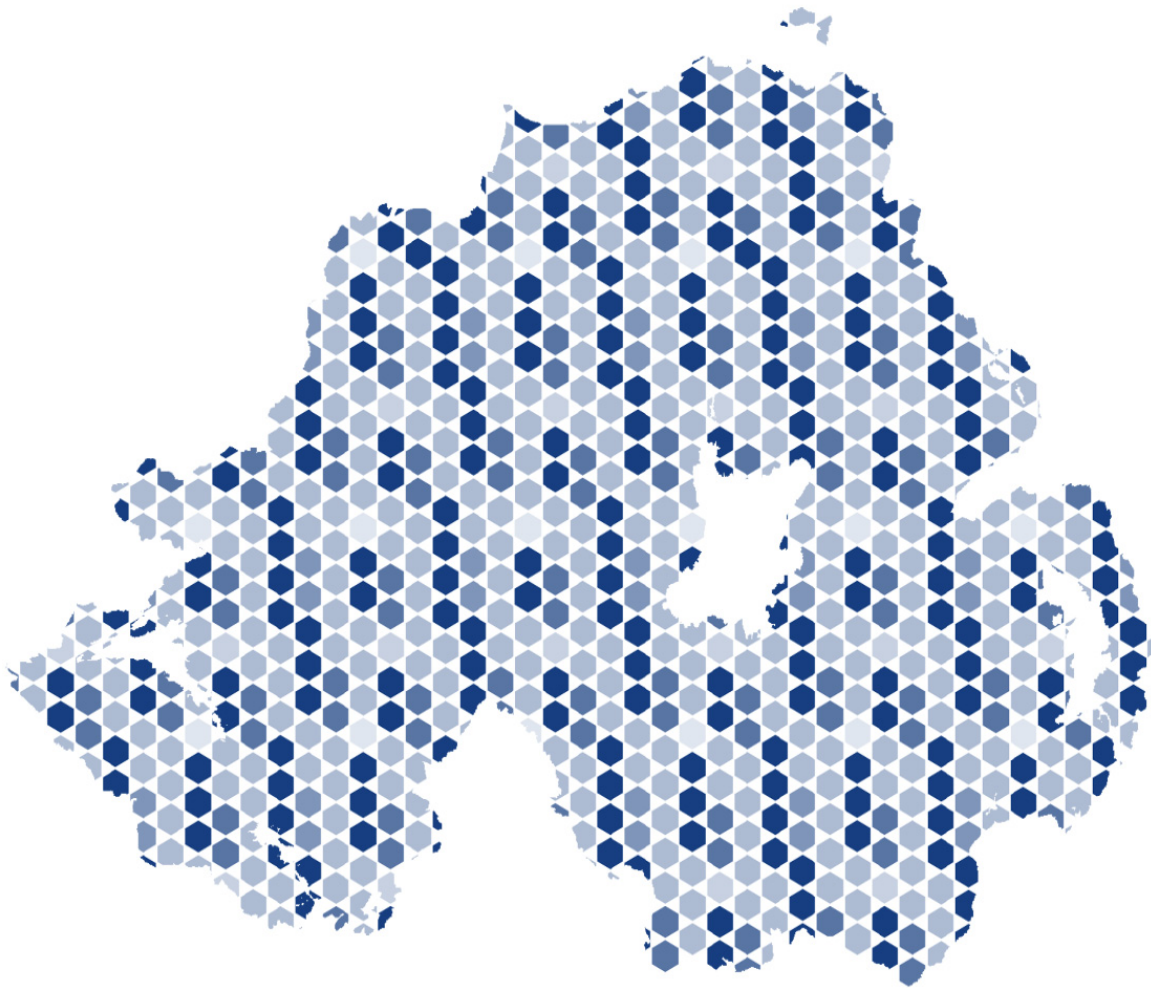


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Nendrum College, Comber

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

Report of an Inspection
in May 2012

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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
ELB	Education and Library Board
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EF	Entitlement Framework
FSM	Free School Meals
GCE A	General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KS	Key stage
NI	Northern Ireland
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Nendrum College is located in the town of Comber and serves a wide geographical area. Formerly Comber High School, its renaming in 2006 was followed by the opening of a new school building in 2008. The school is maintaining its enrolment well and is currently oversubscribed. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs has doubled in the past 4 years.

