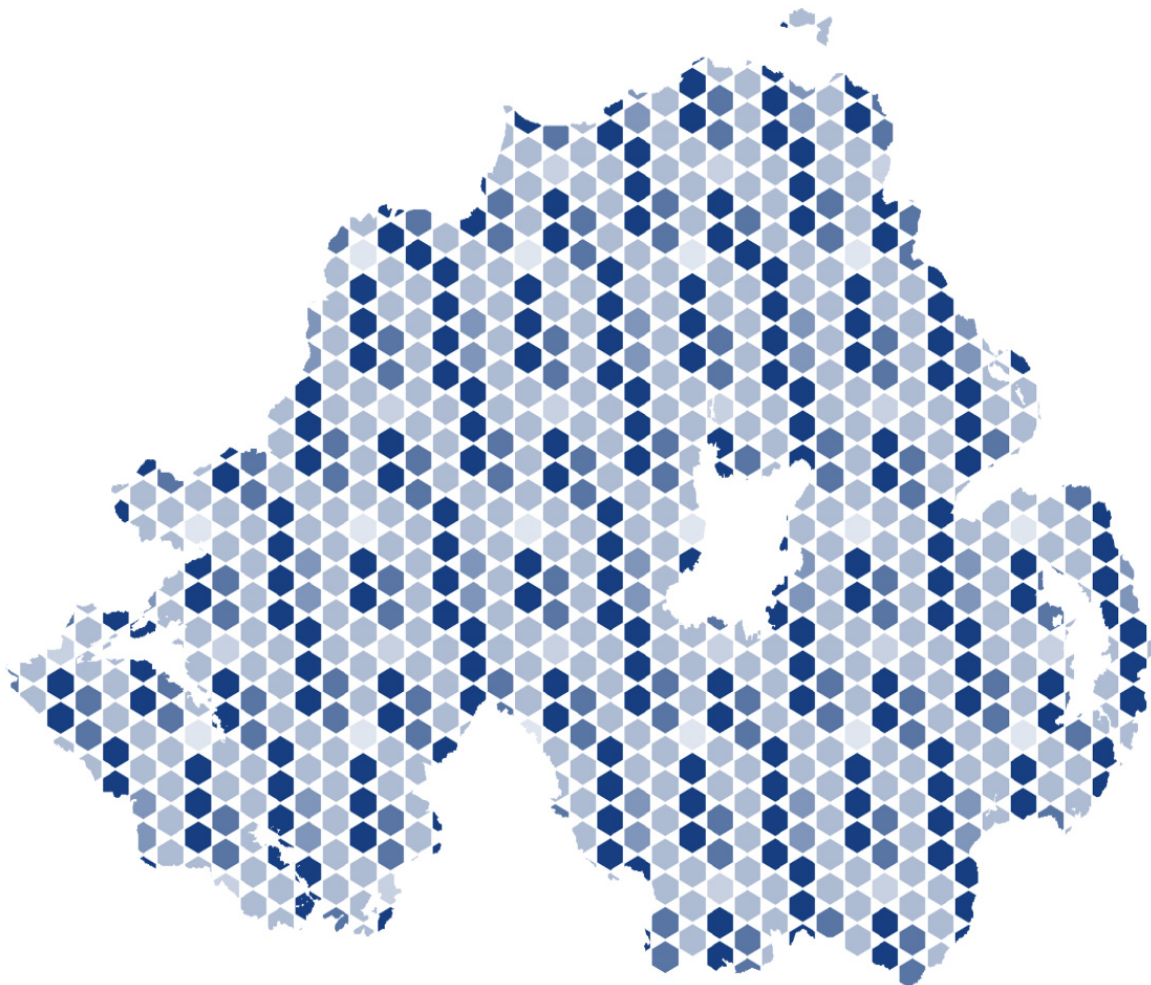


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Newtownabbey Community
High School

Report of an Inspection
in September 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

Newtownabbey Community High School is a controlled, co-educational, 11-16 non-selective school. It is situated on the Shore Road in Newtownabbey, on the outskirts of Belfast. The school has a wide catchment area drawing its pupils mainly from Rathcoole, Greenisland, and increasingly from a wider area within North Belfast. There has been a decline in the enrolment over the past ten years but this has stabilised over the last three years and stands currently at 227. Around 40% of the pupils in years 9-12 have enrolled from other schools. In recent years almost all of the intake either did not participate in the Transfer Test procedure or obtained a grade D. Approximately 44% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has identified 37% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning. Currently, there are nine newcomer pupils. Following a fire over one year ago, Whitehouse Primary School is accommodated on the campus of Newtownabbey Community High School.

