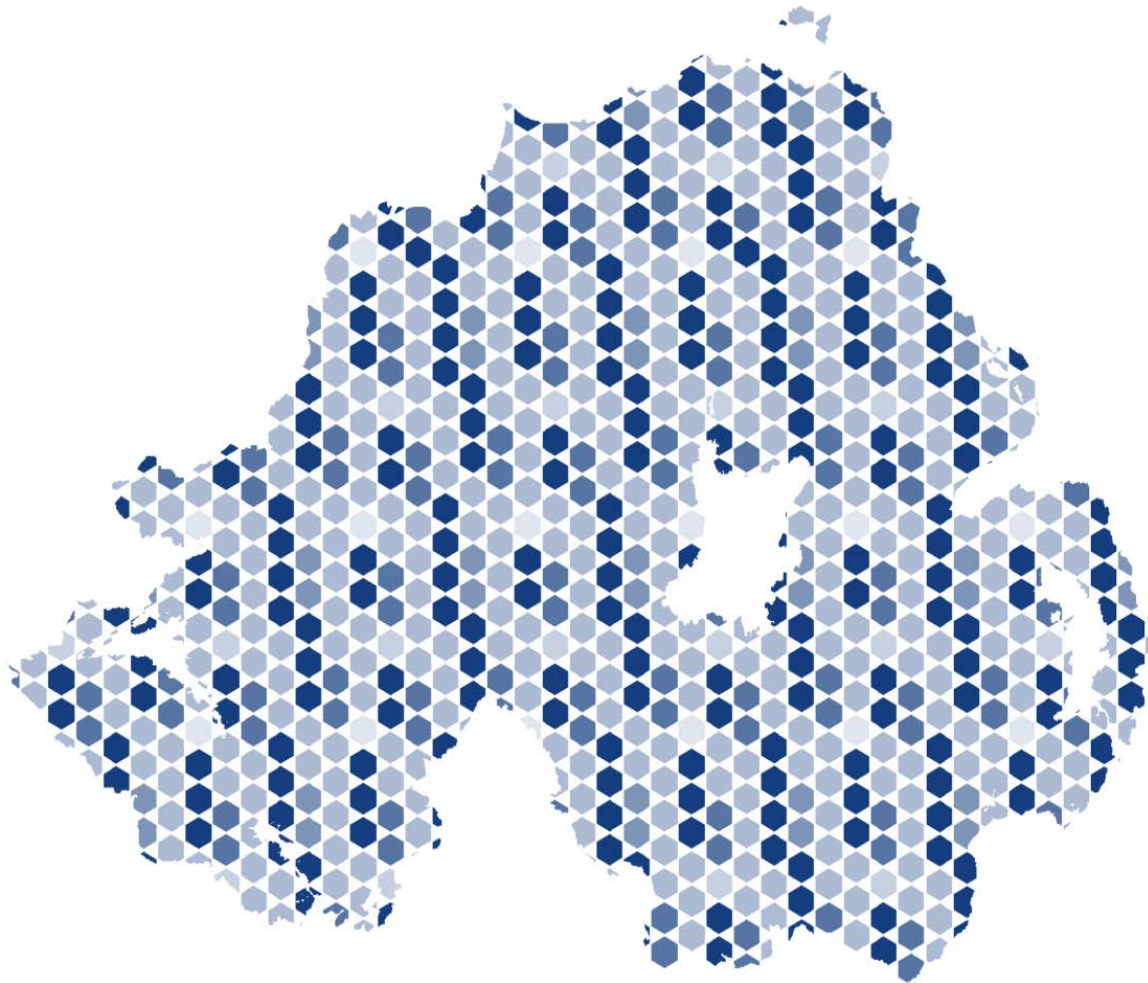


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Rathfriland High School,
County Down

Controlled, co-educational, 11-16, non-selective

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Department of Education
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CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Rathfriland High School, County Down (521-0127)

Introduction

The previous inspection in April 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Rathfriland High School as very good¹. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 8 March 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 none of the teachers 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.

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:

- sustain, and improve further, the outcomes for the pupils at key stage (KS) 4;
- review continuously the curriculum offer at KS 4 to meet effectively the individual needs, interests and aspirations of all of the pupils.

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

Key findings

- The results in public examinations at KS 4 have improved further over the last three years and continue to be a key strength of the school. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs (or equivalents) at grades A*-C is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band and when English and mathematics are included, the proportion of pupils achieving this important benchmark has increased steadily. Importantly, the outcomes for the pupils entitled to free school meals have increased significantly and are consistently above the NI average for similarly entitled pupils.
- The school carries out a thorough and detailed annual review of the curricular offer at KS 4 to ensure that all of the pupils can access courses which are aligned closely to their individual interests, abilities and career aspirations. A very good range of academic and vocational subjects is offered, including those provided through the Banbridge Area Learning Community. As a result, the pupils benefit from a curriculum which meet their needs very well and they subsequently access a range of appropriate career pathways.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding or very good is reported as 'the school is demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement.'

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children 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. The pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their 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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