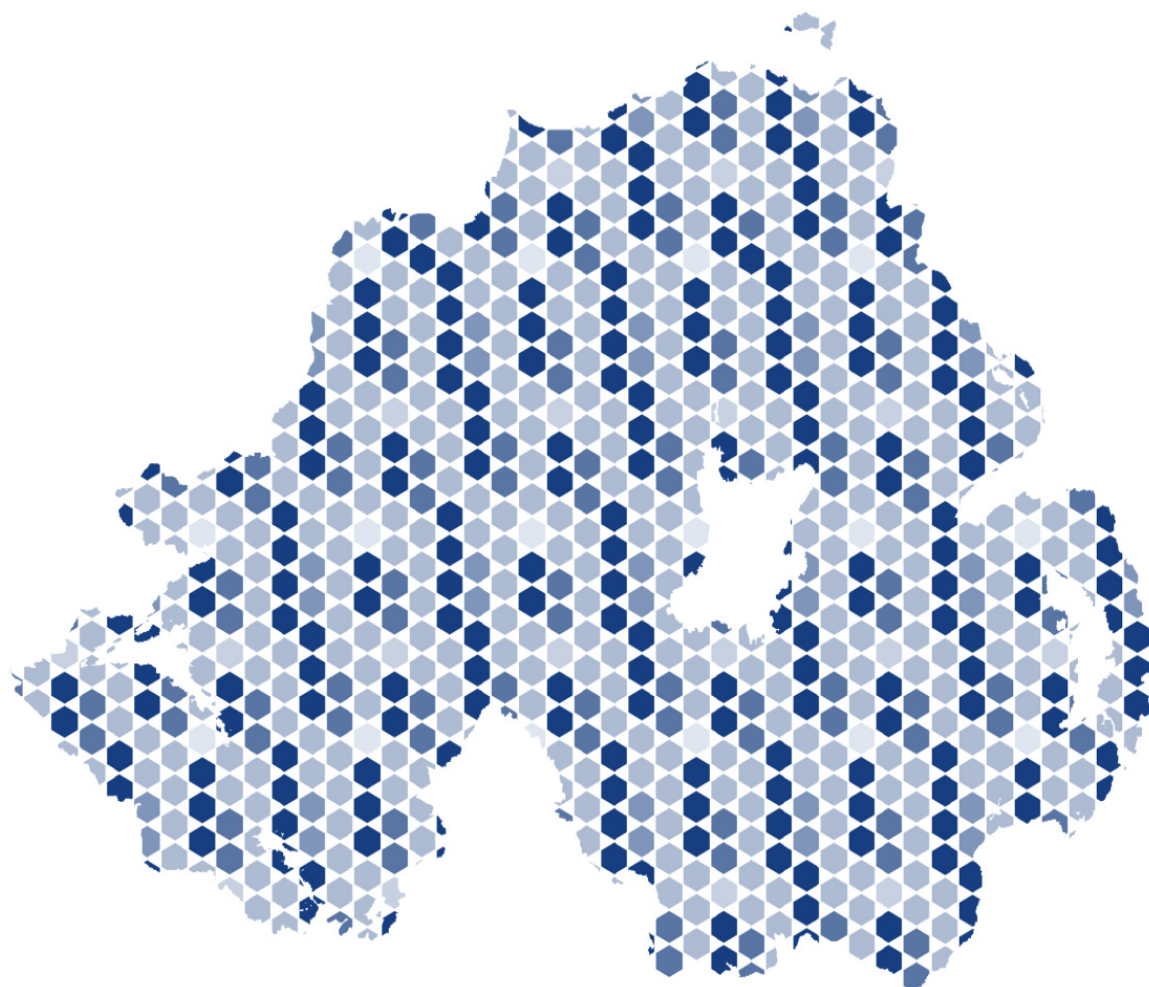


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colmcille's High School,
Crossgar

Report of an Inspection
in October 2010

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

St Colmcille's High School is a maintained co-educational non-selective 11-16 school situated in Crossgar, Co Down. The school draws its pupils from primary schools both within the town and over a 15-mile radius. Over the last three years the enrolment has remained steady and is currently 451 pupils. The school has identified just over 21% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning and approximately 15% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching;
- provision across a wide range of subjects with a particular focus on mathematics, physical education and science, 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 governors;
- the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection;
- the approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity;
- the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life;
- the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); and
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the overall quality of education provided by the school is good.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the very good behaviour and high levels of motivation displayed by all of the pupils;
- the good or better standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations in almost all of the subjects;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or better with a small number of outstanding lessons;

- the strong links between the pastoral care and the special education needs (SEN) co-ordinators which help to meet the additional learning needs of the pupils and promote an inclusive culture across the school;
- the commitment of all of the staff to the overall well-being of the pupils; and
- the very good leadership demonstrated by the Principal.

