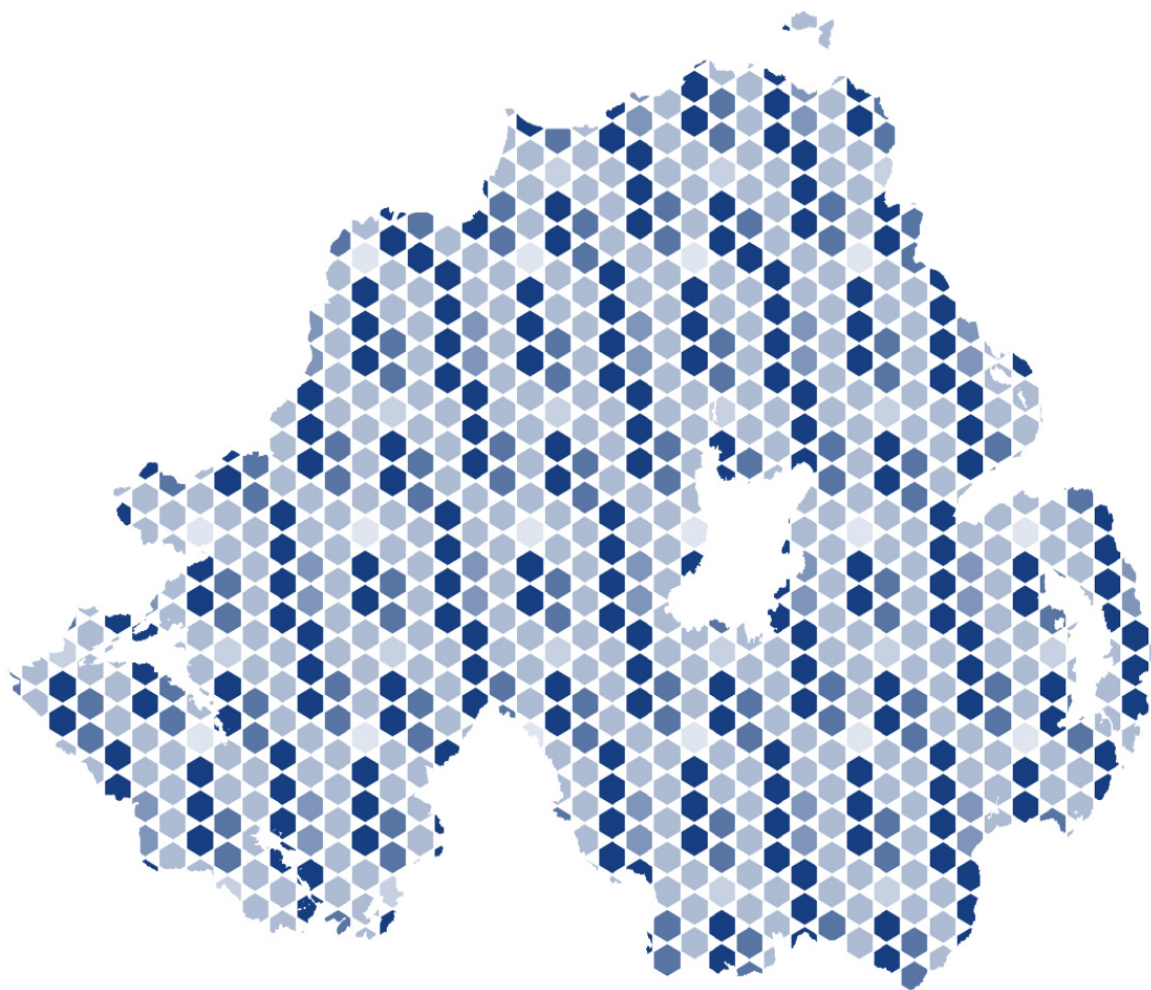


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

De La Salle College, Belfast

Maintained , Non-selective , Boys' , 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011

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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

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

The term '*similar schools*' refers to schools in the same free school meal category as defined by DE, whether they are selective or non-selective.

CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
DE	Department of Education
EOTAS	Education other than at school
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FSM	Free School Meals
GCE A	General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KS	Key stage
NI	Northern Ireland
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
WBALC	West Belfast Area Learning Community

1. CONTEXT

1.1 De La Salle College is a school at the centre of the west Belfast community. The school is maintaining its enrolment well, against a background of falling post-primary pupil numbers in the immediate and wider area. The current enrolment includes a significant, and increasing, number of pupils who require additional support with their learning. There are 216 pupils in the sixth form. The school's attendance figures are above the NI average.