Nendrum College	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	392	404	406	411
FSM Percentage	19%	22%	20%	21%
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	25	37	40	52
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	12	12	18	17
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	*	*	0	0
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	6.82	2.41	4.49	5.88
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	6.82	6.02	8.99	7.06
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	67.05	63.86	60.67	51.76
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	65.91	63.86	58.43	45.88

Source: Data as held by the school. * denotes fewer than 5

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

2.1 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate¹.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils demonstrate a positive disposition towards learning, develop good social skills, interact well with their teachers, peers and visitors and make good progress when the teachers' expectations are appropriately high and the levels of challenge are matched to the needs of all of the pupils.

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

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSME	2009	2010	2011
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 including English and Mathematics	12.2	21	25
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well below average	Below average	Below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	35.1	46.8	43.3
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well below average	Below average	Well below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	80	69	88

Source: Data as held by the school, with DE benchmarks

While the results in tests at KS3 compare favourably with similar schools, the overall attainment of pupils in GCSE examinations is inadequate. The school enters pupils of all abilities for GCSE examinations and over the last three years there has been an improving trend in the percentage of pupils obtaining grades C or above in any five subjects. While there has been a similar improvement in five GCSE subjects when English and mathematics are included, the percentage attaining GCSE grades A*-C remains below the NI average for similar schools. Furthermore, in GCSE mathematics over three years the percentage attaining A*-C improved by 23% to above average for non-selective schools.

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of provision in English is inadequate, in mathematics it is good and in modern languages it is satisfactory².

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. In the majority of instances, the effective practice included very good working relationships within the classes, sharing of clear learning intentions, adept questioning to promote oral and thinking skills, with ICT being used effectively by the teachers and interactively by the pupils to support their learning.

The pupils are streamed into ability bands and, in a minority of lessons, a recurrent feature of low teacher expectation of what all of the pupils could achieve, resulted in the teaching not being matched well to their needs, interests and abilities. Planning, pace and differentiation were ineffective, the pupils were not engaged throughout the lesson and insufficient learning occurred.

The quality of provision for SEN is satisfactory.

² For more detail about the provision in these subjects, see Appendix 3.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early age and are provided with effective withdrawal or in-class support. They achieve well in external examinations, in line with their ability. The reading partnerships programme introduced this year has shown evidence of significant success in increasing the reading ages of those pupils who participated. The SENCO has developed effective systems to track the progress of SEN pupils but also recognises the need to involve subject teachers more in the development of IEPs together with the need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies in all classes.

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

KEY FINDINGS

A caring and supportive ethos is evident within the school. There are frequent examples of courtesy, good behaviour and positive responses from most of the pupils. Year 8 pupils benefit from a well-focused induction programme and the form class programmes for all year groups are suitably varied with, in the best practice, appropriate activities which encourage the pupils to explore personal and social issues. The school council offers pupil representatives a practical experience of decision-making in school life. The pupils have access to a wide ranging extra-curricular programme through Extended Schools provision.

The school is strongly committed to supporting pupils who are at risk of marginalisation and use effective strategies to ensure their inclusion and retention in the school.

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 satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum at KS3 in line with the revised curriculum. While the school complies with the EF guidance with regard to the number of courses offered at KS4, including, for example, the recently introduced Hospitality and Motor Vehicle Studies, the SMT needs to review the school's overly prescriptive subject offer to reflect better the individual needs, abilities and interests of all the pupils. The school's collaboration with other education providers benefits a small number of pupils and its links with partner schools, and the further education college within the North Down and Ards Area Learning Community, are under-utilised.

The provision for CEIAG is good. In both KS3 and KS4, the pupils have ample opportunities to develop their self awareness and the skills and qualities to enable their progression to further study and employment. At KS4, the pupils' experiences are enhanced by an extensive programme of visiting speakers and visits which enlightens their understanding of the world of work; they also benefit from well-planned work placements and mock interviews conducted by members of the local Rotary club.

While there are good communications and working relations between the staff with responsibility for pastoral care and the head of careers, they need to integrate the various aspects of care, guidance and support more strategically to help the pupils maximise their full potential and raise their standards of attainment.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and the management are satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The school has experienced a protracted period of disruption and uncertainty resulting from the complexities of a new build on the same site and by the Principal's long-term illness. In the course of the planning for the new building he worked successfully to improve its reputation in the local and wider community.