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 and mathematics, 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 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 satisfactory.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the positive ethos that permeates the work of the school;
- the well-behaved and mannerly pupils;

- the productive links established with the local community;
- the effective leadership of the middle managers, in particular, in the subject areas under focus;
- the comprehensive analysis of the quantitative data associated with pupil attainment and standards carried out by the Vice-principal; and
- the commitment of the (acting) Principal to the life and work of the school and his on-going efforts to increase the enrolment.

2.2 The main areas for improvement are the need:

- to raise the standards achieved by the pupils at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE);
- to improve further the quality of learning and teaching; and
- to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the school's policies, practices and procedures, and to review urgently the roles and responsibilities of the staff.

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 and 12.

3.2 One hundred and twenty questionnaires were issued to parents; 20 were returned to Inspection Services Branch and nine contained additional written comments.

3.3 Most of the responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were highly affirmative, indicating strong support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the positive response by staff to addressing their individual concerns, the good careers provision and the effective handling of any incidents of bullying.

3.4 Seventeen teachers and 15 support staff completed confidential questionnaires with eight teachers and four support staff providing additional written comments. The teachers noted that they set appropriate standards for pupils' attainment and that the achievements of the pupils are celebrated effectively. Around one-half of the teaching staff who responded raised concerns relating to communication issues within and across the school. In addition, a majority of staff commented that inappropriate pupil behaviour was not managed consistently throughout the school.

3.5 The governors expressed their strong support for the leadership of the Principal and the commitment of the staff to the pupils. In particular, they commended the recent introduction of baselining pupil attainment in order to measure and track progress, the improved results at key stage (KS) 4, the increasing levels of pupil attendance and the supportive links within the Newtownabbey Learning Community.

3.6 The pupils spoke positively about their experiences in school to the inspectors and from the discussions there is evidence that if they had any worries about their safety and well-being they were very well aware of the key personnel to whom they could communicate their concerns.

3.7 The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, any concern emerging from the questionnaires; where appropriate comment is made in this report.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

4.1.1 When the quality of teaching is good or better, the pupils are well-behaved, motivated and demonstrate a good ability to learn. While most pupils in year 12 are entered for five or more subjects at GCSE level, there is undue variation in the standards achieved across the subjects; results in the majority of subjects at grades A* to C are more than ten percentage points below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools.

4.1.2 Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in five or more subjects at GCSE level has increased significantly and is in line with the NI average for similar non-selective schools. In the same period the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in five or more subjects including English and mathematics has also increased significantly; however, this figure remains below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in English is below that for grades A* to C in mathematics. Overall, standards of pupil achievement are inadequate. More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 2.

4.1.3 There has been low attainment for the pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in GCSE examinations. There are limited options and pathways available to them on leaving school. The staff need to review and evaluate the range of accreditation opportunities for these pupils.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The teaching, learning and assessment in the provision observed are satisfactory.

4.2.1 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate, with just under one-half of the lessons judged to be good or better.

The teachers are hard-working and most have developed a good rapport with the pupils. In the best practice, observed in a significant minority of lessons, the work provided is well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils and leads to clear progression in their learning. The teachers used a wide range of strategies to engage the pupils; learning intentions were shared at the beginning of classes and useful plenary sessions summarised the knowledge and understanding gained by the pupils; group work was used to good effect in several subjects and effective questioning techniques were employed by the teachers to develop the pupils' thinking skills. In addition, the teachers made judicious use of ICT to support their subject aims.