2.2 The area for improvement is:

- the need for the leadership and management, at all levels, to continue to focus on self-evaluation, associated action planning and target setting to help promote improvement.

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 and 12.

3.2 Ninety questionnaires were issued to parents; over 43% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 19 contained additional written comments. Most of the responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, indicated very strong support for the work and life of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring, approachable staff, the swift resolution of any pastoral concerns and the support for children who have special educational needs.

3.3 Fifteen teachers and 28 support staff completed confidential questionnaires with eight teachers and four support staff providing additional written comments. Most of the teachers and support staff who responded acknowledged the effective leadership of the Principal and confirmed that they enjoy working in the school. A significant minority of the teaching and support staff who responded also raised concerns relating to communication between the staff at all levels and indicated that there are insufficient opportunities for staff discussion with regard to identifying and achieving the school's priorities. This issue will be dealt with in the report.

3.4 The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school and its long-standing links with the local community. They highlighted the good standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations, the dedication of the school staff, the quality of the pastoral care, including the support provided for pupils with special needs and the contribution the Principal and the senior management team have made to the school.

3.5 In discussions held with the pupils, they stated that they were given very good support to fulfil their potential and they displayed a keen interest in their own learning. The pupils in years 10 and 12 talked knowledgeably about their subject choices at key stage (KS) 4 and their career pathways post-16. The pupils in year 12 reported that they value both their involvement in decision-making within the school and their pastoral role, especially as peer mentors.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The pupils' behaviour, personal and social skills are very good. The majority of the pupils are highly motivated, confident, articulate and keen to show their commitment to the school and to their teachers. In particular, the pupils in year 8 have settled into school quickly and display a keen sense of commitment to their learning and a pride in their school. The year 12 pupils develop good communication skills through their involvement in a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, including the School Council. The pupils work well with their peers, respond well to a wide variety of teaching strategies, including active learning, and contribute positively to their learning.

The levels of attainment in public examinations are good.

Over the past three years, nearly all of the pupils in year 12 were entered for five or more subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level, with 62% of the pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. These standards are in line with similar non-selective schools in Northern Ireland (NI) and are showing improvement each year. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more subjects at GCSE at A*-C including English and mathematics has been below the NI average for similar schools. In almost all subjects, however, the standards achieved at A*-C and A*-E are within or above five percentage points of the corresponding three-year NI averages, and, overall, a majority are showing an upward trend. The school has identified the need to raise further the levels of attainment for all of the pupils.

Those pupils who have a wide range of challenging additional needs are making good progress. The majority of pupils, for example, identified with significant literacy difficulties in year 8 achieve good success in public examinations by the end of KS4. The special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) ensures the effective assessment of the pupils' needs and early identification of the type of support required on an individual basis. In collaboration with colleagues she plans effective intervention which ensures that the majority of pupils achieve to their potential.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

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

4.2.1 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Over four-fifths of the teaching observed was good or better and in a small number of lessons was outstanding. In the remainder of the lessons observed there were significant areas for improvement.

The teachers are dedicated, prepare thoroughly for lessons and provide good support for the pupils. There is a culture of mutual respect throughout the school. The pupils are encouraged to have realistically high expectations and to be actively involved in their learning. The subject teachers' personal planning builds effectively on the pupils' prior

learning and identifies appropriate strategies, including differentiation, to support their progress. However, the quality of planning at departmental level is inconsistent. The school needs to ensure that the good departmental practice which has been identified is shared across all departments. The provision for ICT is satisfactory; when given the opportunity, the pupils use ICT well to support their work.

