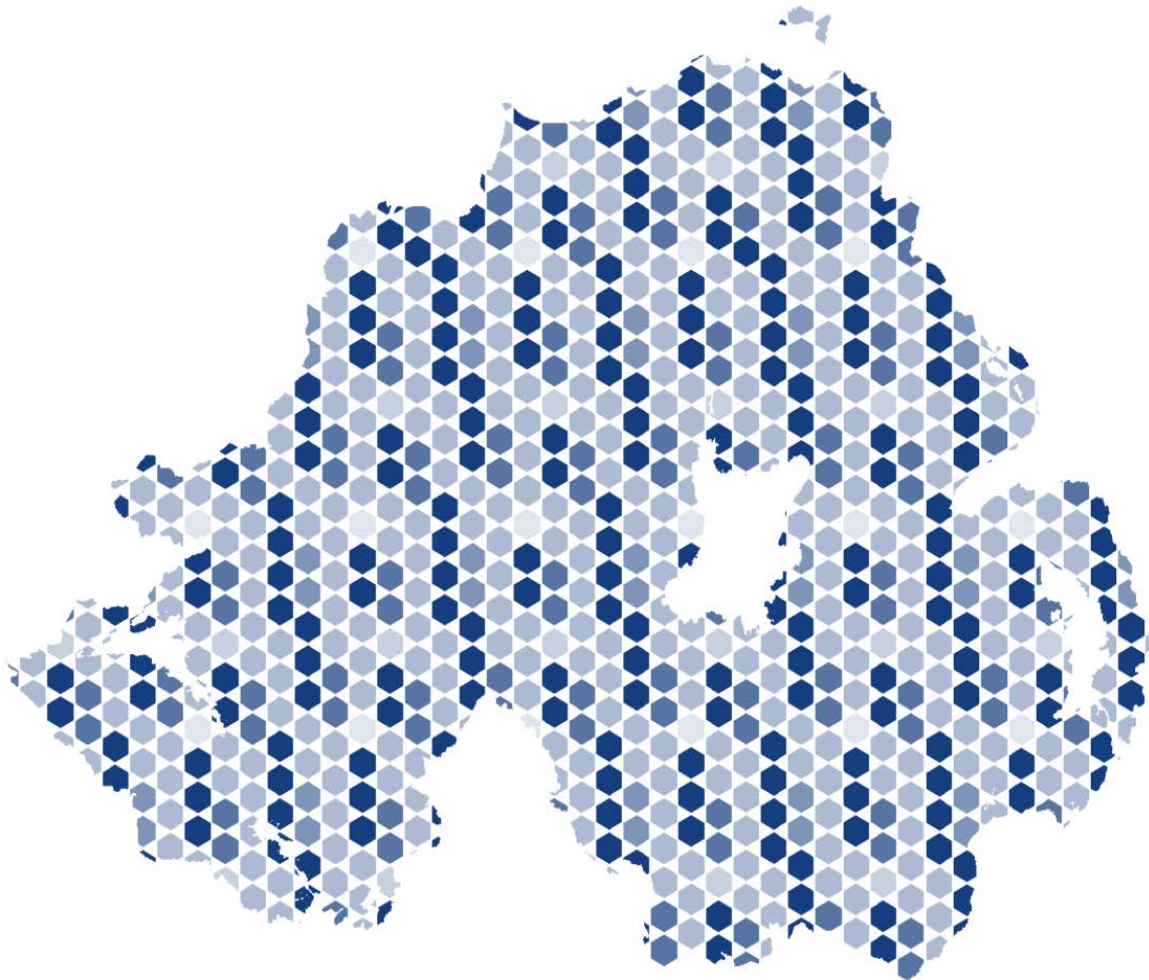


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Strabane Academy, Strabane,  
County Tyrone

Controlled, co-educational, 11-18, grammar school (with an  
all-ability intake)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection  
in September 2016

## **SECOND FOLLOW-UP TO THE BASELINE INSPECTION OF STRABANE ACADEMY, BT82 8NW (241-0311)**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a baseline inspection<sup>1</sup> of Strabane Academy in November 2012 when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory<sup>2</sup>. As a result, the school entered the follow-up process and a follow-up inspection<sup>3</sup> was carried out in December 2014 when the quality of education remained satisfactory.

The areas for improvement identified at the follow-up inspection were the need to:

- improve further the standards attained by the pupils at GCSE level, addressing the variations in outcomes across subjects; and
- continue to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum being offered at key stage (KS) 4.