In the less effective practice observed in around one-half of the lessons, the teaching was characterised by over-direction by the teacher leading to a lack of involvement, interest and motivation on the part of the pupils; the pupils tended to remain passive for long periods of time. The tasks were pitched at a level below the pupils' abilities and aspirations, and the pace of the work was slow. On occasions, where the teaching was ineffective and did not engage the pupils in meaningful activities, poor behaviour ensued.

Although the overall quality of provision for SEN is satisfactory, it will be important that the range of options and pathways available to these pupils on leaving school is broadened. The SEN core team of teachers provides well for the small classes of pupils with additional learning needs. It is essential that the SENCO involves other teachers in writing individual education plans which include more focused subject specific targets and intervention strategies to meet the needs of all pupils.

Although some examples of good practice in the use of ICT as a tool to support teaching were observed in classes, it is clear that the pupils require more opportunities to promote their digital literacy and ICT competencies across the curriculum.

The school needs to implement systematic measures to monitor the pastoral care and provision for the small number of pupils who are currently in alternative education provision beyond the school premises. In addition, while, in the last few years there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils suspended, there needs to be more effective action taken to encourage those pupils at risk of disengaging or opting out of formal education.

Intensive group and one-to-one language support are provided for the nine newcomer pupils. Effective curricular links are established with the English department to support those pupils in their understanding of key literature texts.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum at KS3 in line with the revised curriculum arrangements. At KS4, although the school's curricular offer is limited, it benefits from participation in the Newtownabbey Learning Community, relying heavily on the local College of Further Education (CFE) for the provision of its vocational programme. The Vice-principal and the senior leadership team demonstrate a strong commitment to the rationale which underpins the aims of the Entitlement Framework. Currently, the school admits a small number of pupils from neighbouring schools for GCSE Performing Arts; few pupils, however, take the courses on offer in other schools within the area learning community (ALC). The teachers are aware that this is an area for further development if the school is to meet more fully the needs of all of its pupils.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The assistant pastoral care co-ordinator, the year heads and form teachers are committed and dedicated to the welfare of their pupils. The school has introduced recently some well-considered strategies aimed at linking the pastoral care of the pupils more firmly to the standards they achieve.

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is satisfactory. This is evidenced through year group and whole-school assemblies, the referral/counselling system for the pupils and the effective links with a range of external agencies. The learning support provided, however, does not meet fully the needs of the individual pupils. There is a lack of coherence

in the links between the personal development programme and the arrangements for behaviour management. The effectiveness of the current intervention strategies used to tackle the high levels of pupil absenteeism and poor punctuality require more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

4.2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. However, the school needs to ensure that:

- the parents are informed regularly of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection and are provided with a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years;
- temporary staff understand clearly the current arrangements for child protection; and
- there is a timetabled annual review of the child protection policy in order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the arrangements within the overall provision for pastoral care.

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

The provision for CEIAG is satisfactory. During the taught sessions, the pupils access a range of careers information, using ICT software and labour market intelligence, to inform their individual choices and develop their personal career planning. The written documentation for careers comprising policies, schemes of work and a three year action plan, is detailed, well conceived and provides very good advice for learning and teaching. The pupils benefit from their participation in a well-planned range of careers visits supplemented by a week of work experience in year 11 which contributes well to their understanding of the world of work. However, there is a wide variation in the pupils' knowledge of the career pathways open to them, including the alternative routes and the associated examination grades required. It is essential that the teachers focus on improving the pupils' ability to apply the information and skills they develop to assist them in making better informed personal career and course decisions. There is a need to develop further the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for this key aspect of careers and to provide the time necessary and continuity within the staffing arrangements to achieve this.

4.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.3.1 Overall, the strategic leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The Principal, who has been in post for three years, is supported in his work by the governors. He knows the pupils well and is caring and committed to their welfare; he has overseen a growth in the enrolment and has worked hard to promote the school within the local community it serves. He is assisted well by the Vice-principal who provides very good strategic leadership by analysing and evaluating pupil performance and other data. The SENCO provides good leadership and guidance on specific strategies and classroom management techniques which inform the teachers' working practices in addressing the wide range of needs of the pupils.

4.3.2 Although all of the members of the senior leadership team have a wide range of responsibilities, the SENCO and Head of Careers have excessive duties and with a minimum time allocation; this needs to be reviewed urgently to allow them to monitor more systematically the pupils' learning experiences and progress as they move between the key stages.

