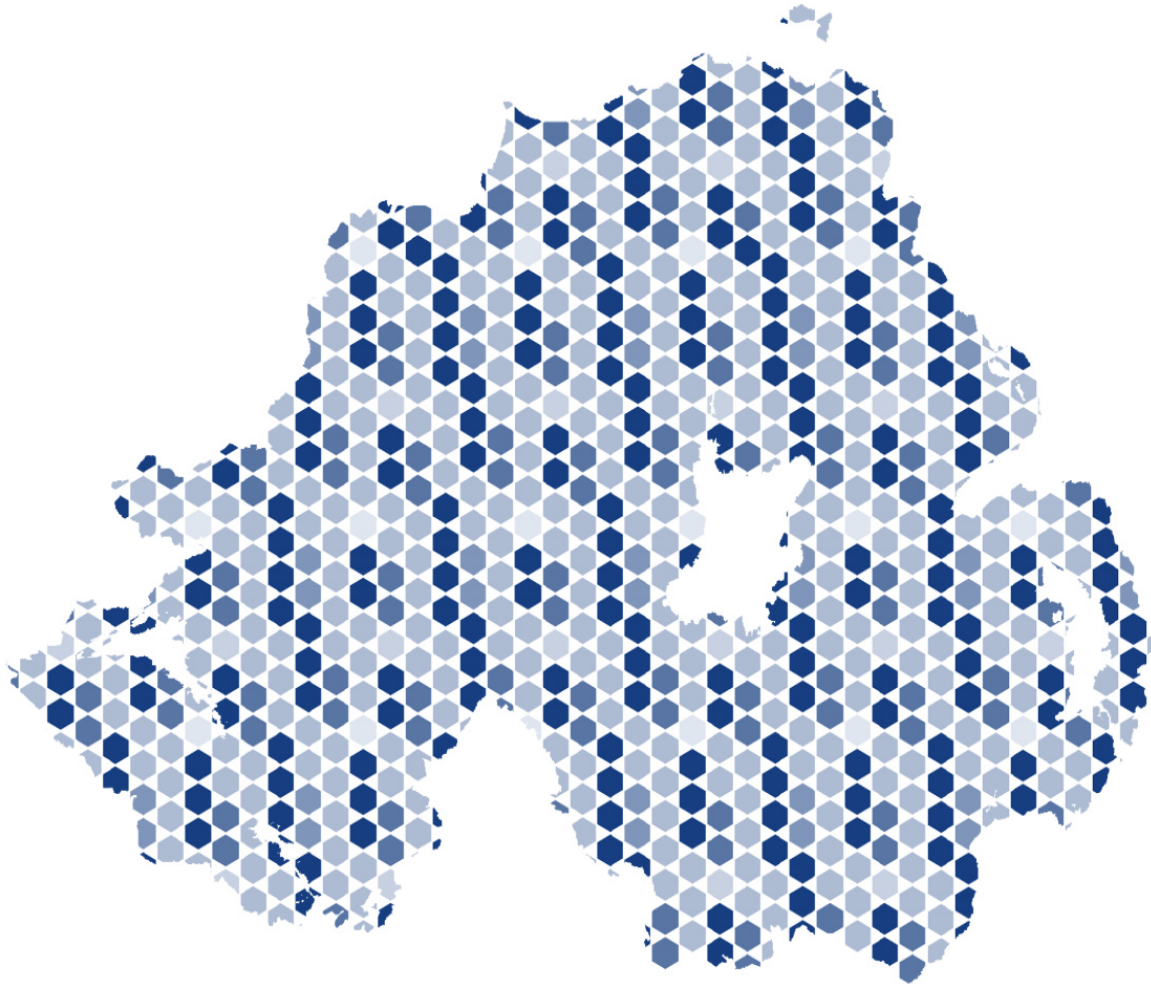


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Christian Brothers' Grammar
School, Omagh

Report of an Inspection
in October 2010

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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Omagh Christian Brothers' Grammar School is an all-boys, voluntary grammar school situated near the town centre with 961 pupils between the ages of 11 and 19, including a sixth form of 273 boys. The school draws its pupils from a large number of primary schools in the town and wider rural areas within an approximate 25 mile radius; the enrolment has increased steadily over the last three years. The school has identified approximately 12% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning. Approximately 13% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching;
- provision across a wide range of subjects with a particular focus in English, science and home economics, including the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum;
- the progress being made towards an extended curriculum;
- the views of the pupils, parents, teachers, support staff and governors;
- the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection;
- the approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity;
- 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
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the high levels of maturity, confidence and courtesy of the pupils;
- the high standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations;
- the quality of the teaching which, in over one-half of the lessons observed, was very good or outstanding;

- the commitment of the teaching and non-teaching staff to meeting the needs of all of the pupils;
- the very good strategic leadership provided by the Principal and his senior leadership team; and
- the work of the governors and the support they provide for the teachers and the pupils.

