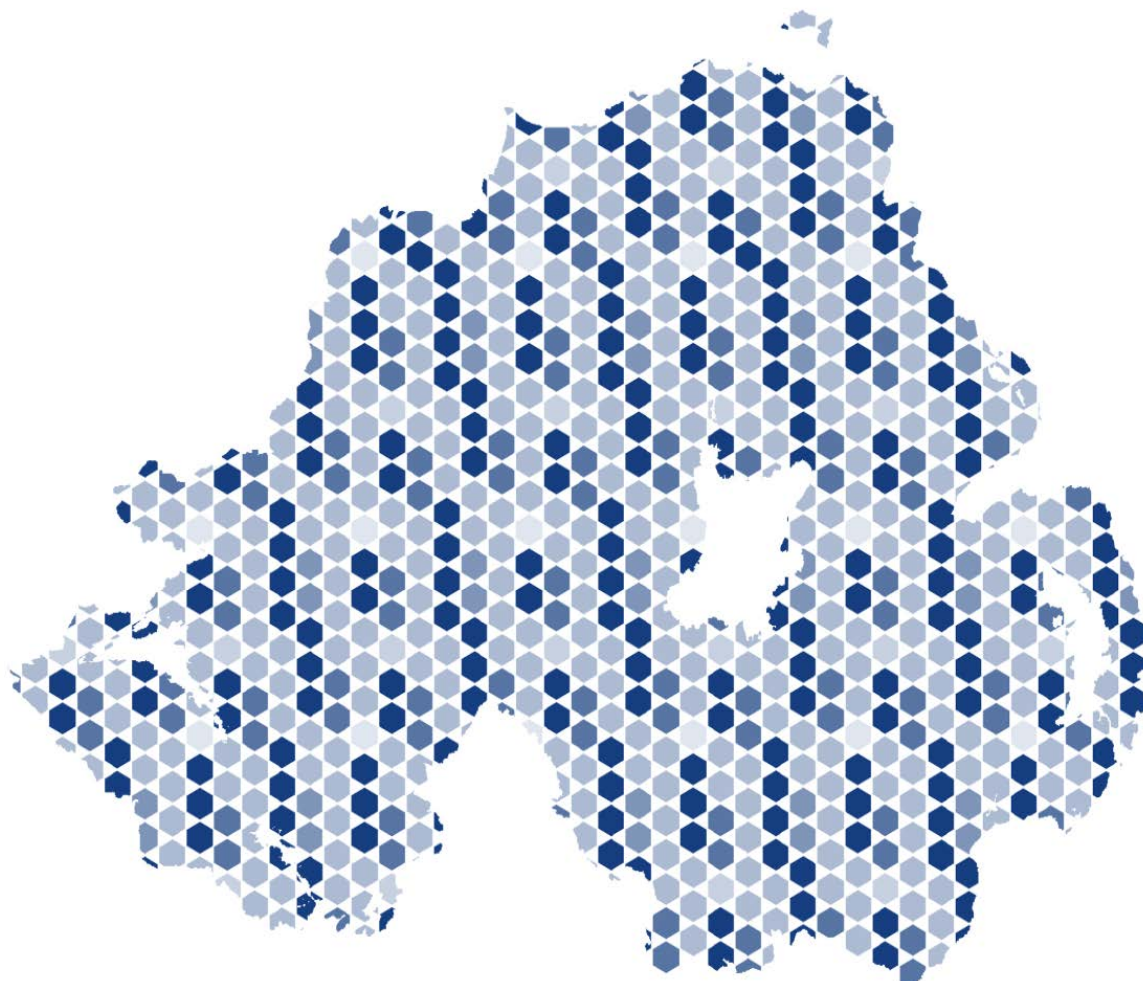


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

City of Armagh High School

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

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
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 12, 13 and 14; 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	131	38	29	20
Teachers	26	21	81	6
Support Staff	17	10	60	*

* fewer than 5

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF SCHOOL

Enrolment in the school has declined by 22% since 2009 to its current level of 260 pupils. The school has a small sixth form with only 13 pupils enrolled. The school has a designated Learning Support Centre and an Autism Support Centre comprising a total of 37 pupils; six of the pupils are enrolled in a year 13 transition course to further education or training programmes. Pupil attendance levels have increased over the last four years.

