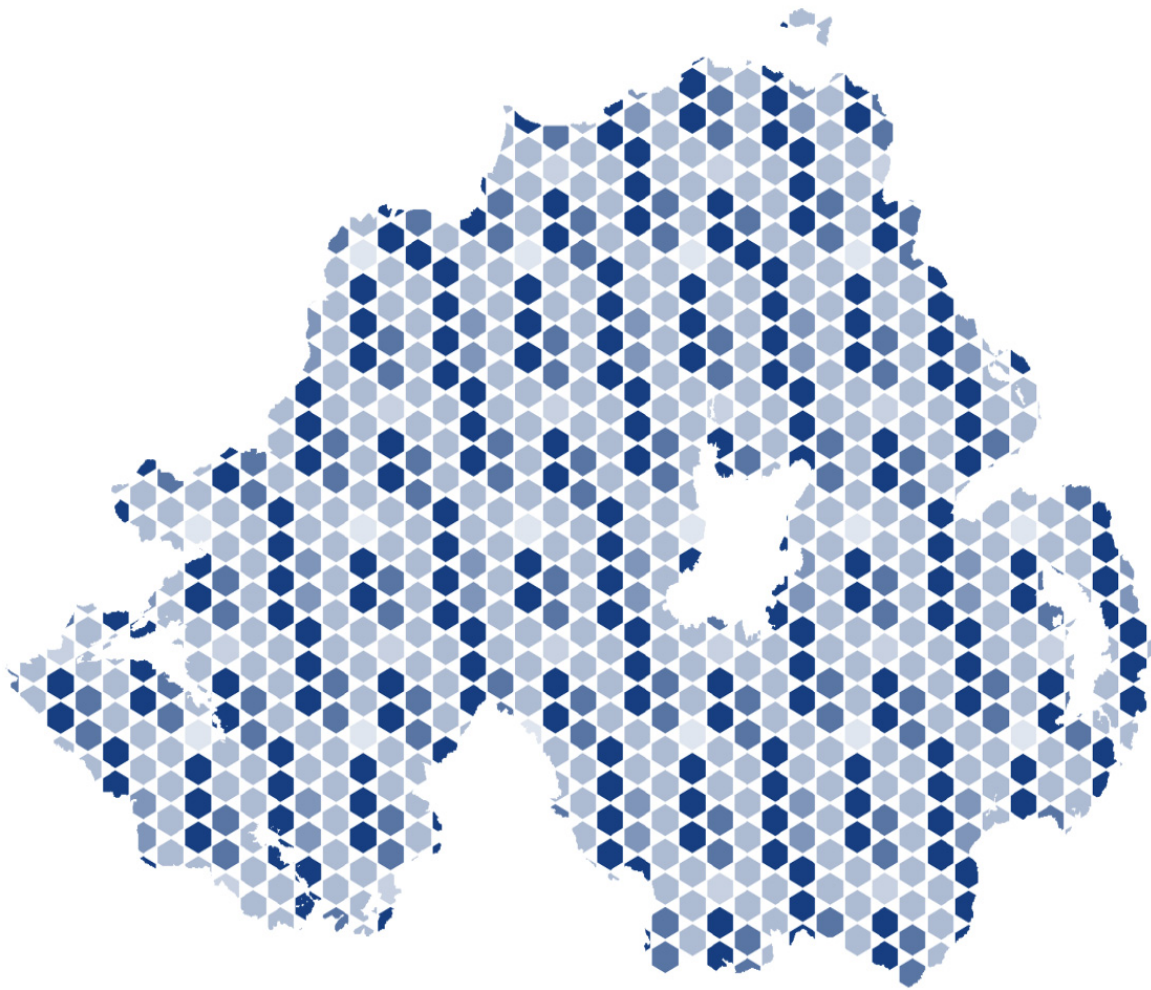


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colman's High School,
Ballynahinch

