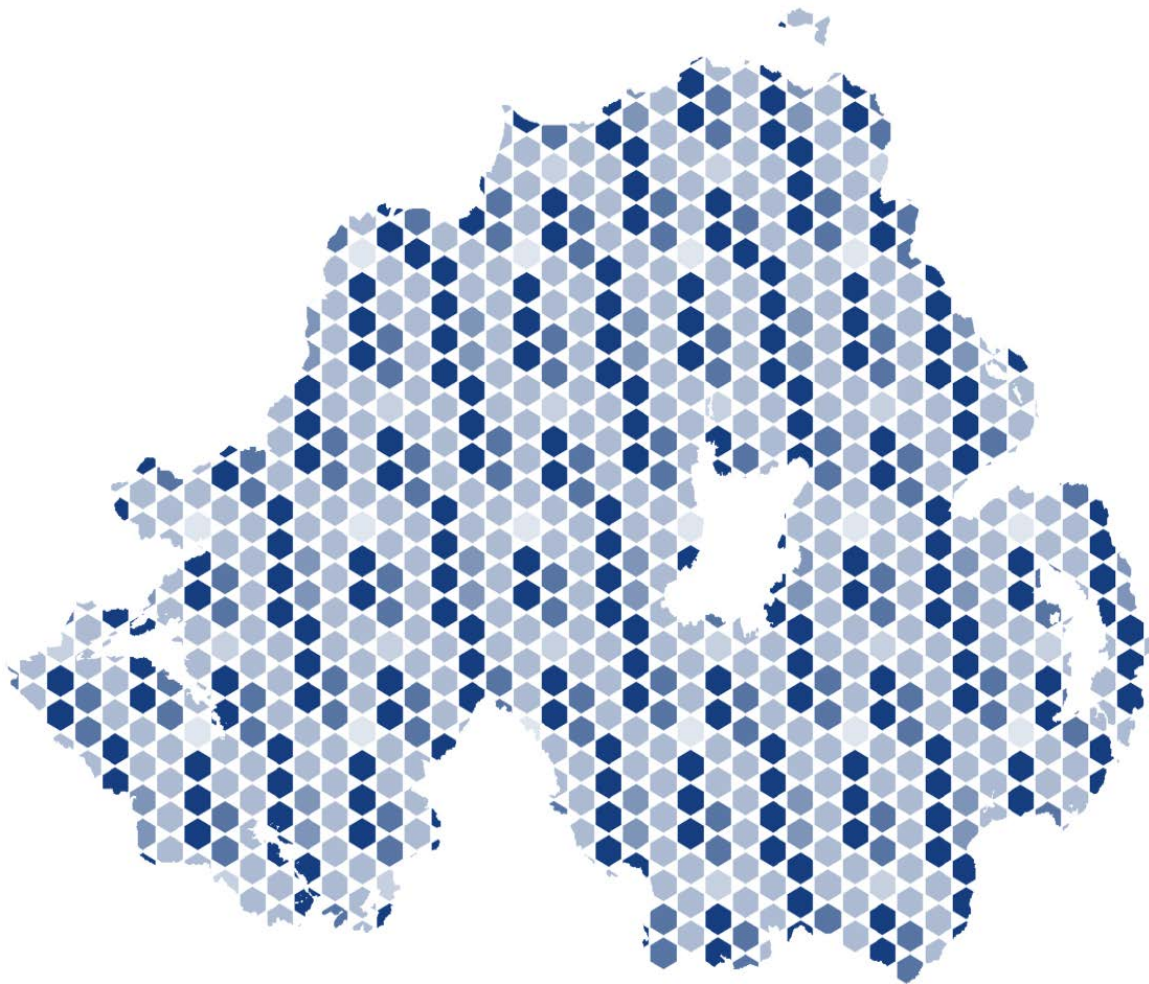


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar  
School, Belfast

Voluntary, co-educational, 11-18 selective school

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection in May 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

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CUSTOMER  
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EXCELLENCE



## **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School, Belfast (142-0277)**

### **Introduction**

The previous inspection in March 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School as very good<sup>1</sup>. Since the inspection, there has been a supplementary appointment to the central leadership team (CLT). A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 14 May 2018.

### **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:

- sustain or improve further the outcomes attained by the pupils in public examinations at key stage 4 and post-16; and,
- improve further the consistency of the quality of the provision of numeracy across the curriculum.

### **Key findings**

- The proportion of pupils attaining 7 or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at A\* to C remains in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average for schools in the same free school meals band. Most of the individual subjects are in line with or above the three-year corresponding NI average for similar schools.
- The pupils continue to attain very highly at post-16, with the proportion attaining 3 or more GCE A levels at grade A\* to C being consistently above the three-year NI average for schools in the same free school meals band. All subjects are in line with or above the three-year NI average for selective schools. Significantly, over the past three years, the school has successfully reduced the gender gap in performance at A Level from almost eighteen percentage points to just over two percentage points and the boys' attainment is now in line with that of the girls.
- The outcomes attained by the pupils are underpinned by: the pursuit of excellence in learning and teaching; the precise monitoring, evaluation and analysis of the school's internal data to identify and remediate under-achievement at the earliest opportunity; and, the high levels of care, welfare and support provided to the pupils.

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<sup>1</sup> From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding or very good is reported as 'the school is demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement.'

- Numeracy is afforded a high priority in the school development plan and there is a well-co-ordinated, common approach to the development of pupils' mathematical skills across the other subject areas. Teachers are supported by appropriate staff development, dissemination of good practice sessions and bespoke numeracy resources to ensure the consistency of the teaching of key mathematical concepts and of the accurate use of mathematic conventions and language. In the lessons observed, the pupils are able to apply these concepts and conventions in a range of contexts with confidence and success.

### **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect the guidance from the Department of Education. In discussions with a selection of pupils from across the key stages, the pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to if they have any concerns about their welfare.

### **Conclusion**

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the pupils. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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