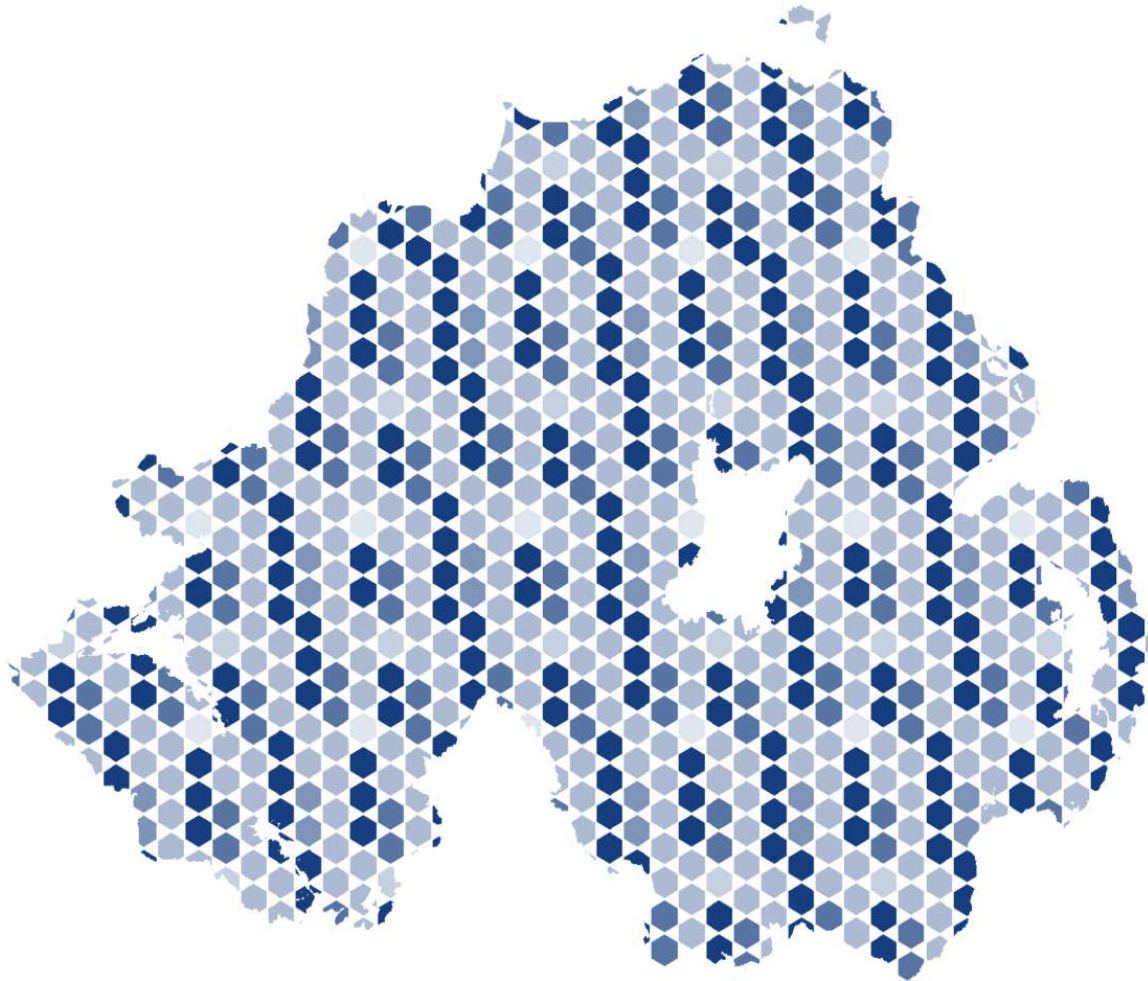# Education and Training Inspectorate
POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

Ballyclare Secondary School, Ballyclare, County Antrim

Controlled, non-selective, 11-18   DE Ref No (321-0134)

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

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INTRODUCTION

1.   Context

The pupils attending Ballyclare Secondary School come from the town and the wider rural catchment area. The enrolment has increased over the past three years; the school is regularly oversubscribed for entry to year 8 and operates at maximum capacity. The senior leadership team has recently been re-structured. The school participate in the local area learning community and has gained externally accredited awards for pupil well-being, business, careers and eco-schools.

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, senior leaders and some support staff 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.