Report of an Inspection
in May 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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Colman's High School is situated in the town of Ballynahinch, County Down. The school draws its pupils from the town and the surrounding rural area. In the last three years the enrolment has increased steadily and is currently 361, including 106 post-16 pupils. The school has identified 25% of the pupils as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, and 33% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 FOCUS OF THE INSPECTION¹

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching with a particular, but not exclusive, focus on key stage (KS) 3;
- curriculum provision across a wide range of subjects, with a particular focus on English, home economics and music; and
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

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; progress towards the Entitlement Framework (EF) and the provision for careers education (CEIAG); and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. The views of the pupils, parents, teachers, support staff and governors were taken into account in the inspection.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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 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. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of pastoral care and the positive working relationships observed between the teachers and the pupils;
- the very good quality of the provision for those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN);
- the very good behaviour of the pupils, who were courteous and welcoming to visitors and showed respect for others during the inspection;

¹ The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in post-primary schools 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>

- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or better; and
- the Principal's effective promotion of the school to a wide range of organisations in the local and wider community.

2.2 The main areas for improvement are:

- the need for the Principal to lead the senior leadership team (SLT) in a review of the school development plan (SDP) and its outworking, with a particular focus on developing more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school and ensuring more effective sharing of the good practice existing; and
- the need to improve further the standards achieved by the pupils.

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 Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.²

3.2 Almost all of the parents' responses were highly affirmative, indicating strong support for the school's work and provision. They appreciated, in particular, the inclusive ethos; the dedicated, hard-working teaching staff; the support provided for those pupils who had additional needs; and, the development of the pupils academically, personally and socially. A small number of parents raised concerns about the limited subject choices at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Level; the lack of opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity; and, the need to update the accommodation.

3.3 Most of the teachers responded very positively in the questionnaire and, in their written comments highlighted: the good relationships between all staff and pupils; the support provided by senior management, especially in resolving pastoral issues involving the pupils; and the opportunities for the teachers' professional development. A minority of teachers raised concerns about communication between senior management and the teachers. Almost all of the responses from support staff were highly affirmative of the care provided for the pupils and the good working relationships within the school.

3.4 The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school and for the leadership of the Principal. They commended the commitment of the SLT and the dedicated staff. Additionally, they recorded their appreciation of the work of the Principal and teachers in developing the extensive links with the local community.

² The number of questionnaires issued and returned, and the numbers containing written comments are shown in Appendix 3.

3.5 In discussions held with groups of pupils in years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14, they reported that they felt safe and secure in school and were aware of what to do if they had any concerns about their safety and well-being. They talked with enthusiasm about the commitment of the staff in providing very good educational and pastoral support, and of the welcoming and caring ethos within the school.

3.6 The Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the discussions and questionnaires which are dealt with, where appropriate, in this report.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Overall the attainments and standards achieved by the pupils are satisfactory.

The pupils are well motivated to give of their best and almost all maintain very good standards of presentation in their written work. The school places a strong and effective emphasis on encouraging the pupils to take pride in their school and in their personal appearance. During the course of the inspection, the pupils were well behaved, courteous, welcoming to visitors, and demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. In class, they co-operated well with their teachers and, when they were given the opportunity, they worked enthusiastically and effectively in pairs and small groups. Most of the pupils identified as having additional needs demonstrate continued improvement in their learning.

Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C has fluctuated, but fell in 2010 to well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools and over the three years is below the NI average when compared with similar non-selective schools. Over the same period, the percentage obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has also fluctuated and is below the average when compared with similar non-selective schools. The variation in results in GCSE and equivalent examinations as a whole is too wide: while grades A* to C in one-third of the subjects are 10% or more above the NI average for non-selective schools, similar grades in a further one-third are 10% or more below. The school has identified appropriately, for example, mathematics in the school development plan as a subject where results need to be improved.

Over the same three-year period, a choice of four General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Levels was delivered. The majority of pupils in years 13 and 14 take courses in applied subjects; they benefit greatly from the provision and achieve very well. The quality of the pupils' work in the portfolios scrutinised provides clear evidence of their very good attainment, particularly in Health and Social Care. While the percentage of the pupils achieving three or more GCE A Levels, or equivalent, at grades A-C has fallen to well below the NI average, the percentage of the pupils achieving two or more GCE A Level or equivalent grades at A-E is above average at 100%.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The quality of the teaching, learning and assessment is good.

