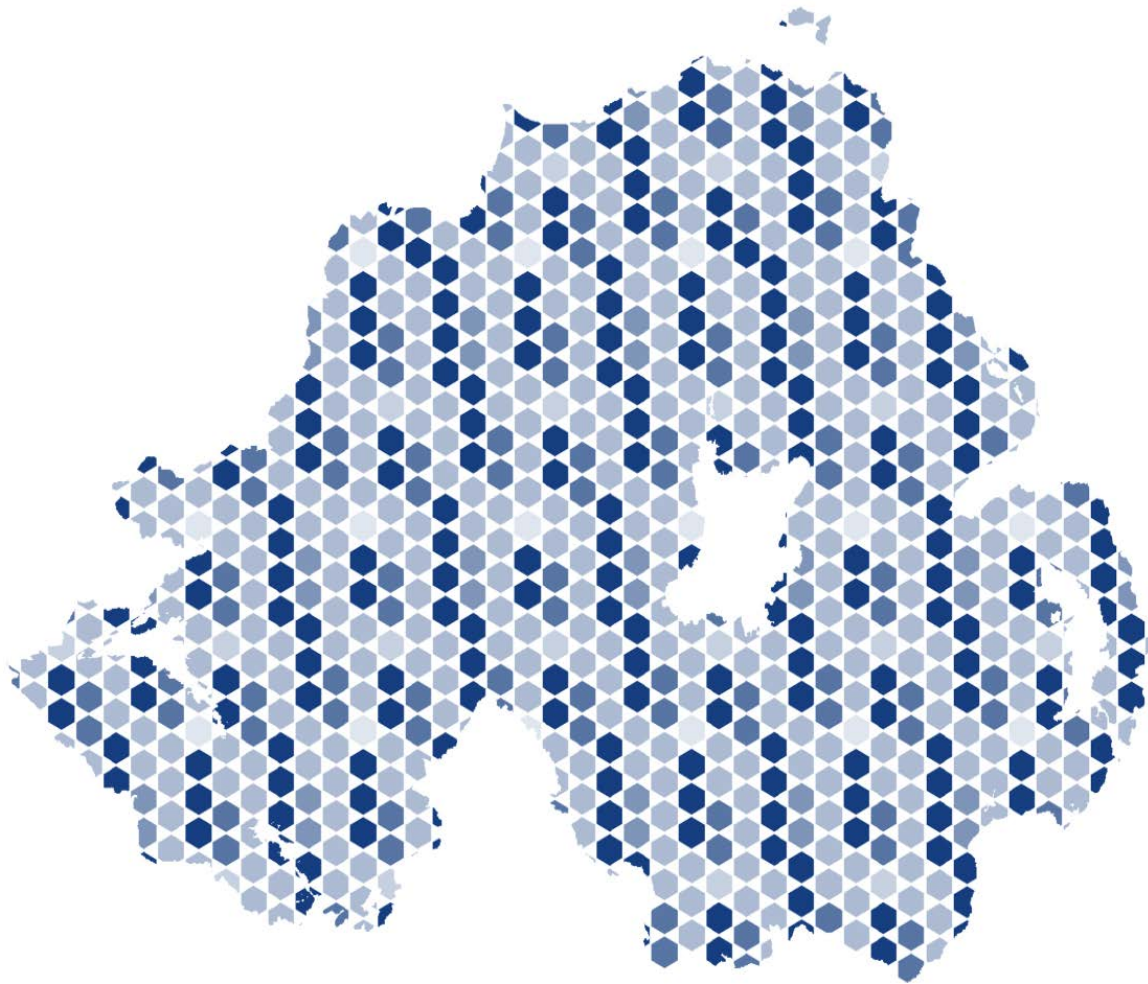


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Holy Cross College, Strabane,  
County Tyrone

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection (Involving  
Action Short of Strike) in  
February 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



# CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Context	1
2. Views of parents and staff	1
3. Focus of the inspection	2
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Safeguarding	5
9. Overall effectiveness	5

## **Appendices**

- A. Examination performance and other statistical data
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Context

Holy Cross College is an 11-18 co-educational, bilateral school. It draws its pupils from a large catchment area, in the wider Strabane and Derry district, which is typically rural in nature and is recognised as an area of high social and economic deprivation. Around 40% of the pupils receive free school meals and just under one-quarter of them require additional help with their learning. Holy Cross College has strong musical, dramatic, artistic and sporting traditions and is an active member of the Derg Mourne Learning Community. There is a well-developed transition programme involving all of the feeder primary 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 only the leadership team would be co-operating with the inspectors. 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.