A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

3. THE VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL

The arrangements for the inspection 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, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

One hundred and ninety questionnaires were issued to parents; 53% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 38 contained additional written comments. Most of the responses from the questionnaires were positive, indicating strong support for almost all aspects of the work and life of the school. In the written comments, a significant minority reflected on how well-settled their child was and the good educational opportunities available within the school, including the helpful support in regard to special educational needs. A majority of the written responses raised concerns about a range of issues, including aspects of the curriculum on offer, the careers advice provided for their child and the procedures in place to promote positive behaviour.

Fifty-four teachers completed confidential questionnaires with 22 teachers providing additional written comments. Most of the teachers' responses, and a number of their written comments, reflect very positively on aspects of the life and work of the school, for example, the mutual respect between the staff and the pupils and the support provided for the pupils with special needs. However, a number of the questions elicited negative responses from a minority of teachers and from a majority of those who provided written comments. Concerns included communication within the school, working relationships and insufficient opportunities for discussion and identification of the school's priorities; they highlighted that they did not feel valued by senior leadership and management and were not content with the high level of administrative duties.

Forty-five support staff also completed confidential questions with eight providing additional written comments. The responses from the support staff and most of their written comments were positively affirmative of the life and work of the school.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the commitment and contribution of the Principal and the senior leadership team. They reported that they were well-informed of the work of the school, including the recent changes in the curriculum provision, the standards the pupils achieve and the school's financial situation.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires, which are dealt with in the report.

In discussions held with the pupils, they talked enthusiastically about the school, its facilities and their subjects. They expressed their appreciation of the community spirit within the school and the support they receive from the staff for both their learning and their personal development and well-being. The pupils were very positive about the opportunities provided for them to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, games and after school clubs. While they acknowledged that the school promotes and rewards positive behaviour, some concerns were voiced about the operation and impact of the current system. These have been discussed with the school. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of where to seek help if they have any concerns and need support.

4 KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The achievements and standards achieved by the pupils in this school are very good. In the course of the inspection, the pupils showed high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning, matching the high expectations of their teachers. When given the opportunity, they worked well in group or paired activities and responded confidently to the learning opportunities provided, some of which were of a high level of challenge. The pupils, including those with identified special needs, demonstrate continuous improvement in their learning. Early identification and intervention for those pupils with significant special needs, often associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), ensures that these pupils progress well. The school's procedures for their post-18 placement are very effective; there is evidence that the very good liaison with the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) Transitions Service and voluntary organisations, such as The Cedar Foundation, has resulted in them securing university placements.

The pupils have excellent opportunities to engage in a wide range of sporting, social and cultural extra-curricular activities which add significantly to their overall education experience.

Over three-fifths of pupils achieve grades A* to B in at least seven General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects; this proportion has grown steadily over the past three years. Over the last three years, the percentage of grades A* to B for most of the subjects is within five percentage points of, or above, the respective Northern Ireland (NI) average.

The percentage of pupils achieving seven or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, over the past three years has also grown steadily and is above the NI average for similar schools.

The percentage of pupils achieving the equivalent of three or more General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Level grades A* to C, over the last three years, is above the NI average for similar selective schools. In addition, over the last three years, the percentage of grades A* to C for most of the subjects is more than five percentage points above the respective NI average.

The pupils with additional learning needs attain well in the public examinations.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 4.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The teaching, learning and assessment in the provision observed is very good.

4.2.1 TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed was good or better; in just over half of the lessons it was very good or outstanding.

In the best practice observed: thorough planning for the intended learning informed the well-structured lessons; there was good use of stimulus material to engage the pupils; the work built on the pupils' previous learning; there was good pace and challenge, arising from the teachers' high expectations; assessment for learning strategies, including effective questioning, were used very well; and the teachers were very secure in their subject knowledge.

