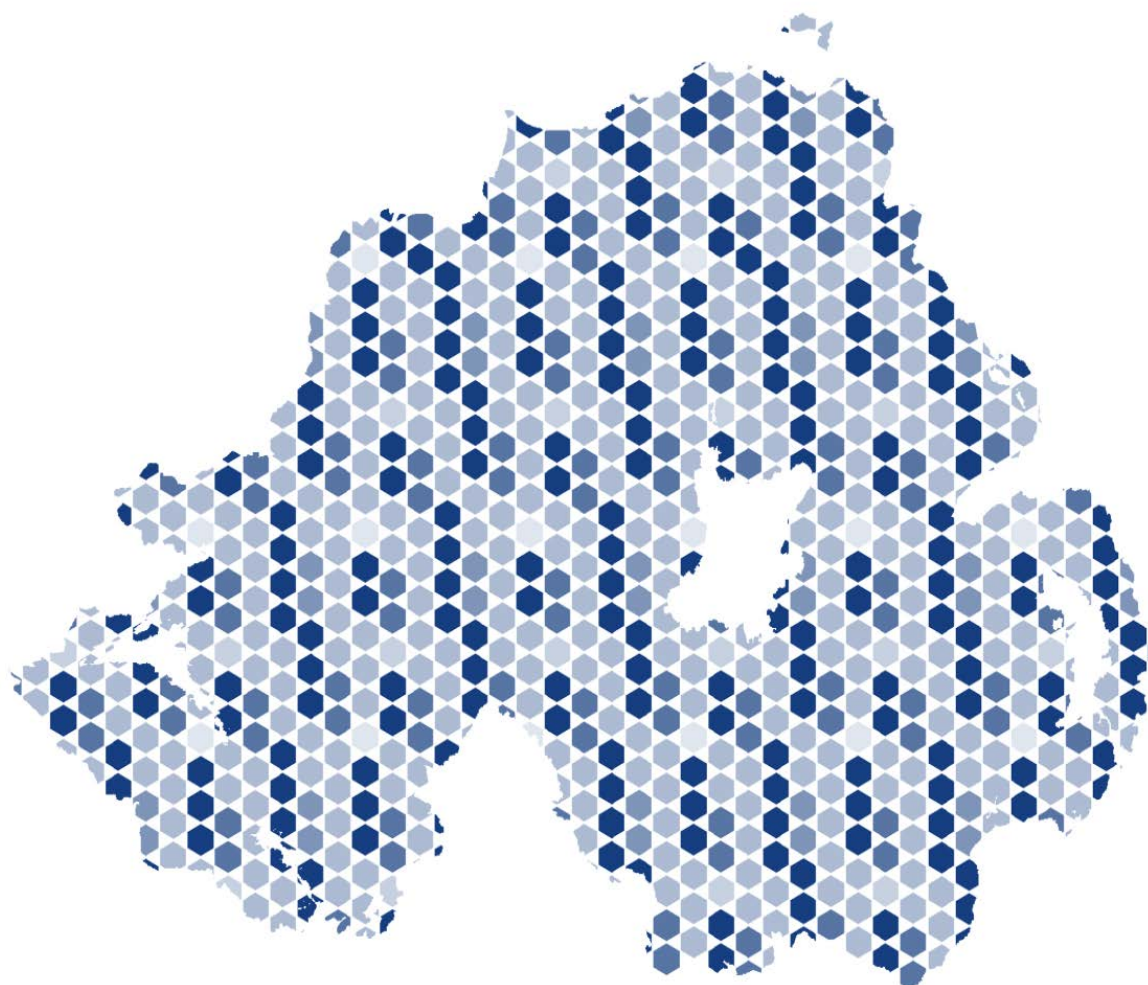


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ashfield Boys' High School,
Belfast

All boys, controlled, non-selective, 11-18 school

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in March 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ASHFIELD BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT4 2LY (121 0015)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Ashfield Boys' High School in September 2016,¹ which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement identified in the inspection were the need to:

- review and improve the curriculum offer and access, and examination entry policy and practice, to meet better the academic, progression and personal development needs of all of the pupils;
- use, record and report quantitative and qualitative data more effectively and accurately, at all levels, to track and monitor the progress in learning of all the pupils; and
- develop further the capacity of the leadership to provide better informed strategic direction and contribute more fully to the school improvement agenda through effective monitoring and evaluation to sustain and raise standards further.

