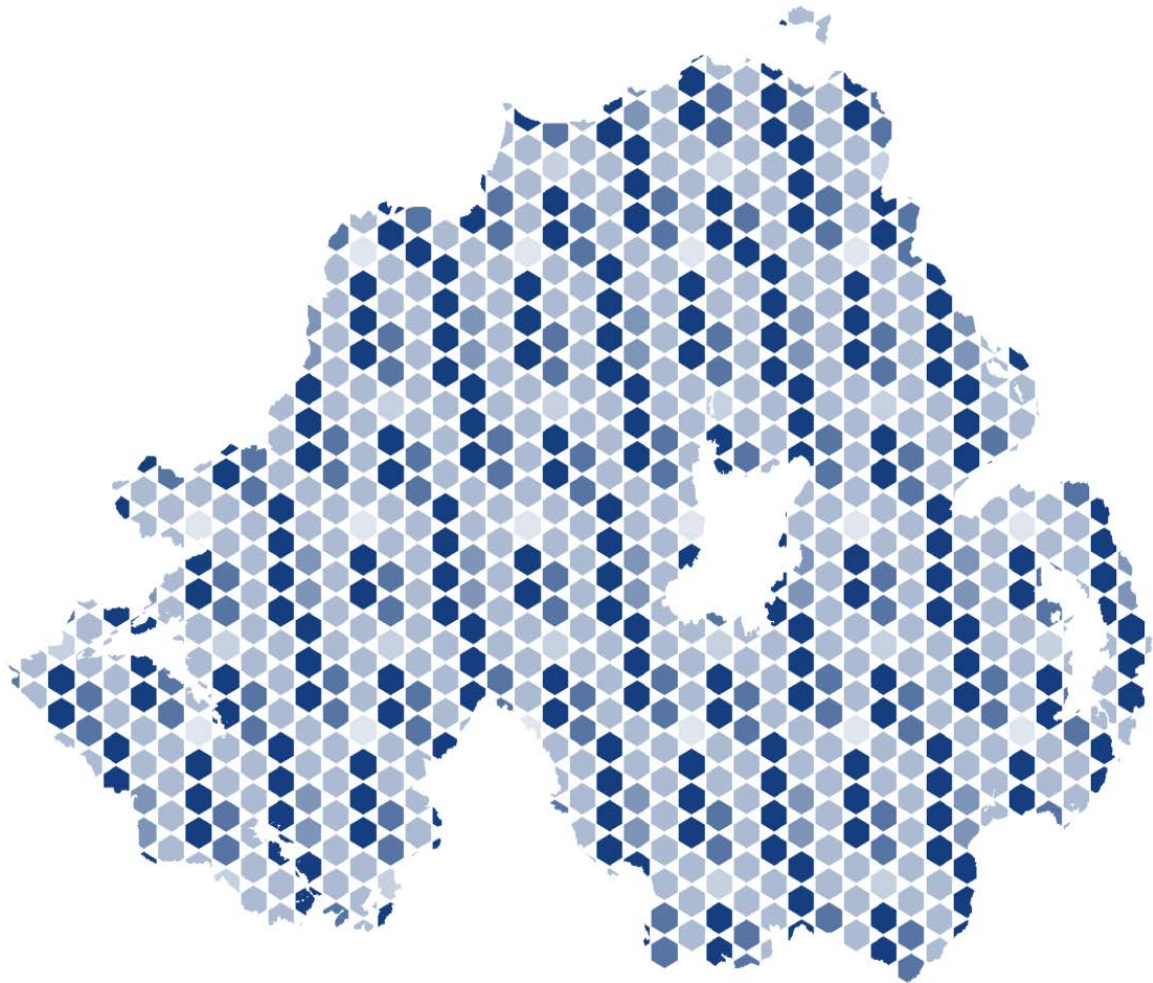


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

De La Salle High School,  
Downpatrick, County Down

All boys, maintained, non-selective 11-18 school

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection (Involving Action Short of  
Strike) in May 2018



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## **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of De La Salle High School, Downpatrick (423-0024)**

### **Introduction**

De La Salle High School, Downpatrick took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection (SII) in March 2015. In the interim, a new principal and two acting senior leaders have been appointed to the leadership team. A further SII was conducted on the 29 and 30 May 2018.

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 all of the senior leadership team and some co-ordinators 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.

### **Focus of the inspection**

The purpose of the SII was to evaluate 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 SII were the school's actions to:

- develop further the quality of numeracy provision within the school; and
- improve the processes of identifying and meeting the needs of all the pupils more effectively.

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the lines of inquiry.

### **Key findings**

- Numeracy development across the school has been informed by a whole-school audit and comprehensive action plan. In order to increase pupil confidence and ability in numeracy, heads of department and class teachers have incorporated using mathematics and mental mathematics strategies into schemes of work at key stage (KS) 3. A detailed numeracy key word dictionary and data handling guidance booklet has been shared with pupils and staff to address inconsistencies across departments. Importantly, the documents provide in-house mathematic lessons video links to consolidate the learning. Classroom assistants and senior pupils have received training to provide additional numeracy support to year 8 pupils and there is a systematic approach to targeting underachievement at GCSE.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more GCSEs, or equivalent, at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics, is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. While the percentage of pupils obtaining at grades A\*-C in mathematics GCSE is above the NI average in two of the past three years, there is a declining trend in outcomes achieved in English GCSE during this period. The school has continued to focus on extended writing across the school; it will be important to monitor the impact of targeted actions on pupil standards.

- A range of pastoral intervention and support strategies have been developed across the school to meet more effectively the needs of all the pupils and include the use of pupil support cards, the ongoing development of nurture provision and staff training on de-escalation and positive behaviour management strategies. Appropriately, a curriculum and skills audit has been completed at KS 4 and has resulted in a wider curriculum offer to all pupils. It will be important to review the KS 5 curriculum to ensure pupils have access to appropriate transitions and pathways. The school has identified the need to use tracking systems more effectively in order to improve the outcomes for pupils entitled to free school meals. Further use of pastoral and curricular data is required across the school to develop a consistent approach to target-setting, inform individualised programmes of academic support and enable a more robust approach to monitoring and self-evaluation.

### **Safeguarding**

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The school needs to: continue its review and update of pastoral policies (to include positive behaviour management and anti-bullying) and develop a consistent approach to risk assessments, including risk assessing the open access points to the school building. Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

### **Conclusion**

Owing to the impact of 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 education provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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