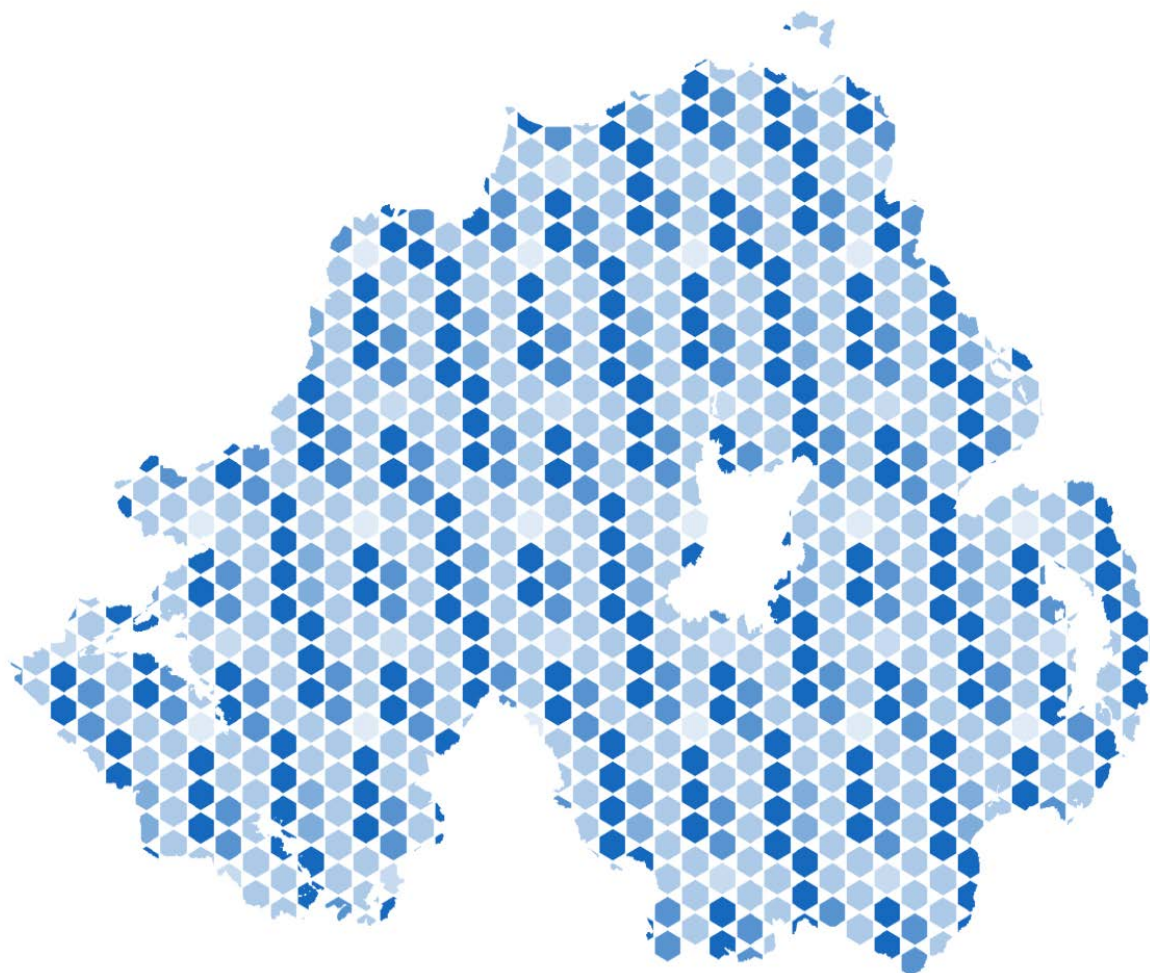


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Gerard's School and Support
Services, Belfast

Report of an Inspection (Including
Action Short of Strike) in
May 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Contents

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Overall effectiveness	4

Appendices

- A. Statistical data
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

St Gerard's School and Support Services is a Catholic Maintained co-educational special school located in Belfast. The school provides education for 251 pupils aged three to 19 years, with a range of special needs who come from Belfast and surrounding areas. In addition, the school provides outreach literacy support for pupils in primary and post-primary schools in the Belfast area. At the time of inspection the principal had been recently appointed. Since the last inspection the school has relocated to a new school complex with extensive modern learning facilities and the needs of the pupils now include severe learning difficulties along with the pupils in the school with moderate learning difficulties.

