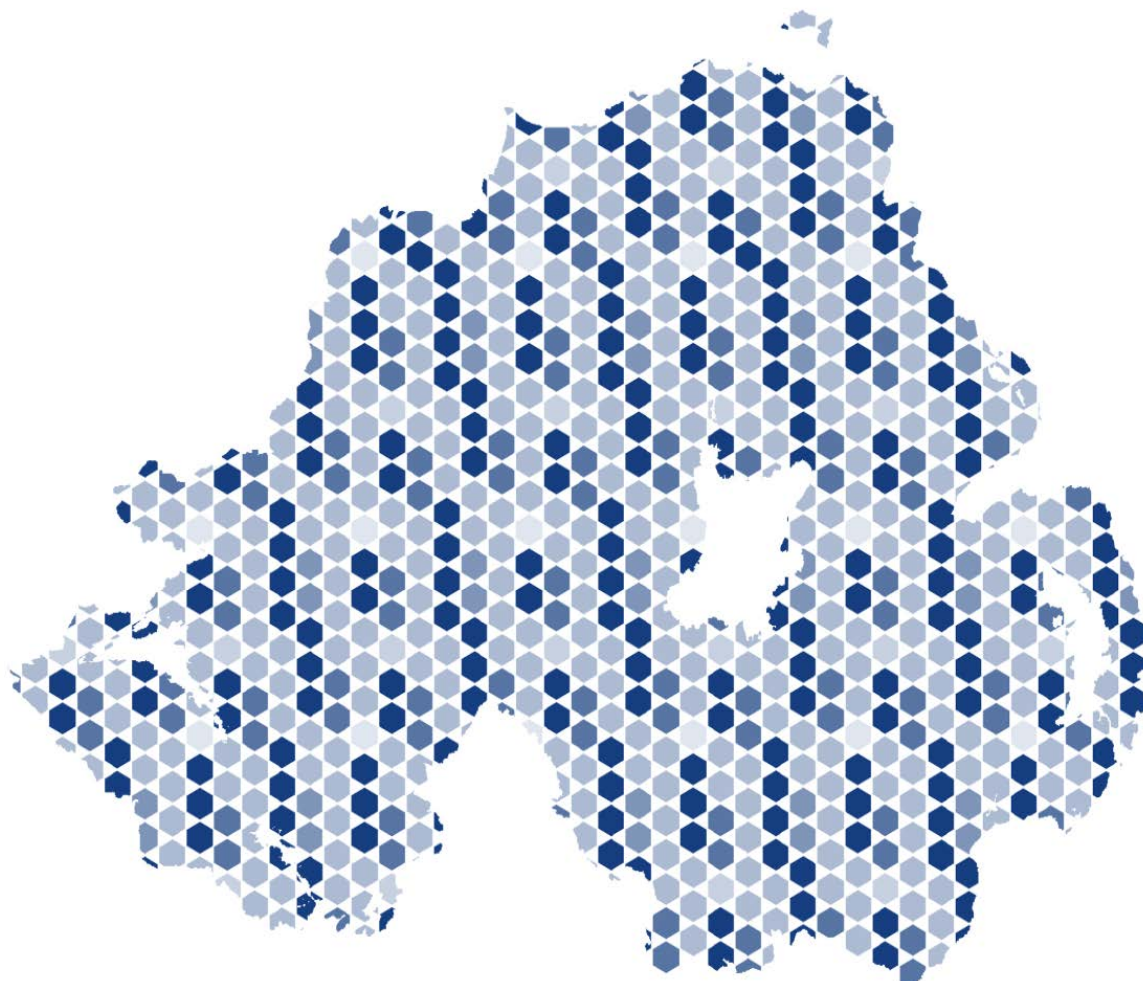


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballymoney High School

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

Report of an Inspection
in October 2012



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CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10 and 12; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	130	55	42	26
Teachers	47	28	60	6
Support Staff	22	5	23	*

* fewer than 5

QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Ballymoney High School draws its pupils from the town and wider rural area. The school was approved for a new build on the existing site in 2003, but further development work has not progressed. The enrolment has remained steady over the last four years and includes 33 pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the Learning Support Centre. In addition to those pupils who require additional support with their learning, an increasing number of pupils also have additional complex social and emotional needs.

