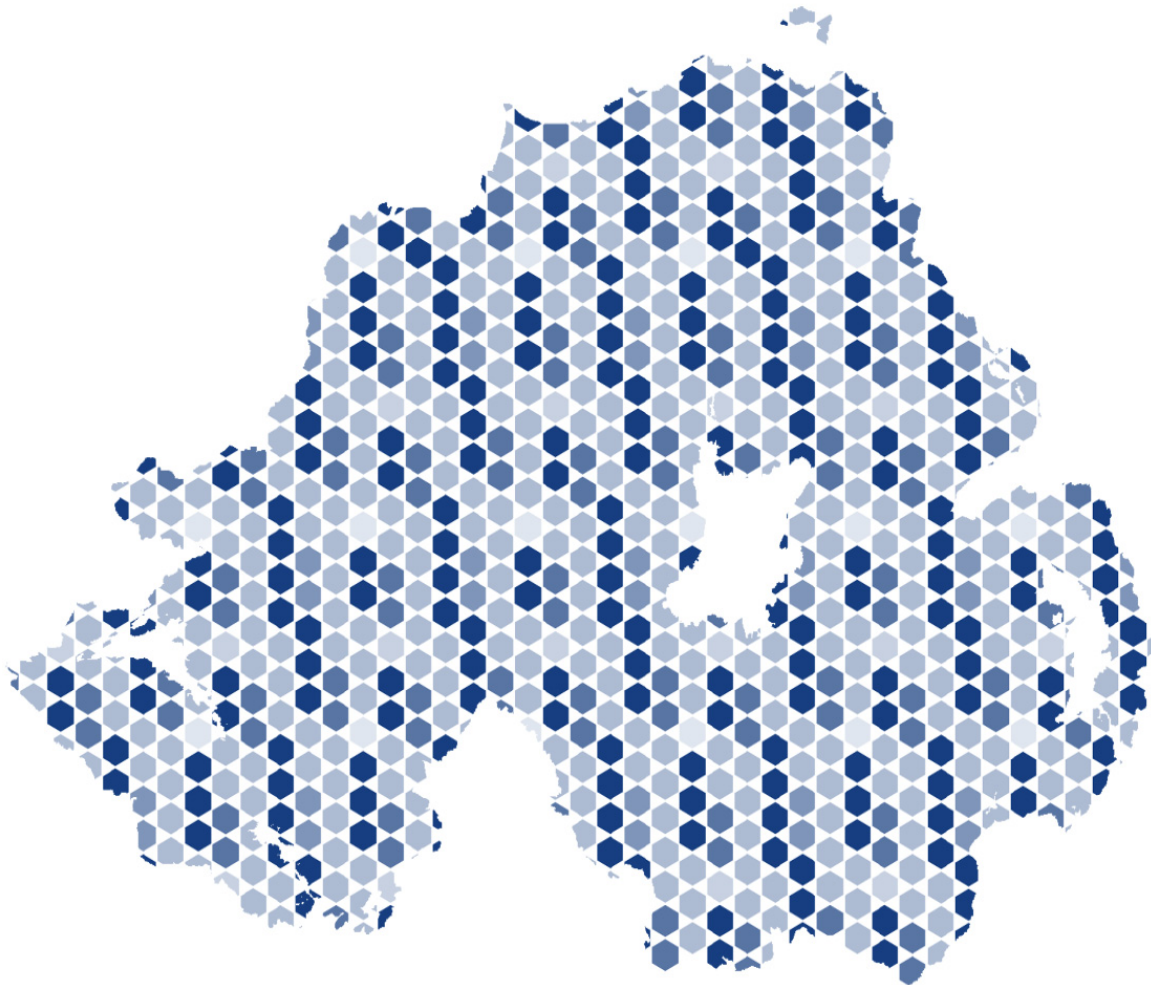


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's College,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in November 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 Patrick's College is a co-educational maintained secondary school situated on the northern outskirts of Ballymena. The enrolment has risen steadily over the past five years and currently stands at 524, reflecting an increasing number of newcomer pupils. The school has identified approximately 27% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning. Just over 20% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and 101 are newcomer pupils.