Holy Cross College	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Year 8 Intake	283	233	279	265
Enrolment	1615	1539	1564	1566
% Attendance (NI Average)	89.7%% (92%)	90.8%% (93.5%)	90.8% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	42.2%	44.5%	42.6%	39.1%
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	22.2% (358)	22.2% (341)	23.0% (359)	24.1% (377)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	69	73	76	69
No. of newcomers	8	11	13	15

**Source:** data as held by the school.

N/A not available

### 2. Views of parents and staff

A very small percentage of parents (15) and 11% of staff (16) responded to the online questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The written comments affirmed, in particular, the caring and supportive learning environment provided for the pupils, the effective transition from primary school into year 8 and the clear channels of communication between home and school. The responses to the staff questionnaires were very positive, highlighting the school's friendly and inclusive ethos and the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer for the pupils. The very few issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

### 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 art 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, mathematics and art and design; and
- the quality and impact of the provision for care, welfare and support of the pupils, including special educational needs.

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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	Unable to assure the quality of education
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	No performance level available
<b>Quality of Provision</b>	No performance level available
<b>Leadership and management</b>	No performance level available

## KEY FINDINGS

### 5. Outcomes for learners

- Almost all of the pupils, who met with inspectors, were articulate and confident. There are significant levels of participation and achievement in a wide range of sporting, musical, cultural and charitable activities. The senior pupils are able to take on various leadership roles and many of them benefit from opportunities to mentor and support the younger pupils as well as attaining accreditation for their work in school and the wider community.

- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band. Whilst most of the subjects at GCSE grades A\* to C and grades A\* to B are in line with or above the corresponding three-year averages for similar schools, the school is working to address the clear gender differential (around 15%) in the outcomes attained between the boys and girls at this level.
- At GCE A Level or equivalent the percentage of pupils attaining at grades A\* to C in at least three subjects has been consistently above the corresponding average for similar schools in the past three years; approximately three-quarters of the subjects are in line with or above the subject average grades A\* to C.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics has been consistently above the NI average for similar schools. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils who require additional support with their learning attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics has been improving from a low base.
- Over the past three years, it is noteworthy that pupils from the school have been among the top candidates in NI for GCSE single award science, art and design and moving image art and GCE A level moving image art.
- The proportion of pupils progressing to higher education courses is nearly double the NI average for non-selective schools.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the standards attained by the pupils in English, mathematics and art and design;
- the progression in the pupils' learning; and
- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

## **6. Quality of Provision**

- The curriculum at all key stages is broad and balanced. Planning for and reviewing of the curriculum is an ongoing priority for the school. Appropriately at Key Stage 4 the school is currently reviewing the range of academic, applied and vocational courses offered to meet more effectively the needs and interests of all of the pupils across the ability range.
- In discussions with inspectors, the pupils expressed their appreciation of: the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) across the key stages; the high quality facilities in the school and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them.

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, learning and assessment in promoting successful 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 art and design across the school; and
- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The extensive consultation process with governors, staff, pupils and parents has been used well to inform the key priorities in the school development plan. The leadership team works collaboratively and is highly committed to improving the learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils. The continuing professional development of staff is aligned closely to the whole-school priorities for improvement.
- There are action plans in place to support the priorities identified through self-evaluation and consultation, however the targets are not specific enough and should be more time-bound and measurable. The school has identified that data could be used more effectively to measure the progress of action plans against the targets.
- The governors are highly supportive of the school and are well informed of the strengths and areas for further development. They have a wide skill set and work proactively in the areas of finance and staffing and have identified that they would like to extend the sub-committees to include curriculum. The governors are developing well their capacity to provide appropriate challenge; they need to continue to promote greater accountability and challenge through a range of first-hand evidence. 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 (DE). There is a need to review aspects of the school's care and welfare policies to ensure they reflect more fully the guidance from the DE. 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.

## Examination performance and other statistical data

### GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2014-15 to 2016-17

Based on data held by the school in SIMS<sup>2</sup> and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Holy Cross College achieving five or more GCSEs (A\* to C and A\* to E) and equivalent subjects, 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<sup>3</sup>.

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98.8	97.4	92.7
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	84	84.6	73.2
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>75.0</i>	<i>76.6</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	47.3	57.5	63.2
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>46.3</i>	<i>45.8</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	97.3	96.6	90
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)	36.3	38.1	50.5

### GCE A level examination results at grades A\* to C from 2014-15 to 2016-17

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 Holy Cross College 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.

