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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

Antrim Grammar School

Inspected: September 2008

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Antrim Grammar School was founded in 1974 and is situated on an attractive 70 acre site which it shares with two other schools. As part of a recent development programme by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board the school has received a major refurbishment and extension to its existing buildings. At the time of the inspection the enrolment was 724 pupils of whom 209 are in the sixth form; approximately 3% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. In the current academic year, all of the pupils enrolled in year 8 obtained either grades A or B in the transfer procedure.

1.2 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, GOVERNORS AND PUPILS

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8, 12, 13 and 14.

One hundred and forty four questionnaires were issued to parents; 64% were returned to the Department of Education and 49 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were mostly affirmative of the work of the school. In particular, the parents mentioned the committed, approachable and supportive teachers, the caring ethos and the high standards attained. The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the parents' questionnaires. The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the effectiveness of the Principal, the commitment and dedication of the staff and the developing links with the community.

Forty-four of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with 20 teachers providing additional written comments. The responses were mostly positive showing evidence of a strong team ethos amongst the staff and their dedication to the work of the school. The support staff responses indicated mainly that they felt valued as members of the school community. In discussions, the pupils talked enthusiastically about the opportunities that are available to them within the school and of the approachable and hard-working teachers. They indicated that they know whom to turn to if they have concerns about their work or personal safety or well-being.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching and leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in addition, on the provision for mathematics, modern languages and science. The school's provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection were also evaluated as was the school's general approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. As an additional evidence base for the inspection, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects. A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The pupils respond confidently to the consistently high expectations of their teachers and display positive attitudes to learning. The school offers a comprehensive range of subjects at both General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) level and is currently broadening its provision with the addition of a number of applied and vocational subjects in collaboration with other organisations. There has been significant improvement in both GCSE and GCE results during 2006-2008.

The standard achieved by the pupils in GCSE examinations is very good. In 2008, pupil achievement in GCSE grades A*-C in at least seven subjects was well above the average for similar Northern Ireland (NI) selective schools. The GCSE results at grades A*-B have shown steady improvement and result in the majority of subjects being within or above five percentage points of the NI average. In a minority of subjects, achievement is more than ten percentage points below the NI average.

Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more GCE Advanced (A) Level grades at A-C has shown clear improvement and the corresponding statistic for 2008 is close to the NI average for similar selective schools. Most subjects are within or above five percentage points of the NI average and a minority of subjects are ten percentage points above. The senior leadership team has recognised the need for further progress in a minority of subjects and appropriate strategies for improvement have been identified and are being implemented.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendices 3 and 4.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The majority of the teaching observed was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice questioning was used adeptly to promote thinking skills and the teachers encouraged the pupils to make extended responses that were valued and consolidated. Assessment for learning strategies including opportunities for self- and peer assessment and well-planned plenary sessions were used constructively, to reinforce and evaluate aspects of the pupils' learning.

2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. This is displayed through the positive working relationships at all levels, the cognisance taken of the individual needs of the pupils and the very caring and supportive ethos throughout the school. The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care gives strong and effective leadership and has developed a collegial approach to the provision for pastoral care.

2.4 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through practical food based activities in home economics and the safer routes to school programme which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.6 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Principal has been in post since February 2007 and provides highly effective leadership. Since taking up appointment he has established a clear and strategic vision for the school. He is energetic and committed to the welfare of the pupils and staff. In consultation with the governors, teaching staff, parents and pupils, he has made good use of wide-ranging qualitative and quantitative management information to inform school development planning which meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The Principal is supported ably by two Vice-principals and the senior leadership team. Leadership and management functions are carried out in an atmosphere of mutual support; this collegiate approach draws effectively on the collective and individual strengths of the team and its members. There is a clear commitment by the middle managers, with whom discussions were held during the inspection, to the ongoing development of the life and work of the school.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the pupils who show a high level of engagement and motivation in their learning, and who display a clear sense of pride in their school community;
- the outstanding provision for pastoral care;
- the high standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE and the improving results at GCE A level;
- the teaching, of which the majority was very good or outstanding;
- the strong, strategic leadership provided by the Principal, senior leadership team and the leaders in pastoral care, mathematics, modern languages and science; and
- the informed use of qualitative and quantitative data to promote improvement in the learning and teaching throughout the school.