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, home economics and modern languages, 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 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 quality of education provided by the school is good.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include the:

- the good progress made, and standards achieved, by most of the pupils;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care including the high priority given to the care and well being of all of the pupils and the nurturing and supportive ethos;
- the strong commitment to inclusion and cultural diversity;

- the hard-working teachers who have established very good working relationships with the pupils;
- the highly effective leadership provided by the Principal; and
- the commitment of the governors to the life and work of the school.

2.2 The main areas for improvement are the need for:

- the teachers to develop further, and implement, assessment for learning strategies in order to improve the quality of the provision and the outcomes; and
- the senior leadership team (SLT) and middle management to develop a more systematic approach towards monitoring and evaluating to inform self-evaluation and the associated action to 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, and for representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14 to meet with the inspectors.

3.2 One hundred and one questionnaires were issued to parents; 20 were returned to Inspection Services Branch and eleven contained additional written comments. The responses from the small number of questionnaires returned were highly affirmative. The parents indicated that their children enjoy school, and highlighted the friendly and approachable staff who encourage the pupils and promote a sense of self-respect.

3.3 Thirty-one teachers and six support staff completed confidential questionnaires with 13 teachers providing additional written comments. Overall, the staff enjoy working at the school, feel valued by the management and consider the leadership of the Principal to be effective. All of the teachers indicated that there is effective communication between the SLT and the staff; however, a minority indicated that communication is less effective across the staff at other levels. A minority of the teachers also feel that the school is not adequately resourced for learning and teaching. In particular, the teachers commented on the caring, welcoming and supportive learning environment provided for the pupils.

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

3.5 The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the quality of the pastoral care and the school's commitment towards inclusion, the excellent leadership of the Principal, and the effectiveness of the SLT. They expressed support for the school's active involvement in the Ballymena Learning Together (BLT) partnership and the associated action to improve community relations and broaden the curriculum offer for the pupils.

3.6 The pupils talked positively to the inspectors about the support given by their teachers and identified many aspects of school life they enjoy including the wide range of extra-curricular activities available. They also stated that they feel happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

Overall, the pupils' achievements are good.

The pupils, many of whom have complex learning, social, emotional and cultural needs, demonstrate a positive disposition to learning. The standard of the pupils' behaviour is very good; many have good social skills and interact well with their peers. In order to improve the pupils' confidence and levels of independence, the teachers' need to provide greater opportunities for the pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and develop competence in oral communication. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress and attain appropriate accreditation across a range of subjects.

In 2010, nearly all of the pupils in year 12 were entered for five or more subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level with approximately one-half achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. These standards are below the average for similar non-selective schools in Northern Ireland (NI); however, there is an upward trend. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more subjects at GCSE at A*-C including English and mathematics has risen and was in line with the NI average for similar schools in 2010. In over two-thirds of subjects, the standards achieved at A*-C and A*-E are within or above five percentage points of the corresponding three-year NI averages.

At General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level, the proportion of pupils achieving three or more GCEs at grades A-C has fluctuated between the average and below the NI average for non-selective schools. The pupils, however, attain well in most of the vocational subjects on offer.

The school has identified the need to raise further the levels of attainment in public examinations and has implemented a range of strategies such as departmental action plans and an effective individual pupil target setting and mentoring programme in year 12. The inspection findings confirm that this is an appropriate area for ongoing development. To support this work, the school needs to develop the effective use of data across the school to track the pupils' progress for the purpose of identifying individual targets and actions which will improve standards.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 3.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

Overall, the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory.

4.2.1 LEARNING AND TEACHING

The teachers are hard-working and committed and have established very good working relationships with the pupils. The quality of almost all of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory: Just under one-half of the lessons were good; and a similar proportion were satisfactory with significant areas for improvement.

The teachers have demonstrated a commitment to reviewing and developing the long-term planning within areas of learning. In the more effective practice: the teachers' medium and short-term planning identified an appropriate range of activities which were focused sharply on securing good learning outcomes; the teachers' expectations of what the pupils could achieve were appropriately high; the learning intentions were clear; there was a good structure and pace to the lesson; the learning was managed well with appropriate cognisance of the wide range of learning, social and cultural needs of the pupils; and the teachers' questioning was effective. In these lessons, the pupils engaged actively, made positive contributions and enjoyed their learning. This good practice needs to be developed across the school.

