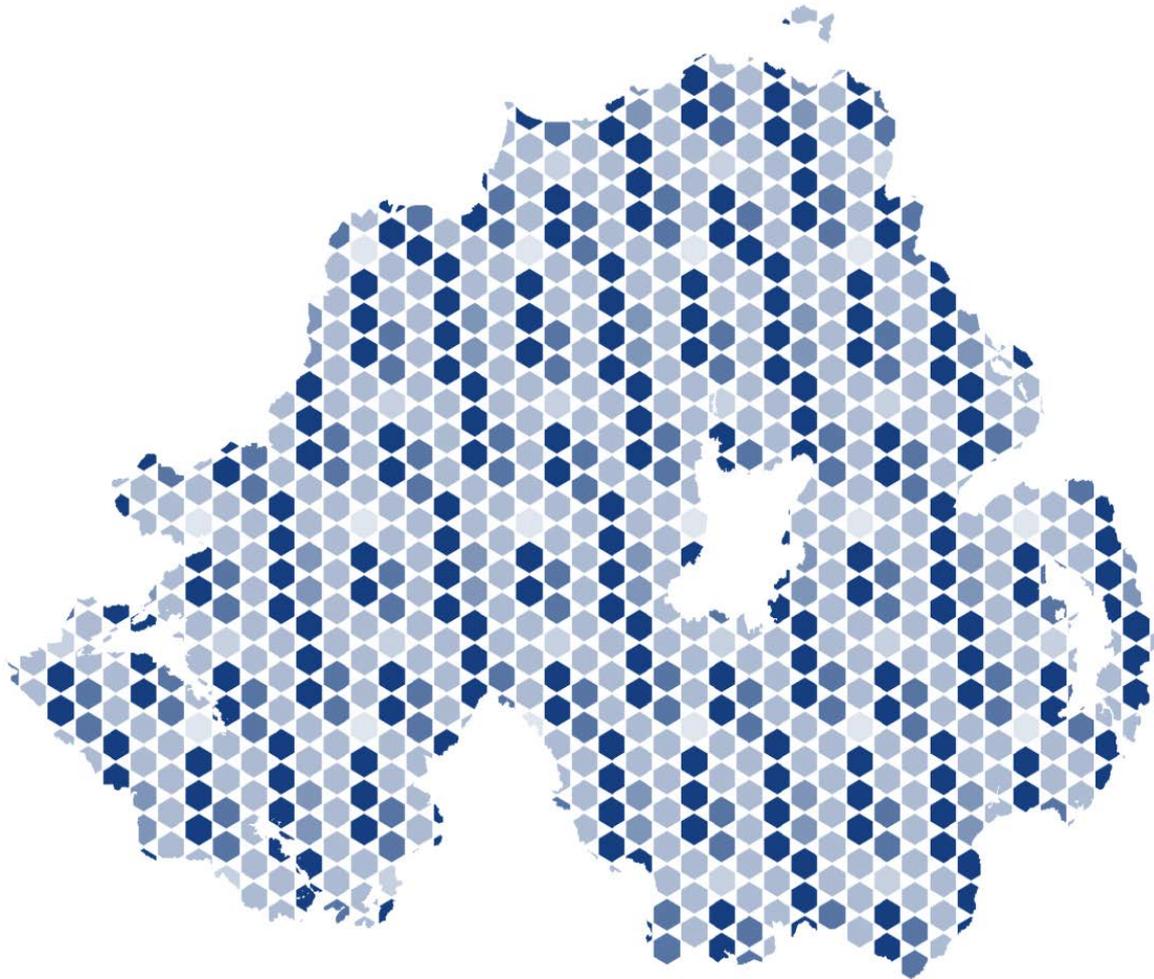


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

City of Armagh High School,
Armagh

Controlled, non-selective, co-educational 11-18

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in December 2016

SECOND FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION OF CITY OF ARMAGH HIGH SCHOOL, ARMAGH, BT61 7JH (521-0121)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection¹ of City of Armagh High School in January 2015, when the quality of education was evaluated overall as satisfactory².

The areas for improvement identified during the follow-up inspection were the need:

- to continue to raise further the improving standards attained by the pupils;
- for the school to improve further the effectiveness of self-evaluation; and
- for the employing authority, governors and the staff to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the sixth form provision, which remains unviable, in order to address more effectively the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

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 two interim follow-up visits carried out by the ETI in September 2015 and February 2016. A second follow-up inspection was conducted in December 2016.

As part of the follow-up inspection, there was an opportunity for parents and staff to complete a confidential questionnaire. Six percent of parents responded to the online questionnaire, with eight of them providing additional written comments. Most of the parents commented positively on the work of the school. Sixty percent of the staff responded to the questionnaire; their feedback was also mainly positive and they agreed or strongly agreed with most of the aspects of the work of the school. The small number of concerns raised about aspects of the provision, were discussed with the senior leaders of the school.

In the interval since the follow up inspection, the following actions or changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- a new acting principal has been in post since September 2015;
- over the past two years, year 8 enrolments have increased from 49 pupils to 74;
- school governors, in association with senior leadership, took the decision not to offer sixth form provision in 2016/17; and
- all staff have participated in continuing professional development on effective self-evaluation and action planning.

The school reports that Education Authority (EA) staff have provided significant advice and support which has positively impacted on improving the work of the school.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/follow-up-inspection-city-of-armagh-high-school-co-armagh.pdf>

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

Key Findings

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement is now good.

The senior leadership team is working to good effect with learning and teaching teams, who have been empowered through professional development, to improve further the action planning process, which is now based on more effective self-evaluation and the better use of assessment tracking data.

The improved self-evaluation process is impacting positively on the quality of the provision for learners. Effective collegial working is enabling observations of professional practice at all levels throughout the school. All of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection were effective (good or better) in promoting and progressing the pupils' learning.

The school has broadened appropriately the curricular offer at Key Stage (KS) 4; through the development of three curricular pathways, the pupils have access to a wider range of subject choices which better meet their needs, abilities and interests.

A mentoring programme has been implemented for key groups of pupils at KS 4, involving appropriate collaboration with pupils, parents and teachers, which is providing these pupils with good support.

Achievements and standards have improved and are now good. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C increased to 55%. When English and mathematics are included, an improving trend over the last three years has seen the percentage rise from 30% to 41%, which is now in line with the corresponding Northern Ireland average for similar schools in the same free school meals band. The attainment of pupils entitled to free school meals in five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has improved notably to 44% in 2016.

The overall quality of the provision for English is good. The standards attained by the pupils at GCSE grades A* to C in English have improved from 51% at the time of the follow-up inspection to 65%. Within the department, there continues to be: a sound strategic analysis of performance data to effect further improvement in outcomes; clear identification of the necessary actions to bring about sustainable improvement; and use of a range of appropriate intervention strategies and activities to support and progress the pupils' learning and the outcomes they attain across the key stages. A high priority continues to be given to a whole-school development of the pupils' literacy skills. This is focused on the acquisition and development of the pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum, underpinned by effective continuing professional development for all staff.

The school has been active in seeking a resolution to the issues associated with the unviable sixth form provision. It is working well with the area learning community, employing authority, governors and staff to plan for and ensure a satisfactory outcome to this is achieved in the interest of the pupils, the community and the future sustainability of the school.

Overall Effectiveness

The City of Armagh High School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- embedding further the self-evaluation process to sustain and further improve the standards attained by the pupils.

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