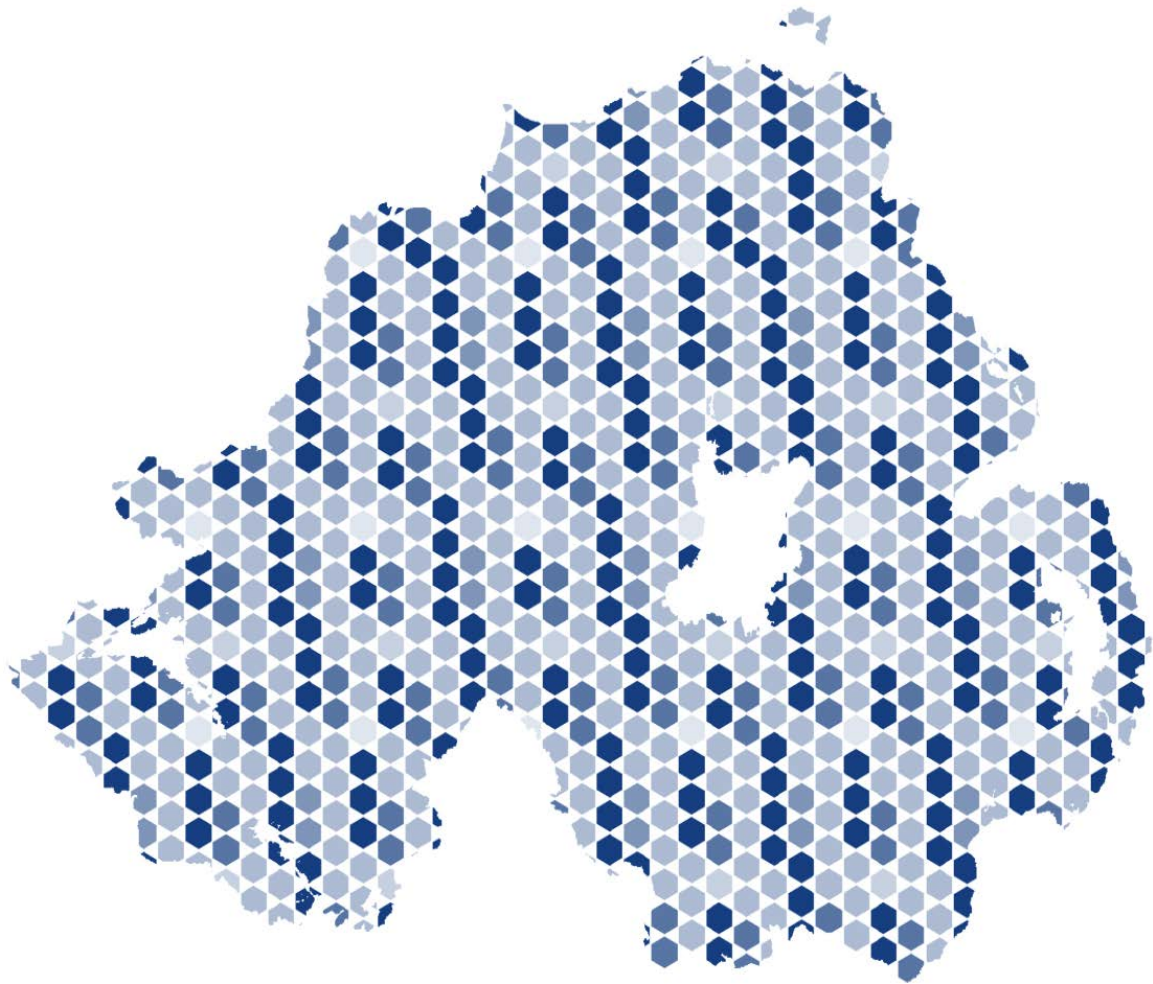


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colm's High School,
Twinbrook, Belfast

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-19 school

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Colm's High School is situated in the Colin area of west Belfast. This area includes Twinbrook, Poleglass and Lagmore, from where the school draws nearly all of its pupils. There are high levels of social disadvantage in this area and consequently 71% of the pupils are in receipt of free school meal entitlement. In addition, 93% of the pupils have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning, with 10% having a statement of special educational need: these figures represent a notable rising trend.

The St Colm's staff, pupils and parents take great pride in the achievements of their local school. Enrolment, at year 8, which had fallen significantly over the past seven years, has risen sharply this academic year; the school has had to manage sensitively some very difficult challenges in this period. The school engages well through the Lisburn Area Learning Community with a number of other post-primary schools and further education colleges. It is also involved in a shared education programme, which is having a positive impact on many of the pupils who are participating.

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 almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI have 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.