In the less effective practice, there was: a lack of clarity about the intended learning; over directed whole-class teaching with low level questioning and missed opportunities to challenge the more able pupils; an over-emphasis on transcription and limited opportunities for the pupils to respond to, and record, their own learning; and too narrow a range of learning and teaching strategies. In these lessons the pupils were often passive and did not engage actively in the learning.

In order to improve the quality of the learning and teaching, the teachers need to develop further, and implement, assessment for learning strategies, including effective questioning and plenary sessions which consolidate the learning.

The school has appointed recently a head of learning and identified the need to agree and construct a meaningful process for self-evaluating the quality of learning and teaching. The inspection findings confirm that this is a key priority for development.

The quality of the provision for the pupils with special needs is good. New baseline testing arrangements have been introduced recently to inform learning and teaching and measure the progress made by the pupils. The school has recognised the need to support subject teachers in using the Individual education plans (IEPs) more effectively in planning lessons and implementing subject specific strategies to meet the needs of the individual learners. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) should continue to develop the structured monitoring, evaluation and review of the IEPs and intervention strategies to support pupils.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The learning experiences, programmes and activities provided by the school meet the needs of the pupils in an effective manner and serve the needs of the wider community well.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to, and benefits from, its active participation in the BLT area learning community.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum for all of the pupils at key stage (KS) 3 in line with the Northern Ireland curriculum. At KS4, the school offers a range of applied and general qualifications, with additional options provided through the BLT collaboration. An appropriate range of examination courses is available for pupils with special educational needs. At post-16, the school's collaborative arrangement within the BLT provides a good curriculum offer. Overall, progress towards the implementation of the Entitlement Framework by 2013 is very good.

Importantly, the school offers a wide range of both academic and non-academic extra-curricular activities to meet the needs and interests of the pupils, including: the Princes Trust XL programme; a range of sporting activities; a young enterprise programme in collaboration with Sentinus; and opportunities for the pupils to participate in music and drama.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The school leadership gives a high priority to the care and well being of all of the pupils. The school has a nurturing and supportive ethos. There are a range of programmes in place throughout the school to meet the personal, social and emotional needs of pupils and to help them respond appropriately to situations affecting their welfare. There is a strong commitment to the support and retention of vulnerable pupils in the school and there is very effective communication with a range of support services to address the individual needs of these pupils.

The pastoral co-ordinator is dedicated to meeting the needs of all of the pupils and works very effectively with the newly appointed assistant co-ordinator and pastoral team. There are high levels of pupil involvement in activities which support the pastoral provision, including: the mentoring programme; school assemblies; the school committee; and fundraising events. The school council is active and effective; the pupils are involved in making decisions about aspects of school life which directly affect them.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion and cultural diversity. There are very good systems to identify those pupils at risk of dropping out of school and teachers are developing consistent strategies to promote their inclusion and retention in school. The small number of pupils who are currently in alternative education provision offsite are not visited by staff on a regular basis; however, it is timely that the school is putting in place arrangements to monitor the pastoral care and educational provision for these pupils. There are currently 101 pupils with English as an additional language from five countries within the European Union; two Polish teachers and a learning assistant provide these pupils with one-to-one and intensive group support. The school provides very good support for the newcomer pupils and has put in place measures to make them feel welcome and included, and provide them with good access to the school curriculum.

4.2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

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

4.2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example the nutritional quality of the school meals and strong emphasis on participation in sport during and after-school, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

Overall the provision for CEIAG is satisfactory. The school has recently demonstrated a commitment to review and improve the quality of the provision, and has developed a programme and framework for delivery for careers at KS4 and post-16.

The pupils make good use of a satisfactory range of careers information, including relevant ICT software and labour market information, to inform their personal career plan. The overall CEIAG programme at KS4 and post-16 provides the pupils with satisfactory opportunities to develop effective decision making skills.