City of Armagh High School	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	43	35	47	42
Total Enrolment	335	289	262	260
% Attendance (NI Average)	90.5 (90.6)	92.0 (91.0)	92 (92.6)	92.3
FSME Percentage ¹	18.5	20.8	21.0	22.8
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	31.9 (107)	28.4 (82)	26.0 (68)	31.5 (76)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream classes	22	18	14	17
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the Learning Support Centre	41	29	25	21
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the Autism Support Centre	16	15	12	17
No. of newcomers	12	16	16	14
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	4.7	11.4	12.8	2.4
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	18.6	20.0	19.2	8.3
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	53.5	68.6	61.7	63.9
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	58.1	80.0	74.5	72.2

Source: data as held by the school.

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of City of Armagh 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 the provision in English and mathematics, and they 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; 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. The school's Learning Support and Autism Support Centres were included in the inspection.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

At the time of the inspection, sixth form lessons were not inspected because all of the year 13 and 14 pupils were undertaking their planned work experience programme.

1.3. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The achievements and standards attained by the pupils are satisfactory².

KEY FINDINGS

During the inspection the pupils were well-behaved and showed a positive disposition to their learning. A minority of the pupils lack confidence and were reticent in their oral responses during their lessons.

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	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	72.3	52.3	57.5
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well above</i>	<i>Below</i>	<i>In line with</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	49.2	21.5	17.5
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well above</i>	<i>Well below</i>	<i>Significantly below</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	92.3	87.7	92.5
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	16.7	10.0	8.3

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks³

Since 2010 all year 12 pupils are entered for GCSE or equivalent in at least five subjects. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C has declined from a high level in 2010 when it was well-above the average. Over the same period, the percentage obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has also declined and is particularly low for those pupils entitled to free school

² For additional performance data in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendix 1

³ Department of Education (DE) Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

meals. This decline is due, in most part to a marked drop in the levels of attainment in GCSE English. Given the small numbers of pupils in year 12 (40 pupils in 2012), the performance of a relatively small number of pupils has disproportionately affected the overall figures for attainment. There is evidence of underachievement in English by a minority of pupils who attained higher grades in their other subjects. In contrast, across the school as a whole, the pupils' achievements in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects are good. The three year average in both design and technology and single award science at GCSE grades A*-C are more than 20% above the average for non-selective schools.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	40	0	83
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100	100

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks⁴.

For the small number of pupils who have enrolled in the sixth form, the standards in General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) levels over the last three years are satisfactory, with all of the pupils attaining a pass in at least two subjects. The results in Health and Social Care are very good. Nevertheless, given the small number of pupils and the limited curriculum offer, the sixth form provision is not sustainable.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the provision in English is satisfactory and the quality of the provision in mathematics is good⁵.

The quality of the lessons observed ranged from very good to a small number which were inadequate. In the better lessons, the teachers' expectations were consistently high, there was clear evidence of enjoyment in the learning. The teachers made effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and well-planned group work to enhance the pupils' learning.

In the less effective practice, the pace of learning was slow with an over-reliance on low level worksheet activities which did not provide sufficient challenge and stimulation for the pupils, and opportunities for pupils to write at any length were too limited.

The quality of provision for Special Educational Needs is good.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through the use of baseline testing and effective liaison between the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and subject teachers.

⁴ DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

⁵ For detailed findings of the provision in English and Mathematics, see Appendix 2.

The pupils make good progress, in line with their abilities considering the barriers they face in their learning. They work well alongside their peers in class and are involved fully in the life of the school. In the withdrawal lessons, the pupils learn with confidence and respond well to sensitive, flexible and well-focused one-to-one support provided by a well-managed team of effective classroom assistants.

