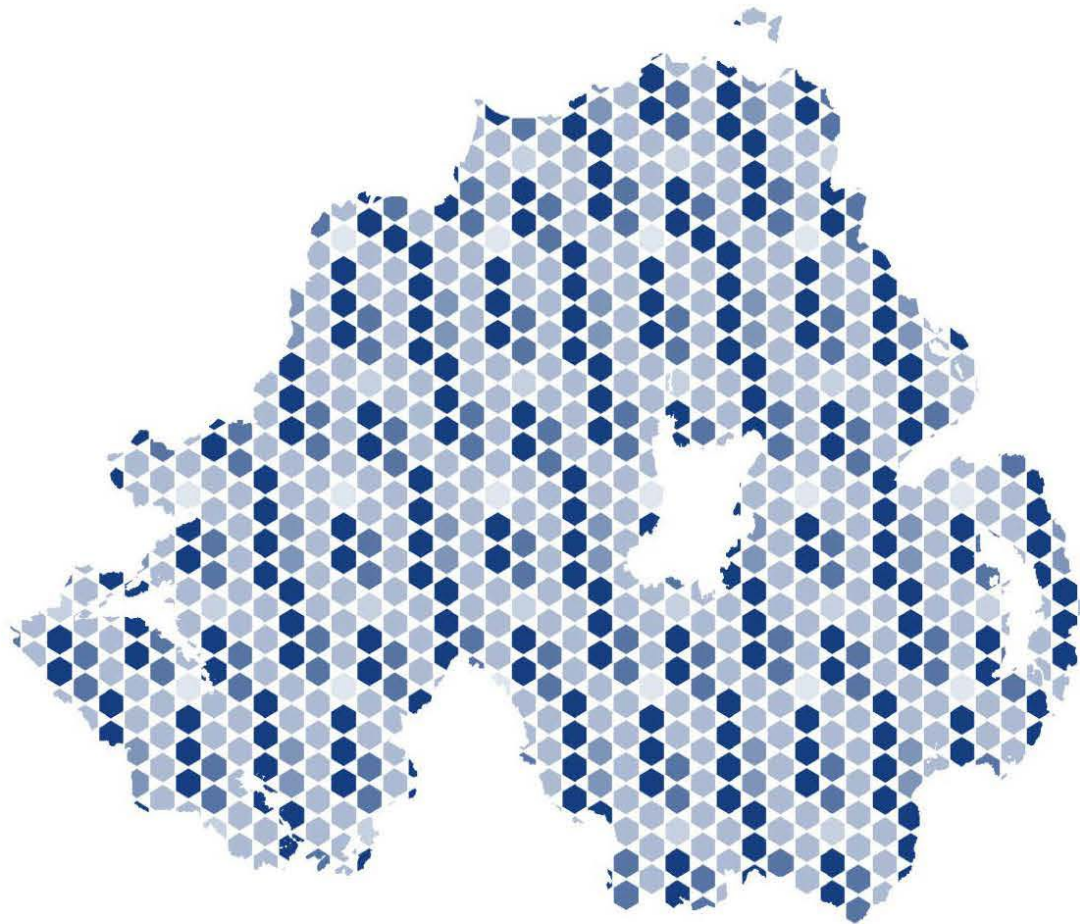


Education and Training Inspectorate

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Patrick's College, Banbridge, County Down

Maintained, non-selective, co-educational 11-19 school DE Ref No: 523-0076)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in November 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Patrick's College, Banbridge, County Down (523-0076)

Introduction

St Patrick's College took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection in October 2016. Since then there have been changes in the senior leadership team (SLT), including new appointments and the development of leadership roles and responsibilities, in particular distributed leadership in line with the school priorities. The school's overall enrolment has increased from 325 to 480; the provision includes a learning support centre with a current enrolment of 34 pupils. However, in the interim, the enrolment at post-16 has fallen and currently stands at 7 pupils. The school is an active member of the Banbridge Area Learning Community and there is a well-developed culture of shared education.

A sustaining improvement inspection was conducted in November 2019.

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. 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. Members of the senior leadership team and some of the middle leaders co-operated with the inspection in relation to leadership and safeguarding responsibilities. 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 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 development and initial impact of the new positive behaviour policy; and
- development of the use of data to promote individual pupil attainment in mathematics.

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

- A new positive behaviour policy has been developed following an extensive process of research, training and consultation with all stakeholders. Led by the school's pastoral team of year heads, the policy emphasises the importance of building effective communication, respecting the rights and responsibilities of all, having an agreed set of values and establishing good habits for learning. Its implementation includes a fully reformed merit system and the removal of the detention system. Critical review and evaluation is ongoing during the initial implementation phase and the use of de-merits has reduced significantly. In discussions, the pupils report that the new merit system is fairer and motivates them to work hard and contribute.
- Since the inspection in 2016, the use of data has developed further to baseline pupils in mathematics, create personalised targets and to apply interventions. The school offers an extensive range of intervention strategies including mathematics support and booster classes. Interventions informed by the improved use of data has led to identified pupils reaching or exceeding their targets. There was evidence that a range of strategies, including effective questioning and differentiation, engages the pupils well in their learning.
- The percentage of pupils achieving A* to C in GCSE mathematics remains consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average (for schools in the same free school (FSM) meal band). The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs (including equivalents) at Grades A* to C including English and mathematics also remains consistently above the NI average (for schools in the same FSM meal band).
- In pupil discussions, the younger pupils spoke of how they have a voice in their school and in particular they expressed appreciation for the range of learning experiences at Key Stage 3 and the option choices available for GCSE. The older pupils were very positive about their experience of school life, including the leadership opportunities being provided for them and the encouragement and support given by their teachers.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the post-16 provision in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. 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.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by almost all of 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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