<b>GCE A Level or equivalent</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	83.6	84.3	89.7
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	55.1	69.3	56.4
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>45.5</i>	<i>53.3</i>	<i>N/A</i>

<sup>2</sup> SIMS: School Information Management System

<sup>3</sup> See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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 (over the past three years)**

**Grades A\* - C**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	284	260	245

<b>GCSE Subject</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>	<b>School A* to C %</b>	<b>NI A* to C %</b>
Art & Design	143	88.1	76
Business and ICT <sup>6</sup>	59	47.5	N/A
Drama	42	71.4	75
English Language	666	73.7	66
English Literature	268	96.3	85
Engineering Materials	201	76.6	65
French	31	80.6	78
Further Mathematics	70	81.4	86
Geography	134	60.4	63
Health & Social Care	30	56.7	67
History	229	74.7	63
Home Economics: Child Development	76	78.9	68
Information Technology	420	81.7	73
Irish	92	96.7	94
Learning for Life and Work	89	86.5	75
Mathematics	649	66.4	51
Media Studies	38	71.1	63
Moving Image Art <sup>6</sup>	23	73.9	N/A
Motor Vehicle Studies	45	35.6	54
Music	52	86.5	81
Religious Studies	561	62.9	64
Science Single Award	164	76.2	70
Science Double Award	362	86.6	88
Spanish	190	83.2	82
Business Studies	*	72.2	60
Polish	*	100%	N/A

\* indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

---

<sup>6</sup> In 2 out of the last 3 years

## OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS (EQUIVALENTS): KEY STAGE 4

Level 2	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Total entry over 3 years	School A* - C %
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C		
Applied Sciences (BTEC)	100	100	N/A	154	100
Beauty services(OS)	100	0	N/A	12	100
Business Studies (OS)	25	95.8	100	39	89.7
Childcare Skills (BTEC)	N/A	100	100	22	100
Childcare Skills (NQF)	100	N/A	N/A	9	100
Computer Use	N/A	N/A	16.7	6	16.7
Construction Studies (OS)	81.8	80	85.7	46	82.6
Design & Technology Graphic Products	100	100	30	24	70.8
Engineering (OS)	100	93.3	85.7	53	92.5
Health & Social Care (BTEC)	100	N/A	N/A	23	100
Personal and Social Education (OS)	59.9	0	0	238	59.9
Practical Craft (OS)	100	84.6	83.3	32	90.6
Preparation for Work	N/A	80.5	87.9	286	83.9
Public services(OS)	100	N/A	N/A	8	100
Sports Studies (BTEC)	100	100	N/A	131	100
Sports Studies (BTEC)	N/A	N/A	89.5	57	89.5
Music Technology(OS)	N/A	N/A	100		
Preparation for Work (BTEC)	N/A	100	N/A	*	95

\* indicates fewer than 5 pupils

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level or equivalent (over the past three years) Grades A\* - C**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	151	135	133

<b>A Level Subject or equivalent</b>	<b>Number of Entries</b>	<b>School A* to C %</b>	<b>NI A* to C %</b>
Art & Design	33	93.9	91.9
Biology	68	72.5	83.4
Business Studies	47	72.3	87.7
Chemistry	26	81.5	86
Child Care Skills	25	96	N/A
Design & Technology Product Design	58	88.1	67.9
Drama	26	96.2	88.6
English Literature	48	93.8	85.2
Engineering	28	100	N/A
Geography	35	88.9	86.5
Health & Social Care	89	87.6	84.8
History	75	81.3	85.9
Information Technology	172	88.4	79.5
Mathematics	59	86.4	88.8
Moving Image Art*	19	100	92.3
Religious Studies	106	85.8	89.3
Spanish*	16	87.5	91.5
Sports Studies	52	85	N/A
English Language <sup>7</sup>	*	41.2	N/A
Media Film & TV Studies	*	70.6	85.8
Music	*	66.7	84.7
Physics	*	53.3	83.3
Applied Science	*	94.4	N/A
Irish	*	94.7	95.7
Politics	*	89.5	88.9
French	**	0	89.7
Building (BTEC L3)**	**	100	N/A
Leisure and recreation(BTEC L3)**	**	100	N/A
Multi media (BTEC L3)**	**	0	N/A

\* indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

\*\* indicates fewer than 5 entries over 3 years

<sup>7</sup> In 2 out of the last 3 years

### Staying on rate<sup>8</sup> 2016/17

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	48.4	56.5
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	75.2	84.6

### Leavers' destinations 2015/16

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from Holy Cross College who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	School	NI	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	248	12996			
Employment	2.4%	11.6%			
Further Education	22.2%	44.2%	3	52	1
Higher Education	45.6%	23.5%	0	0	112
Work-based Learning (Training)	28.2%	15.2%			
Unemployed	1.6%	3.6%			
Unknown	0%	1.9%			

<sup>8</sup> The 'Staying On Rate' is taken to mean the pupils who stay on at the school from year 12 to year 13 or transfer from year 12 to year 13 in another school; and, then from year 13 to year 14.

**Inspection methodology and evidence base**

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

Inspectors scrutinised documentation, data and held formal discussions with some pupils (in groups), and some staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

## 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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

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

### 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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2018

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)