4.2.1 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of the lessons observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory. Most of the lessons observed were good or better, with one quarter being very good. One-fifth of the lessons observed were satisfactory.

The teachers are hard-working and effectively establish positive working relationships with the pupils. The classroom assistants provide well-targeted support for the pupils with whom they work. In the best practice, in one in four of the lessons observed, the teachers' planning identifies the intended learning outcomes clearly and the lessons are structured well, with a strong emphasis on building on the pupils' previous learning and experiences. The pace of these lessons is brisk and the work is realistically challenging. In particular, the effective sharing of learning intentions at the start of, and consolidation during, the lessons helps the pupils focus sharply on what they learn, and enables them to evaluate their own progress. The teachers provide the pupils with carefully planned opportunities for extended discussion, enabling them to develop their thinking and communication skills. Information and communication technology is used effectively to consolidate the pupils' learning and engage them in activities with a real sense of purpose and audience.

In the minority of instances, the less effective practice is characterised, in particular, by success criteria for lessons being unclear, resulting in the students not fully reaching the standards of which they are capable. The lessons are overly directed by the teachers and often provide insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. The Principal and SLT need to ensure that the very good practice observed is identified more effectively and disseminated better across the school.

The school identifies the individual needs of the pupils who require additional support early, and appropriate interventions are put in place to support them in both literacy and numeracy. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) works closely with a range of staff and identifies appropriate strategies to eliminate possible difficulties in learning through a combination of in-class support and withdrawal from lessons. The individual education plans (IEPs) set out clear strategies to be used by the class teachers to help the pupils overcome any barriers they have in their learning. Assessments by the teachers and their associated detailed tracking of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy are carried out regularly and demonstrate continued improvement by most of the pupils. Pupils move appropriately through the various stages within the SEN register, depending on the level of the support they require and the progress they make. The SENCO, the teachers and the learning support staff all work hard to ensure that the pupils who have additional needs in literacy and numeracy benefit from a full engagement in the curriculum. Most of the pupils make good progress. The overall quality of the provision for SEN is very good.

The school welcomes and provides good inclusive support for the six newcomer pupils from four different countries.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The pupils at KS3 and 4 are provided with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. The Principal and the SLT have a strong commitment to the rationale underpinning the Entitlement Framework and the school plays an active role in the Ballynahinch Area Learning Community (ALC). The school collaborates with the partner schools and has plans to extend this collaboration further through the provision of a wider range of general and applied A Levels in order to meet the pupils' needs and career aspirations more fully. Most of the KS4 pupils carry on into the sixth form and choose courses from a range of four GCE A Levels and four applied A Levels offered within the school. While a wider range of qualifications is offered within the ALC, a minority of the pupils take up courses outside the school. The school should continue to review and adjust the post-16 curricular provision to ensure it is suitably matched to the needs and career aspirations of all of the pupils. In particular, a sharper focus should now be given to evaluating and consolidating the range of options, specifically to ensure that there is a continuing balance between courses followed within the school and through the extended use of the ALC.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good.

The school has a caring, supportive ethos and takes a holistic approach to the educational, personal and social development of the pupils. The head of pastoral care provides effective strategic leadership. He is supported well by a committed and energetic team of year heads and form tutors who work very hard to support the pupils in their care. Among the strengths of the pastoral provision are: the emphasis on encouraging high standards of pupil behaviour; the strong sense of community within the school; the commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils; the good working relationships observed between the staff and the pupils; and the very good quality of the pupils' personal and social learning experiences observed within the weekly form classes. The school has introduced recently a school council constituted of pupils from years 11 to 14 to encourage pupil participation and involvement in whole-school decision making; this development is noteworthy and should be extended further to include pupils from each of the year groups. There are well-developed, inclusive approaches which integrate the programme for SEN with the pastoral provision.

