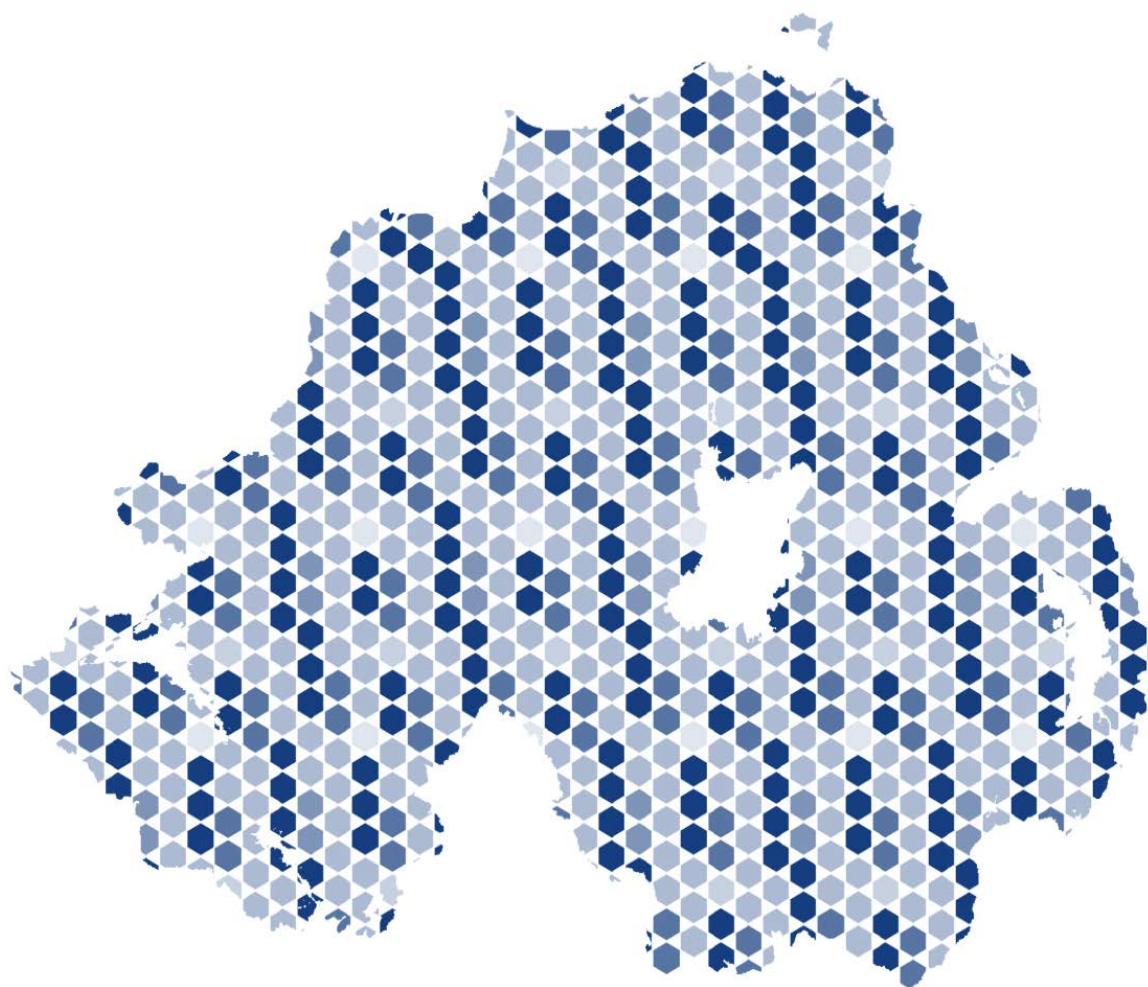


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Columbanus' College,
Bangor, County Down

Non-selective, co-educational 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection in
January 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Columbanus' College takes great pride in serving the academic and pastoral needs of all its pupils, including a significantly high proportion from non-Catholic traditions and faiths, as its mission is: 'a school that serves the whole community'.

The pupils come from a wide range of primary schools across the Bangor and north Down area. The school engages, and values its participation, in a number of shared educational and collaborative arrangements with other post-primary schools in the Bangor area.

St Columbanus' College	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	95	99	124	123
Enrolment	601	593	617	643
% Attendance (NI Average)	92.1% (92.0%)	91.0% (92.0%)	91.6% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	17	25	29	32
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	24% (143)	28% (168)	31% (191)	32% (210)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	37	42	40	43
No. of newcomers	14	10	12	10

Source: data as held by the school.
N/A not available

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on science in this inspection.