The period of instability in the leadership of the school coincided with a drop in the pupils' attainments, from which standards are now recovering, while remaining below the NI average for similar schools. The majority of subjects at GCSE level are more than ten percentage points below the NI average for non-selective schools.

The acting Principal and SMT have provided leadership in introducing an inclusive approach to school development planning and identifying, as a priority, the need to raise standards through improved results in external examinations. The new Principal, whose appointment commences from the start of the 2012-13 school year, along with the SMT, needs to draw on the strengths that exist within middle management, and the evidence of very good working relations among the staff, to establish a renewed, whole school emphasis on strategic leadership for improvement.

The SDP does not meet the requirements of the School Development Plan regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010: it will be appropriate to review and refocus the action plans on the issues identified in this inspection.

The Board of Governors are committed to the life and work of the school, however they need to have a more adequate, informed understanding of the standards being attained so that they can contribute more effectively to the school improvement and development planning process.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

6. CONCLUSION

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

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

6.3 The main areas for improvement are the need:

- to draw upon the expertise within the school to establish a progressive, strategic whole-school development plan to address the major challenges identified in this report; and
- to improve the major shortcomings in standards and curriculum, learning and teaching, in particular the low expectations and challenge often arising from the organisation of the pupils into ability bands.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Nendrum College
 ii. School Reference Number: 421-0045
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Controlled
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 14/05/12
 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	80	88	83	89	85
Total enrolment	387	392	404	406	411

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	91	91.7	90.3	90	90.3	91	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 28.36 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.776
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.492

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	45	44	44	41	40	214
Enrolment: Girls	40	38	38	48	33	197
Enrolment: Total	85	82	82	89	73	411
PTR	0	0	0	0	0	

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	83	
Another School	13%	14.8
Employment	20%	5.2
Full-time Further Education	53%	47.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A
Full-time Training	12%	25.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	1%	3.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.8

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

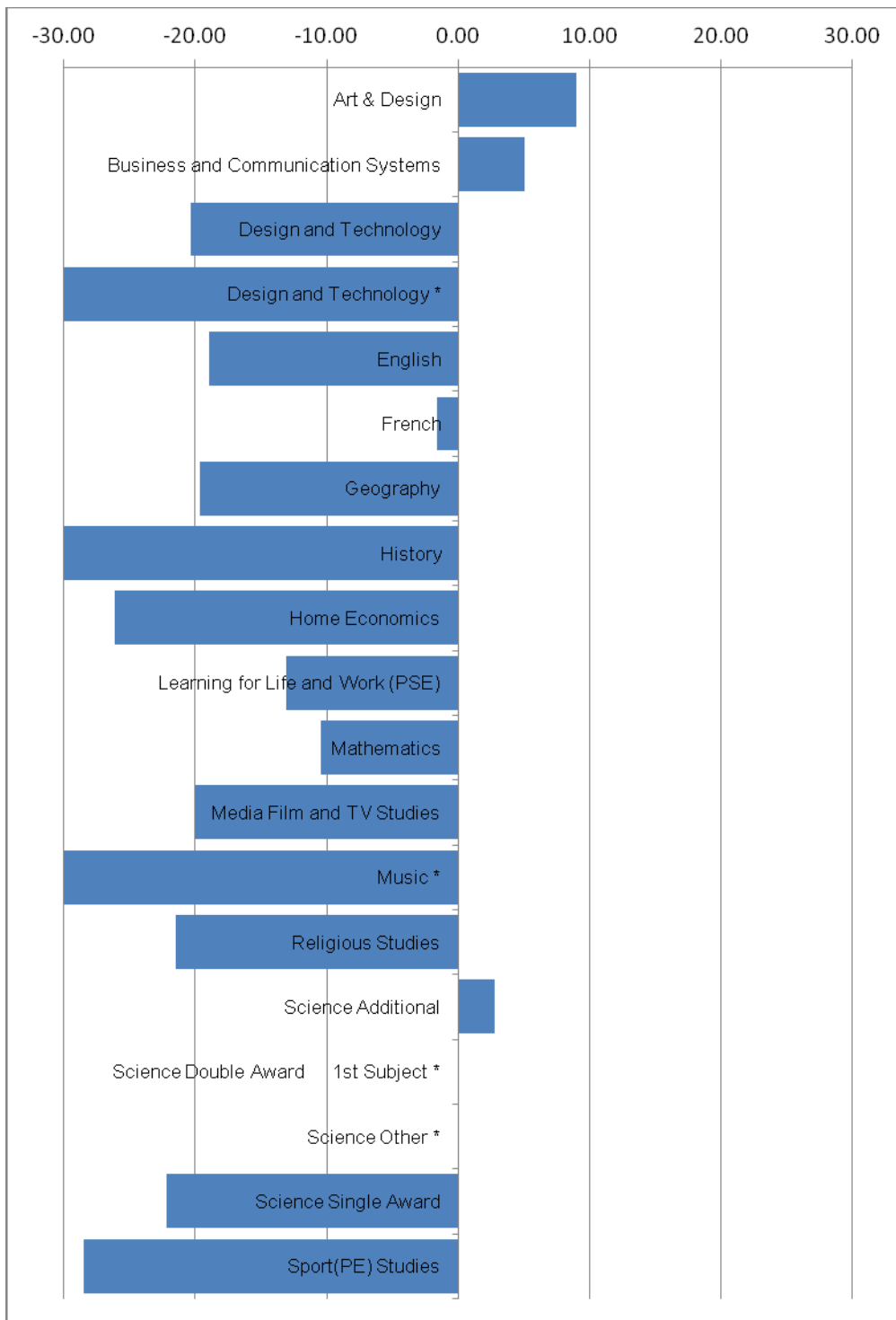
NB: the NI average for all non-selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and mathematics in 2011 is 36.4%

