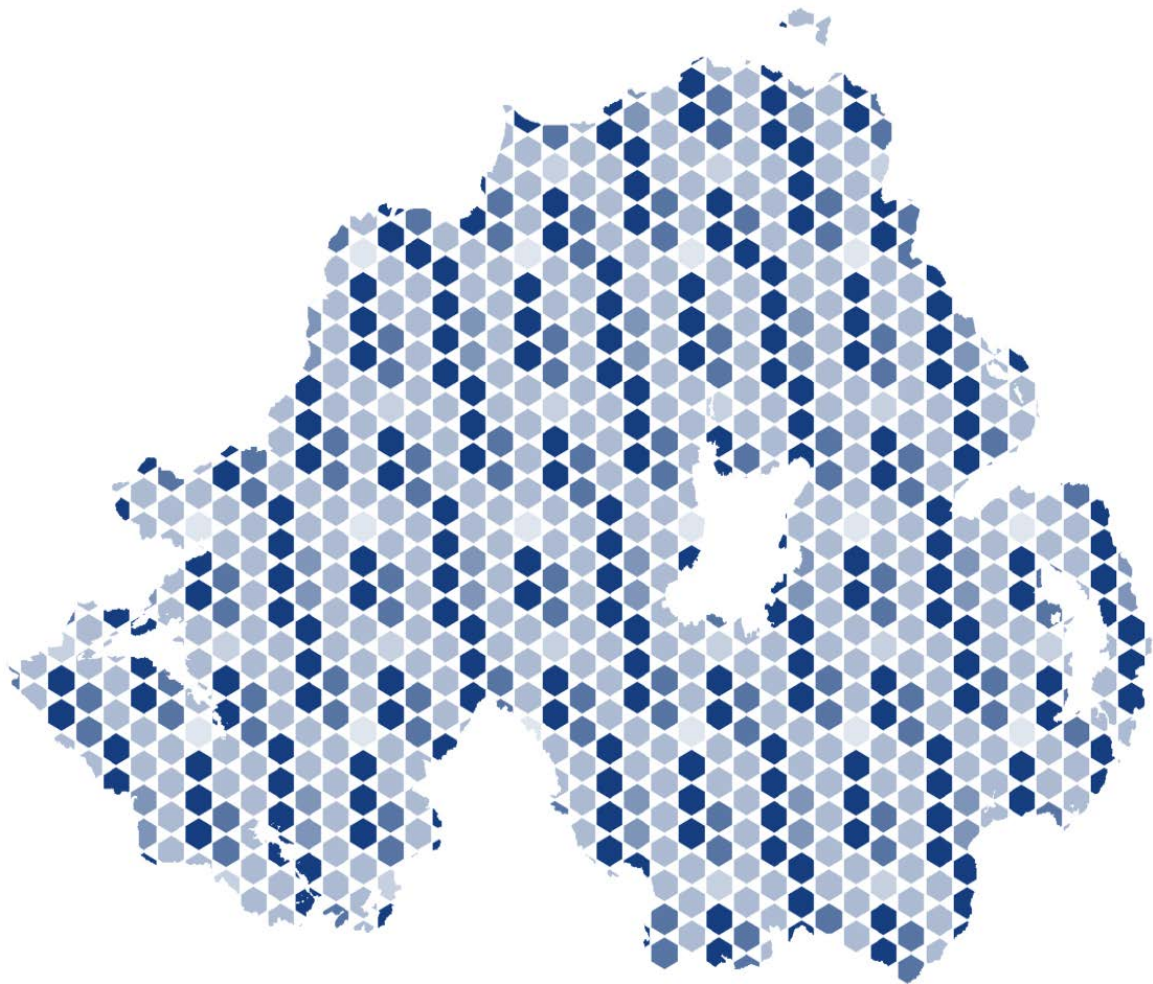


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Hunterhouse College,  
Belfast

11-18, all-girls, voluntary, selective school

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



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 Hunterhouse College, Belfast (142-0265)**

### **Introduction**

The previous inspection in March 2015<sup>1</sup> evaluated the overall effectiveness of Hunterhouse College as good<sup>2</sup>.

In the interim period, there have been new appointments to the senior leadership team (SLT) and a resultant review of strategic roles and responsibilities. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted in November 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 senior leaders 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:

- raise further pupil attainment at GCSE grades A\* to B; and
- address specific barriers to learning, particularly at Key Stage (KS) 4 and post-16.

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**

- The curriculum at KS 4 and post-16 has been reviewed and broadened to better match the needs, interests and career progression pathways of the wide ability range of the pupils.
- The proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\*-B including English and mathematics increased steadily by almost ten percentage points from 45.6% in 2015 to 54.8% in 2017. However the outcomes attained at this level declined to 43.1% in 2018; this was in line with the school's internal standardised data. Similarly, outcomes for pupils attaining seven or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/follow-up-inspection-hunterhouse-college-belfast.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as good is reported as the school is demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

declined in 2018 and were below the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. For three of the past four years the proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics has been broadly in line with the corresponding NI average for similar schools.

- Since 2015 school priorities to address specific barriers to learning have included attendance monitoring, feedback and motivational target setting. In discussions with inspectors, pupils reported that they value the feedback they receive because it helps them to improve their work; they spoke about the benefits of setting targets. Qualitative and quantitative data is used at all key stages to identify areas of underperformance and monitor individual pupil progress across the curriculum. The school's mentoring programme at KS 4 and post-16 supports pupils identified as being at risk of underachieving.
- The school is alert to anxiety experienced by a small proportion of the pupils at both KS4 and post-16 and is addressing this through well-targeted pastoral and academic strategies. A wide range of pastoral and attitudinal information informs a number of intervention strategies focused on building the pupils' resilience, self-esteem and self-regard as learners.
- All of the pupils who met with the inspectors are proud of their school and spoke highly of the school community and the support and guidance they receive from their teachers to progress their learning. The senior pupils spoke positively of the benefits of: the community placements; the leadership roles afforded to them; and their role as peer mentors. The year 8 pupils indicated that they have settled well in school and enjoy their learning.

## **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The school needs to review its risk assessments for access to the school. In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to 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 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 provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Health and Safety**

There is open access to the site and school buildings.

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