2. Views of parents and staff

Around 7% of parents (38) and 75% of staff (60) responded to the online questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The written comments affirmed, in particular, high quality pastoral care, pupils' contentment at school and a committed and approachable staff which is led well at all levels. The responses to the staff questionnaires were also positive, highlighting pride in the school's caring ethos, the commitment placed on providing quality learning and teaching and the support provided for professional development. A small number of issues raised in the questionnaires was discussed with the principal and governors.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of a post-primary inspection is to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Provision for learning	Very Good
Leadership and management	Very Good

The overall provision for English is very good; while for mathematics and science it is good².

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- Most of the pupils enjoy learning, are courteous and take great pride in their school. The pupils engage positively with the teachers and work well collaboratively. Many have well developed inter-personal skills and are confident and articulate. A high number of pupils benefit from participating in cultural, sporting and community-based activities, which develop their social skills further and provide meaningful leadership and team-work experiences. The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in fundraising for charities that develop social justice values, which, in some instances, reflect closely the traditions and ethos of the school.
- The pupils achieve very good outcomes in English, and in mathematics and science they are good.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased from 42% to 62%, which is now well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar non-selective schools. It is of note that the similar percentage for pupils entitled to free schools meals has risen also from 33% in 2014 to 39% in 2015 and is consistently above the respective NI average.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C has increased from 34% to 56% representing a significant upward trend to 10 percentage points above the NI average for similar schools.

² The areas for improvement have been reported to, and discussed with, the relevant department(s) and senior leadership of the school, as applicable.

- Around one-half of GCSE subject outcomes at grades A* to C are in line with, or above, the corresponding three-year average for similar schools; while at GCE A level, the proportion in line, or above, is around one-third. Consequently, there is undue variation in examination outcomes across subjects and there is a need for greater consistency and improvement.
- The standards attained by the pupils in an appropriate range of vocational subjects are mostly very good.
- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning, including those who are in Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision, attain highly. They follow suitable curriculum pathways and accredited courses that enable them to progress positively to further education, higher education, training or employment.
- A majority of the year 12 pupils progress to post-16 provision in the school. The proportion of pupils progressing to further and higher education courses is slightly above the respective NI average.

6. Quality of Provision

- The quality and impact of the learning and teaching is a significant strength of the work of the school. Almost all (96%) of the lessons observed were good or better in progressing the pupils' learning; of which 47% were very good or better. The highly effective lessons were well planned and learning was differentiated to meet the needs of pupils; lessons had explicit structures and appropriate pace to support and consolidate learning. The teachers regularly use information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning and use a range of effective assessment for learning strategies and innovative approaches to engage and motivate the pupils. The high level of consistency in learning and teaching is a strong indicator of the very effective pastoral care.
- The highly effective system to track and monitor the pastoral needs and academic progress of the pupils is aimed strategically at improving outcomes further. Assessment information is effectively shared with staff on a regular basis and informs well the planning; the progress of each pupil is monitored carefully and tailored interventions are provided to support them.
- The quality of provision for English is very good; in mathematics and science it is good.
- The high priority given to literacy is evident in the comprehensive and effective guidance and support materials made available to staff and the delivery of well-focused whole-staff training in literacy across the curriculum. While numeracy across the school is also promoted and the pupils' skills further developed through well-planned events, competitions and numeracy tasks, the pupils would benefit from wider opportunities, across the curriculum, to use and apply mathematical thinking and language.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's approach to the care and welfare of the pupils impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes.

- The school has highly effective provision for pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning, including those pupils with a range of complex medical needs. The individual education plans have appropriate targets and strategies to inform teachers' planning and practice to ensure pupils overcome barriers to learning. There is exemplary practice in supporting pupils with special educational needs and those at risk of marginalisation, and who attend EOTAS, to make sure they remain an inclusive part of the school community.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum offer at key stages 3 and 4. The pupils are provided with an open range of appropriate and inclusive curriculum pathways. In the sixth form, a broad, flexible curriculum offer meets the needs of the pupils; the quality and breadth of the offer is enhanced further through the area learning community. The school provides suitable access to a two-year programme of study and the range of pathways offered is subject to continuous review; the curriculum is responsive to the changing needs of the pupils, while taking appropriate cognisance of wider labour market information.
- The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is afforded a high strategic priority. There is an effective taught programme of employability and careers education that develops extensively and progressively the pupils' understanding of the world of work and employability skills. The pupils benefit from having access to a wide range of well-organised and relevant curriculum and careers resources and events, which enables them to make effective, informed and impartial careers-related decisions.