St Colm's High School	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Year 8 Intake	41	60	46	80
Enrolment	478	446	392	387
% Attendance (NI Average)	87.7% (92 %)	84.5% (93.5 %)	87.9% (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	64.9	70.2	70.4	70.8
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	77 (369)	82 (366)	90 (354)	93 (361)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	30	30	35	40
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Around 6% of parents (17) and 55% of all staff (23) responded to the online questionnaires. Nearly all of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The small number of parents' written comments affirmed well the care provided for the pupils and praised the professionalism of staff. The responses to the staff questionnaires returned were highly positive without exception. All staff were highly supportive of the school's leadership and provision and expressed a pride in the care and welfare they offered to the pupils. These positive responses were shared with the principal and governors, along with all written comments, whilst maintaining the anonymity of the respondents.

¹ 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.

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 special educational needs; 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

Overall Effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Provision for learning	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The pupils, who met with inspectors, were confident, friendly and forthright; they have positive dispositions to their learning and spoke very respectfully and passionately about their teachers and the support they receive in school. They praised the good range of sporting and cultural activities provided by the school from which they acquire and develop important skills and capabilities. As they progress, the pupils are able to take on various leadership and coaching roles and they benefit from opportunities to mentor and support their younger peers, and through opportunities to work in meaningful situations within and beyond the school.

- In discussion with inspectors, a group of year 14 pupils spoke with inspiring maturity, honesty and good humour about their experiences in a shared education programme with their partner school in Lisburn. The pupils praised the programme, valued the friendships gained and talked about the significant attitudinal changes they have experienced as a result of this involvement in shared education. The pupils acquired and can apply problem-solving skills, which they use in real life situations to alleviate poverty, demonstrate social responsibility and address appalling local issues, which destroy individuals and communities, such as suicide.
- The school's internal and diagnostic data provides significant evidence of the value its pastoral and academic provision adds to the pupils' progression and learning outcomes.
- Over the last three years, the outcomes for pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C has been in line with, or above, the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) averages. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has also been in line with, or above, the corresponding averages in two out of the three years. These outcomes represent a significant achievement in light of the low entry baseline profile of the majority of these pupils.
- The outcomes in public examinations attained by the pupils at post-16 require improvement. Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils entered for three or more GCE A levels or equivalent has decreased from 54% to 35%. Over the same period, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C has decreased from 24% to 7%; and the percentage of pupils attaining two or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to E had decreased from 97% to 69%.
- The pupils attain well also in an appropriate range of applied and vocational courses.
- At the end of key stage (KS) 4, a majority of the pupils progress to appropriate provision in work-based learning or further education. The proportions of pupils who stay on from year 13 to year 14, and who progress to higher education from year 14, are below the corresponding averages.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

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

6. Quality of provision

- The curriculum planning process is pupil-centred, adaptive and led effectively. At KS 3, the school is reviewing well the impact of the curriculum offer; consequently a small nurture group has been established to support those pupils entering the school most in need of support, in particular to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Good attention is paid to the development of the pupils' literacy skills throughout KS 3, which adds value and prepares them well for the next level of study. Across KS 3, as evidenced by the scrutiny of pupils' work, good efforts have been made to develop further their thinking skills and personal capabilities through cross-subject thematic units of work and this should be developed further.
- At KS 4, the pupils have access to an appropriate curriculum and the range of courses offered is matched well to the pupils' interests and the range of abilities. The curriculum offer includes vocational and applied programmes, appropriate collaboration with a work-based learning provider, and underpins the value added and overall good attainment by the pupils at this level.
- At post-16, the school collaborates significantly within the Lisburn Area Learning Community to broaden the level 3 subject choices available to the pupils, but also to meet the needs and career aspirations of individual pupils. Careful consideration is given to ensuring a match between the number of subjects taken and the pupils' ability levels; consequently, a majority of the pupils follow two as opposed to three GCE A levels or equivalent, although they are well informed about the impact of this on progression pathways. The post-16 level 2 provision is not meeting well enough the needs of the small group of pupils following this pathway and needs to be reviewed.
- The school has made good progress in establishing a whole-school, cross-curricular approach to careers education, information, advice and guidance. Consequently, the pupils benefit from a coherent approach to personal career planning and most of the pupils spoken to have a sound knowledge of local labour market information and progression pathways.

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 of provision in English and literacy, mathematics and numeracy and special educational needs across the school; and
- the impact of care and welfare on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- Rigorous self-evaluation, along with meaningful and extensive consultation, inform well the school development planning process. Consequently, the priorities in the school development plan, which are appropriate and timely, are the primary strategic authority for a wide range of school improvement work, at departmental level and beyond. The professional development of staff is afforded due significance and is contributing well to building their capacity in order to meet better the challenging academic and pastoral needs of all pupils.

