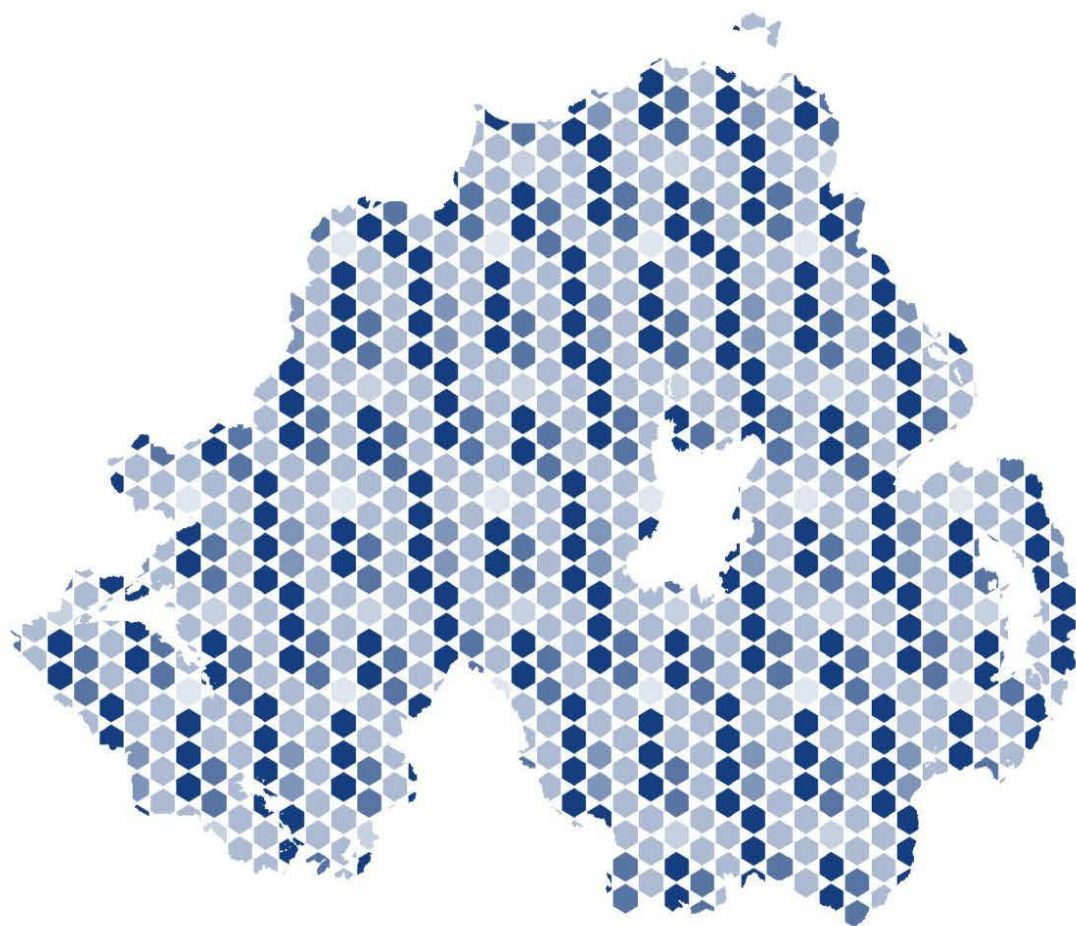


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Carrickfergus Grammar School, Carrickfergus, County Antrim

Controlled co-educational 11-18 Grammar School DE Ref No: 341-0098

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in January 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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Introduction

The previous inspection in [October 2016](#), evaluated the overall effectiveness of Carrickfergus Grammar School as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. Since the last inspection, there have been changes at senior leadership; minor works have been completed to upgrade the facilities and secure more fully the school site.

A sustaining improvement inspection was conducted in January 2020.

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. Senior leaders co-operated with the inspection in relation to their 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.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school development planning. The school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The lines of inquiry during the inspection were the school's actions to:

- meet better the needs of all pupils through adapting the curriculum offer at post-16; and
- facilitate better the dissemination of good practice through using more fully incisive feedback on the quality of the actions for improvement.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking and impact of the identified actions associated with the lines of inquiry.

Key findings

- Since the last inspection, the outcomes of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications (including equivalents) at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics have fluctuated. While most of the pupils attained at this level in 2019, the outcome is below the Northern Ireland average (for schools in the same free school meal band). The school has identified, as a priority, the need to address outcomes at this measure, as well as the widening gap between males and females. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils attaining three or more grades A* to C at GCE A level (including equivalents) has improved from 64.9% in 2016 to 74.0% in 2019.

- Since the last inspection, the school has begun the process of tailoring the curriculum offer to meet more fully the needs, aspirations and career interests of all the pupils; applied and general subjects have been introduced at post-16.
- Planned actions for improvement at subject level are informed by analysis of data and a focus on pupil outcomes in public examinations. The ETI was unable to evaluate the outworking and impact of the school's actions to facilitate better the dissemination of good practice through using more fully incisive feedback on the quality of the actions for improvement.
- The pupils who met with inspectors shared their views on school life with confidence and maturity. They spoke about the range of extra-curricular activities and how they are rewarded for positive contributions to school life.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance by 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. The school needs to continue to keep under review the suite of pastoral policies, to reflect the most recent departmental guidance and ensure that the governing body completes the arranged training. During discussions, the pupils reported that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

Conclusion

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 children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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