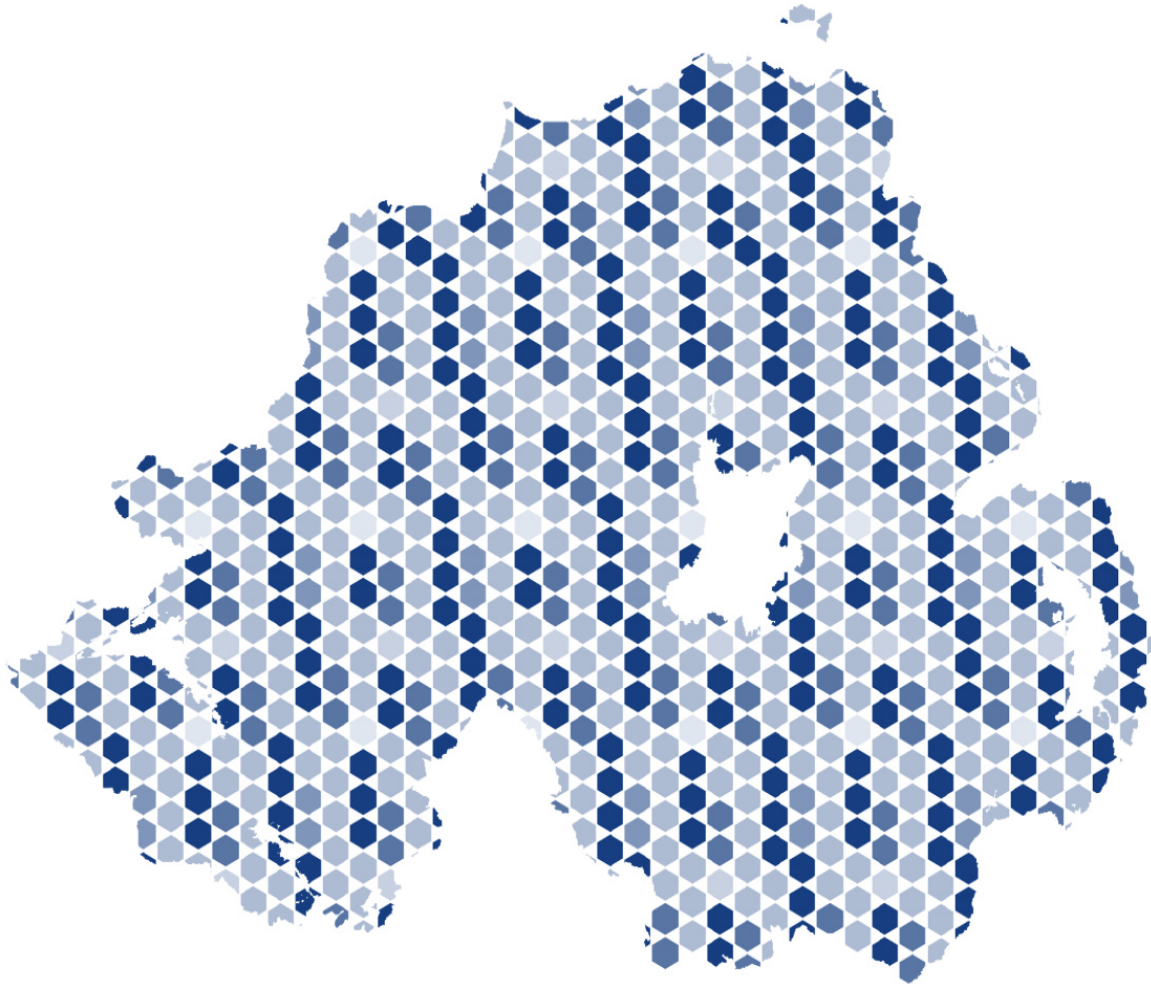


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Dalriada School, Ballymoney

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

Dalriada School is a co-educational voluntary grammar school situated in Ballymoney with an enrolment of 849. It draws its pupils from the town and the wider rural areas within an approximate fifteen mile radius. The school is regularly over-subscribed. Approximately 5% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has identified just over 2% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning.

### 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, mathematics and physical education, 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 the Board of Governors (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 outstanding quality of the pastoral care provision and the highly effective links which support the academic and the pastoral needs of all of the pupils;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, in which approximately a quarter of the lessons were good, half were very good and a small number were outstanding;
- the very good leadership and management provided by the Principal, Vice-principals and the senior leadership team;

- the pupils' high levels of independence and their positive and active dispositions to learning, which complement the good standards attained in public examinations;
- the hard working teachers and their effectiveness in meeting fully the academic and pastoral needs of the pupils; and
- the extensive range of extra-curricular activities which very significantly enhances the pupils' overall educational experience.