4.2.4 SAFEGUARDING

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

4.2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The overall quality of the CEIAG is satisfactory.

The school offers a variety of programmes and activities which reflect and meet the needs of the majority of the pupils in KS3 and KS4. The pupils benefit greatly from their participation in a well-planned programme of careers visits and events in the school, supplemented by a week of work experience in both years 12 and 13, which contributes effectively to their understanding of the world of work. The head of department has appropriately identified the need to address the variation in the provision of CEIAG for the pupils in years 13 and 14. In supporting the ongoing development of CEIAG, the Principal and the SLT need to ensure a more consistent and coherent approach to the delivery of CEIAG, particularly for the post-16 pupils. It will also be important that the work in CEIAG is linked appropriately to the SDP, is monitored and evaluated regularly in order to ensure consistency in the delivery, and to bring about further improvement in the provision.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

5.1 The Principal is strongly committed to the welfare of the pupils and knows them well. He has been in post for the past three years. In that time he has established very good links with the local and wider community through, for example, opening the school's facilities to a range of community groups. He has led effectively the work in starting to develop the post-16 provision and has co-operated closely with the governors to reduce significantly the budget deficit. He is well supported by the Vice-principal and the SLT in his work.

5.2 A number of key aspects of leadership and management need to be addressed. The SDP does not comply with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland), and priorities identified within the SDP need to be re-adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The associated development and planning processes need to be developed significantly by the Principal, the SLT and heads of department in order to ensure more effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, in particular, focusing sharply on raising further the standards which the pupils attain. A more systematic scrutiny of a wider range of first-hand evidence, such as lesson observation, pupils' books and quantitative data, is needed by the teachers and the management at all levels in order to promote improvement. Associated with this, the school needs to make clearer how the various curricular, SEN and pastoral teams will facilitate a sharper focus on understanding and meeting the needs of individual pupils effectively, and thereby contribute to the re-adjustment of the SDP.

6. CONCLUSION

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

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision for English is good.

The strengths of the English provision include:

- the quality of the teaching observed, almost all of which was good or very good;
- the priority given to the promotion of thinking skills and of talking and listening;
- the effective leadership of the head of department; and
- the good standards achieved by the end of KS3, and in GCSE English Literature.

The area for improvement is the need to;

- develop the processes of monitoring and evaluation to improve further the standards in GCSE English.

Home Economics

The quality of the provision for home economics is satisfactory.

The strengths of the provision for home economics include:

- the good start made by the recently-appointed head of department in reviewing the home economics provision and her commitment to continuing improvement;
- the highly positive behaviour of the pupils and the good working relationships between the teacher, support staff and the pupils in all of the lessons observed; and
- the opportunities provided for the pupils to develop practical skills, as well as more generic skills, such as working with others.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- improve the standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level; and
- to develop further the monitoring, evaluation and sharing of good practice in home economics.

Music

The quality of the provision for Music is satisfactory.

The strengths of the provision for Music include:

- the very good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;

- the pupils' engagement, motivation and enjoyment in their learning and their ability to work well collaboratively;
- the quality of the teaching which was good in most of lessons observed;
- the development of links with the local community through music; and
- the enthusiasm and commitment of the head of department in developing appropriate extra-curricular activities to develop further the pupils' musical skills.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop the planning in order to show progression in the teaching and learning in KS3; and
- implement clearer action planning to guide the further development of the department.

ACCOMMODATION

- The provision of accommodation for home economics is not in accordance with the recommendations of Part 16 of the DE Secondary School Building Handbook.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Home Economics:

- there is a lack of continuous work surface in the specialist room;
- table tops are well-worn and in an unhygienic condition;
- cooked-chill facilities are unavailable for the safe storage of foodstuffs;
- general storage facilities are inadequate;
- overhead power sockets are not easily accessible; and
- adapted facilities to support pupils with special physical needs in practical activities are unavailable.