Ballyclare Secondary School	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Year 8 Intake	183	185	186	195
Enrolment	1022	1036	1050	1062
% Attendance (NI Average)	92.9 (92.0%)	93.5 (91.8%)	92.9 (91.9%)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage[1]	21.9	23.5	22.8	23.8
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	30.4 (311)	30.4 (315)	30.4 (319)	28.6 (304)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	23	23	27	46
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as verified by the school.
N/A not available
* fewer than 5

2.   Pupils', parents' and staff questionnaire responses

Twelve percent (131) of the pupils across the key stages completed the online questionnaire. Overall, the majority of the pupils' responses were positive about their experiences in the school and, in particular, about the welcoming and inclusive ethos, the range of subjects to choose from and the feedback from teachers. One-third of the pupils who responded provided written comments sharing their views of school life and their learning experiences.

A small number of parents (8) responded to the online questionnaires. The responses from most of the parents were positive and indicated good levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school, in particular, the good progress their children are making and the appropriate range of subjects available.

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[1] The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

There were no responses to the online questionnaire from the staff.

Issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

3.   Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of a post-primary inspection is to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;

- 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 modern languages 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 modern languages; 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

KEY FINDINGS

5.   Outcomes for learners

- Most of the pupils who met with inspectors were articulate and confident. The senior pupils take on leadership roles and responsibilities which develop their personal, social and employability skills, for example through the student leadership team, the house system and the student forum. Many of them benefit from opportunities to mentor and support the younger pupils through a variety of programmes.

- Overall, the pupils' attainment in public examinations requires improvement at all levels. The senior leaders have identified raising standards as a priority and they are beginning to adapt the curriculum accordingly.

- In the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has improved but remains well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools[2]. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils attaining any five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C has also been well below the corresponding average. The outcomes attained by the pupils in a majority of the subjects at GCSE grades A* to C[3] are in line with, or above, the subject averages; just over one-quarter are more than ten percentage points above these averages.

- In the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A level qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C has fluctuated, but remains well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools[4]. The outcomes attained in a majority of subjects at A level grades A* to C[5] are below the subject averages. It is significant that the outcomes attained in just over one-half of the subjects are more than ten percentage points below.

- The school needs to address urgently the widening gender differential in the outcomes attained by the boys and girls at both GCSE and A level. Over the past three years, approximately half of girls attain seven or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.

- In two of the past three years, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the NI average for similar schools. In this period, the pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning have attained well.

- Over the past three years, pupils from the school have been among the top candidates in NI for GCSE art and design and leisure and tourism and GCE A level moving image art and applied information and communication technology.

- The staying on rates for year 12 into year 13 and for year 13 into year 14 are both below the NI average for similar schools. Of the very few pupils who return in year 13 for a one year level 2 study programme, almost all progress onto employment or further education. In 2017 a majority of the leavers in year 14 progressed to Level 4 at further education and higher education.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the standards attained by the pupils in English and literacy; mathematics and numeracy and modern languages;

- the progression in the pupils' learning; and

- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

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[2] In the same free school meal (FSM) band.
[3] In those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages.
[4] In the same free school meal (FSM) band.
[5] In those subjects for which there are corresponding NI subject averages.

6.   Quality of Provision

- The curriculum across all key stages is broad and balanced. The school has introduced recently new processes for choosing subjects for Key Stage (KS) 4, with the increased flexibility allowing greater access across the current range of courses. The low outcomes achieved by a minority of the pupils at KS 4 indicate that they would benefit from a curriculum which is better matched to their needs, interests and abilities, including access to a wider range of vocational subjects. The school needs to monitor the suitability of the qualifications for all of the pupils as well as the number of subjects that are taken.

- As a result of the ongoing review of the curriculum at post-16, the school has introduced a wider range of level 3 subjects which are focused on better meeting the pupils' needs and career aspirations. The pupils in years 13 and 14 also benefit from a small number of courses offered with a local post-primary school.

- At post-16 there is a coherent approach to careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils from years 13 and 14 demonstrated a good knowledge of the pathways open to them. The school's whole-school evaluation of CEIAG, which involved wide consultation with pupils, parents and staff has identified where the provision at KS 3 and KS 4 can be improved.

- Work experience placements are available to all year 12 pupils and strong links with local businesses provide a range of real-life experiences across the key stages focused on developing the pupils' employability and entrepreneurial skills.

- The discrete pastoral teams and the school-based care team meet regularly to review the provision for the pupils, particularly for those who require additional help in aspects of their learning, and put programmes of support in place for them. Regular tracking of the pupils' progress informs the planned interventions and support programmes; these pupils are supported very well at key transition points to ensure that their choices for the next stage of their learning are informed and appropriate. The pastoral staff have been particularly successful in sustaining consistent levels of pupil attendance.