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**

3.1 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 governors and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

3.2 One hundred and sixty-eight questionnaires were issued to parents; 49% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 37 contained additional written comments. Most of the responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were highly positive, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school. In particular, the parents praised the caring staff, the pastoral ethos and the extra-curricular opportunities. They frequently commented that the pupils are well settled and happy.

3.3 Fifty teachers out of 55 and 16 support staff out of 20 completed confidential questionnaires with 19 teachers and 8 support staff providing additional written comments. Nearly all of the teaching and support staff expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the staff highlighted the happy atmosphere in the school, the excellent working relationships between the staff and pupils and their view that Dalriada is a very good place to work.

3.4 The governors talked with pride about their support for the school and the accomplishments of the pupils. They praised the enduring and distinctive ethos of the school, in which all aspects of school work is guided by a strong recognition that every pupil is valued. They were knowledgeable, actively involved and supportive of the many aspects of school life. They clearly affirmed the work of the Principal and the staff.

3.5 The pupils talked positively about: how they feel respected and valued as individuals; the support they receive in developing their talents; the way in which teachers make their learning experiences enjoyable; and of the very good working relationships that they enjoy with all members of the school community. There is clear evidence that the pupils are aware of what to do and who to talk to if they have any worries about their safety and well being.

3.6 The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the few areas of concern which emerged from the questionnaires and written comments.

## **4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION**

### **4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

As a result of the teachers' effective practice in addressing the range of learning needs, the pupils develop extremely well and their achievements and standards are very good across the range of ability in the school. In the course of the inspection, the pupils demonstrated high levels of motivation, engagement and enjoyment in their learning and they displayed appropriately high expectations of what they could achieve. The pupils, including those with identified special educational needs (SEN), demonstrated continuing improvement in their learning. The pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school, excellent social and inter-personal skills and their behaviour was always exemplary during the inspection.

The pupils have excellent opportunities to engage in an extensive range of extra-curricular sporting, social, and cultural activities which add significantly to their overall education experience and the levels of participation are very good.

The levels of attainment in public examinations are good.

At General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level the pupils' achievement in grades A\* to C in at least seven subjects including English and mathematics is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar selective schools; in 2010 nearly all of the pupils achieved grades A\* to C in at least seven subjects including English and mathematics. Over the corresponding period, there has been a slight decrease in the number of pupils achieving grades A\* to B including English and mathematics in seven GCSE subjects or more. Almost three quarters of the subjects are either within or above five percentage points of the respective NI average. In approximately one-fifth of subjects, the results are more than ten percentage points above the NI average.

The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in three or more A Levels has fluctuated over the past three years. The three year average over this period remains above that for similar schools. During this period, over half of the subjects are five percentage points or more above the respective NI average at GCE A\* to C. The senior management team has recognised the need to address the variation in attainment and are currently implementing a range of strategies to address any low achievement and under-performance.

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**

Teaching and learning take place in supportive classrooms, in which the pupils are actively and enthusiastically disposed to learning. The teachers are responsive to meeting all learning needs inclusively by ensuring that pupils of all abilities are stretched and challenged appropriately in their learning. Those pupils who may require extra support with their learning are very well catered for. The school has a SEN register with pupils moving on and off the register depending on the level of the support they may require and the progress they make.

Nearly all of the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, with around a quarter of lessons good, half the lessons very good and a small number outstanding.

In the more effective practice the teachers:

- demonstrated excellent knowledge of the pastoral and learning needs of their pupils and recognised the inextricable link between these and the teaching and support strategies they employed;
- set realistically high expectations which challenged and inspired the pupils;
- used and built upon the pupils' interests, ideas and prior learning;
- developed the pupils' sense of independence and creativity and exploited cross-curricular opportunities to develop higher level literacy skills;
- used questioning techniques very skilfully to promote deeper thinking and to draw out extended oral and written answers from the pupils;
- planned lessons where there were high levels of meaningful pupil engagement and active participation; and
- helped the pupils to use self and peer assessment to inform their future learning.

In the less effective practice: lessons were overly teacher led; there was a lack of pace and challenge and plenary sessions had insufficient focus on learning. Some lessons integrated ICT into the teaching to very good effect, but this was not always the case. There is a need to ensure teachers' use of ICT is more widespread across the school.