The overall quality of provision for SEN is very good. Planning is informed by the detailed, relevant individual education plans (IEPs). The majority of teachers use the IEPs to inform their classroom management, teaching and learning strategies and choice of resources. In the majority of classes the teachers assess the pupils' progress, adjust the pace of the lessons and differentiate the content as needed. There is good pastoral and learning support from the SENCO and the special needs staff for individual pupils; a strong feature of the practice is the flexibility shown by staff and management, particularly in supporting those pupils with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In the best practice in the teaching observed, there are mutually respectful relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils and there is a strong inclusive ethos in which the pupils' learning is matched to their needs. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils and support their progress by building on their prior learning. Clear learning intentions are integral to the teaching, revisited during the lessons and used effectively to evaluate the pupils' progress. A good range of open-ended and differentiated questioning promotes the pupils' thinking skills and engagement in their learning. The teachers' oral or written comments help the pupils to improve the quality of their work.

In the less effective practice, the lessons tend to be over-directed by the teacher, resulting in low levels of pupil engagement. The lessons lack challenge for the more able and a lack of differentiated work leads to limited opportunity and progression for some of the pupils.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The school is making good progress towards providing a suitably broad and balanced curriculum, in line with the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, which matches the ability and meets the career aspirations of all of the pupils. In recent years several vocational options have been introduced in conjunction with the local college of further and higher education as part of the Ballynahinch Learning Community. The school has also introduced a wider range of GCSE and BTEC subjects to work toward broadening the curriculum at KS4. There is an appropriate entry policy for most pupils. However, the practice of all year 11 and 12 pupils taking either Occupational Studies or BTEC qualifications may not always be suitable. It is important that this practice is monitored, evaluated and reviewed annually to ensure that all of the pupils are given the opportunity to follow the most appropriate educational pathway.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The staff and pupils value highly the pastoral provision within the school. Throughout the school there is an inclusive and supportive ethos, and the behaviour of the pupils is consistently exemplary. The senior pupils in the school play a very important role in the pastoral care of the younger pupils, and demonstrate confidence, maturity and a strong sense of belonging to their school community. The school has very good external links and the premises are well used after school hours by a range of local community organisations.

4.2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

4.2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through, for example, connected learning projects on healthy living and the school council's involvement in lunchtime arrangements. There is a need to ensure that the school tuck shop presents a consistent healthy eating message by offering only healthy food and drinks.

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

The quality of provision for CEIAG is good. The head of careers knows the pupils well and, at an individual level, provides them with a range of opportunities suitable to their current and future needs. By the end of year 12, the pupils have an understanding of the world of work and of the education, training and employment opportunities that are available to them. Local employers and past pupils of the school assist greatly with the process of helping the pupils develop their interviewing skills, and many provide opportunities for work-based learning. It is important that the school makes stronger connections between CEIAG and Learning for Life and Work aspects of the curriculum. The school has rightly identified a task group to consider the best way to take forward Learning for Life and Work and the careers provision.

4.2.7 HEARING IMPAIRED UNIT

The Hearing Impaired Unit (HIU) is providing very good support for a small number of pupils who integrate with their peers for the majority of their school day. In addition, the unit supports those pupils with hearing loss who are fully integrated into mainstream classes. The pupils benefit from the caring atmosphere in the unit and the sound knowledge and understanding of hearing impairment which the teacher, ably supported by her classroom assistants, brings to her work. Links with parents, and with the statutory and voluntary agencies which support those with hearing impairments are used well to inform the work. There is good liaison between the unit teacher, the SENCO and subject teachers to support the progress of these pupils who, within a wide continuum of ability and often with other emotional and social difficulties, achieve to their potential as a result of this provision. It will be important to continue to develop professional expertise for the HIU and mainstream staff on the inclusion of the HIU pupils.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management at all levels in the school is good.

5.1 The Principal has been in post for 16 years and provides very good leadership coupled with a clear vision to help bring about school improvement. During this time she has encouraged strong links between the school and the local community. She is well supported by the hard-working, dedicated Vice-principal. School development planning is well established within the school and the school development plan sets out a range of appropriate priorities for school improvement. While the plan is developed through consultation, there is further scope for extending the consultation process to identify and

achieve the school's targets. The senior management team has recently been restructured; it will be important to build the capacity and extend the role of this new team, and middle managers, in school development planning by monitoring and evaluating provision, focusing more sharply on the action needed to bring about future improvement and specifying the success criteria by which progress can be measured.