De La Salle College	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	1130	1116	1088	1087
FSM (Band 2) Percentage	31	31	32	33
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	40 (447)	39 (436)	44 (475)	48 (526)
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	31	42	55	65
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	*	*	*	7
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	13	5	13	9
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	16	14	17	19
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	54	53	50	62
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	55	46	48	48

Source: Data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

2.1 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.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are very good¹.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are courteous, respectful and display a clear sense of pride in their school. They respond confidently and consistently to the high expectations of their teachers and nearly all have positive attitudes to learning.

¹ For detailed results in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendices 1 and 2

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
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	60.34	58.76	67.68
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	44.62	34.02	42.07
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Significantly above average	Well above average	Significantly above average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	88.83	91.75	91.46

Source: Data on Year 12 (KS4) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

The pupils attain outstanding GCSE outcomes, well above or significantly above the average for similar non-selective schools.

Over the past three years more than one-half of subjects exceeded the NI average at GCSE level by 10% or more, with a further one-fifth of subjects surpassing the NI average at GCSE level by 5% or more.

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	23.17	25.32	46
Comparison with the NI average	Well below average	Well below average	Above average
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	90.24	97.47	97.37
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Below average	Above average	Above average

Source: Data on Year 14 (A2) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

The pupils' attainment at GCE A2 Level has improved significantly over a three year period from a low base line in 2009, to one which is above the NI average.

Additionally, a minority of pupils take applied subjects offered at GCE and achieve good standards. The inspection confirms that addressing the variation in standards across GCE subjects is a priority for the school leadership. Nearly one half of the year 14 pupils leaving in 2010 progressed to higher education which is well above the average for similar non-selective schools.

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The provision in English is very good, in mathematics and in science it is good².

The quality of just over half of the lessons observed was outstanding or very good, in equal measure; with a further one third good.

² See Appendix 3.

In the outstanding and very good lessons the pace remained challenging and brisk, questioning was used adeptly to promote thinking and to elicit extended responses by the pupils which were valued and consolidated by the teachers. Assessment for learning strategies and well-planned plenary sessions which the pupils enjoyed, were used constructively to reinforce learning.

Around one-tenth of lessons were over-directed by the teachers and failed to provide learning that sufficiently matched the needs, interests and abilities of all of the pupils.

The quality of provision for SEN is outstanding.

The pupils' literacy, numeracy and social needs are identified early. In nearly all of the classes the teachers take note of, and make provision for, the significant numbers of pupils with additional needs. The pupils who receive further support in literacy and numeracy benefit greatly from the carefully planned additional classes which integrate a range of well-chosen strategies, and short, sharp motivating activities, to address gaps in learning. They make good progress and a majority achieve very good success in their GCSE examinations.

4.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is outstanding.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are very well cared for as a result of the holistic approach to their educational, social and emotional development. They respond positively to the supportive ethos evident in almost all of the classrooms.

The Year 8 pupils settle well as a result of the well-planned induction programme and the effective links established with the local primary schools. The KS4 pupils benefit from the assertive mentoring programme which guides them in their learning. They enjoy their participation in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

At each KS there is effective communication with parents, carers and external agencies to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils.

The behaviour of the pupils is very good, and they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

A strong emphasis is placed on inclusion and on the retention of vulnerable pupils. As a direct result, very few pupils are educated other than at school. The school keeps a watching brief on the progress of the pupils in EOTAS provision and effectively reintegrates them when their coping skills and attitudes show improvement.

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

4.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

At KS3, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and meets effectively the diverse range of learning needs of all of the pupils. At KS4, the pupils have access to 23 courses. The school works well with parents and carers to ensure that suitable learning pathways which are matched to the learning aspirations of the pupils.

In years 13 and 14, the school provides a quality education experience through the wide range of courses available. The highly effective and long-standing consortium arrangements with a neighbouring school make possible the shared delivery of 36 courses in year 13 and 27 courses in year 14; the curriculum offer meets fully the requirements of the EF. The school is a committed and active member of the WBALC. The pupils are provided with a high quality post-16 enrichment programme that complements the curriculum.

The provision for CEIAG is very good. The pupils benefit from the well- resourced CEIAG programme. They develop their skills and their knowledge of employability issues through Learning for Life and Work classes and well-planned opportunities to participate in good quality work placements including, at post-16, those through the West Belfast Business and Education Partnership initiative. The CEIAG action plan, is detailed, well-conceived and links appropriately to the SDP.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and the management are outstanding.

KEY FINDINGS

The Principal provides outstanding leadership. He has a clear vision and an unrelenting focus on improving the school, with a strong emphasis on the care of the individual pupil and their attainment of the highest educational standards. He is very well supported by the recently-appointed Deputy-principal and by the senior leadership team, who lead collegially, and manage effectively, the pastoral and curriculum provision, drawing successfully, as they do, on the individual and collective strengths of the team. Communication is good between the SLT and staff within the school.