#### 4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The Principal and senior leadership team (SLT) have a clear vision and commitment to the rationale which underpins the aims of the Entitlement Framework. The school is making very good progress towards widening its curriculum at key stage (KS) 4 and beyond, which is relevant to the pupils' interests, abilities and career aspirations. The pupils' knowledge of career pathways open to them, including alternative routes and the associated examination grades required, is good. There is very good collaboration between the school and other local schools and education providers, including the further education sector. The school makes a positive contribution to the work of the Ballymoney Area Learning Community and has established arrangements for the evaluation of the progress towards the implementation of the Entitlement Framework. Consequently, the school recognises appropriately the need to develop further the access to additional applied courses for KS4 and post-16 pupils.

#### 4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding and they are an integral part of the learning and teaching. This is evident through the inclusive ethos, where each pupil is valued and enabled to develop as an individual and as a contributor to the life of the school and his or her local community. There is a very effective school council which actively seeks out the opinions of the pupils to inform school policy and influence decisions which affect their school experience.

The pupils contribute actively to the life of the school, for example, through the mentoring of other pupils, by leading extra curricular activities and in the responsibilities held by the senior pupils: all of which assist in developing the pupils' leadership skills. The senior pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education by being encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.

The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care, who is also the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), gives strong and effective leadership to the dedicated, caring and very approachable pastoral team. In her role as SENCO, the Vice-principal has a very good working knowledge of the challenges facing each of the pupils with special needs and ensures that the parents are kept up to date regarding the pupils' progress.

#### **4.2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/ SAFEGUARDING**

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect fully the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

#### **4.2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the opportunities to participate in cookery events and competitions and the wide range of after school opportunities available to pupils. There is a need to formalise monitoring and evaluation procedures to provide a benchmark and identify progress made in relation to the school's healthy eating programme.

#### **4.2.6 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

The provision for CEIAG is good. Under the leadership of the very effective head of careers, the department has produced good quality written careers resources which are used well in the taught Learning for Life and Work programmes in years 8 to 12.

The pupils access a range of good quality, up-to-date careers information, including information on a diverse range of higher education courses and a variety of informative labour market information. The pupils benefit greatly from their participation in a well-planned range of careers visits and events in the school, supplemented by a week of work experience in year 13 which contributes well to their understanding of the world of work. There is a need to improve the pupils' access to and use of ICT resources and associated careers software to inform further their career choices and develop their personal career planning.

### **5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good.

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is very good. Since his appointment in 2007, the Principal has worked well with the school community to develop a clear strategic vision for the school that is informed through the effective use of self evaluation. He has made a very good start to initiating a more accountable and distributive leadership and management structure, focusing on improving the quality of learning and teaching, staff development and widening the curriculum provision.



The Principal is very aware of the challenges facing the school. He adopts an appropriately measured approach to organisational development. He has reviewed the roles and responsibilities of staff and has supported their professional development in order to equip them better to manage the changes that lie ahead. The school development plan (SDP), which meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, contains a number of appropriate priority areas for improvement drawn up by the SLT and informed through effective self-evaluation. Baseline positions have been established and associated action plans have been drawn up. For example, there is a clear and appropriate commitment in the SDP to develop further leadership, at all levels, across the school. Associated actions include entering Investors in People, disseminating better practice through in-service training opportunities and providing middle managers (and aspiring middle managers) with access to appropriate continuous professional development.

The Principal is supported well by the two Vice-principals and the wider SLT. Through their various roles and responsibilities, appropriate emphasis is placed on raising the pastoral and academic standards and on developing self-evaluation practices further. The positive out-workings of the SLT's leadership are clearly reflected in the attitudes, commitment and classroom practice of the teachers.

The school values the need to maintain and develop further the meaningful links it enjoys with the wider community. There is a genuine commitment to promoting and fostering better community relations through educational initiatives. The school is rightly proud of its role as the lead partner in the Sharing Education Programme, which allows young people from a diverse range of local primary and post-primary schools to come together and learn collaboratively.

There is excellent communication between the Principal and the governors who give most generously of their time and play a very active role in overseeing the strategic development of the school.

The school deploys its financial resources appropriately and makes effective use of all available resources to provide good value for money.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

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

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS**

**English**

The quality of the provision for English is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the quality of the teaching observed, all of which is at least good, most very good and some outstanding;
- the high standards achieved in public examinations;
- the good standards of writing in all classes;
- the very good leadership of the head and assistant head of department;
- the department's very good self-evaluation which identifies appropriate areas for development; and
- the strategic approach taken by the department to bring about the necessary change to improve further the teachers' planning, teaching and learning, where necessary.