The SENCO provides the teachers with helpful and practical information and guidance in setting targets and developing strategies to support the pupils in class. The teachers track the progress of the pupils who require additional support in meeting the targets outlined in the individual education plans in a consistent way. However, the whole-school monitoring and evaluation of the associated learning and teaching strategies to meet the needs of all the pupils on an individual basis remains underdeveloped.

The Learning Support and the Autism Support Centres

The quality of education and pastoral care for the pupils with specific learning differences and difficulties in the Learning Support and the Autism Support Centres is good.

The pupils achieve well in external examinations and make good progress as a result of the effective quality of the teachers' and teaching assistants' planning and support for individual pupils. The school needs to develop the individual education plans to align them more closely with the pupils' learning profiles on entry to the school and review the assessment approaches to ensure more rigorous diagnostic guidance to inform learning and teaching.

3.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory

KEY FINDINGS

The results of the parental questionnaires, with very few exceptions, show high levels of satisfaction with the school. The returns highlighted the good communications with parents, the parental workshops, the pastoral support for the pupils, and the support for the pupils with special educational needs.

During the inspection, the pupils were friendly, courteous and related well to each other. Although the school council has an election system and there is good representation from all classes, the school recognises the need to help the pupils to play a more active role in the life and work of the school and to contribute more effectively to decision-making than they currently do. The staff understand the needs of the pupils; they have established appropriate links to outside agencies to support the development of the pupils' emotional health and well-being. More needs to be done, however, to strengthen the collaboration between the vice-principal for pastoral care, the pastoral team, the SENCO and subject teachers in order to ensure an holistic approach to the educational, social and emotional development of the pupils.

The pupils talked enthusiastically about the reward system, which is effective in motivating them and recognising well their achievements. The pupils are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

3.3 The curricular provision for the pupils at Key Stage (KS3) and KS4 is good. The curricular provision for the pupils in the sixth form is inadequate.

At KS4, the school meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. There is effective collaboration with the Southern Regional College for groups of pupils in years 11 and 12 undertaking occupational studies. The limited collaboration with other schools within the Armagh Area Learning Community, however, presents persistent challenges regarding viable class sizes for a minority of subjects at KS4. Appropriately, all pupils undertake GCSE science which serves them well in maintaining an appropriate breadth of progression pathways.

The pupils in the two support centres have access to a curriculum which is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet their needs; they are able to access an appropriate range of subjects within the school as a whole.

The number progressing to the school's sixth form is very low. The small sixth form cohort constrains the school's capacity to increase appropriately the breadth and balance of the curriculum provision. Furthermore, the sixth form pupils do not have adequate opportunities to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities, which would meet their interests and support their personal and social development. The sustainability of the sixth form needs to be reviewed urgently by the employing authority, school governors and the school leadership team.

The provision for CEIAG is good.

At KS 4, the pupils have good opportunities to develop the skills and qualities to support their progression to further study and employment through a well-planned taught careers programme. Good use is made of the Progress File in raising the pupils' levels of self esteem through heightened self-awareness of their individual achievements and personal and social development. The pupils have good access to independent impartial advice and guidance that does much to inform them on relevant progression pathways. This is supported effectively by the well- planned programme of guest speakers and careers visits, and the good use of work experience that is undertaken by year 12 and sixth form pupils.

The careers team have a thorough knowledge of their pupils, however, there are insufficient linkages between the elements of care, guidance and support to maximise the pupils' potential and to raise standards of achievement. There is a need to review the monitoring and evaluation and quality improvement planning process for CEIAG and to place an appropriate focus on its key role in informing curriculum design and development.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality and effectiveness of the leadership and the management are inadequate.