The quality of the middle management is very good. The heads of department and co-ordinators implement well-conceived and effective strategies to ensure that the best possible educational and pastoral outcomes are achieved by the pupils.

A very good quality SDP (which meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005) identifies, through consultation, a range of appropriate priorities to meet the needs of all of the pupils. The implementation of the SDP priorities is effectively and rigorously monitored by the Principal and SLT, and challenged robustly and effectively by the Governors. The inspection confirms that the sharing of the existing effective examples of good practice in planning, teaching and assessment remains an appropriately high priority within school's development planning.

The school has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

The school is a hub of the local community. For seven evenings each week, the pupils, parents and wider community benefit substantially from their participation in a variety of educational and sporting activities held within the school. This includes a variety of activities provided through the Extended Schools programme. The Principal, supported well by key school personnel, plays an active and highly effective role in leading this important aspect of the work.

Given the findings of the inspection, the school meets the needs and expectations of the school community very effectively.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 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.

STATISTICAL

INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: De La Salle College
 ii. School Reference Number: 123-0182
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Catholic Maintained
- v. Date of Inspection: W/C 07/11/11
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	175	173	177	176	172
Total enrolment	1144	1130	1116	1088	1087

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	92.5	92.6	91.2	91.4	90.5	95.9	95	93	91
% Attendance young people on Special Educational Needs Register									

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 72
- iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.611
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 15.062
- Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study (Focused only): 26

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	172	176	176	173	174	135	81	1087
Enrolment: Total	172	176	176	173	174	135	81	1087
PTR	15.766	16.133	16.133	13.67	14.052	15.565	14.142	

1.5 Staying On Rate (2009/10) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	68.5	NI Av Year 13	47.4
Year 14	42.0	NI Av Year 14	34.5

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	77		124	
Another School	16%	14.8	1%	2.4
Employment	64%	5.2	7%	12.3
Full-time Further Education	8%	47.5	30%	28
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	47%	42.5
Full-time Training	1%	25.1	8%	5.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	3%	3.6	5%	5.8
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	9%	3.8	2%	3.9

APPENDIX 2

TABLE 1 outlines the school's GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

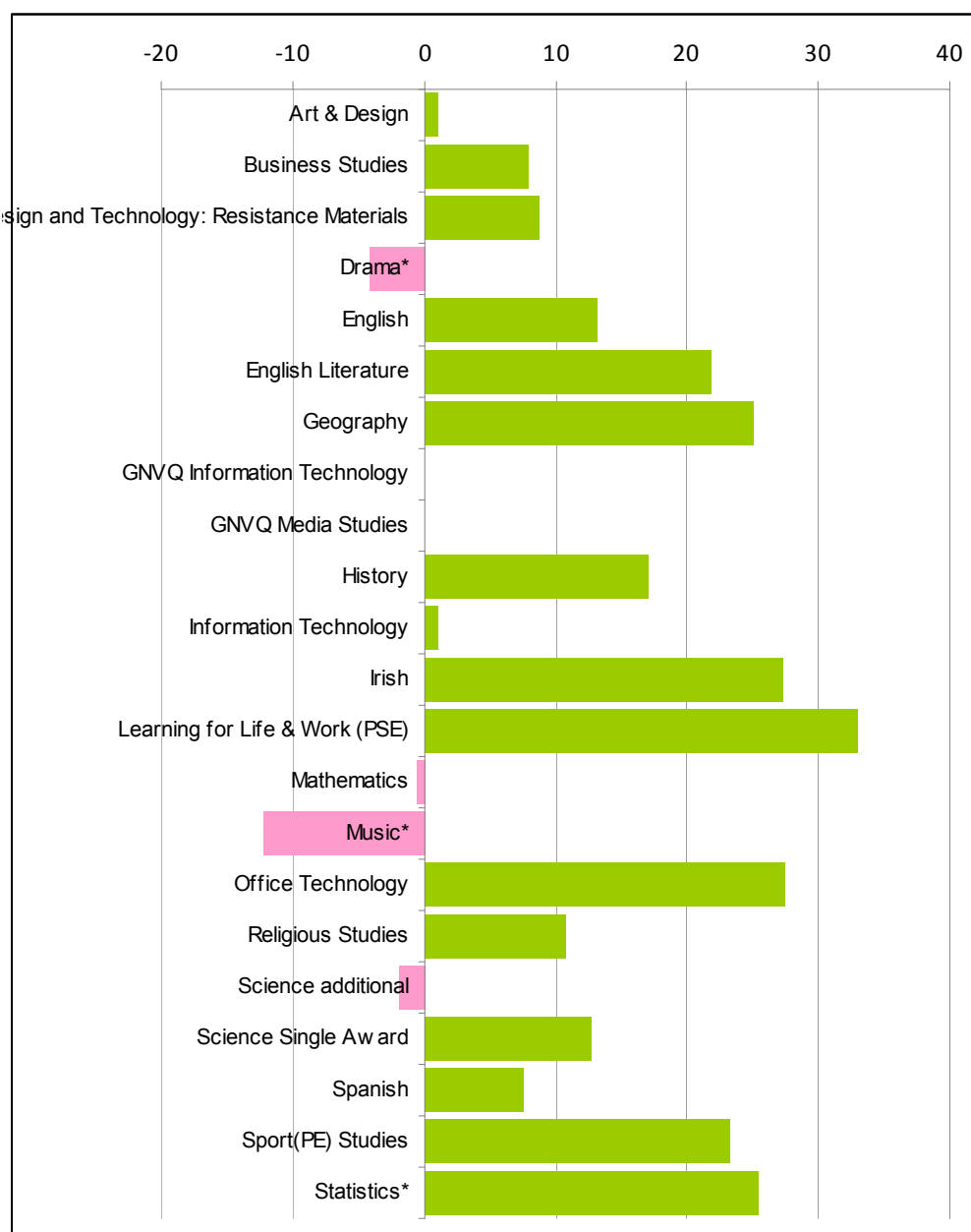
NB: The NI average for all non-selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics in 2010 is 34.9%