4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this organisation is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FOR THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Mathematics

The strengths of the mathematics department include:

- the interest in and attitude to mathematics demonstrated by pupils and teachers;
- the high quality of presentation of the pupils' work and the good standards achieved in public examinations;
- the very good to outstanding quality of the majority of the teaching;
- the good use of assessment for learning;
- the leadership of the head of department and the collegiate management of the department; and
- the detailed analysis of the pupils' performance focused on improving standards.

Modern Languages

The strengths of the modern languages department include:

- the positive ethos and supportive learning environment;
- the pupils' response and attitude to learning languages;
- the standards achieved by many of the pupils in public examinations;
- the quality of the teaching which was good or very good in the lessons observed;
- the reflective and informed leadership of the head of department, the hard-working teachers and strong sense of team-work; and
- the effective self-evaluation which has led to the appropriate identification of areas for development.

Science

The strengths of the science department include:

- the high standards achieved by the pupils in GCE and GCSE science examinations; and the uptake of the sciences at post-16 level;

- the good opportunities provided for the pupils to develop important scientific skills, as well as more generic skills such as working with others;
- the high quality of the teaching observed, including the creative use of ICT to enhance and support the pupils' learning;
- the pupils' participation in extra-curricular science activities and competitions which has increased their interest in science and their motivation to learn;
- the effective leadership of the head of science who has a clear vision for the development of science in the school; and
- the developing use of self-evaluation to improve the pupils' learning.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Antrim Grammar v. Date of Inspection: W/C 29.09.08
 ii. School Reference Number: 341-0209 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Controlled Grammar

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 8 Intake	109	106	104	107	106
Total enrolment	730	707	701	715	724

1.3 Attendance

Year 2007/08	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2007/08	NI Average 2006/07
% Attendance	95.7	95.2	94.6	94.2	94.4	93.3	95.8	95	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	54	53	57	55	59	34	32	344
Enrolment: Girls	52	54	50	50	51	68	55	380
Enrolment: Total	106	107	107	105	110	102	87	724
PTR	17.722	17.889	17.889	15.369	15.348	12.56	12.227	

1.5 Staying On Rate (2007/08) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	99.1	NI Av Year 13	91.7
Year 14	73.0	NI Av Year 14	83.7

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2006/07	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	4		105	
Another School	3	22.6%	2	1.3%
Employment	1	5%	12	5.1%
Full-time Further Education	0	54.4%	16	8.4%
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	71	81.7%
Full-time Training	0	11.7%	4	1.2%
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0	1.9%	0	0.9%
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0	4.5%	0	1.3%

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Antrim Grammar School SCHOOL YEAR: 2008/2009

GCSE	2006	2007	2008
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	99.07
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	90	92.59	97.22
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	90	92.59	95.37
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2006	2007	2008
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	65.71	67.47	74.60
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	91.43	85.54	92.91

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2008, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

Table 1

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-B	French Mathematics Physics	Additional Mathematics History Home Economics	Biology Double Award science 1 st Subject Drama English English Literature Geography Information Technology Spanish	Chemistry Religious Studies	Art and Design Business Studies* German Music* Sport/PE Studies Technology
GCE A level A-C	Economics German Home Economics Music	Chemistry English Literature Mathematics Politics Religious Studies	Biology Design and Technology: Product Design French Further Mathematics Geography History History of Art and Design Physics	Art and Design	Business Studies Information Technology Spanish

* Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 30 pupils over three years

Table showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.

Table 2

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-B		Drama Information Technology Music	Art and Design Biology Chemistry English English Literature History Home Economics Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Additional Mathematics Geography Mathematics Physics Spanish	Business Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject French German Technology
GCE A level A-C		Art and Design Business Studies English Literature French Further Mathematics Geography German History Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies Spanish	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Economics English History of Art and Design Home Economics Information Technology Physics	Computer Studies/Computing Design and Technology: Product Design	

Table showing Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) results 2008

Table 3

	% Distinction	% Merit	% Pass	Total Entry
First Horticulture	100			11
First Horse Care	33	11	44	9

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