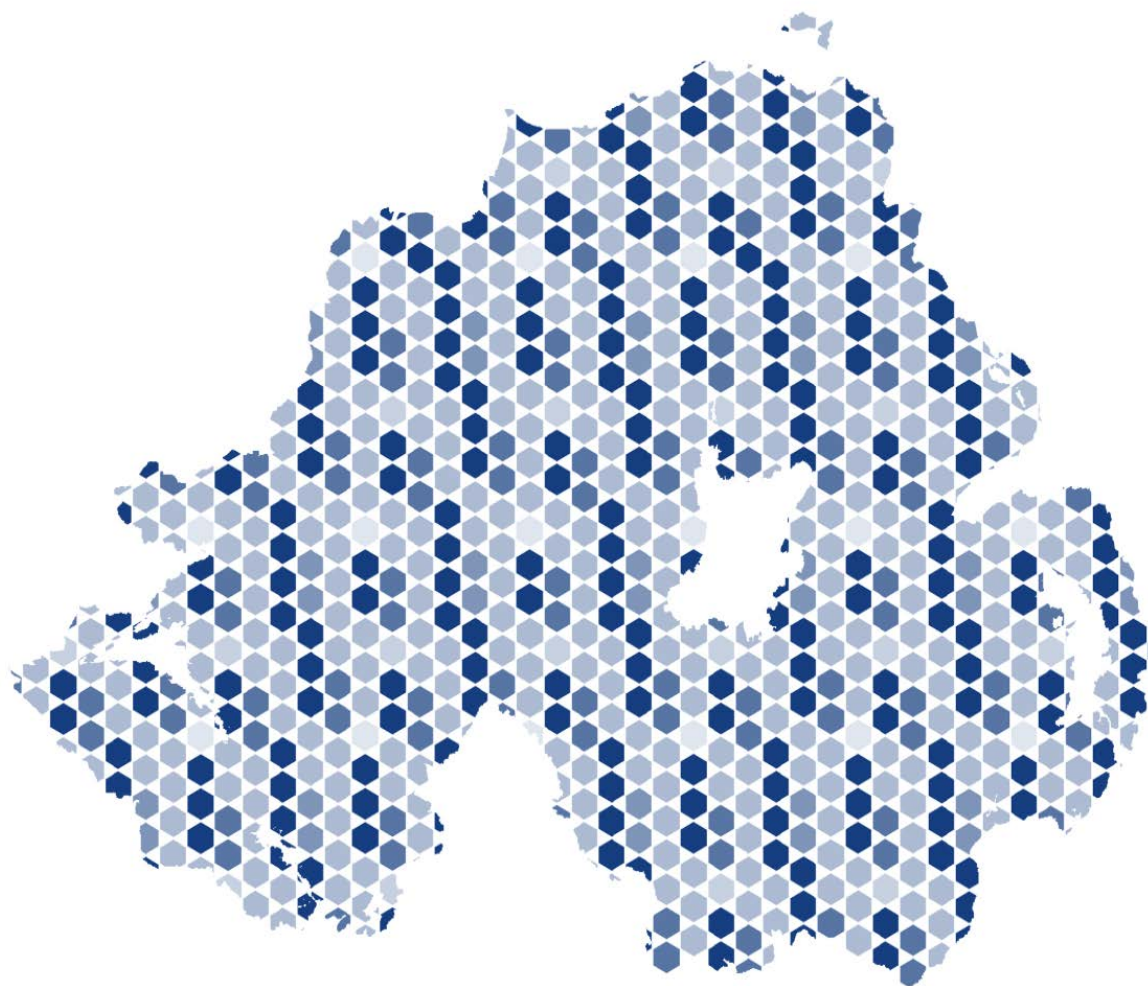


# Education and Training Inspectorate

## POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



### St Colman's High School and Sixth Form College, Ballynahinch County Down

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-18 school DE Ref No (423-0161)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

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Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
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# **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Colman's High School and Sixth Form College, Ballynahinch, County Down (423-0161)**

## **Introduction**

St Colman's High School and Sixth Form College took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection in May 2016. Since the last inspection, there have been some changes in the management structure of the school; the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been reviewed to align more closely to the school development plan. The enrolment in the school has increased by around 20% in the last four years and currently stands at just under 500 pupils; post-16 provision includes a transition year programme at year 13. The school has continued to develop its links with other post-primary schools, including through the shared education partnership and the Ballynahinch area learning community.

A sustaining improvement inspection was conducted in September 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 members of the senior leadership team 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 inspection focused on evaluating 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 inspection were the school's actions to:

- develop the provision for literacy and numeracy across the school, in order to improve the pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics at GCSE level; and
- support learning and teaching through the further development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

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**

- The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalents at grades A\*-C has increased steadily over the last three years and has remained well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools<sup>1</sup>; when English and mathematics are included, the proportion achieving has improved since the previous inspection and in the last two years has been above the NI average for similar schools.

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<sup>1</sup> In the same Free School Meals band.

- The school uses effectively a range of performance data and other information to identify low- and under-achievement and puts in place a wide range of interventions to support the development of the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school's internal data demonstrates that these interventions are contributing to the improved outcomes at Key Stage 4.
- The school provides every pupil in key stages 3 and 4 with a personal tablet. In discussion with the inspectors, pupils reported that having these devices support their learning, team-working and organisational skills. Feedback from last year's school's survey of year 8 pupils and their parents/carers indicates that the personal tablets are impacting positively on the pupils' learning.
- The ICT development team is focused on the use of ICT to support learning and teaching, including through the provision of staff development, courses for parents and the development of an e-learning platform across all subjects and key stages.
- The inspectors met with representatives of the school council who spoke very positively about their experiences including the learning and pastoral support provided by the staff and the opportunities for pupils to represent others, express their views, and bring about tangible change to aspects of school life.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

## **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils reported that they feel safe and happy in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, 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 the action short of strike being taken by most of 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.

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