KEY FINDINGS

The teachers and the support staff report harmonious working relationships and effective communication with the senior leadership team. There are however, shortcomings in the effectiveness of senior leadership. Whole-school self-evaluation is not effective in identifying precisely the strengths or the key areas for improvement, evaluating the quality of the learning and teaching and the development of literacy across the curriculum. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team are not clear and there is insufficient accountability throughout the school.

The inspection identified examples of good practice where some of the middle management demonstrate considerable commitment and action on school improvement through their participation in a School Improvement Group. The achievements of this group include the introduction of a programme of connected learning at KS3, and the school's participation in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, ICT Accreditation scheme. The senior leadership team, however, has not provided this group with a remit which is defined clearly enough to bring about improvement in learning and teaching, and to raise the standards achieved by the pupils consistently across the school.

The governors are committed to the life and work of the school, and have played an active role in discussions on the future of the school. While they provide a degree of challenge to the principal, accountability for the performance of the senior leadership team by the governors is underdeveloped. The school budget is in a deficit which needs to be addressed urgently by the governors and the employing authority in the interests of the whole school community.

Given the shortfalls in whole school self-evaluation, the school development plan is not compliant with the requirements of the 'The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010'.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the DE. There is a need, however, to update and review the training in safeguarding for a small number of the staff and governors, and to clarify the reporting arrangements in the child protection and anti-bullying policies.

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 particularly in leadership and management which need to be addressed urgently if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively.

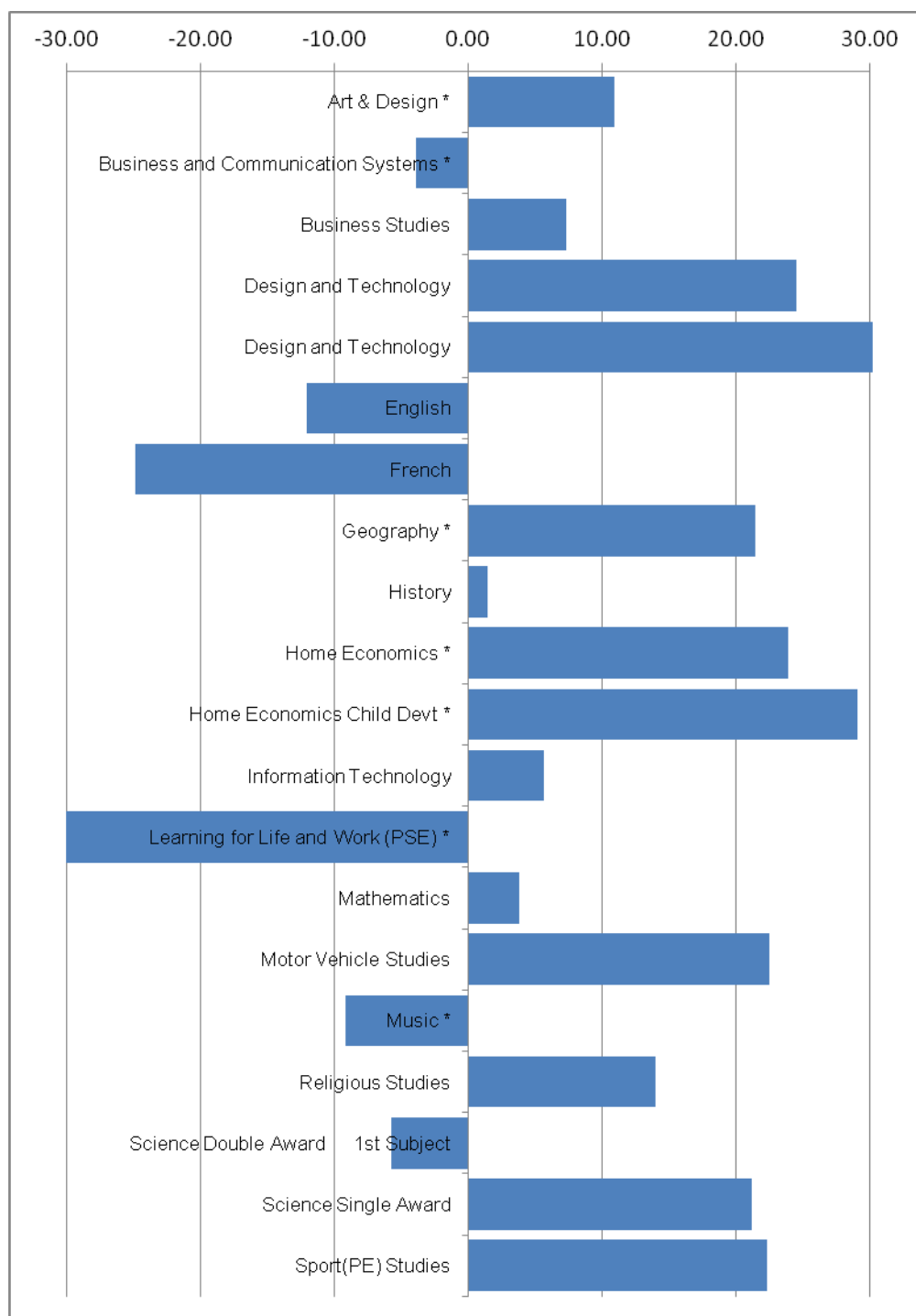
5.2 It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, and in particular the unviable sixth form provision, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

