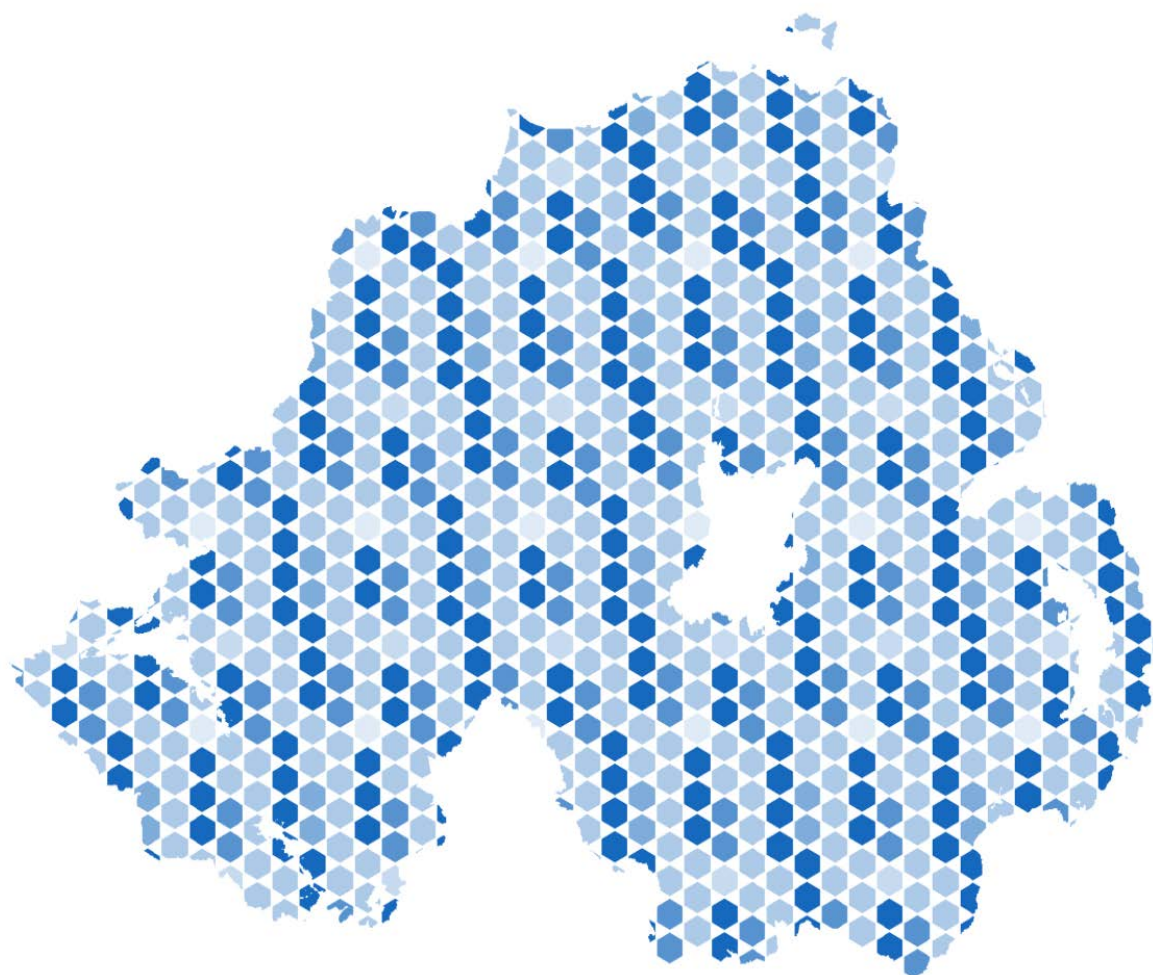


SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Mitchell House School,
Belfast

Report of a Sustaining
Improvement Inspection
in November 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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CUSTOMER
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Mitchell House School, Belfast (131-0016)

Introduction

The previous inspection in November 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Mitchell House School as a school demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. In the interim there have been changes in the senior leadership team and teaching staff. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 5 November 2018.

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 areas of focus during the SII were:

- the further development of pupil assessment procedures; and
- the development of the curriculum to meet the complex learning needs of the pupils.

Key findings

- In Mitchell House School, there is strong evidence of highly effective leadership leading to a revision of the assessment system and associated tools and resources used throughout the school. The information gathered has led to more focused differentiated activities, effective individual withdrawal support where required, and the collation of evidence of increased pupil engagement and progression.
- The curriculum has been developed further to meet the increasingly wide range of complex pupil needs through; a well-informed re-organisation of teaching arrangements, including literacy and numeracy in base classes for pupils in key stage 3; a key stage 4 class for pupils with complex physical, social and learning needs; dual placements with mainstream schools for a minority of pupils; and a wider range of appropriate accreditation opportunities for senior pupils.

Safeguarding

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

Conclusion

Mitchell House School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Accommodation

Whilst the health and safety issues raised in the 2015 inspection report have been addressed, the following accommodation issues remain, and impact significantly on the pupil's educational experiences.

1. The accommodation has a negative impact on the development of the curriculum. The small classrooms restrict the free movement of pupils using wheelchairs, standing frames and other apparatus. The hall, located in the old residential building, can only be used by small numbers of pupils in wheelchairs, making circulation and free movement very difficult, consequently the use of the hall for physical education is very limited. The hall is too small for an assembly or special event and unfit for purpose.
2. The narrow and restricted corridors and steep ramps are difficult for pupils with limited mobility particularly for those in wheelchairs. There are very limited facilities for the storage of wheelchairs and other essential equipment.
3. The old residential section of the school building requires constant repair and ongoing maintenance with single glazed windows. Some of the windows are ill fitting and have poor insulation properties resulting in additional expense in heating the school building.
4. The covered walkways that provide access to external mobile classrooms are not weather resistant and staff report that in inclement weather pupils in wheelchairs and those with restricted mobility have great difficulty accessing the numerous classrooms that are outside and separate from the main school building.
5. The school has very restricted indoor and outdoor play space.

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