4.3.3 The school development plan (SDP) does not meet fully the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The SDP and associated action plans set out a number of suitable priorities and areas for development for the future direction of the school. Good progress has been made in promoting positive behaviour, creating closer partnerships with the local community and enhancing the intake and image of the school; in addition, the attendance rate has increased and the number of suspensions decreased in recent years. More work still remains to be done at whole-school level in order to embed more consistently and rigorously the process of self-evaluation leading to improvement in pupil outcomes, including results in public examinations.

4.3.4 The school has made a good start to baselining the pupils' achievements. It is making appropriate use of pupil performance data from internal and external assessments to address the undue variation in the standards attained by the pupils at both KS4 and KS3. The inspection endorses this as a key priority. The senior leadership team and the heads of department engage in a comprehensive analysis of examination results and are beginning to set realistic targets for achievement based on the pupils' prior attainment.

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 in leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. 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 in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

The quality of provision in English is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the effective leadership of the head of English;
- the use of data to inform planning and set targets for improvement; and
- as identified in the department action plan, the review and revision of schemes of work.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to improve the standards in particular in public examinations; and
- to update and develop further the schemes of work, focusing more sharply on learning.

The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the willingness of the pupils to participate in paired and grouped discussions when given the opportunities through well-planned and appropriately challenging activities;
- the hard work and commitment of teachers in supporting the pupils;
- the strategies used to promote an interest in mathematics;
- the good or better quality of teaching in nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed; and
- the enthusiasm and leadership of the head of department.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise standards, particularly at GCSE, through, for example, ensuring that the work is matched to the needs and abilities of all of the pupils and brings about appropriate progression in their learning; and
- to develop further the monitoring and evaluation, including the strategies for self-evaluation, in order to effect sustained improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Newtownabbey Community High v. Date of Inspection: W/C 27/09/10
 ii. School Reference Number: 321-0279 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Controlled

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	34	28	36	23	35
Total enrolment	302	229	227	240	224

1.3 Attendance

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	90.1	86	79.4	83.1	88.4	0	0	85	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 17.6 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.81
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 12.81

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	19	17	26	25	31	0	0	118
Enrolment: Girls	16	12	25	26	27	0	0	106
Enrolment: Total	35	29	51	51	58	0	0	224
PTR	12.88	11.04	12.72	12.9	13.88	0	0	

1.5 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 12/13	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	58		2	
Another School	3%	12.8	0%	2.2
Employment	19%	5.7	0%	11.6
Full-time Further Education	57%	46.6	50%	27.6
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	0%	45.5
Full-time Training	7%	27.5	50%	5.2
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	10%	3.8	0%	4.5
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	3%	3.5	0%	3.3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Newtownabbey Community High School

SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	95	96	91
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	27	23	38
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	10	8	15
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	71	52	65
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	0	0	0
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	44	0	0

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table 1 showing GCSE subject results, over the three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with the 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
GCSE A*-C		Learning for Life and Work (PSE) *Polish	*Business & Communication Systems *Home Economics – Child Development		Art & Design *Design and Technology *Double Award Science 1st Subject English *French Mathematics *Media Film and TV Studies *Religious Studies Single Award Science *Sport (PE) Studies
GCSE A*-E			Art & Design Learning for Life and Work (PSE) *Polish *Religious Studies Single Award Science *Sport (PE) Studies	*Home Economics – Child Development	*Business & Communication Systems *Design and Technology *Double Award Science 1st Subject English *French Mathematics *Media Film and TV Studies

* denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 30 pupils over 3 years

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

	100%-96%	95%-86%	85%-76%	75%-66%	65%-0%
GCSE A*-C		Polish	Art & Design	Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Literature	Business Studies Design and Technology English French History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Mathematics Media Film and TV Studies Office Technology Religious Studies Science Single Award Sport(PE) Studies
GCSE A*-E	Double Award Science 1st Subject English Literature Polish Sport (PE) Studies	Art & Design English French History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Media Film and TV Studies Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science	Business Studies Design and Technology Mathematics		

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