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
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	60.34	58.76	67.68
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	44.62	34.02	42.07
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	88.83	91.75	91.46

Source: Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

TABLE 2 shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCSE Grades A*-C**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



The subjects with an entry of less than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011 are indicated with an *.

TABLE 3 outlines the school's GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

A-level results A*-C

NB: The NI averages in 2010 for all non-selective schools of pupils entered for A2 level or equivalent: who achieve:

3 or more grades A*-C = 42.7%

2 or more grades A*-E = 94.7%

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	23.17	25.32	46
<i>Comparison with the NI average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	90.24	97.47	97.37
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>

Source: Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

OTHER RESULTS: POST-16

Applied courses taken in the last three years

Table 6: Applied General Certificate of Education Advanced Level

	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A-C	% A-E	% A-C	% A-E	% A-C	% A-E	
Business Studies	38	88	50	100	50	75	28
ICT	38	92	50	94	76	100	46
Leisure Studies	50	90	62.5	100	100	100	28

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The provision in English is very good.

The strengths of the work include the:

- very good standards achieved by the pupils in GCSE English;
- high expectations of the teachers which promote a positive attitude to learning from the pupils;
- effective leadership of the head of department, including the good use of data to identify and target underachievement;
- quality of the teaching, the majority of which was good or better; and
- opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills in English beyond the main curriculum.

Mathematics

The provision in mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work include the:

- motivated pupils, most of whom participate well and enjoy their learning;
- very good standards achieved in GCSE mathematics;
- quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, a majority of which was good;
- hard-working teachers who support effectively the pupils in their learning and hold appropriately high expectations of what they can achieve;
- effective use of available data to set targets and monitor pupil progress; and
- high priority given, by the head of department and departmental team, to raising attainment in public examinations.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- widen the range of learning and teaching strategies to engage all of the pupils actively, and develop further the use of assessment to inform learning; and
- adopt a more reflective approach towards self-evaluation, with a greater focus on improving the quality of the provision.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is good.

The strengths of the work include the:

- good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers in all of the lessons observed;
- good standards attained by the pupils at GCSE level, particularly in Core Science;
- good quality of the learning and teaching resources produced by the teachers, and the excellent quality of the learning environment;
- good use of data to track the pupils' progress in their learning;
- the good levels of individual pupil support provided by the teachers in order to address low attainment; and
- the effective, collegial leadership by the head of department and the commitment of the departmental team to improving classroom practice.

The area for improvement is the need to:

- share more effectively the very good practice in planning, teaching and assessment which exists in the department in order to engage all of the pupils more actively and collaboratively in their learning.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of De La Salle College, Belfast focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects 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. Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Detailed findings are reported in Appendix 3.

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, on CEIAG and on progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

The arrangements for the inspection included:

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire to the inspection;
- meetings with representatives from the governors; and
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14 (including the School Council)

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	218	61	28	30
Teachers	72	42	58	13
Support Staff	40	24	60	*

Source: Returns from questionnaires to Inspection Services Branch at DE

* fewer than 5

The returns from most of the questionnaires sent to the teachers, the support staff and the parents were very positive. A small number of teachers and support staff reported some concerns in aspects of communication and management. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors, areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

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