5.3 The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- address shortcomings in leadership and management, including in school development planning, self-evaluation and governance;
- improve the quality of learning and teaching;
- raise the levels of achievement at GCSE level, particularly in English; and
- review urgently the viability of the school sixth form.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

**1.1 GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION
EXAMINATION RESULTS: 2010-2012 AT GRADES A*-C.**



1.2 OTHER RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Level 2	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
CCEA Occupational Studies	100	91	91	67

Level 1	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 2 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
CCEA Key Skills Communication	86	40	n/a	12

Entry Level 3	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 2 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
CCEA Entry Level English	43	80	n/a	12

1.3 GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS:

A2 Subject	2010		2011		2012		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Applied Health and Social Care (Double Award)	80	100	100	100	85.6	100	14
Applied Information and Communications Technology (Single Award)	40	100	0	100	83.33	100	14

1.4 Staying On Rate 2011/2012 (Current year13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	17.2	NI Av. Year 13	47.9
Year 14	7.0	NI Av. Year 14	36.5

1.5 Leavers Destinations 2010/2011

	Year 12	Percent.	NI %	Yr 13/14	Percent.	NI%
TOTAL	75			13		
Another School	*		15.8	0	0	2.5
Employment	*		4.4	0	0	11.7
Full-time Further Education (including Foundation Degrees in Further Education)	49	65	45	*		31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	38.5
Full-time Training	16	25	28	8	62	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	*		3.8	*		6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	*		3.3	0	0	3.1

* refers to numbers fewer than 5

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, and MATHEMATICS

English

The overall quality of the provision is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good leadership of the Head of department particularly with regard to leading and managing change;
- the good use made of ICT across all classes helping the pupils take responsibility and become more active in their learning;
- the confidence with which the pupils contribute to class discussions and group work; and
- the improvement in the KS3 outcomes over the past three years.

The area for improvement is the need:

- to focus more strategically on improving the inadequate standards at GCSE A*-C.

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good outcomes at GCSE grades A*-C in mathematics in four of the last five years;
- the very good leadership of the head of department and the high quality of the policies which underpin the improvement agenda for mathematics across the school;
- the hard-working teachers and the positive working relationships in most of the lessons observed;
- the good support provided for individual pupils during the lessons observed; and
- the positive contribution made to the pupil's learning in mathematics by the classroom assistants.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- for the head of department to monitor closely the quality of the learning and teaching; and
- for the teachers to focus on the development of the pupils' problem-solving skills, oral participation in lessons and enjoyment of mathematics.

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