Ballymoney High School	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	112	128	123	143
Enrolment	659	661	643	665
% Attendance (NI Average)	90 (91)	91 (91)	91 (91)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage	27	27	27	28
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	15 (101)	16 (109)	20 (128)	20 (135)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream classes	15	18	20	21
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the LSC	33	34	32	33
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	*	9	8	5
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	15	17	14	11
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	71	73	60	62
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	71	83	62	63

Source: data as held by the school. * = fewer than 5

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Ballymoney High School focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to geography, mathematics and science provision, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas; a summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on: the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); and the progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The overall standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate¹.

KEY FINDINGS

When given the opportunity, the pupils work well together and demonstrate good thinking, social and interpersonal skills. The pupils respond well and use subject specific language, when taught effectively and in meaningful contexts. In general, however, they do not have enough opportunities to think and learn independently and collaboratively. The teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are too low. Consequently, the pupils' oral, presentational and independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance:

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98	99	97
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	50	41	42
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	28	22	28
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	76	81	79
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	13	*	10

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks². * = fewer than 5

Over the past three years, almost all of the pupils have been entered for five or more GCSE subjects. There has, however, been a downward trend in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more subjects at grades A* to C. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more subjects at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been consistently below the average for similar schools. In addition, the standards achieved by the pupils who are entitled to free school meals are not high enough.

¹ For additional performance data in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendix 1

² DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

The variation in the performance of individual subjects at grades A* to C is too wide³. One-half of the subjects are more than five percentage points below the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland average; however, a similar proportion are within five percentage points of or above average, and one-third of the subjects are more than 10 percentage points above the average.

The majority of the pupils in the Learning Support Centre achieve good results in a range of external examinations at Entry Level; all of the pupils progress to further education or training programmes.

The majority of the pupils who receive additional support through withdrawal classes and in-class provision make satisfactory progress in line with their ability.

The school has prioritised appropriately the need to raise the pupils' levels of achievement; over the past two years, a range of strategies has been introduced to support this work including target-setting, mentoring and tracking the progress of individual pupils. Alternative qualifications are also being introduced. There is, however, an insufficient focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching in order to raise attainment.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is satisfactory.

The provision in geography and mathematics is satisfactory, and in science it is good⁴.

The teachers are hard-working and prepare thoroughly for lessons. In the best practice, the planning for the teaching of individual subjects identifies detailed and effective approaches and learning strategies.

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from very good to satisfactory; two-thirds of the lessons were evaluated as good or better, and one-third had important areas for improvement.

In the more effective practice: the pupils were given opportunities to think, reflect, demonstrate the extent of their learning, and gave extended responses to effective questions posed by the teacher; the pupils completed a range of challenging activities at a brisk pace; the teacher understood and built successfully upon prior learning; the teachers gave clear explanations, demonstrating sound subject knowledge; and ICT was used well to stimulate interest in learning. In these lessons, the pupils achieved good outcomes.

In the less effective practice: the level of the pupils' engagement in learning was too low, owing to over-directed whole-class teaching and a lack of challenge in the standard of the work; and the teaching was not matched closely enough to the needs and ability of all of the pupils.

³ See Appendix 1 for details.

⁴ For detailed findings of the provision in geography, mathematics and science see Appendix 2.

The effective use of assessment for learning strategies is underdeveloped; it is not informing sufficiently in-class planning to promote appropriate progression and improve the pupils' learning. The school reviewed recently the whole-school homework policy. Whilst the teachers set and mark homework regularly, the pupils do not receive enough meaningful written feedback to help them improve the standard of their work.

3.1.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the pastoral care is good.

The pupils are very well cared for as a result of the inclusive and supportive ethos. The school is committed to the pastoral welfare of the pupils; a wide range of relevant strategies meet effectively the individual social and emotional needs of the pupils. The pupils are courteous and friendly; their behaviour during the inspection was very good. The views of the pupils are sought effectively; the members of the active student council spoke positively about their contribution towards improving the life and work of the school.

