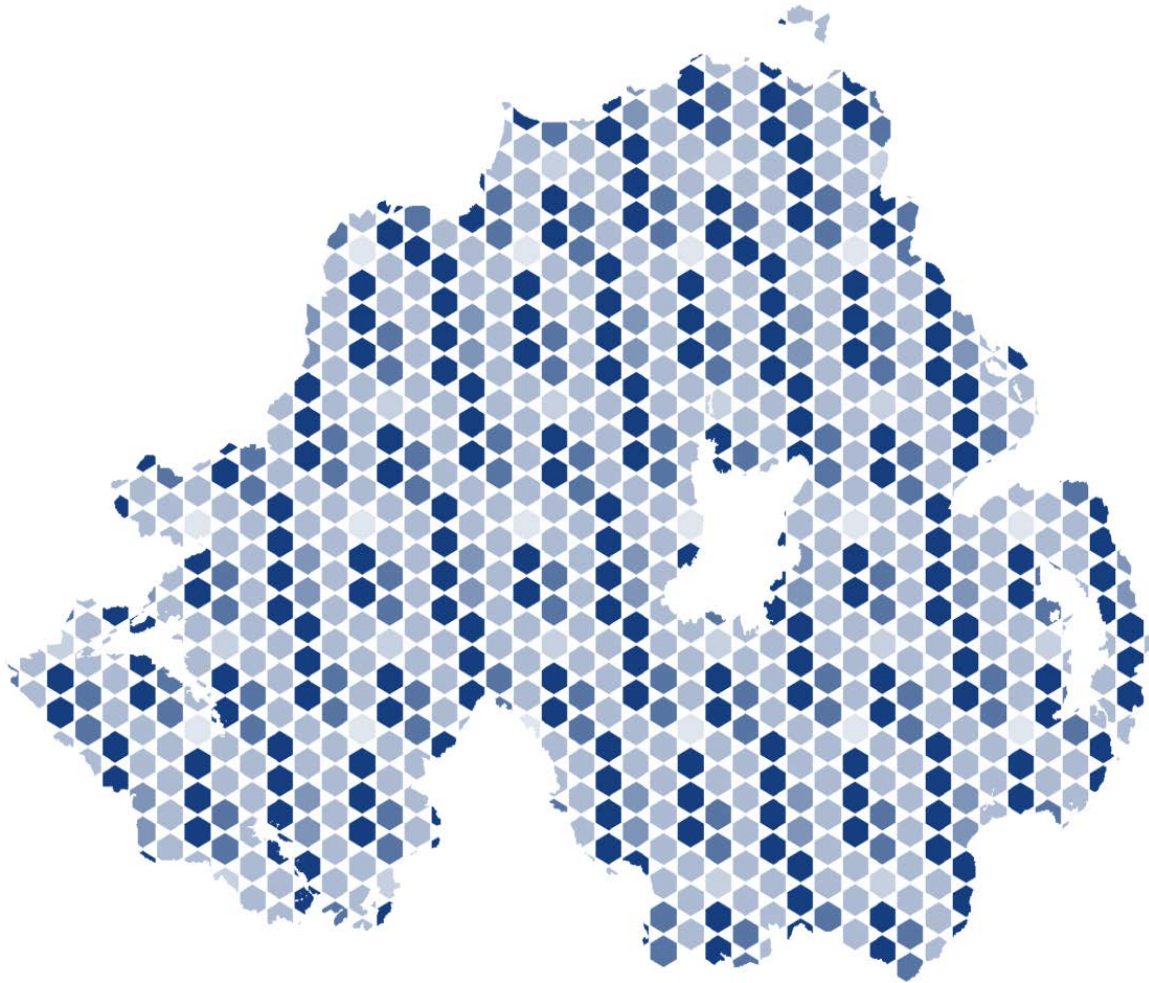


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Victoria College, Belfast

11-18, all-girls, voluntary, selective school (142-0264)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Victoria College, Belfast (142-0264)

Introduction

The previous inspection in November 2015¹ evaluated the overall effectiveness of Victoria College as demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

In the interim period, a new vice-principal has been appointed, there has been a review of roles and responsibilities at senior and middle leadership and significant changes to accommodation which include: a new sports hall, refurbishments to two science laboratories and a new art and design purpose-built space. More recently in November 2018, a new principal has been appointed. A sustaining improvement inspection (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 principal, vice-principal and the assistant principal 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:

- address significant variation in the standards attained by the pupils across the subject departments at GCSE A*-B; and
- further develop the planning for learning, in particular differentiation, to better meet the needs and abilities of all the pupils.

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

- Since the last inspection there has been a focus at all key stages on tracking pupil progress through the use of internal assessments and external standardised tests. This work needs to continue with an emphasis on the consistency of whole school target setting to support the raising of the pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage (KS) 4. There remains, however, a significant variation in the standards attained by the pupils across the subject departments at GCSE A*-B and this is a key priority for improvement.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-victoria-college-belfast.pdf>

- For two of the past three years, the outcomes at KS 4 were in line with the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. However, in 2018 the proportion of pupils attaining seven GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C including English and mathematics was significantly below the NI average for similar schools.
- The curriculum review in recent years has led to a small number of modifications to the offer at KS4 and post-16. It would be important that the school continues to keep under review the curriculum offer, including the currency and career progression of the qualifications offered.
- Since the last inspection, the continued whole school focus on planning for learning includes: signposting of differentiation within schemes of work; dissemination of classroom practice across departments and continued professional development for all staff. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate the impact of further developing the planning for learning, and in particular differentiation.
- All of the pupils who met with the inspectors value the support and guidance they receive from their teachers to progress their learning and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. 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. 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 almost all 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.

APPENDIX

Health and Safety

1. There is limited disabled access within and across the school sites.
2. The lift is not of adequate size for wheelchair use on the senior campus.

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