At the time of the inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding were unsatisfactory and did not reflect adequately the guidance from the Department of Education. The ETI carried out a follow-up safeguarding visit in November 2016 when the revised arrangements for safeguarding were evaluated as satisfactory².

The school's action plans identified key actions to bring about the necessary improvements and were adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the ETI. The school development plan (SDP) was adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The progress being made in the areas for improvement was discussed with the school in an interim follow-up inspection visit carried out by the ETI in June 2017. The school reports that it received a good level of support and training from the Education Authority (EA).

In the interval since the initial inspection, actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- a review of the roles and responsibilities of the Core Leadership Team and a re-structuring of the senior leadership team;
- a re-structuring of the Pastoral Care and Support Team and new appointments at middle leadership level, including a numeracy intervention co-ordinator and a literacy intervention co-ordinator;
- the appointment of link governors for priority areas of the post inspection action plan;
- the review of the examination entry policy and practice;
- a comprehensive review of the school's use of data to ensure accurate target-setting and more effective monitoring and tracking of pupil progress;

¹ <https://www.eti.gov.uk/publications/post-primary-inspection-ashfield-boys-high-school-belfast>

² Since January 2017, the safeguarding conclusion of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory is reported as 'reflects broadly the guidance'.

- greater flexibility in the options process at key stage (KS) 4 and post-16; and,
- the provision of an extensive range of teacher professional learning opportunities.

Views of parents and staff

A very small number of parents (6) and forty percent of staff responded to the re-issued online questionnaire. Almost all of the parents that responded affirmed the work of the school and the written comments highlighted their appreciation of the school's commitment to providing positive learning and extra-curricular experiences for their children to achieve their full potential. The responses from the staff were mostly affirmative; the written comments asserted the greater focus on relevant teacher professional learning and the benefits to both pupils and staff of the extent of the school improvement work undertaken since the initial inspection.

Key Findings

The outcomes for learners are now good. The school's review of the examination policy and practice has resulted in a reduction of the number of pupils withdrawn from the public examinations data. The evaluations that follow, on levels of attainment in public examinations, are set within this context.

The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C has remained steady at 79.8%, which is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has decreased from 49.5% to 45.0% but remains in line with the NI average for similar schools.

The proportion of pupils attaining three or more A-levels or equivalent at grades A* to C has increased from 45.4% to 54.4%, which is above the corresponding NI average.

The school continues to review the curriculum and career progression pathways and leavers' destinations; there are now more flexible pathways at KS4 and post-16, and there is greater cohesion in the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance.

The quality of provision is now good. Almost all of the teaching observed during the follow-up inspection process was good or better, with two-thirds being very good. Teacher professional learning is a high priority and the staff engage in peer observations and in the sharing of best practice to continue to improve the quality of the pupils' learning experiences. The teachers use a range of qualitative, quantitative and attitudinal data to tailor more precisely the learning and teaching strategies to the needs and abilities of the pupils.

The re-structured Pastoral Care and Support Team has a clear vision of how best to support the pupils; consequently the care, welfare and support processes in the school are more child-centred. There is evidence that the implementation of the revised positive behaviour policy has impacted positively, with a reduction in the number of detentions and suspensions. Similarly, the introduction of a merit system has resulted in a reduction in the number of behaviour referrals and, in discussions, the pupils speak very favourably of the consistent and fair application of the new system by the teachers and of the accessibility of the rewards, staged appropriately across the academic year.

The quality of leadership and management is now good. The leadership and management at all levels has undertaken training to increase the skills, knowledge and expertise necessary to support the areas for improvement. For governors and senior leaders, there are now well-defined roles and responsibilities with clear lines of accountability and challenge established and a more cohesive structure in place for monitoring and reviewing the actions to promote improvement. The key priorities on the SDP are being taken forward by teams with strategic oversight. An over-arching culture of self-evaluation has been established, based on rigorous analysis of internal and external data and focused on securing improved learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils.

Based on the evidence presented during the follow up-inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding reflect the guidance from the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, groups of pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

Overall Effectiveness

Ashfield Boys' High School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- developing further a curriculum that is tailored to the abilities and aspirations of the pupils in order to sustain, or raise further, the standards attained by the pupils in public examinations.

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