The pastoral provision is led well. It has been reviewed over the past few years, and is monitored effectively through, for example, an annual consultation with the pupils. As a result, the taught personal development programme has been revised and is suitably comprehensive and relevant. An effective positive behaviour policy has also been implemented, which incorporates a reward system of which the pupils spoke very positively. There was, however, variation in the quality of the outworking of the pastoral care through the learning and teaching observed.

The parents who completed the confidential questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school and commented, in particular, on the approachable and caring teachers.

The pastoral provision, in which there are significant strengths, needs to support more closely the raising of achievement for all of the pupils.

The school is committed strongly to supporting pupils who are at risk of marginalisation and has in place effective strategies to ensure their inclusion and retention in school. The school is putting in place arrangements for the senior teachers to visit regularly the small number of pupils who are placed appropriately in alternative education provision off-site to ensure their pastoral and academic needs are being met.

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The canteen staff work well with the pastoral team, other staff and pupils to promote health and well-being initiatives.

The quality of provision for pupils in the in the Learning Support Centre is good.

The teachers and classroom assistants in the Learning Support Centre provide a supportive and caring learning environment. The pupils attend the centre for the core subjects and integrate into mainstream classes for all other subjects. The learning in the Learning Support Centre is planned appropriately around the individual needs of the pupils and matched well to their interests and ability.

At present, there is a lack of resources available within the centre to support and develop literacy and ICT.

The overall quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

The withdrawal classes are well planned and, in the sessions observed, the pupils responded well to the individual support provided by the learning support teacher. In particular, these sessions focus appropriately on raising the pupils' standards of reading and comprehension.

Currently, across the school, the targets within the individual education plans are too general to inform the teachers' planning and classroom practice. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop the individual education plans and to involve teachers in using subject-specific strategies to meet the needs of individual learners

The quality of the provision for CEIAG is good.

The pupils have a good understanding of the future options open to them including those provided through vocational pathways. They speak highly of the individual guidance provided by their careers teachers and the careers advisor. The CEIAG provision is well planned; the taught course focuses appropriately on the explicit development of employability skills. The pupils benefit from a range of careers events, enterprise programmes, visits, and in year 12 work experience which enables them to explore work in the local economy and to make more informed career choices.

The careers provision is led and monitored well; as a result, the school has identified appropriately the need to develop further CEIAG across the other subjects in order that it is more meaningful.

3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils at key stage (KS) 3. At KS4 the pupils have access to a range of academic and vocational options to match their interests. The school, in collaboration with other local post-primary schools and the further education college, is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

The school's policy on entering pupils for public examinations is not tailored closely enough to the needs and ability of all of the pupils; senior leadership need to review this policy in order to match the number, type and level of the courses on offer with the needs, ability and aspirations of all of the pupils.

There is a good range of relevant sporting and non-sporting extra-curricular activities available during lunch and after-school which meets effectively the pupils' interests.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The overall quality of leadership and the management is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The senior management committee (SMC), consisting of the principal, vice-principal, two senior teachers and special educational needs co-ordinator, provide effective leadership of key aspects of the work of the school; there is a co-ordinated and systematic approach towards overseeing the pastoral and curricular work of the middle management, and

under-performance in subject areas is challenged appropriately. There are clear systems for communication between the SMC and the teachers. The SMC have begun recently to monitor and evaluate, with clearly defined focuses to inform whole-school self-evaluation, the pupils' work and departmental planning.

The middle managers are enthusiastic about their role, review regularly the pupils' outcomes, and demonstrate a commitment to the school improvement agenda.

However, the SMC and middle management do not monitor closely enough the quality of the provision for learning in order to identify actions and effect improvement. Leadership at all levels now need to give a higher priority to monitoring, evaluating, and leading strategically the development of learning and teaching in order to raise the low standards.