- In discussions with inspectors, the pupils spoke positively about the academic and pastoral support they receive. They spoke with enthusiasm about their learning across the curriculum and are appreciative of how the teachers help them to improve their work. The pupils value the opportunities to participate in a range of sporting, eco, cultural and charitable activities.

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;

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- the quality or overall impact of the CEIAG provision;

- the quality of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and modern languages across the school; and,

- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- The recently re-structured senior leadership team has adopted a collegial approach to the improvement work; this work needs to be sharply focused on raising standards at KS 4 and post-16, informed by more robust analysis of the internal quantitative and qualitative data alongside the relevant NI benchmarks. The continuing professional development of staff is aligned closely with the priorities in the school development plan. The school has prioritised training in autism and dyslexia for the special educational needs co-ordinator, the learning support staff and all the teachers.

- The school development planning process is informed by consultation with all stakeholders. While there is an increased emphasis on self-evaluation across the school, the quality of the evaluation and subsequent action-planning is variable. In a majority of action plans, the targets, actions and success criteria are not clearly enough defined, so it is difficult to measure progress. In order to take forward the necessary improvement work, it will be important for the senior leaders to identify and disseminate the best practice in action-planning.

- The governors are highly committed to the school and work pro-actively in the areas of finance and staffing; they have dealt with a high number of challenging staffing issues. The governors support the introduction of initiatives, including strong links with local businesses, to enhance the pupils' progress and to extend the curriculum. More rigorous, better-informed monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' outcomes in public examinations, complemented by robust and ongoing review of the curricular provision are essential if the governors are to support more effectively the senior leaders in the necessary raising of standards. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in those 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 (DE). The school is reviewing its pastoral policies in line with current DE guidance. 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.

CONCLUSION

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

1. The safety of the pupils and staff is compromised by the pedestrian and vehicle entrances. These are side by side, with no safety barrier between the vehicles and pedestrians during the movement of traffic in and out of school during the school day.

2. The safety and well-being of the pupils and staff is compromised as a result of:

    - the access arrangements to the mobiles; and

    - the numbers of pupils accessing the canteen at lunch time as, despite operating split lunch arrangements, there remains a lack of space in the canteen and furthermore it does not have wheelchair access.

3. The school needs to ensure that all appropriate risk assessments are in place and implemented with appropriate risk reduction measures.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2015-16 to 2017-18

Based on data held by the school in SIMS[6] and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Ballyclare Secondary School achieving five or more GCSE examinations and equivalent at grades A* to C and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band[7].

The table also includes the percentage of year 12 pupils in Ballyclare Secondary School achieving five or more GCSE examinations and equivalent, including English and mathematics at grades A* to E. In this instance, there is no NI average available.

*GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions*	*2015-16*	*2016-17*	*2017-18*
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98.8	100	97.7
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	60.5	57.4	61.1
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band[8]	*75.8*	*81.8*	*N/A*
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	*37*	*46.9*	46.3
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band	*56.6*	*61.4*	*N/A*
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	*92*	*90.7*	93.1
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	*38.5*	*30.3*	*40.6*

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[6] SIMS: School Information Management System
[7] See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.
[8] The benchmarking bands for 2015/16, as set in in Circular 2017/8 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' are different to those used in preceding years; therefore, trend comparisons with previous years' benchmarking data need to be treated with caution.

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2015-16 to 2017-18

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in Ballyclare Secondary School achieving three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C, compared with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band.

GCE A Level or equivalent	*2015-16*	*2016-17*	*2017-18*
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	99.4	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	44.9	37.5	51.9
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals band[9]	*56.1*	*61.9*	N/A

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[9] The benchmarking bands for 2015/16, as set in in Circular 2017/8 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' are different to those used in preceding years; therefore, trend comparisons with previous years' benchmarking data need to be treated with caution.

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level or equivalent

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

Grades A* - C

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	162	162	175

GCSE Subject or equivalent	Number of Entries	School A* to C%	NI A* to C%
Agriculture	22	72.7	61.6
Art & Design	84	88.1	75.8
Business Studies	74	75.7	60.7
Business Studies (Occupational Studies)	30	96.7	N/A
Carpentry & Joinery (Occupational Studies)	81	93.8	N/A
Design and Technology	165	69.1	70.5
Drama	*	100	78.1
English Language	499	57.5	67.5
English Literature	58	86.2	84.5
Food Preparation (Occupational Studies)	54	100	N/A
French	85	78.8	74.9
Geography	130	52.3	64.8
History	132	59.8	65.0
Home Economics	66	84.8	67.7
Home Economics: Child Development	103	75.7	70.0
Horticulture (Occupational Studies)	43	72.1	N/A
Horse Care (NQF)	*	100	N/A
Horse Care (BTEC)	*	100	N/A
Information Technology	105	81.0	71.5
Leisure & Tourism	55	76.4	54.3
Learning for Life and Work	39	57.1	74.1
Mathematics	498	58.6	52.7
Mathematics Further	29	69.0	84.8
Media Studies	140	58.6	65.4
Motor Vehicle Studies	58	36.2	52.3
Music	27	92.6	81.3
Office Technology	34	61.8	62.8
Performing Arts	37	51.4	54.3
Polish	*	100	N/A
Religious Studies	190	84.7	65.1
Science Double Award	235	82.1	83.4
Science Single Award	216	66.7	70.0
Sport/PE Studies	42	92.9	70.1
Sport/PE Studies (NQF)	*	100	N/A