5.2 There is very good communication between the Principal and the governors who are highly committed to the life and work of the school community. They are well informed about school development and the standards achieved by the pupils.

5.3 The SENCO provides very good leadership and manages the arrangements for supporting pupils with SEN very effectively. She provides good guidance, information and advice for staff and co-ordinates the team of classroom assistants very well. The staff value her expertise and experience. There are strong partnerships with outside agencies to support her work. In collaboration with senior management she recognises the need to revisit overall school policy for SEN in the light of the changing context.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 In the areas inspected, the overall quality of education provided by the school is good.

6.2 The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address.

6.3 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the area for improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Mathematics

The quality of provision for mathematics is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very good teaching in one third of the lessons observed during the inspection;
- the very good behaviour of the pupils and the positive relationships between the teachers and the pupils in most of the lessons observed;
- the departmental documentation, which is of a very good quality;
- the pupils' ability to work well collaboratively, when given the opportunity; and
- the very good start made by the recently appointed head of department in reviewing the mathematics provision and her commitment to continued improvement.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to improve further the standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level;
- for the head of department to monitor and evaluate more effectively the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment to ensure consistency across the department; and
- for the teachers to match the learning more closely to the interests, needs and abilities of the pupils and to link more closely with the SEN provision.

Physical Education (PE)

The quality of the provision for PE is good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very good working relationships between teachers and pupils in nearly all of the lessons observed;
- the high levels of participation and the pupils' positive attitudes to physical education;
- the consistently excellent outcomes achieved by pupils at GCSE level;
- the quality of teaching observed, four-fifths of which was good or better;

- the enthusiastic, committed and hard-working teachers; and
- the good leadership and effective management by the PE co-ordinator.

The area for improvement is the need:

- to review departmental planning and develop strategies for self-evaluation within the PE department.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is very good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very good quality of the departmental documentation, particularly the development plan setting out appropriate priorities for the medium-term;
- the very good or outstanding teaching in a majority of the lessons observed, characterised by the pupils' use of a variety of written and other resources and their accurate scientific record of a wide range of practical and investigative work;
- the effective use of learning intentions for teaching and learning purposes;
- the very good standards reached in practical and written work, including the very good attainment in public examinations;
- the good use of quantitative and benchmarked data to track the pupils' progression in their learning, including the standards they reach; and
- the very good leadership of the head of science, including her effective emphasis on the department working as team.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Colmcille's High School v. Date of Inspection: W/C 4/10/10
 ii. School Reference Number: 423-0102 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Maintained

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	95	81	94	90	90
Total enrolment	460	451	452	449	451

1.3 Attendance

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	92.3	91.2	91.2	89.6	90.4	91	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 31
- iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.708

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.683

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	53	48	53	42	61	257
Enrolment: Girls	37	45	36	39	37	194
Enrolment: Total						451
PTR	14.787	14.985	14.904	14.622	15.287	

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

Year 13	0	NI Av Year 13	91.1
Year 14	0	NI Av Year 14	86.3

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	89		0	
Another School	54%	12.8	0%	0.9
Employment	0%	5.7	0%	4.8
Full-time Further Education	20%	46.6	0%	7.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	0%	83.5
Full-time Training	21%	27.5	0%	0.6
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	3%	3.8	0%	1.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	1%	3.5	0%	1.4

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: St Colmcille's High School SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	93.55	94.25	94.6
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	58.06	58.62	68.5%
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	36.56	40.23	35.16
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	83.87	80.46	83.52

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and (GCE A2⁺) subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) 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*-B	Double Award Science 1 st Subject English English Literature French Media Film and TV Studies Motor Vehicle Studies Single Award Science Sport (PE) Studies	Design and Technology History	Art and Design Business Studies Drama Geography Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Religious Studies	Mathematics	Home Economics Information Technology

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-B		Drama Information Technology	Art and Design English English Literature History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Design and Technology Geography Mathematics	Business Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject French Media Film and TV Studies Motor Vehicle Studies Single Award Science

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