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 the majority of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI have 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.

2. Views of parents and staff

None of the parents, and a small number of staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. All of the responses to the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. There were no additional comments from parents or staff. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors, the main findings emerging from the staff questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for pupils; in particular, how the school is addressing individual needs;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

5. Outcomes for learners

- The pupils are articulate in expressing their views and are enthusiastic about school trips, sports and learning opportunities. They achieve well in a wide range of appropriate academic and vocational accredited courses by the time they leave school. They are aware of the pathways available and the qualifications they require in order to progress to employment or further study. The school data indicates that almost all of the school leavers in 2016 have successfully maintained their placements in education, training or employment.
- During discussions with inspectors, almost all of the pupils were confident and talked readily and enthusiastically about their learning; they take pride in their achievements and are courteous in their engagement with peers, staff and visitors to the school. They have a variety of opportunities to undertake meaningful roles and responsibilities, for example as members of the student council. The pupils welcome the opportunity to participate in fundraising, sporting and musical activities that enable them to celebrate their talents.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the:

- outcomes attained by the pupils;
- progression by the pupils in their learning; and
- pupils wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- A whole school curriculum audit has been completed and needs to be used to address the changing learning requirements of the pupils. The school has appropriately reviewed the role of specialist teachers in key stage 3 to more effectively support the learning needs of the pupils.
- There is valuable established collaboration with the speech and language therapists based in the school and with occupational therapists from the community. Effective links have been established with neighbouring special schools, the careers education information advice and guidance service and with further education colleges, relevant training agencies and employers. The pupils have opportunities to participate in appropriate work experience placements.
- The individual education plans focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, however the school has identified the need to develop further the pupils' targets to include social skills and behaviour, where appropriate. An individual pupil tracking system has been introduced and is at an early stage of implementation.
- In discussions with the inspectors the pupils reported that they enjoy very positive working relationships with all staff and enjoy the range of educational and recreational facilities available to them in school. The pupils interact well with one another and commented positively on the support they received from staff to help them with their learning.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the:

- quality of the curriculum;
- care and welfare; effectiveness of guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences; and
- effectiveness and impact of planning, engagement/ teaching/training and assessment in promoting successful learning.

7. Leadership and management

- While the newly restructured leadership team is at an early stage of development, it is focussed strategically on taking the school forward. They are developing the curriculum and safeguarding teams within the school to include co-ordinators of each key stage, and have recognised appropriately the need to enhance the monitoring and evaluation processes for learning, teaching and progression.
- The school development plan has reached the end of its three year cycle and the compilation of the new plan has begun with extensive consultation with staff, parents, pupils and governors. The leadership team are in the process of prioritising areas for inclusion in the new development plan to meet the changing profile and needs of the pupils.
- The school has developed links with a range of external organisations, local schools, community groups and training agencies. For example, senior pupils attend an inclusion project in the community to develop social and communication skills.
- During the inspection the ETI met with representatives of the board of governors. The governors are informed about the work and life of the school and are effective in supporting the principal and management. They are developing their challenge function as necessary to support the leadership team in achieving the priorities of the school development plan.
- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements are in place for safeguarding learners which broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils report that they feel safe in school. They know what to do and who to talk to if they are concerned about their safety and well being. However, owing to action short of strike, the ETI are unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

The ETI are unable to evaluate fully the:

- effectiveness and impact of the middle leadership;
- effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement; and
- effectiveness and impact of the strategic leadership team.

8. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the 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 being provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Statistical data

St Gerard's School and Support Service	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Enrolment school	257	248	251
% Attendance	89.1	88.2	90.8
% FSME ¹	71	73	78.5
Newcomers	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

Inspection method and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework which guides inspection and self-evaluation within special schools is available on the ETI website [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Special Education | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors scrutinised a sample of documentation and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, and few staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, on the Quality of provision and on Leadership and management:

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

Inspection Outcome

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when indicating what will happen after the inspection:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement which include the need to... There will be a formal follow-up inspection in...
The organisation 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 organisation's progress in addressing the need to... There will be a formal follow-up inspection in...

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2017

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk