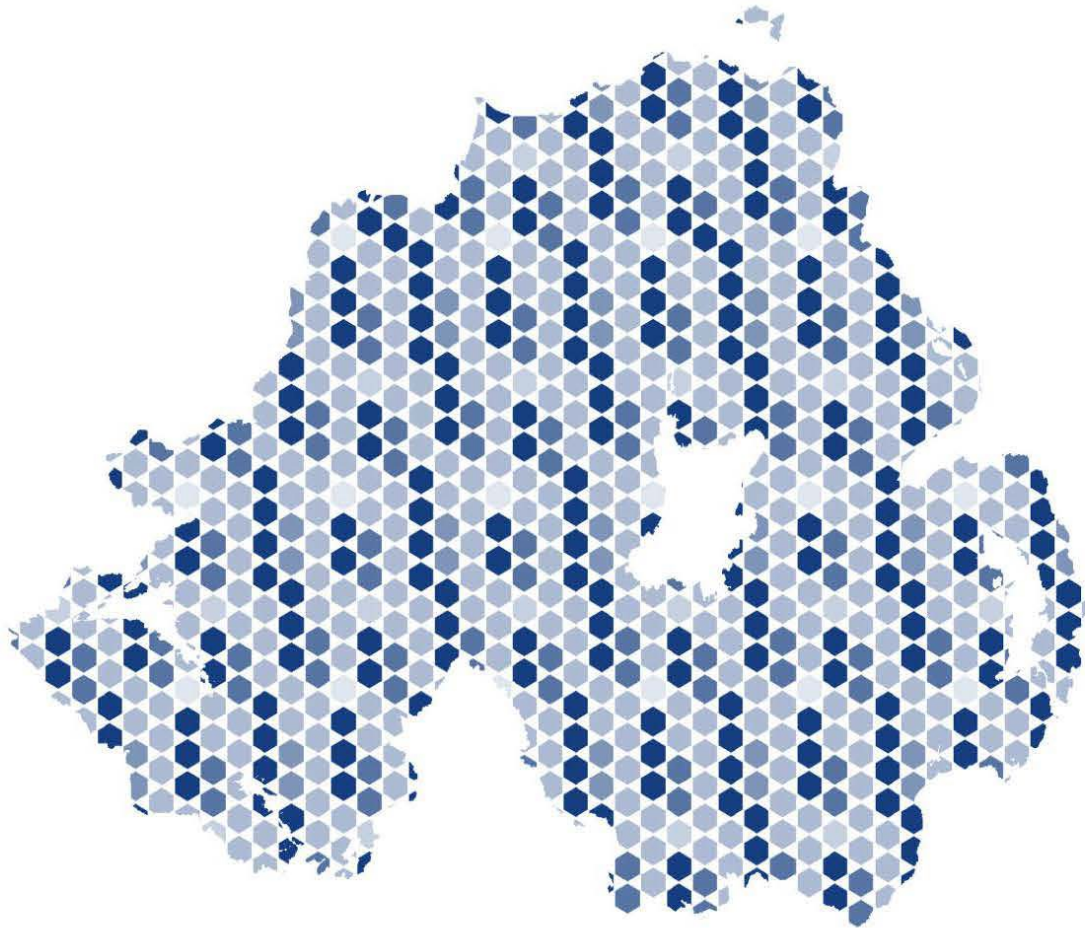


Education and Training Inspectorate POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Cookstown High School, Cookstown, County Tyrone

11-18, co-educational, all-ability non-selective school DE Ref No: 521-0230

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in
November 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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1. Context

Cookstown High School attracts its pupils from the town and the wider area; its provision includes a learning support centre, with a current enrolment of 28 pupils. The school is an active member of the Cookstown and Dungannon Area Learning Community and collaborates very closely with the neighbouring maintained post-primary school through its shared education partnership. A new principal was appointed in September 2018.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute, and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspection. The governors and most of the senior leadership co-operated with the inspection in relation to leadership and safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the standards of education and professional practice among teachers 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.

2. Pupils', parents' and staff questionnaire responses

Sixty-eight percent of the pupils responded to the online questionnaire; all of the responses were from key stage (KS) 3 and KS4. Overall, the responses were positive with most of the pupils indicating that they feel safe and cared for in school, are supported by their teachers and are making progress in their work. A minority of pupils indicated that they would welcome further opportunities to learn with pupils from other schools.

Cookstown High School	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Year 8 Intake	129		139		129		134	
Total Enrolment	787		778		796		810	
Attendance (NI Average*)		92.5 (91.8)		91.6 (91.9)		91.2 -		N/A -
Free School Meal Entitlement	188	23.89	187	24.04	190	23.87	196	24.20
Pupils on SEN Register	145	18.42	124	15.94	146	18.34	148	18.27
No of Pupils with Statements	31		41		50		53	
No of Newcomer Pupils	19		18		19		7	

* Northern Ireland Statistic & Research Agency: Attendance at grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools: Detailed Statistics - 2017/18, 2018/19

N/A: Not available.

Nineteen percent of the parents responded to the online questionnaire; these responses were, in the main, positive. Overall, most of the parents are happy with their child's experience in school. In the written comments, parents highlighted their satisfaction with their child's progress, the work of the leadership and the staff and the range of learning experiences including extra-curricular activities.

Sixteen percent of the staff responded to the online questionnaire. Both the teaching and support staff responses reflected positively on the staff development opportunities.

Individual concerns raised through the pupils', parents' and staff questionnaire responses have been discussed with the principal and representatives from the board of governors.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the learners;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on technology and design in this inspection.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the provision and the overall outcomes for the pupils;
- the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards;
- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, and technology and design; and
- the quality and impact of the provision for care, welfare and support of the pupils.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they have been reported in the body of the report.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

5. Outcomes for learners

- The pupils who met with the inspectors were polite, respectful and articulate. They engaged readily in conversations about their experiences of school life. The older pupils reported that the school provides numerous opportunities for them to take on leadership roles; they reflected maturely on how these develop their wider skills such as communication, organisation and teamwork.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils, including for those pupils with free school meal entitlement, attaining five or more GCSE qualifications (including equivalents) at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased from in line with, to above, the Northern Ireland (NI) average (for schools in the same free school (FSM) meal band). Over the same period, the proportion of pupils attaining any five GCSEs (including equivalents) at grades A* to C has remained consistently in line with the NI average.
- Most of the subjects at GCSE grades A* to C are performing in line with, or above, the corresponding NI subject averages (in those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages).
- Just over two-thirds of the pupils attain seven or more GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. However there continues to be a gap between the GCSE outcomes for boys and girls, with girls having significantly outperformed boys in 2019. The school has put in place a number of strategies to improve further the boys' performance.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A level qualifications (including equivalents) at grades A* to C has improved from 68.1% in 2017 to 81.1% in 2019 and is now well above the NI average (for schools in the same free school (FSM) meal band).
- Most of the A level subjects are performing in line with, or above, their corresponding NI subject averages (in those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages).
- Most of the school leavers progress to further education, higher education or employment. Over the past three years, most of the pupils in year 13 progressed to year 14, after which the majority progressed to further or higher education courses.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the standards attained by the pupils in English and literacy; mathematics and numeracy; and design and technology;
- the progression in the pupils' learning; and
- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The pupils from all key stages spoke positively about their learning across the curriculum and explained how they are supported by the staff. The pupils expressed their appreciation of the extra-curricular learning experiences; in particular, they highlighted the wide range of sporting opportunities.
- The school's subject offer at Key Stage (KS) 4 and post-16 meets the entitlement framework. A wide range of academic and vocational subjects are offered at KS 4 and post-16 in collaboration with the further education college and partner schools in the Cookstown and Dungannon Area Learning Community.
- The provision for careers is delivered through the employability strand of Learning for Life and Work at KS 3 and KS 4, with an additional discrete period of careers from year 10 onwards. The pupils talked about how they benefit from research into potential career pathways and undertaking work experience in KS 4 and in year 13.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the impact of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching and assessment in promoting learning;
- the quality or overall impact of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provision;
- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and technology and design across the school; and,
- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team has been restructured in recent years; members work collegially and support one another well in carrying out their clearly defined roles and responsibilities. There are agreed systems in place to link with middle leaders and governors, underpinning lines of accountability.

- The school development plan sets out clear priorities which focus on improving further the learning and teaching experiences provided for, and outcomes attained by, the pupils. The plan is informed by the analysis of a range of internal and external data and consultation with all stakeholders. Across the subjects, there is a consistent approach to data analysis and action planning. The school's improvement work is supported by a varied and creative programme of staff development.
- The leadership reports that collaborative working within the Cookstown and Dungannon Area Learning Community, together with support from the Education Authority, is impacting positively on school development.
- The governors have a broad range of skills and experience, which they use to good effect to support school improvement. They are well-informed about the priorities for development and provide appropriate levels of challenge and support. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness and impact of the senior leadership of the school;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

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

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by 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.

Health and safety/Accommodation

The school has identified a small number of health and safety/accommodation matters which are currently being progressed with the relevant stakeholders.

