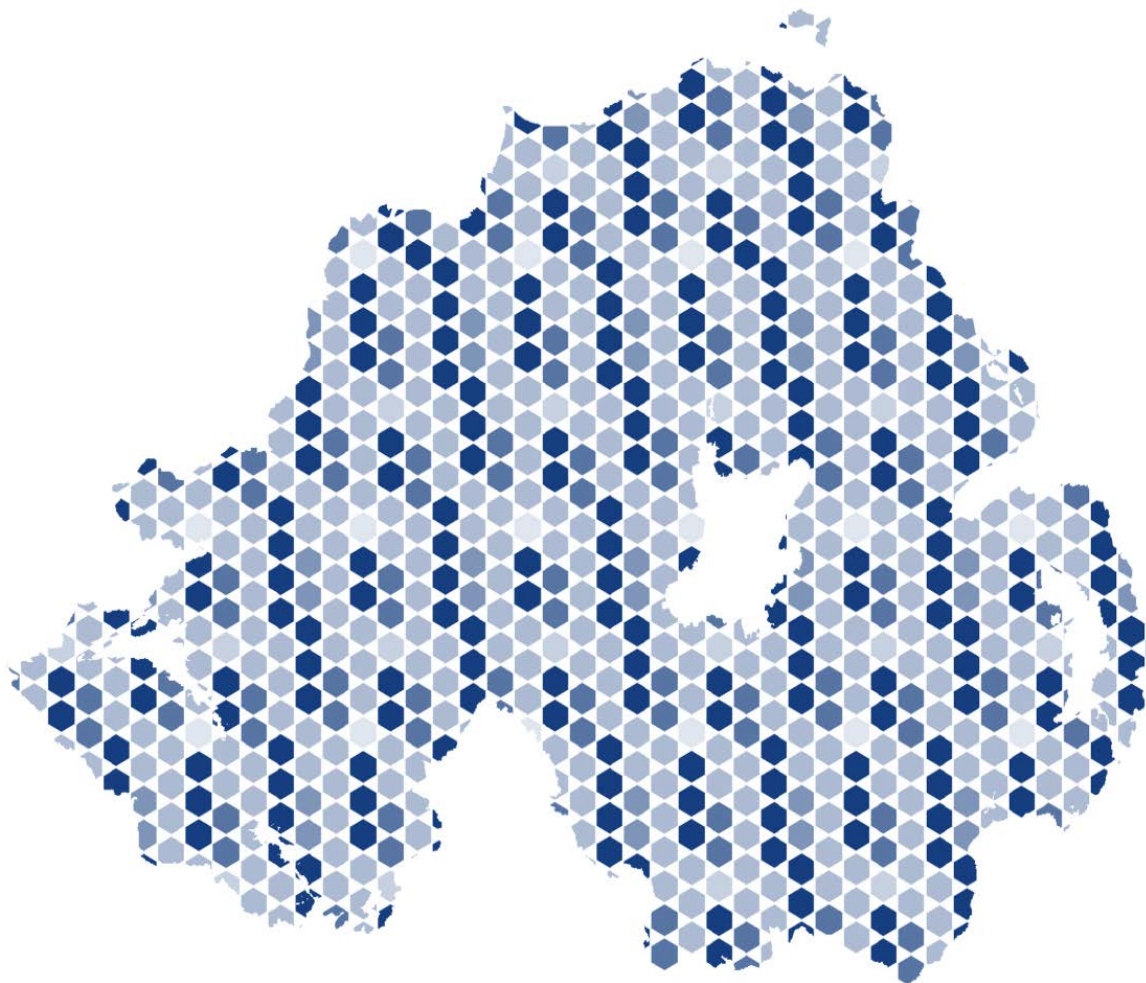


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Dromore High School, Dromore, County Down

Co-educational, controlled non-selective DE Ref No (521-0064)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in March 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 Dromore High School, Dromore, County Down (521-0064)

Introduction

The previous inspection in April 2016¹ evaluated the overall effectiveness of Dromore High School as demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

In the interim period, there have been new appointments to the senior leadership team (SLT); the strategic roles and responsibilities of SLT have been aligned to the SDP priorities; a data manager, a director of key stage 4 and new heads of English and careers have been appointed.

A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in March 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 SLT 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:

- raise the outcomes attained by all of the pupils, in particular at Key Stage (KS) 4; and
- baseline and track the progression of pupils across the school.

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

- While the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has remained in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools, the standards achieved by the boys over the three years have increased resulting in a narrowing of the gender gap at GCSE level. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, and including English and mathematics, has increased since the last inspection and these pupils are now attaining in line with their peers.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-dromore-high-school-county-down.pdf>

- While the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C has increased from 64.7% in 2016 to 72.5% in 2018, this remains below the NI average for similar schools. A number of new subjects have been recently introduced to broaden the curriculum and better meet the needs and abilities of all the pupils. It will be important to consider the currency, duplication and career progression of some of the qualifications.
- At post-16 the pupils continue to attain well.
- The appointments of a data manager and KS 4 director have led to a greater whole-school focus on the monitoring and tracking of pupils across the school. A wide range of internal and external data has been collated and analysed in detail to good effect in order to accurately baseline and track the progression of pupils, including monitoring of the impact of intervention strategies at KS 4. The school has recently engaged with an external programme focusing on utilisation of strategies to motivate and engage the pupils in their learning, in addition to providing an opportunity for continuing professional development for the middle leaders.
- During the inspection, the inspectors engaged in discussion with groups of pupils from across the key stages. The pupils spoke positively of their teachers and the intervention strategies used in class to progress their learning and recognise how the tracking system helps them, particularly at KS 4.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The school needs to consider procedures, including risk assessing the open access points to the school building. In discussion with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. 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 almost all of the teachers, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Health and Safety

There is open access to the site, school buildings and mobile classrooms.

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