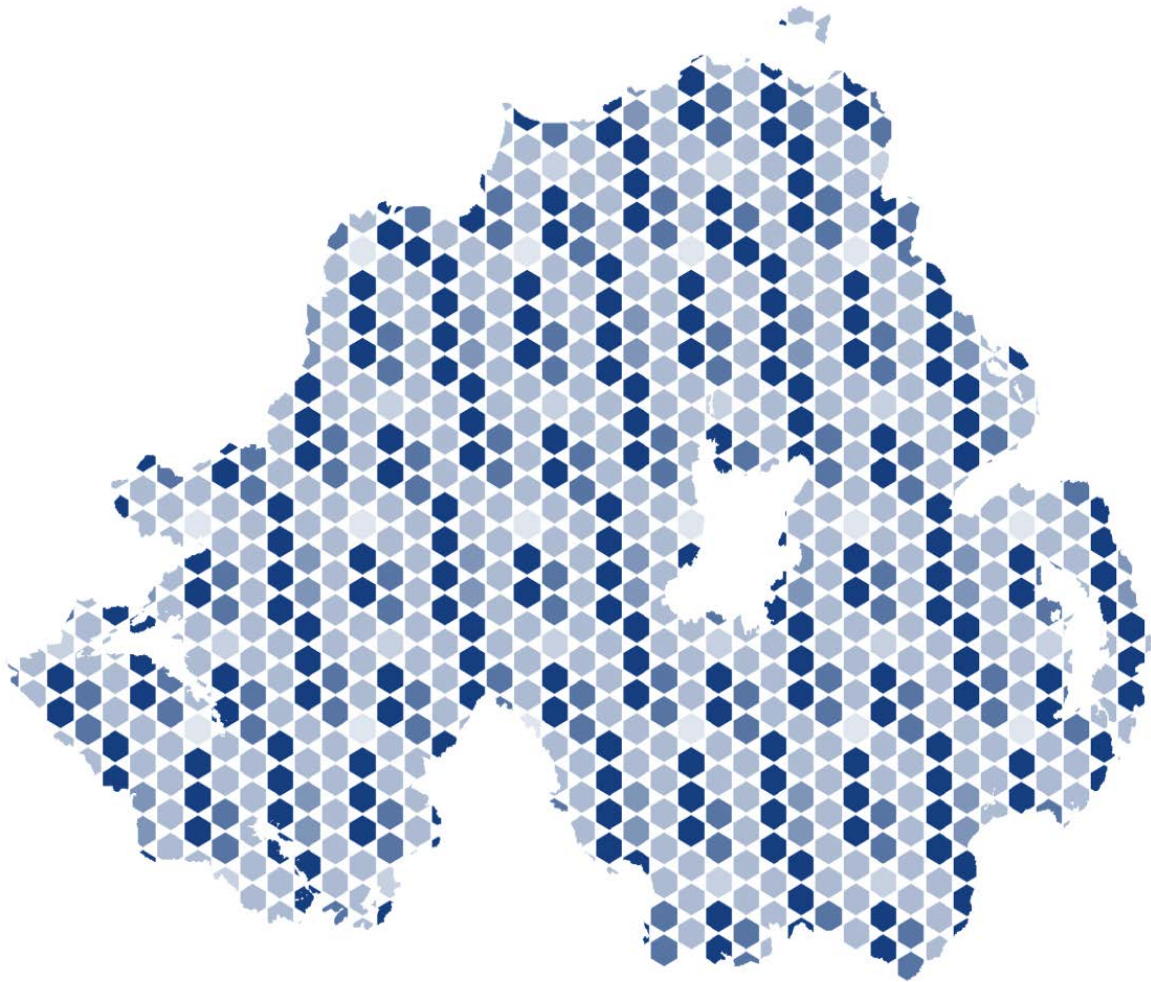


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The High School, Ballynahinch,
County Down

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

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in September 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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SECOND FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, BALLYNAHINCH, BT24 8EH (421-0029)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection¹ of The High School, Ballynahinch, in December 2012 when the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory². A follow-up inspection³ was carried out in September 2014 when the quality of education remained satisfactory. The areas identified for improvement at the follow-up inspection were the need to:

- improve further the standards attained by the pupils at GCSE level, addressing the variations in outcomes across subjects; and
- continue to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum being offered at key stage (KS) 4.