**Mathematics**

The quality of the provision for mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the high standards attained by the pupils in public examinations at all levels;
- the well motivated pupils and their ability to learn collaboratively in groups and pairs;
- the quality of teaching observed during the inspection, of which one-half was very good and a further one-quarter of which was good;
- the good range of learning strategies that the teachers use to engage the pupils actively in their learning;
- the hard-working, and dedicated, departmental team who have appropriately high expectations of what the pupils can achieve; and
- the good progress in developing the scheme of work at KS3.

An area for improvement is the need:

- to develop the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department in order to identify and share the very good practice and promote improvement.

## **Physical Education**

The quality of the provision for Physical Education is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the positive ethos and professional working relationships throughout the department;
- the good rapport between staff and pupils in all the lessons observed;
- the very good standards Physical Education, including those attained in public examinations at GCSE;
- the quality of teaching which was good or better in the majority of the teaching observed;
- the high levels of participation in physical education and the pupils' positive attitudes to physical education; and
- the extensive range of extra curricular sport activities and the sporting successes of the school.

An area for improvement is the need:

- to improve the standards achieved by pupils in public examinations at AS and A2 level.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- There are deficiencies in changing and showering facilities for staff and pupils in physical education.
- There is a need to secure better all points of pedestrian access across the school site.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Dalriada School  
 ii. School Reference Number: 342-0012  
 iii. Age Range: 11-18  
 iv. Status: Voluntary  
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 18/10/10  
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	127	127	125	126	126
Total enrolment	848	854	851	849	849

1.3 Attendance

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	97.36	96.5	96.02	96.09	96.6	96.18	97	97	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 58.8      iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.71
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.44      Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study: (Focused only) 29

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	74	57	59	72	64	61	62	449
Enrolment: Girls	52	71	67	54	57	50	49	400
Enrolment: Total	126	128	126	126	121	111	111	849
PTR	16.13	16.21	16.13	13.61	12.80	12.65	14.26	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2008/09) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	88.9	NI Av Year 13	92.6
Year 14	82.9	NI Av Year 14	86.4

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	14		116	
Another School	14%	24.1	0%	1.3
Employment	0%	3	1%	3.4
Full-time Further Education	86%	58.9	6%	9.5
Full-time Higher Education	0%	N/A	87%	82.8
Full-time Training	0%	6.4	0%	0.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.7	0%	1
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	5.9	6%	1.6

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Dalriada School, Ballymoney

SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

<b>GCSE</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
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	99.2	98.43	98.37
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	97.6	97.64	95.12
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	92	94.49	92.68
<b>GCE A2 Level or equivalent</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	77.23	74.55	84.11
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	100	96.36	97.2

## EXAMINATION RESULTS

**Table 1** showing the GCSE and GCE subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

	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
<b>GCSE A*-B</b>	Design and Technology English Literature Geography Mathematics	Additional Mathematics Biology History Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies Chemistry Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject English French Home Economics Information Technology Physics Religious Studies Spanish		Art & Design German Music
<b>GCSE A*-C</b>		Biology Geography	Additional Mathematics Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject English English Literature French German History Home Economics Information Technology Mathematics Music Physics Religious Studies Spanish Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies	Art & Design
<b>GCE A*-C</b>	Classical Civilisation Economics* German* Home Economics* Music	Chemistry Design and Technology* English Literature Further Mathematics* Geography Mathematics Religious Studies	Biology Business Studies Critical Thinking* French History	Information Technology Physics Spanish*	Art & Design* Sport (PE) Studies*

\*Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 30 over 3 years

NOTE: GCE A\* grade applies from 2010

**Table 2** showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1

	<b>100% - 96%</b>	<b>95% - 86%</b>	<b>85% - 76%</b>	<b>75% - 66%</b>	<b>65% - 0%</b>
<b>GCSE A*-B</b>		Information Technology Music	Additional Mathematics Art & Design English English Literature History Home Economics Mathematics Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Science 1st Subject Geography Physics Spanish	Business Studies French German
<b>GCSE A*-C</b>	Art & Design English Home Economics Mathematics Music	Additional Mathematics Biology Business Studies Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject English Literature Geography History Information Technology Physics Religious Studies Spanish Sport (PE) Studies	French German		
<b>GCE A*-C</b>	Critical Thinking	Art & Design English Literature French Further Mathematics Geography German History Home Economics Mathematics Music Religious Studies Spanish	Biology Business Studies Chemistry Classical Civilisation Design and Technology Economics Information Technology Physics	Sport (PE) Studies	

NOTE: GCE A\* grade applies from 2010



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