- The senior leadership team work collegially and strategically in their roles and their work attracts high levels of support, respect and confidence from a wide cross-section of the school community. A wider distributive model of leadership extends down to the middle leaders, where the well-embedded self-evaluation practices are managed to good effect. There is a culture of care and encouragement for pupils and staff and there is excellent capacity to track the attainment of pupils, monitor their progress and provide intervention strategies that bring about improvements, not only in outcomes but also in dispositions to learning and behaviour.
- 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 governors have great pride in their school and understand its essential role in the community in raising aspirations, maximising attainment and opening pathways for success. They have effective oversight of the work of the school and provide appropriate support and challenge to all staff, whose contributions they value highly.

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 spoke positively about their learning experiences and the support they receive from all of the staff in the school. They 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.

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 SIMS² and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in St Colm's High 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 band³.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	82.5	85.4	68.4
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁴</i>	<i>72.9</i>	<i>72.2</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	30	43.9	29
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>32.9</i>	<i>38.1</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	92.5	100	91.5
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)	25.5	41.2	18.6

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

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 St Colm's High 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	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	54.5	53.7	35.7
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	24.2	23.1	7.1
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	97	84.6	69.1

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

² SIMS: School Information Management System

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

⁴ 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 (over the past three years)
Grades A* to C**

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of pupils in Year 12 cohort	81	41	59

Subject	Entries	School Three-year average at A* to C %	Northern Ireland Three-year average at A* to C %
Learning for Life and Work	47	91.5	75
Sport	38	86.8	84
Irish	26	84.6	94
Science Double Award	22	75	87
Home Economics	43	69.8	68
English Language	169	60.4	66
Art and Design	41	70.3	76
Hospitality and Catering	37	59.5	61
Drama	42	58.5	75
Science Single Award	130	57.3	70
Performing Arts	68	49	63
Music	6	50	83
Business and Commercial Systems	49	46.9	65
Mathematics	168	38.7	51
History	56	32	63
Geography	42	23.8	62
Motor Vehicle Studies	8	25	50
Business Studies	14	7.1	62
Design and Technology (materials)	48	6.1	66

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at key stage 4 (over the past three years)
Grades A* - C**

Level 2 Subject	2014 - 15	2015 - 16	2016 - 17	Total entry over 3 years
	% A* - C	%A* - C	% A* - C	
CCEA Prince's Trust	95	100	100	87
IFS Financial Capability	92	100	100	65
CCEA Design & Creativity Occupational Studies	68	100	100	46
CCEA Environment & Society Occupational Studies	88	100	na	37
BTEC in Travel & Tourism	45	67	N/A	44
City & Guilds in Sport	100	75	90	38
OCN NI Delivering Skills for Employability	N/A	79	83	19
CCEA Construction Occupational Studies	50	100	78	31
CCEA Business & Services Occupational Studies	93	100	88	72
BTEC in Business	100	93	N/A	32
CCEA Engineering Occupational Studies	89	100	100	38

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

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of pupils in Year 14 cohort	33	51	42

Subject	No of entries over three years	School three-year average at A* to C %	Northern Ireland three-year average at A* to C %
Sociology	8	100	75.1
Art and Design	*	66.7	92
Media, Film and TV Studies	*	60	85.5
Health and Social Care	36	59	84.8
IT/ Art	10	50	92.3
Science (vocational)	31	48.5	65.3
Politics	9	40	88.7
Biology	*	0	83.1
English Literature	*	0	86.2

*less than 5 entries

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: POST-16

Other level 3 courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

GCE Subject	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Coaching Diploma	N/A	N/A	66.7	66.7	75	75	27
Coaching (Increasing participation in Sport)	N/A	N/A	93.3	93.3	91.7	91.7	27
BTEC in Travel & Tourism	N/A	N/A	100	100	50	75	10
Beauty (massage techniques)	100	100	100	100	N/A	N/A	*
BTEC in Business	78.6	100	85.7	100	33.3	100	40
BTEC in Sport	37.5	100	61.5	100	42.8	100	28
BTEC in Construction	100	100	100	100	0	100	8
Children's Care	N/A	N/A	80	100	75	100	9

*less than 5 entries

Staying on rate

Based on data held in SIMS by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at St Colm's High School, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for non-selective schools taken from school census returns to the Department of Education for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Year 12 staying on to Year 13	48.4	30.4
% Year 13 staying on to Year 14	75.2	54.5

Leavers' destinations

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from St Colm's High School who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for selective schools.

	NI	School	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	12996	107			
Employment	1511 (11.6%)	37 (34%)			
Institute of Further Education	5745 (44.2%)	20 (19%)		16	5
Institute of Higher Education	3051 (23.5%)	13 (12%)			13
Work-based Learning (Training)	1976 (15.2%)	29 (27%)			
Unemployed	467 (3.6%)	5 (5%)			
Unknown	246 (1.9%)	3 (3%)			

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication 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.

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