During the first follow-up inspection, the quality of the provision for English and mathematics was also evaluated as satisfactory. The key targets in the action plans were appropriate and the progress made in the areas for improvement was discussed with the school during the interim follow-up inspection visits carried out by the ETI in September 2015 and April 2016. The school reports that the Education Authority staff provided significant support during the follow-up process. A second follow-up inspection was conducted in September 2016.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following changes and actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the school's enrolment has decreased from 589 pupils at the time of the first follow-up inspection to 546, (of these, around one-half were selected based upon ability as identified through the school's transfer test procedure);
- the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs has decreased to 18%;
- a school improvement sub-committee of the board of governors has been formed;
- a new learning and teaching co-ordinator has been appointed; and
- three learning pathways for the KS 4 curriculum have been established and embedded.

### **Key findings**

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement remain good. The senior leaders use data with increasing effectiveness to track the pupils' progress and to implement a wider range of targeted intervention and support programmes. This includes a pupil tracking system which has been embedded at

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<sup>1</sup> The baseline inspection report can be accessed at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/standard-inspection-strabane-academy>

<sup>2</sup> From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory has been reported as having important areas for improvement.

<sup>3</sup> The first follow-up inspection report can be accessed at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/follow-inspection-strabane-academy-co-tyrone>

KS 4 and post-16 and is developing well at KS 3. As a result, communication with, and reporting to, parents are much more informed and effective in supporting the pupils' progress. The governors are supportive of the school and are better informed about, and involved in, the school improvement process.

Achievements and standards remain an important area for improvement.

Over the past three years, the headline performance of the more able<sup>4</sup> pupils at GCSE level compares favourably with the NI average for selective schools. The percentage of these pupils attaining at grades A\* to C in at least seven GCSE subjects or equivalent, including English and mathematics, has increased from 81% to 89%, which is just below the NI average.

Over the same period, the percentage of year 12 pupils across all three KS 4 curriculum pathways attaining at grades A\* to C in at least five GCSE subjects or equivalent has increased from 66% to 69%, but remains well below the NI average when compared with all schools.

The percentage of year 12 pupils across all three curriculum pathways attaining at grades A\* to C in at least five GCSE subjects or equivalent, including English and mathematics, over the past three years has increased from 52% to 60%; this is still below the NI average for all schools.

In 2016, the standards achieved at GCSE level or equivalent by pupils who follow curriculum pathways two and three are not good enough. It is concerning that the percentage of these pupils who achieved five or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A\* to C fell significantly to 39%, which is way below the NI average for non-selective schools.

Over the past three years, at grades A\* to B, attainment for the more able pupils in GCSE English was well below the three-year Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools; their attainment in English literature was also below the corresponding average. Attainment in GCSE English for all other pupils, at grades A\* to C, was well below the NI average for non-selective schools. Over the same period, at grades A\* to B, attainment for the more able pupils in GCSE mathematics fluctuated but was above the NI average for selective schools. Attainment in mathematics for all other pupils, at grades A\* to C, was well below the NI average for non-selective schools.

The quality of provision remains an important area for improvement; however, an important start has been made to improving the consistency of the learning experiences for all pupils and there is now a broadened curriculum choice and blend of qualifications across the pathways at KS 4. There is evidence that the focus by the senior leaders and co-ordinators on effective planning, teaching and assessment to improve learning is bringing about positive change. It is also clear that some of the curriculum changes are impacting positively and there have been some improvements in the standards attained by the pupils. It will be important for all departments to continue to sustain and build upon this important work and to improve further the quality and impact of the learning and teaching for all of the pupils.

The quality of the learning and teaching in three-fifths of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection was good or better in promoting the pupils' learning. These lessons were characterised by: purposeful activities to engage the pupils; and useful starters to assess prior learning. In the lessons which had important areas for improvement, there was; over-direction by the teacher with pupils being overly passive; and too many opportunities to develop their flexible thinking skills were missed.

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<sup>4</sup> These pupils have been selected based upon their ability, as identified through the school's transfer test procedure.

The quality of provision in English and mathematics remains an important area for improvement; one-half of the lessons observed had important areas for improvement. While the quality of the planning in English is mostly good, the planning in mathematics is an important area for improvement; there is insufficient emphasis on the development of the pupils' skills and a lack of challenge for some of them.

## **Conclusion**

Strabane Academy needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the pupils. It may require external support to do so<sup>5</sup>. The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- continue to improve the quality of the lesson planning and teaching to meet individual pupils' needs and support their progress in learning; and
- build further the capacity of middle leaders to monitor and evaluate the provision in their areas of responsibility in a more systematic and consistent manner to bring about sustainable improvement at GCSE level.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

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<sup>5</sup> The Department of Education's Standards and Improvement Team will advise the school on the nature of any support and follow-up actions required.

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