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSME	2009	2010	2011
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 including English and Mathematics	12.2	21	25
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Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	80	69	88

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

Summary of the school's 3-year average with NI average.



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is good

The main strengths of the mathematics provision are:

- the good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers, enabling the good individual support provided for the pupils;
- the very good or outstanding quality of teaching in a significant minority of the lessons observed;
- the outstanding leadership and management, including the high quality of action planning;
- the action research completed, including the dissemination of its findings within the ELB; and
- the significant improvement in the standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level over the last three years, although still below average.

A main area for improvement is:

- to maintain the improvement in standards through the continued focus on improving the quality of the teaching and learning.

The overall quality of provision in English is inadequate.

The main strengths of the English provision are:

- the good standards being attained in KS3 tests in English;
- the quality of the teaching observed which is satisfactory to good, with some very good features;
- the effective focus on learning which develops the pupils' thinking skills, personal capabilities and self-reflection;
- the quality of the formative written feedback on the pupils' written work;
- the developing use of test and examination data to track the progress of the pupils; and
- the strong commitment to the development of teaching schemes, to self-evaluation and to raising standards by the hard-working head of department and the teachers of English.

The main areas for improvement are:

- to raise expectations for, and standards in, the attainment of the pupils who are under-achieving in GCSE English through more detailed individual tracking and more frequent and effective intervention to support their learning; and
- to share and evaluate improvements in teaching approaches, over the short-term, so as to determine the effectiveness of the focus on learning in raising standards.

The quality of provision for modern languages is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the supportive ethos in which French is taught and the appropriate emphasis on careers with languages;
- the wide range of teaching approaches which motivate the pupils and capture their attention;
- the effective use of ICT by both teachers and pupils;
- the good start made by the Head of French in engaging in self-evaluation leading to improvement; and
- the results in GCSE French which are in line with the average for schools of similar type.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- for the teachers to increase their use of the target language as a tool for communication and learning during lessons;
- for the pupils to improve their skills in speaking and writing in French using extended language; and
- to increase the number of pupils taking French at KS4.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Nendrum College 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, languages and CEIAG, providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Detailed findings are reported in Annex 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 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 and 11.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	102	42	41.2	12
Teachers	28	23	82	5
Support Staff	13	13	100	*

Source: Returns from questionnaires to DE. * = fewer than 5

The majority of the comments from parents were highly positive and included appreciation of the professionalism and caring attitude of the teaching and support staff; attention was also drawn to the good communication between school and parents.

Comments from the teaching staff drew attention to positives such as the pleasant working environment in which staff support one another; they raised issues about the need for improved communication within the school and more effective staff development. Comments from support staff were very positive about the life and work of the school. 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.

All of the pupils with whom discussions were held, talked about the caring ethos of the school. In particular, most indicated how they had benefited from the support received from the staff when experiencing difficulty with aspects of their work and from the wide-ranging extra-curricular programme. A small number registered their concerns about restrictions of subject choice.

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