The school has identified clearly those pupils who are in need of additional support for their learning. Planning for special educational needs (SEN) is informed by the detailed and relevant individual education plans (IEPs). The teachers use the IEPs well to inform their classroom management, teaching and learning strategies and resources. In the majority of lessons, the teachers assess the pupils' progress, adjust the pace and differentiate content as needed. Close monitoring by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) allows potential difficulties for pupils to be addressed promptly and parents to be kept informed of progress and any behavioural issues. Lessons are ably supported by effective intervention by the classroom assistants. A strong feature of good practice is the clear recognition of the importance of links with pastoral provision especially for those pupils with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils, which is relevant to their interests, abilities and career aspirations. In recent years, the school has made very good progress in extending appropriately the curricular offer at both key stage (KS) 4 and post-16, and has achieved a good balance between applied and academic subjects and pathways. The Principal and senior leadership team are committed to the rationale which underpins the aims of the Entitlement Framework. While there is some evidence of collaboration with other education providers, this remains at an early stage and benefits only a small number of pupils. Collaborative links with the local further education college are under-developed.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for the pastoral care of the pupils is very good. The school has a very inclusive, caring and supportive ethos and demonstrates a holistic approach to the personal and social development of the pupils. The Head of Wellbeing provides very strong and effective leadership of this dimension of the school's work and is well supported by key pastoral staff and the entire school community. Strong and effective links with the SENCO ensure that those pupils with significant challenges are given outstanding guidance and support. In addition, there are very good links with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Among the strengths of the pastoral provision are: the developments of the Wellbeing Centre; the commitment given to meeting the needs of individual pupils; the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular learning experiences; the importance placed on listening to the pupils, particularly through the Student Council; and the emphasis given to encouraging positive behaviour.

4.2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

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

4.2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the nutritional quality of the school meals and the strong emphasis on participation in sport, which encourages the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

4.2.6 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (CEIAG)

The quality of the provision for CEIAG is very good. There is a significant commitment by senior management to a coherent, supportive and well-resourced programme of employability and careers provision throughout the school. There is a strong focus, beginning in year 8, on the progressive development of the pupils' skills and personal qualities to make informed, sensible and realistic decisions at key transition points.

The provision is led and managed very effectively; the head of careers is enthusiastic, forward-thinking and reflective and has developed a strong department. Good links have been established with an extensive range of appropriate external organisations, which are used to good effect. The careers teachers know all of the pupils very well; they monitor, record and analyse systematically their aptitudes, interests, aspirations and progress. As a result, the pupils benefit from high quality careers advice and guidance and have a good understanding of the world of work and of the education, training and employment opportunities that are available locally and further afield. The post-16 pupils are particularly well supported through effective timetabled provision, relevant work experience placements, good access to careers teachers on an individual basis and very good guidance and preparation for university applications and associated interviews. The extensive, collective planning for the CEIAG provision leads to consistently good classroom experiences for the pupils; the quality of the teaching in careers and employability is very good and the needs of the pupils are very well met.

The school provides the pupils and their parents with an excellent range and quality of documentation to inform their choices at the key transition stages. The school has recognised the need to evolve the use of a virtual learning environment to extend the range and variety of the experiences available to the pupils.

4.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management at all levels is very good; it is very effective in raising achievement, supporting the pupils and developing the curriculum.

The quality of the leadership and management provided by the Principal and the senior leadership team is very good. The Principal has been in post for five years; he knows his school well and is committed and dedicated to the work of the school and to raising the standards the pupils achieve. He provides clear strategic leadership in important aspects of the school's work, including having a strong curriculum vision. In the last two years, new appointments have been made to the senior leadership team, who ably and enthusiastically support the Principal. There is a need to keep under review how the work of the Principal, the Vice-principal, the senior leadership team, the responsibility holders who comprise the middle management and the classroom teachers, can best be harnessed to ensure a more collegial approach to achieving the school's vision.

The responsibilities of the members of the senior leadership team are linked strongly to the work of key committees, which work effectively at strategic and operational levels. The Staff Welfare Committee has a representative sample of the teaching and non-teaching staff and there is evidence that a number of initiatives proposed by it have been taken forward by the school.

The school's process for improvement has strengths including the requirement for all committees, departments and post holders to have development plans and report progress three times a year in addition to an annual summative evaluation. Over the last year, a common approach has been taken to aspects of departmental planning. The inspection endorses this ongoing review of the development planning process; there are insufficient opportunities for inclusive whole staff discussions and there is a need for a greater coherence to all the development plans. The quality of the evaluations has improved in recent years, although in general they are not sufficiently based on first-hand evidence.

The senior leadership team has only recently started to develop the School Development Plan in order that it fully meets the requirement of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The areas for improvement include the need to have a clear outline of the main top priorities for improvement and associated whole-school action plans to address these priorities. The inspection endorses the decision to revive the Parent's Council in order to extend the consultation process in preparation of the Development Plan.