General Classrooms:

- visual panels are absent from a number of the classroom doors and in the music practice rooms.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	115	54	47%	28
Teachers	25	20	80%	8
Support Staff	22	8	36%	1

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Colman's High v. Date of Inspection: W/C 09/05/11
 ii. School Reference Number: 4230161 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Catholic Maintained

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	46	35	54	55	48
Total enrolment	333	290	310	317	361

1.3 Attendance

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	92.4	91.5	88.5	92.4	88.5	92.5	88.5	91	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 25 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.79
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.44

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	30	29	28	21	35	32	10	185
Enrolment: Girls	18	36	28	21	18	30	25	176
Enrolment: Total	48	65	56	42	53	62	35	361
PTR	15.38	14.18	13.46	12.42	13.46	16.96	16.82	14.38

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

Year 13	63.8	NI Av Year 13	44.3
Year 14	32.8	NI Av Year 14	30.6

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	20		44	
Another School	15%	12.8	2%	2.2
Employment	45%	5.7	21%	11.6
Full-time Further Education	20%	46.6	28%	27.6
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	26%	45.5
Full-time Training	5%	27.5	16%	5.2
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	10%	3.8	7%	4.5
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	5%	3.5	0%	3.3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: St Colman's High School,
Ballynahinch

SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE and GCSE Equivalent Subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2008	2009	2010
*Number of Year 12 taking GCSE and Equivalent subjects	57	54	45
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE& Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	71.93	83.33	80
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	42.11	33.33	42.22
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	35.09	22.22	28.89
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	68.42	74.07	77.78
GCE A level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	31	35	18
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A levels	100	100	100

Table showing the GCSE/GCE and subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland averages

Table 1

	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	Double Award Science 1st Subject French* German* Motor Vehicle Studies Music* Office Technology	Single Award Science Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies English English Literature Geography	Additional Science	Art and Design* Chemistry* Design and Technology* History Home Economics* Home Economics Food* Mathematics Religious Studies
GCSE A*-E		Motor Vehicle Studies Music* Single Award Science	Additional Science Business Studies Double Award Science 1st Subject* English English Literature French* Geography German* History Home Economics Food* Mathematics Office Technology Religious Studies	Chemistry* Home Economics*	Art and Design* Design and Technology*
GCE A*-C	History**				Geography** Sociology Sports Studies**
GCE A*-E			Geography** History** Sociology Sports Studies**		

*In the subjects indicated, fewer than 30 pupils entered the GCSE examination over a three-year period.

**In the subjects indicated, fewer than 20 pupils entered the A Level examination over a three-year period.

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

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

Table 2

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-C			Art and Design Chemistry English Literature Music	Additional Science Double Award Science 1st Subject German	Business Studies Design and Technology English French Geography History Home Economics Home Economics Food Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport (PE) Studies
GCSE A*-E	Double Award Science 1st Subject English Literature German	Additional Science Art and Design Chemistry Design and Technology English French History Home Economics Home Economics Child Development Home Economics Food Music Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies Geography Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies		
GCE A*-C		Geography History	Sociology	Sport (PE) Studies	
GCE A*-E	Geography History Sociology Sport (PE) Studies				

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

OTHER RESULTS

Awarding Body	CCEA					
	2008		2009		2010	
Occupational Studies	Number of Pupils	% Pass	Number of Pupils	% Pass	Number of Pupils	% Pass
% A*-C Double Award	0 4 1 2 2	0	10	90	8	100
% A*-C Single Award		75	1	100	1	100
% D-G Double Award		100				
% D-G Single Award		100				
% First Skills		100				

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Applied General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)

Subject	2008		2009		2010		Total entry over 3 years
	Entries	% A*-C	Entries	% A*-C	Entries	% A*-C	
Health and Social Care	26	88.48	34	91.18	32	75	96
Manufacturing	32	65.6	28	82.1	-	-	60

Applied General Certificate of Education A Level

Subject	2008		2009		2010		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Health and Social Care (Double Award)	79	100	85	100	100	100	52
Health & Social Care (Single Award)					100	100	33
Information Communication Technology			40	100	86	100	17
Business	63	100	60	100	67	100	46

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