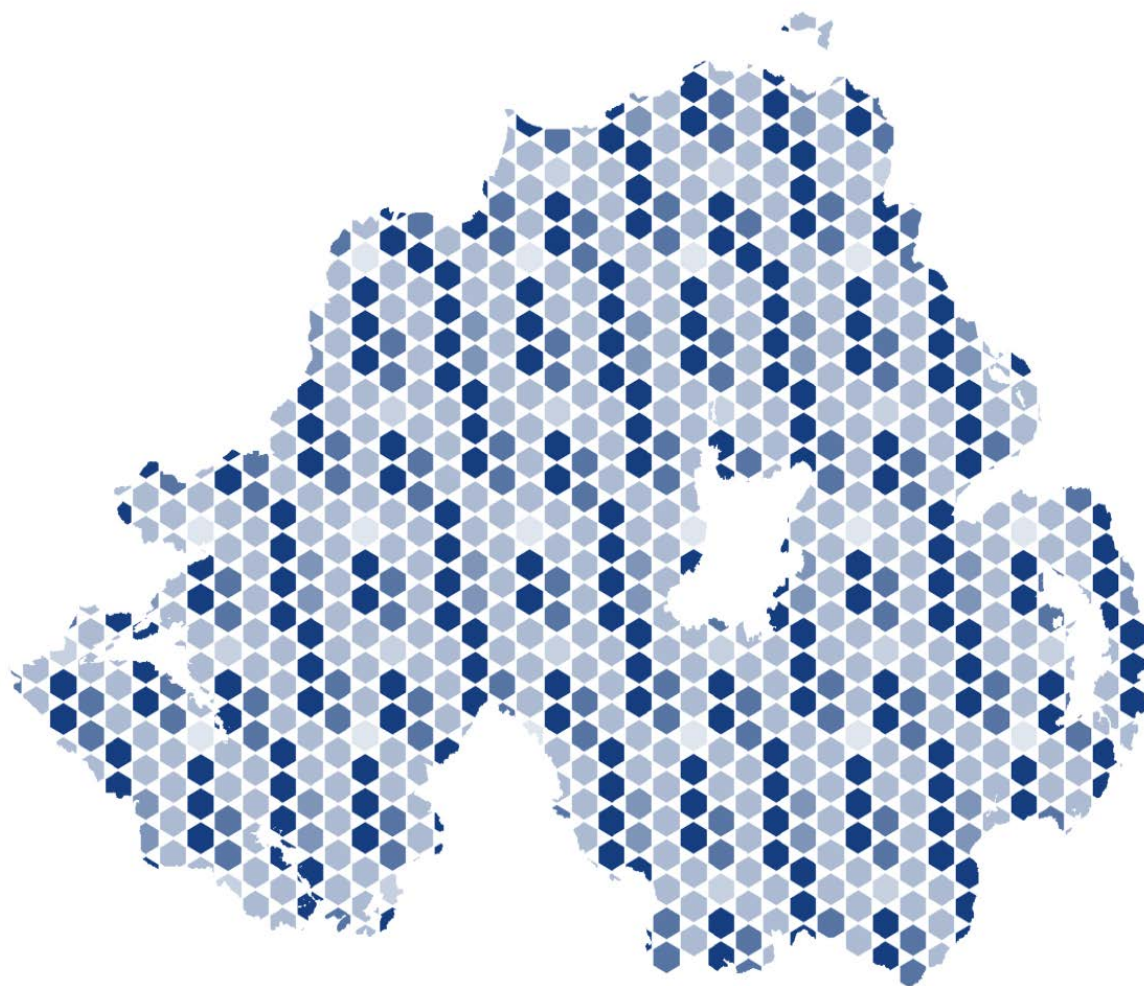


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Down High School, Downpatrick, County Down

Controlled, selective, 11-18 DE Ref No (441-0085)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in April 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Down High School, Downpatrick, County Down (441-0085)

Introduction

Down High School took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection (SII) in March 2016. In the interim, three new members have been appointed to the senior leadership team (SLT), the principal and two vice-principals. The school now participates in a shared education partnership programme with one local post-primary school. A SII was conducted in April 2019.

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 senior leadership would be co-operating with the inspection. The ETI has 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.

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:

- improve the outcomes for pupils at post-16 through improved tracking and monitoring systems; and
- develop further the care and welfare of pupils through the promotion of emotional health and wellbeing initiatives.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking and impact of the identified actions associated with the lines of inquiry.

Key findings

- Pupil progress is monitored by the curriculum and pastoral teams to identify early underachievement and implement individualised support strategies which include coaching, mentoring and subject support. The school's evaluations indicate that the interventions in place are leading to improved outcomes at post-16, with almost all of the Year 14 pupils progressing to higher education. In 2016, 76.7% of the pupils achieved grades A*-C in at least three GCE A level qualifications or equivalent, and in 2018, 79.3% of the pupils achieved at this level. The percentage of pupils achieving seven A*-C grades at GCSE is in line with the NI average for similar schools¹. The school has identified the need to analyse further the outcomes at grades A* to B at GCSE level and to monitor further the gender gap differential in the outcomes attained by boys and girls at GCSE and A-level.

¹ In the same free school (FSM) meal band.

- Following consultation with staff and pupils, the SLT has prioritised the development of pupil emotional health and wellbeing initiatives. A wellbeing co-ordinator has been appointed and a key area of focus has been the development of pupil resilience and the language of wellbeing. The school links with a range of external agencies to support the preventative curriculum and through the shared education partnership, there has been a focus on the year ten pupils developing their understanding and awareness of meditation. A whole school audit of values has taken place and is informing the school's review of a range of policies.
- Importantly, there is a number of pastoral and curricular pupil forums prioritising pupil voice and enabling pupils to identify areas for further improvement, such as the personal development programmes across the school. In order to develop positive attitudes, dispositions and behaviours, pupils have the opportunity to participate in leadership roles such as the student and eco-councils, ICT ambassadors and peer mentors.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education (DE). The school has identified the need to review the anti-bullying and relationships and sexuality policies in line with the latest DE guidance. The pupils report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

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

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2019

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