The key targets in the associated action plans were appropriate and the progress made in the areas for improvement was discussed with the school during the interim visits carried out by the ETI in April 2015 and June 2016. A second follow-up inspection was conducted in September 2016.

The school reports that Education Authority (EA) staff provided significant support during the follow-up process.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following changes and actions which affect the work of the school include:

- the enrolment has declined from 200 pupils in 2014 to 167 pupils;
- the curriculum offer at KS 4 has been increased to 31 subjects (as a result of the extended Shared Education programme, including co-operation with two other schools within the area learning community);
- the EA is providing a programme of professional development for staff in the key areas of literacy and numeracy;
- there has been one further redundancy among the teaching staff;
- the school has appointed acting co-ordinators for special educational needs and for careers education, information, advice and guidance;
- there has been significant discontinuity in, and re-structuring of, the senior leadership team; and
- a programme of refurbishment across the school has been completed.

Key findings

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement remains an important area for improvement for the senior leaders and the governors. The review of the curriculum, identified as an important area for improvement in the first follow-up inspection, was not sufficiently rigorous and the necessary actions have not been implemented quickly enough. As a consequence, there has been sustained

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/standard-inspection-high-school-ballynahinch>

² From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as satisfactory has been reported as the school needing to address (an) important area(s) for improvement.

³ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/follow-inspection-high-school-ballynahinch>

under-performance in too many subjects and the pupils' progression needs are not being met adequately. The senior leaders and teachers have, however, begun to use data more effectively to track the pupils' progress and implement a wider range of targeted intervention and support programmes.

The achievements and standards require significant improvement. The outcomes for the pupils at GCSE are still too variable; around one-third of the subjects at GCSE are performing above the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland (NI) averages for similar schools; outcomes in a further two-thirds of the subjects are well below or significantly below the corresponding averages. Over the past two years, the proportion of year 12 pupils attaining five or more GCSE subjects at grades A* to C has risen by almost 12 percentage points, from 41% to 53%; however, this figure remains significantly below the average for similar schools in the same free school meal band. Although the proportion of year 12 pupils attaining five or more GCSE subjects at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has doubled in the same period (and now stands at 39%) it remains well below the average for similar schools in the same free school meal band. While the standards attained by the small number of pupils entitled to free school meals have improved from a very low base, at 17% they also remain too low.

The quality of provision in English and mathematics remains an important area for improvement. The standards attained by the pupils at grades A* to C in GCSE English have improved from 32% at the time of the first follow-up inspection to 53%; however, they remain below the NI average for similar schools. The standards attained in mathematics have improved from 33% to 58%, which is now above the NI average. The outcomes in both subjects remain below the respective three-year NI averages. Importantly, the inspection evidence is clear that the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are not developed effectively or consistently across the curriculum. Senior leaders need to monitor the impact of the whole-school focus on learning and teaching in order to identify and share the best practice, and support the further development of the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Conclusion

The High School, Ballynahinch, needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the pupils. It may require external support to do so⁴. This second follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to raise further the standards attained by the pupils and continue to address the inconsistency in outcomes across the individual subjects;
- to improve the quality of provision in English and mathematics and implement more consistently across the curriculum strategies to develop further and more systematically the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; and
- to strengthen the role of the senior leaders and governors in monitoring and evaluating rigorously the impact of the planned actions on the pupils' learning and on the standards they attain.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

It continues to be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

⁴ The Department of Education's Standards and Improvement Team will advise the school on the nature of the support and follow-up actions required.

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