7. Leadership and management

- The high quality college development plan provides a clear strategic vision for improvement. It is wide-ranging and ambitious and details the evaluative and consultative processes that inform appropriate priorities, which are aligned closely to the work of individual departments and to wider pastoral and other whole-school initiatives. The plan is comprehensive and connects the many aspects of school improvement work into a unity of purpose, which is symbiotic and pupil-focused.
- Strategic leadership at a senior level is a significant strength. There is a resolute and tenacious commitment to the pupils' pastoral needs and the outcomes they attain. The college has effective formalised processes and routines, including close and responsive oversight of a wide range of improvement work to benefit the pupils. The effective distributive leadership structure, along with the capability of key post-holders in the strategic planning, implementation and monitoring of the school's provision and outcomes, reflect high levels of capacity to sustain and bring about further improvement.
- The middle leaders contribute effectively to the school improvement agenda. They provide appropriate leadership and management of their areas of responsibility. The opportunities provided for professional learning are of a high quality and focus on building their leadership capacity to support further improvements, which are aligned to the college development plan.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governance is well experienced and motivated by a firm conviction that St Columbanus' College puts pupils first. Consequently, the governors provide high levels of support and appropriate challenge when directing the work of the principal and senior leaders and can demonstrate clearly how their decision-making has brought about important improvements for the pupils.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

CONCLUSION

8. Overall effectiveness

St Columbanus' College has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Accommodation

There are significant deficiencies in the school's accommodation that have a detrimental effect on the well-being of the pupils, including:

- the generally poor fabric of the existing old school estate that requires constant repair and maintenance;
- the lack of adequate facilities for physical education;
- the limited outside spaces for the pupils during break and lunch times;
- the mobile classrooms numbered 1,2,5 and 6, which are in a poor state of repair with single glazed windows that require urgent action;
- the home economics and art facilities, which do not meet current accepted standards; and
- the water ingress in a number of the classrooms.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS³ and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in St Columbanus' College achieving five or more GCSE's (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subjects, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band⁴.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	62.92	60.23	71.6
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁵</i>	<i>68.3%</i>	<i>75.7%</i>	<i>75.7%</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	41.57	47.73	61.73
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>42.9%</i>	<i>51.7%</i>	<i>51.7%</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	96.63	82.95	98.77
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	33.33	41.67	38.89

³ SIMS: School Information Management System

⁴ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

⁵ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in St Columbanus' College achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A* to E.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	52	60	65.85
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	34.09	35	56.1
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	88.64	92.5	95.12

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level (over the past three years) Grades A* - C

	2014	2015	2016
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	89	88	81

GCSE Subject	Number of entries	School three-year average at grades A* to C	Northern Ireland three-year average at grades A* to C
Construction	57	100.00	82.2
English Language	258	66.67	63.2
English Literature	41	78.05	84.0
French	37	48.65	75.2
Geography	115	49.57	61.1
History	54	50.00	61.7
Home Economics	46	93.48	70.7
Home Economics Child Development	50	82.00	65.7
Information Technology	193	96.37	74.2
Mathematics	256	59.77	51.5
Moving Image Arts	62	48.39	62.2
Performing Arts (Vocational)	48	35.42	69.2
Religious Studies	192	61.98	64.6
Science Double Award 1st Subject	116	90.52	83.0
Design & Technology: Resistance Materials *	29	13.79	61.5
Learning for Life and Work *	13	38.46	74.7
Learning for Life and Work (PSE) *	6	100.00	74.7
Music *	27	55.56	79.3
Spanish *	23	69.57	82.0

* indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

Level 2 Qualification at Key Stage 4	2013-14 A – C %	2014-15 A – C %	2015-16 A – C %	Total entry over 3 years
OCR National Sports Science	N/A	75	83	26
CCEA Occupational Studies	75	64	84	126
Edexcel CIDA/DIDA	98	8	75	87
BTEC Applied Science	100	58	47	52

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level (over the past three years) Grades A* - C

GCE Subject	Number of entries	School three-year average at grades A* to C	Northern Ireland three-year average at grades A* to C
Geography	33	75.76	84.6
Health & Social Science (Vocational)	28	60.71	84.3
Information Technology (Vocational)	83	86.75	84.7
Religious Studies	25	64.00	88.7
Science (Vocational)	33	78.79	61.9
Sociology	24	33.33	76.0
Environmental Technology *	21	61.90	**
Art & Design *	11	100.00	90.6
Business Studies (Vocational) *	19	68.42	82.7
Moving Image Arts*	19	73.68	87.2

* indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

** indicates a new subject that does not yet have a three year average

APPLIED/ VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Level 3 Qualification	2013-14 A – C %	2014-15 A – C %	2015-16 A – C %	Total entry over 3 years for PI Cohort
BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Sport	100	100	100	14

Staying on rate

Based on data held in SIMS by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at St Columbanus' College, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for non-selective schools from school census returns to the Department of Education for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	47.8%	65.3
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	78.2%	66.2

Leavers' destinations

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from St Columbanus' College who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	NI	School	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	13157	97			
Employment	10.9%	13.4%			
Institute of Further Education	44.5%	49.4%	22	16	10
Institute of Higher Education	13.2%	18.5%			18
Work-based Learning (Training)	17.9%	11.3%			
Unemployed	11.3%	1%			
Unknown	1.9%	6%			

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Post-Primary>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management⁶:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The 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.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

⁶ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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