The SENCO provides very good leadership to the work with pupils with SEN. He manages the arrangements for supporting pupils with SEN very effectively and the staff value his expertise and the information, advice and training he delivers through staff development and information sessions.

5. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school 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 FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of provision for English is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the excellent relationships at all levels and the engagement and enjoyment in learning demonstrated by almost all of the pupils;
- the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations in English subjects, especially at GCE Advanced level;
- the professional consistency of approach evident in the very good and outstanding teaching observed;
- the excellent progress being made, by the vast majority of the pupils, in all aspects of English and English Literature;
- the quality and effectiveness of the strategic leadership and management of the English department, including the effectiveness of the self-evaluation for improvement.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the positive working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the good or very good quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed;
- the willingness of the pupils to respond enthusiastically and apply their scientific knowledge when given the opportunities;
- the good standards achieved in public examinations;
- the commitment of all the teachers to the review and improvement of classroom practice; and
- the effective analysis of benchmarked data which is shared across the departments and used to monitor improvement.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to review the arrangements for the leadership and management of science at KS3; and

- to adopt a more strategic approach to action planning that focuses on improving the quality of the pupils' learning and is informed by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and the quality of the pupils' work.

Home Economics

The quality of the provision for home economics is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the strong commitment of the Principal to the development of home economics throughout the school;
- the strategic and committed leadership of the head of department;
- the hard working teachers and the very good teaching observed in all of the lessons;
- the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations at KS4;
- the effectively developed schemes of work which guide the teachers well and meet the needs of all the pupils at KS3 and in KS4 GCSE hospitality; and
- the very good use of ICT to support learning and teaching.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Christian Brothers Grammar, Omagh v. Date of Inspection: W/C 18/10/10
 ii. School Reference Number: 242-0064 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	139	139	136	137	139
Total enrolment	928	941	929	940	961

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	94.6	93.8	94.5	92.1	96.0	93.4	92.4	94	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 63.9 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.89
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 15.0

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	139	133	136	142	138	147	126	961
Enrolment: Girls								
Enrolment: Total	139	133	136	142	138	147	126	961
PTR	16.99	16.26	16.25	17.05	16.35	13.24	11.19	

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

Year 13	102.4	NI Av Year 13	92.6
Year 14	89.6	NI Av Year 14	86.4

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	12		132	
Another School	8.3%	24.1	1%	1.3
Employment	16.6%	3	6%	3.4
Full-time Further Education	58.3%	58.9	3%	9.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	86%	82.8
Full-time Training	15%	6.4	0%	0.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.7	0%	1.0
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	8.3%	5.9	4%	1.6

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh

SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	91.79	96.83	99.26
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	84.33	92.86	95.56
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	86.57	92.06	94.81
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	82.84	89.68	94.07
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	73.44	70.00	76.70
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	85.16	85.38	84.17

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and (GCE A2⁺) subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, 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	Additional Mathematics* Spanish	Art and Design History	Business Studies Chemistry Design and Technology English English Literature Geography Home Economics Food Information Technology Irish Music Physics Religious Studies Science Double Award Science Single Award Sport(PE) Studies	French Mathematics	Biology
GCE A Level A-C	Accounting(Finance)* Business Studies Chemistry D&T: Product Design* Information Technology Music* Spanish Sport(PE) Studies *	Applied ICT Art and Design Biology Design and Technology English Literature Geography History Mathematics Mathematics Further* Moving Image Arts Politics Religious Studies	Applied Business		Irish* Physics

* denotes aggregate entries less than 30 at GCSE or less than 20 at GCE

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		Music	Information Technology Science Single Award Sport(PE) Studies	Art and Design Biology Chemistry Design and Technology English English Literature Geography History Irish Mathematics Mathematics Additional Physics Religious Studies	Business Studies French Home Economics Food Science Double Award Spanish
GCE A Level A-C		Applied Business Applied ICT Art and Design English Literature History Irish Mathematics Mathematics Further Moving Image Arts Music Politics Religious Studies	Biology Business Studies Chemistry Design and Technology Geography Information Technology Physics Spanish	Accounting(Finance) D&T: Product Design Sport(PE) Studies	

Table 3 - Other examinations

Applied General Certificate of Education

	2008		2009		2010		Total Entry over 3 years
	% A - C	% A - E	% A - C	% A - E	% A - C	% A - E	
GCE Leisure and Recreation	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	28

BTEC National

2010	Entry	Distinction	Merit	Pass
Sport – Certificate Level	5	5	0	0
Sport – Diploma Level	3	2	0	1

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