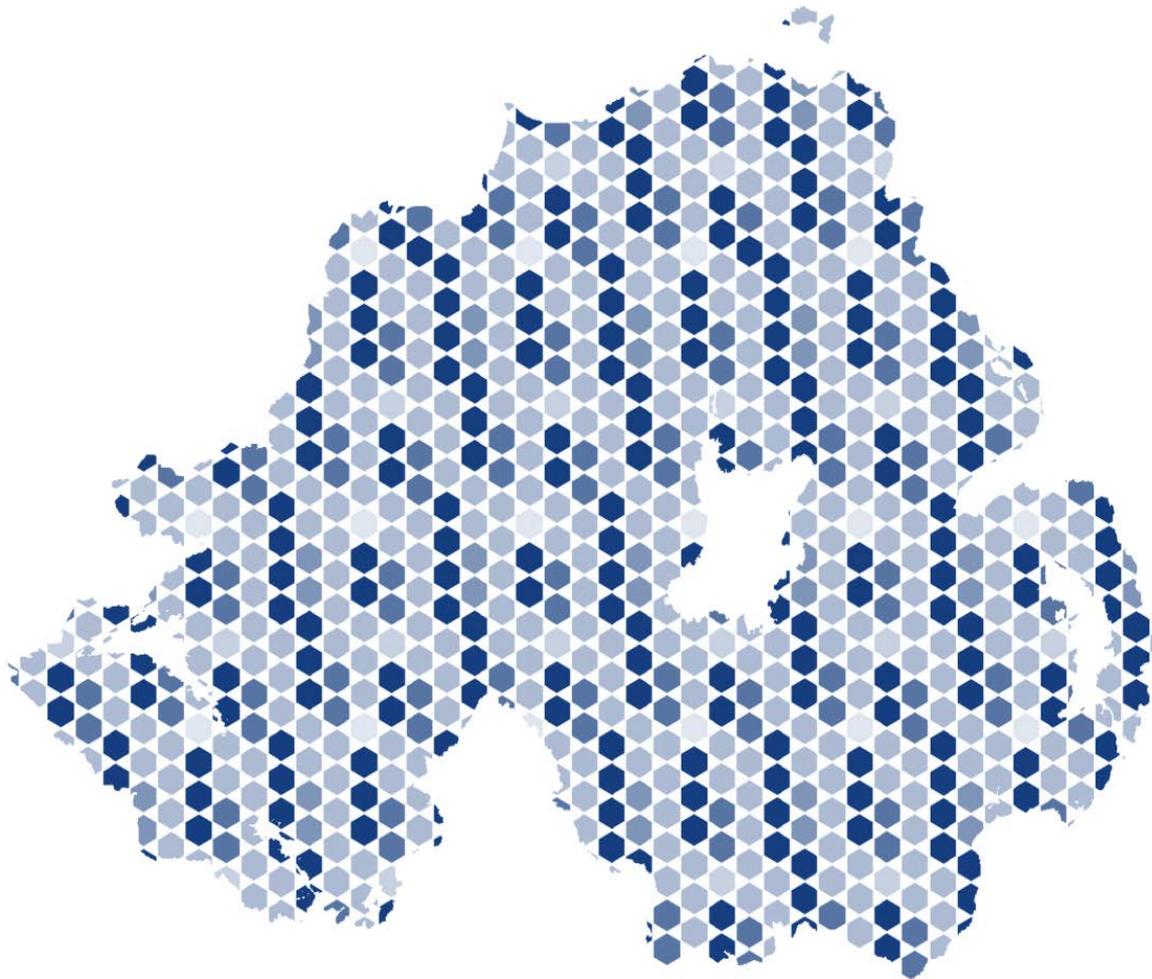


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's High School, Newry, County Down

11-18, all-girls', maintained, non-selective school DE ref no (523-0108)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of S trike) in January 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 St Mary's High School, Newry (523-0108)

Introduction

The previous inspection in October 2015¹ evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's High School as demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in January 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 only members of the senior leadership team (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 line of inquiry during the SII was the school's actions to:

- develop middle leadership to impact positively on learning, teaching and on the outcomes achieved by all learners.

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 line of inquiry.

Key findings

- The well-focused, continuing improvement work in the school is led effectively by the senior leadership team. Central to this work are the pupils and a focus on the provision of a curriculum and quality learning experiences that match their needs and ability. This links appropriately to the school's mission statement "always to do one's best" and is reflected in the pupils' positive attitude to learning.
- The school has an embedded, robust culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. There is an appropriate focus on the development of middle leadership. The evidence provided demonstrates a well-tailored staff development programme with an emphasis on creating a consistent approach to learning and teaching; this has impacted positively on the outcomes the pupils achieve. Pupils from across the key stages who met with inspectors spoke with enthusiasm about their enjoyment of learning across their subject areas.

¹ https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/post-primary-inspection-st-marys-high-school-newry_0.pdf

- The outstanding results achieved by the pupils in public examinations at Key Stage 4 have been sustained. At GCSE, nearly all of the pupils attain five or more examinations at GCSE or equivalent level at grades A*-C; the majority of the pupils attain five or more GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics. The attainment at GCSE is consistently well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools in the same free schools meals band. At post-16 the majority of pupils attain 3 A level grades or equivalent at grades A*-C; this is well above the NI average for similar schools in the same free schools meals band.
- The pupils who met with the inspectors are very proud of and loyal to their school. They spoke very positively about their experiences in school and in particular: the help, support and guidance they receive from their teachers; the high expectations set for them; the opportunities they have to develop leadership skills through the school councils, mentoring programmes and the ambassador scheme; and, their enjoyment of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

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 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 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.

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