APPENDIX B

Examination performance and other statistical data

Data Year 12 performance

GCSE and GCSE Equivalent Subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE and Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98.36	98.36	93.81
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	79.51	81.97	78.35
<i>The NI average for non-grammar schools in the same FSM band*</i>	81.8	82	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	60.66	61.48	68.04
<i>The NI average for non-grammar schools in the same FSM band*</i>	61.4	62.8	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	90.98	92.62	86.6
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to FSM achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A - C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	38.24	41.38	57.89

* Median for each year from the Department of Education benchmarking Quartiles for non-grammar schools in the same FSM band.

[BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2016/17](#)

[BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2017/18](#)

Year 12 GCSE (including equivalent) examination outcomes

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	122	122	97

(The three average is expressed as a percentage of the pupils entered)

Subject	Number of Entries over three years	School Three-year average A* to C	Northern Ireland Three-year average A* to C
Agriculture (GCSE/FC_SA1)	24	45.8	62.3
Art & Design (GCSE/FC_3510)	49	73.5	75.0
Astronomy (GCSE/FC_RE1)	*	100.0	N/A
Biology (GCSE/FC_1010)	233	89.3	81.2
Business Studies (GCSE/FC_3210)	85	72.1	62.4
Chemistry (GCSE/FC_1110)	131	80.9	76.7
Computer Architecture/Systems BTNG/C12_CJ3)	75	90.8	N/A
Computer Use (NVQ/L2_CN1)	*	100.0	N/A
D&T Graphic Products (NQF/L2_9030)	2	100.0	N/A
Design and Technology (GCSE/FC_8900)	96	84.4	70.9
Engineering (BTNG/C12_XA1)	57	98.3	N/A
English Language (GCSE/FC_5030)	338	72.3	68.6
English Literature (GCSE/FC_5110)	20	95.0	84.1
French (GCSE/FC_5650)	53	92.5	71.5
Geography (GCSE/FC_3910)	120	87.5	64.1
German (GCSE/FC_5670)	14	92.9	N/A
Government and Politics (GCSE/FC_4830)	*	100.0	N/A
Health Studies(BTNG/C12_PA1)	60	96.7	N/A
History (GCSE/FC_4010)	118	72.0	63.4
Home Economics (GCSE/FC_3310)	113	86.7	68.4
Information Technology (GCSE/FC_2650)	139	75.5	71.6
Mathematics (GCSE/FC_2210)	340	72.7	53.5
Mathematics Further (GCSE/FC_2330)	47	93.6	86.1
Music (GCSE/FC_7010)	26	76.9	78.7
OS: Business (COA/B_OS01)	*	100.0	N/A
OS: Construction (COA/B_OS02)	*	100.0	N/A
OS: Design (COA/B_OS03)	12	91.7	N/A
OS: Engineering (COA/B_OS04)	*	77.8	N/A
OS: Technology (COA/B_OS06)	*	87.5	N/A
Personal Health (NQF/L2_HJ1)	22	100.0	N/A
Physics (GCSE/FC_1210)	119	90.8	89.5
Preparation For Work / PSE (GCSE/FC_4810)	31	34.4	73.5
Religious Studies (GCSE/FC_4610)	109	93.6	67.8
Science Single Award (GCSE/FC_1310)	70	41.4	69.5
Spanish (GCSE/FC_5750)	30	90.0	82.4
Sport/PE Studies (GCSE/FC_7210)	55	69.1	72.4
Travel and Tourism (BTEC/FCE_NK1)	*	80.0	N/A

* Indicates fewer than 10 entries over 3 years.

Data Year 14 performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of Year 14 taking A levels and Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	88.41	90.48	92.45
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	68.12	71.43	81.13
<i>The NI average for non-grammar schools in the same FSM band*</i>	61.9	68	N/A
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A levels	100	98.41	100

* Median for each year from the Department of Education benchmarking Quartiles for non-grammar schools in the same FSM band.

[BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2016/17](#)

[BENCHMARKING DATA GCSE & Level 3 Post-primary Schools 2017/18](#)

Year 14 A-level (including equivalent) examination outcomes

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	69	63	53

(The three average is expressed as a percentage of the pupils entered)