There is a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) which has been reviewed recently in line with The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (NI) 2010. The SDP priorities are informed appropriately by self-evaluation, the analysis of performance data, and very good consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors. At all levels, there is variation in the quality of the action plans to support development work; in general, the success criteria are not suitably specific and measurable.

At a whole-school level, the effective use of assessment data is at an early stage of development; targets are set for individual pupils, and their progress is tracked. Currently, the data is not used sufficiently to raise the teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and to identify learning and teaching strategies that will bring about sustained improvement.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection the governors are informed about some important aspects of the work and life of the school; they have a good knowledge of whole-school performance in public examinations, and maintain an overview of the outworking of the SDP. The governors could usefully strengthen their role in overseeing the strategic work of the school by encouraging the senior leaders to improve the quality of learning and teaching and develop further the curriculum to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the minor areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils; these arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The senior leadership has established purposeful curricular links within the Ballymoney Area Learning Community at KS3 and KS4, as well as pastoral links to help foster positive values among the pupils. The school also has effective links with a range of other external agencies and professionals to assist with specialist work and support vulnerable pupils overcome barriers to learning.

The available accommodation is used effectively to support learning and teaching, despite the concerns⁵ expressed by the governors.

⁵ Issues relating to the school's accommodation are detailed in Appendix 3.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the pupils are to be met more effectively.

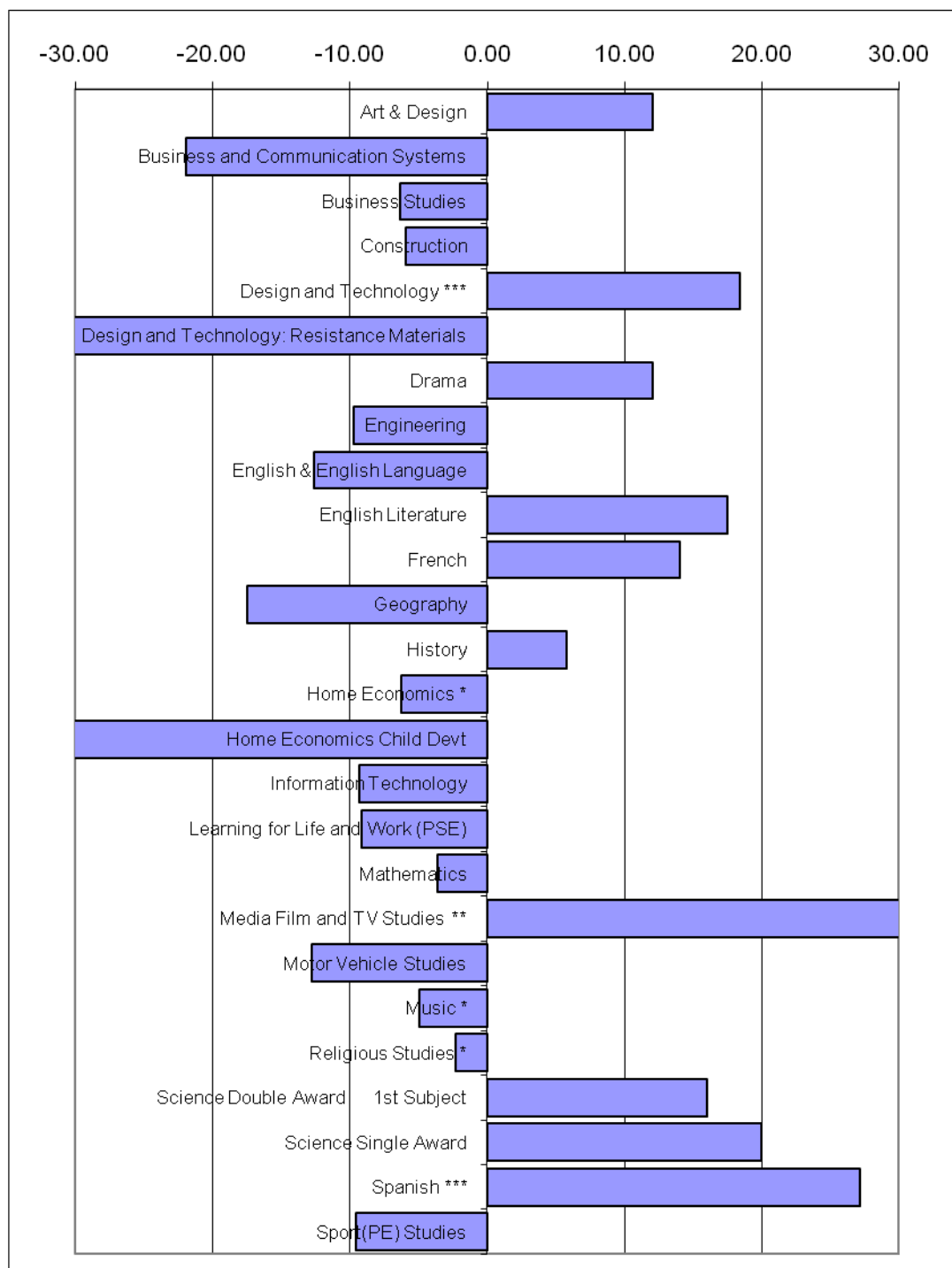
5.2 The main areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise the overall standards achieved by the pupils including the levels of attainment in public examinations;
- for the teachers to raise their expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and use assessment more effectively to inform classroom practice in order to meet the needs and ability of all of the pupils; and
- for leadership, at all levels, to develop further their role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching in order to identify actions to effect sustained improvement in the provision.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A* to C