* indicates fewer than 10 entries over 3 years

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level or equivalent (over the past three years)

Grades A* - C

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	49	56	54

GCE Subject or equivalent	Number of Entries	School A* to C%	NI A* to C%
Accounting/Finance	11	81.8	74.1
Art & Design	14	100	94.7
Biology	29	34.5	82.7
Business Studies	21	81.0	91.0
Chemistry	*	22.2	88.9
Childcare Skills (BTEC)	*	100	N/A
Design & Technology: Product Design	26	53.8	67.8
Engineering	*	75.0	N/A
English Literature	26	65.4	84.6
French	*	75.0	90.8
Geography	15	86.7	87.4
Health & Social Care	35	94.3	86.8
Health & Social Care (Double Award)	16	93.8	78.4
History	24	50.0	84.4
Home Economics	14	42.9	89.9
Information Technology	26	100	77.1
IT/Art (Moving Image Art)	12	100	N/A
Mathematics	12	25.0	88.6
Media Film & TV Studies	27	92.6	84.8
Music	*	60.0	87.7
Performing Arts	*	100	N/A
Performing Arts (Vocational)	*	100	86.1
Religious Studies	33	81.8	88.8
Life and Health Science (Vocational)	13	30.8	68.9
Sport Organisation (NQF)	*	100	N/A
Sport/PE Studies	10	40.0	77.8
Sport/PE Studies (BTEC)	13	61.5	N/A
Travel & Tourism	21	95.2	78.9
Travel & Tourism (Double Award)	*	100	N/A

* indicates fewer than 10 entries over 3 years

STAYING ON RATE[10] 2017/18

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at school compared with the NI average for all schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	49.5	40.6
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	74.2	64.0

Leavers' Destinations[11] 2016/17

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from this school who leave school to enter employment, further education, higher education, and training or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-grammar schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI No.(%)	School No.(%)	NI Yr12 (%)	School Yr12 (%)	NI Yr13 (%)	School Yr13 (%)	NI Yr14 (%)	School Yr14 (%)	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	12256	248		176		18		54			
Employment	1497 (12.2%)	40 (16.1%)	6.7%	19 (10.8%)	21.9%	*	12.2%	17 (31.4%)			
Institute of Further Education	5512 (45.0%)	142 (57.2%)	60.9%	122 (69.3%)	49.2%	10 (55.5%)	45.0%	10 (18.5%)	*	92	28
Institute of Higher Education[12]	2652 (21.6%)	35 (14.1%)	*	11 (6.3%)	*	*	21.6%	24 (44.4%)	0	0	11
Training[13]	1924 (15.7%)	18 (7.25%)	28.0%	13 (7.4%)	17.9%	*	15.7%	*			
Unemployment	448 (3.7%)	* (2.01%)	2.7%	*	6.4%	*	3.7%	*			
-Others	223 (1.8%)	# (3.22%)	#	#	#	*	1.8%	*			

Source for NI data: Destination of School Leavers by year group, 2016/17 - NON-GRAMMAR SCHOOLS[14]
- *fewer than 5 cases
- # figures suppressed

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[10] The percentage of pupils who stay on at school compared with the Northern Ireland average for all schools, this rate is calculated in terms of pupils who progress their level of study, whether at their original or a new school. Pupils that move schools between years are counted as 'staying on' at their original school as they are progressing their study within the school system.

[11] Destination is defined by Institution. Institutions may provide courses at both Further and Higher Education levels.

[12] Includes universities and teacher training colleges.

[13] 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.

[14] Excludes special and independent schools.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication, which is available at: http://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Post-Primary.

The arrangements for this inspection included: meetings with the principal, meetings with some staff with specific responsibilities, support staff; representatives from the governors and groups of pupils; review of documentation and data; and the opportunity for all pupils, parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

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[15]:

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

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[15] And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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.