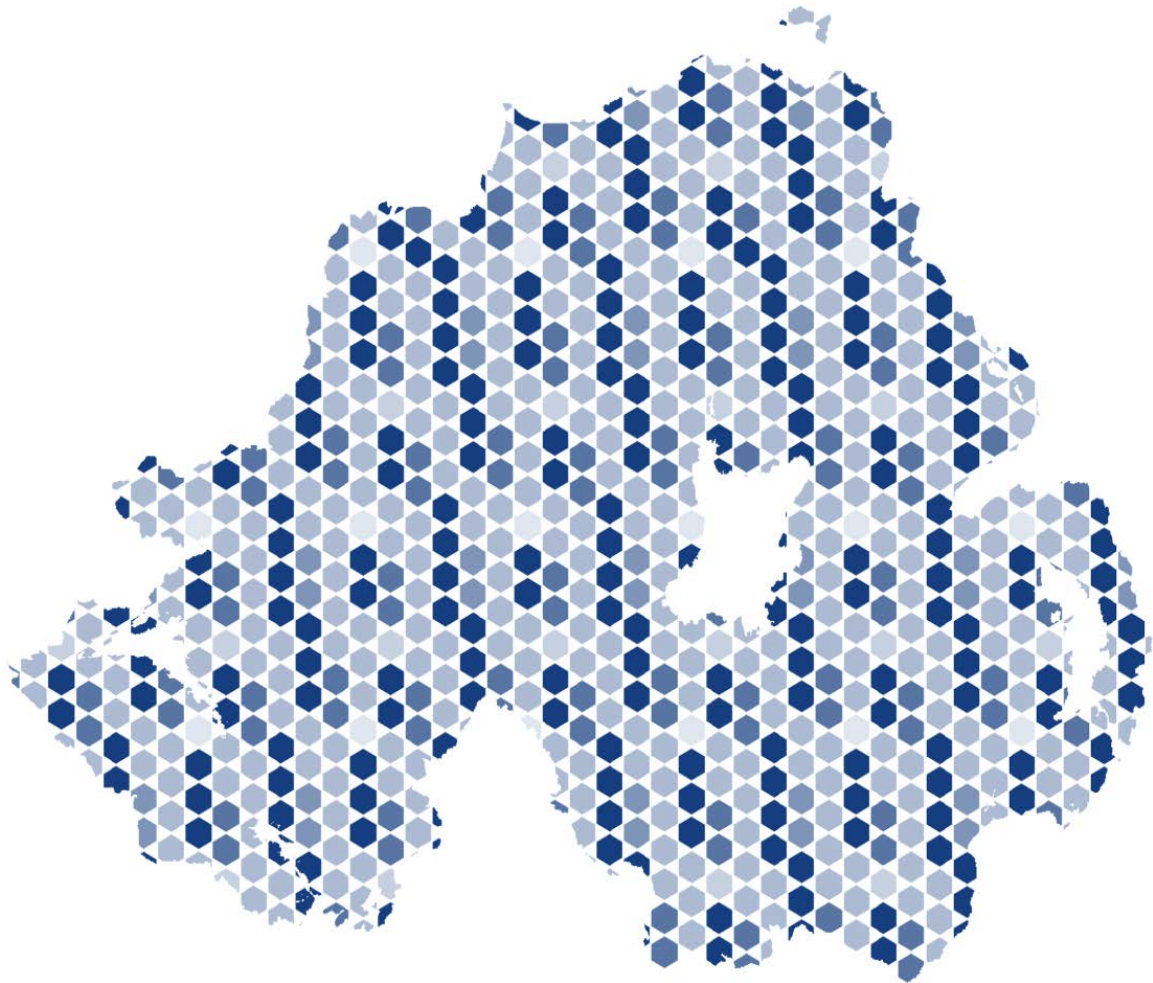


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Thornhill College, Londonderry

All-girls' 11-18 voluntary grammar school

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection (Involving Action Short of  
Strike) in November 2018



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## **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Thornhill College, Londonderry (242-0052)**

### **Introduction**

The previous inspection in November 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Thornhill College as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement<sup>1</sup>.

In the interim period, there has been significant change in senior leadership, with three appointments to the senior leadership team (SLT).

A sustaining improvement (SII) was conducted in November 2018.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that only members of the SLT and safeguarding team would be co-operating with the inspection. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

### **Focus of the inspection**

The purpose of the SII was to evaluate the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school development planning. The school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The lines of inquiry during the SII were the school's actions to:

- improve further the effective use of data to meet more effectively the individual needs, targets and aspirations of all the pupils; and
- develop further the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve and enliven the quality of teaching and learning.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking and impact of the identified actions associated with the lines of inquiry.

### **Key findings**

- There is clear evidence of strategic and targeted improvement work, implemented efficiently by the senior leadership team focused on the effective use of data to meet effectively the individual needs of the pupils. As a result, the pupils continue to achieve very high outcomes in public examinations at key stage 4 and post-16.
- At whole-school level data is used effectively to inform self-evaluation, benchmarking, planning for improvement and monitoring of performance. The data leader has collated and, together with teachers, analysed a wide range of internal and external data, including attitudinal and diagnostic information to: baseline and track the pupils' progress, provide feedback and identify and monitor the impact of intervention strategies. The well-established tracker system in post-16 has been developed into key stages 4 and 3. In discussions with the inspectors the pupils expressed their appreciation of the pastoral and academic support they receive from the approachable and caring staff and about the wide range of intervention and support strategies the school has developed to help them reach their targets.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-thornhill-college-londonderry.pdf>

- Since the time of the original inspection the school has prioritised the use of ICT to enhance further pupil engagement and enliven teaching and learning. The impact of this work, which is at an early stage of development, is being monitored and evaluated in consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified and a senior teacher with responsibility for leading the strategic promotion of E-Learning throughout the school has been recently appointed. A bespoke programme of professional development for teachers and pupils, including e-safety, has underpinned the development of digital technologies across the school. This, together with a whole-school digital literacy week, and curricular developments at post-16, has focused on broadening further the pupils' experiences in digital learning.
- Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate the impact of this improvement work on teaching and learning. However in discussions with the inspectors, the pupils spoke positively about their active involvement in digital literacy activities across the school and their roles as digital leaders. The pupils were confident and highly motivated, expressing their appreciation of the many opportunities they have for leadership, for example, through the school leadership teams, the buddy system, as mindfulness ambassadors and through a wide range of enrichment activities.

### **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The pupils who met with the inspectors spoke positively about the inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school; they are extremely proud of their school. They reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

### **Conclusion**

Owing to the impact of action short of strike being taken by the teachers, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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