* fewer than 30 entries over the past three years

** new subject with the first cohort, of less than 30 pupils, entered in 2012

*** fewer than 30 entries over the past three years with no entries in 2011 or 2012

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

Level 2	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
<i>Occupational Studies</i>	100	100	95	43
<i>Certificate of Personal Effectiveness</i>	-	86	81	53

LEAVERS DESTINATIONS

	Year 12		
	No.	%	NI %
TOTAL	141		
Another School	17	12	16
Employment	5	4	4
Full-time Further Education	85	60	45
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	N/A
Full-time Training	24	17	28
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	6	4	4
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	4	3	3

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: GEOGRAPHY, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

Geography

The quality of the provision for geography is satisfactory.

The strengths include the:

- good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- notable improvement in GSCE outcomes at grades A* to C over the past 3 years;
- effective use made of ICT to support the pupils' learning;
- good quality planning which provides opportunities for the pupils to investigate a range of relevant local and global geographical issues and build on the pupils' interests; and
- effective leadership of the recently-appointed head of department and her commitment to raising standards and developing the provision.

The areas for development include the need:

- to improve further the standards attained at GCSE by all of the pupils; and
- to develop a broader range of teaching strategies to ensure that the activities are matched more closely to the needs and abilities of all of the pupils.

Mathematics

The quality of the provision for mathematics is satisfactory.

The strengths include the:

- high level of individual support provided for the pupils;
- good quality of the teaching in just over one-half of the lessons observed;
- range of activities used to promote mathematics;
- hard-work and commitment of the teachers; and
- good leadership and management of the department.

The areas for development include the need:

- to raise the expectations set for the pupils through more challenging classroom activities and effective questioning; and
- to improve the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is good.

The strengths include the:

- very good relationships between the pupils and the teachers in all of the lessons observed;
- very good standards attained by the pupils in public examinations at GCSE level;
- good or very good teaching in most of the lessons observed and, in particular, the good levels of individual pupil support provided by the teachers in order to address low attainment;
- good quality of the resources and the good use of ICT to support the learning and teaching; and
- effective leadership of the head of department and the collegial commitment of the departmental team to improve classroom practice.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to use formative assessment more effectively to promote learning and to inform classroom practice so that the teaching is matched more closely to the needs, interests and ability of the pupils.

ACCOMMODATION AND/OR HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Roof leakage above laboratory 5, and above sections of the corridors adjacent to room 24 and laboratory 3.
- Water leakage and a heat loss through the aluminium window frames in the main teaching block.
- The electrical wiring in the main teaching block needs replaced in line with the North Eastern Education and Library Board recommendation.

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