Subject	Number of Entries over three years	School Three-year average A* to C	Northern Ireland Three-average A* to C
Agriculture (BTEC/SD3_SA1)	*	100.0	N/A
Art & Design (GCE/A_3510)	15	100.0	93.7
Biology (GCE/A_1010)	59	89.8	82.9
Business Studies (GCE/A_3210)	25	92.0	89.1
Chemistry (GCE/A_1110)	26	92.3	88.8
Chinese (GCE/A_5950)	*	100.0	N/A
Computer Use (BTEC/SD3_CN1)	11	100.0	N/A
D&T Product Design (GCE/A_9080)	*	77.8	62.4
Design and Technology (GCE/A_8900)	*	66.7	N/A
Engineering (BTEC/SD3_XA1)	*	100.0	N/A
English Literature (GCE/A_5110)	17	88.2	85.5
French (GCE/A_5650)	*	100.0	92.3
Geography (GCE/A_3910)	17	88.2	86.9
Health Studies (BTEC/DI3_PA1)	32	96.9	N/A
Health Studies (BTEC/SD3_PA1)	23	100.0	N/A
History (GCE/A_4010)	19	89.5	83.6
Home Economics (GCE/A_3310)	39	97.4	N/A
Information Technology (GCE/A_2650)	41	82.9	73.6
IT/Art (GCE/A_8210)	*	100.0	N/A
Mathematics (GCE/A_2210)	50	90.0	88.8
Mathematics Further (GCE/A_2330)	6	100.0	95.5
Multi Media (BTEC/SD3_KA4)	*	100.0	N/A
Music (GCE/A_7010)	*	66.7%	85.4
Performing Arts (BTEC/SD3_LC11)	*	100.0	N/A
Physics (GCE/A_1210)	23	73.9	79.1
Polish (GCE/A_6070)	*	100.0	N/A
Psychology (GCE/A_4850)	*	80.0	70.6
Religious Studies (GCE/A_4610)	36	91.7	88.3
Spanish (GCE/A_5750)	*	66.7	94.3
Sports Studies (BTEC/SD3_MA1)	28	100.0	N/A
Travel and Tourism (BTEC/SD3_NK1)	*	100.0	N/A
Travel and Tourism (NQF/L3_NK1)	*	100.0	N/A

* Indicates fewer than 10 entries over 3 years.

Staying on rate 2018/19

	58.4	NI Av. Year 13	48.7
% Yr13 staying on to Yr14	87.4	NI Av. Year 14	74.2

Leavers' Destinations 2017/18

	NI No & %	School No & %	NI Yr12 No & %	School Yr12 No & %	NI Yr13 No & %	School Yr13 No & %	NI Yr14 No & %	School Yr14 No & %	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 and above (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	11802 100%	132 100%	5547 100%	52 100%	1275 100%	7 100%	4980 100%	73 100%			
Employment	1562 13.2%	15 11.4%	391 7%	7 13.5%	322 25.3%	0 0%	849 17%	8 11%			
Institute of Further Education	5159 43.7%	52 39.4%	3417 61.6%	38 73.1%	588 46.1%	5 71.4%	1154 23.2%	9 12.3%	5	39	8
Institute of Higher Education**	2622 22.2%	44 33.3%	* *	0 0%	* *	0 0%	# #	44 60.3%		0	44
Training***	1823 15.4%	4 3%	1445 26.1%	4 7.7%	209 16.4%		169 3.4%	0 0%			
Unemployment	391 3.3%	1 0.8%	156 2.8%	1 1.9%	90 7.1%		145 2.9%	0 0%			
Others	245 2.1%	16 12.1%	138 2.5%	2 3.8%	# #	2 28.6%	# #	12 16.4%			

Source for NI data: Destination of School Leavers by year group, 2017/18 NON-GRAMMAR SCHOOLS (excludes special and independent schools).

* Fewer than 5 cases.

Figures suppressed.

** Includes universities and teacher training colleges.

*** Numbers entering training include those entering the Training for Success programme, operated by the Department for the Economy. Training on Training for Success is delivered by a range of training providers, including Further Education Colleges. Training for Success trainees who receive training at Further Education Colleges are recorded as being in training and not in Further Education. This convention avoids double counting of Training for Success trainees.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI’s [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework](#) publication is available on the ETI website.

The arrangements for this inspection included: a meeting with representatives from the governors; formal discussions with some pupils (in groups); meetings with most of the senior leadership; a review of documentation and data; and the opportunity for pupils, parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments	Percentage with comments
Pupil	544	67	132	24
Parents	144	18.3	39	27
Teacher	7	11.9	*	*
Support staff	7	22.6	*	*

*fewer than 5 returns

The tabulated SIMS information and the tables for Year 12 and Year 14 examination outcomes in individual subjects have been verified by the school.

GCSE Grading 2019

The Department of Education has indicated there are no plans to change school performance measures at A*-C with the introduction of the new C* grade. For GCSEs graded 9-1 this performance measure will be 9-4. For the ETI, data on performance in public examinations continues to be only one of the measures that contributes to the evaluation of outcomes for learners.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management (and the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable):

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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