In order to improve the quality of the CEIAG programme there is a need to develop, in collaboration with other appropriate staff, the provision in KS3 and to link the CEIAG provision to other curricular areas at KS4 and post-16.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 Overall, the leadership and management are good: they work effectively towards raising achievement, supporting the pupils and developing the curriculum.

5.2 The Principal, who has been in post for six years, provides highly effective leadership and a clear direction for the school. She demonstrates a strong commitment to the pastoral care and welfare of the pupils and the staff and leads effectively the whole-school improvement agenda. She is supported ably by a vice-principal and SLT. It is appropriate that the membership, roles and responsibilities of the SLT are being reviewed to meet current needs of the school. There is very good communication between the senior leadership and the staff, and the middle management team are effective in their roles.

5.3 The school has a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) which complies with the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The SDP identifies a number of suitable priorities based appropriately upon consultation with the pupils, the parents, the teachers and the governors. The associated action plan targets and actions are not sufficiently specific, and the staff development programme needs to be linked more strategically with the SDP priorities to support whole-school improvement. A good start has been made to self-evaluation at all levels; the further development of self-evaluation has been identified appropriately as a priority within the SDP. Importantly, the SLT and middle management need to develop a more systematic approach towards monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the development work, and the quality of learning and teaching, to inform self-evaluation and the associated action to promote improvement.

5.4 The SENCO has been appointed recently and has been very effective in putting in place good arrangements to support the pupils with special educational needs. She assists staff to provide well for the needs of pupils who require additional support with learning. Special educational needs is given a high priority within the school and there is effective liaison with outside agencies who can offer support.

5.5 The governors show high levels of commitment to the life and work of the school. They are well informed, know the school community, and are involved appropriately in strategic planning.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 In the areas inspected, the 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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

6.3 The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision for English is good.

The strengths of the work include the:

- good standards of writing in many of the classes;
- quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was good or better;
- hard-working and committed teachers;
- strategic approach taken by the department to bring about the necessary change in the teachers' planning;
- good leadership provided by the head of department, particularly with regard to reviewing the schemes of work; and
- department's good start to self-evaluation which, identifies appropriate areas for development including the need to raise standards in GCSE examinations.

The area for improvement includes the need to:

- focus more strategically on improving the standards achieved by all of the pupils in external examinations.

Home Economics

The quality of the provision for home economics is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the responsive and well-behaved pupils;
- the good standards achieved by the pupils in GCSE child care and development and in Applied GCE health and social care;
- the overall quality of the teaching which was always satisfactory, and in the majority of the lessons observed was good;
- the positive working relationships between the staff and the pupils in most of the lessons observed; and
- the commitment and hard work of the head of department and the teachers of home economics.

The area for improvement includes the need to:

- develop further the monitoring, evaluating and sharing of good practice within the home economics department, with a particular focus on learning and teaching.

Modern Languages

The quality of the provision for modern languages is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very inclusive approach to language learning and teaching;
- the good levels of attainment in French at GCSE level;
- the very good working relationships between the teachers and the pupils and among the pupils;
- the positive response of most of the pupils to the range of activities provided by the teachers;
- the good support provided by the teachers to individual pupils in the lessons observed; and
- the revision of the schemes of work for Irish with a clear focus on continuity and progression in the learning.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- develop further the range of learning and teaching strategies, including the effective use of ICT, to motivate the pupils and increase their active participation in the learning; and
- make clear to the pupils the learning intentions and associated success criteria and use these effectively to evaluate the learning and inform future planning and practice.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Patrick's College
 ii. School Reference Number: 323-0084
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Catholic Maintained
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 08/11/10
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	84	63	92	75	74
Total enrolment	421	415	470	505	524

1.3 Attendance

Year 20098/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	93.6	90.9	89.7	90.5	88.7	93.3	94	91.2	90.6

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 37.6 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.73
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 13.9 Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study: (Focused only) 12

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	31	45	49	36	47	19	19	246
Enrolment: Girls	43	34	56	41	63	19	22	278
Enrolment: Total	74	79	105	77	110	38	41	524
PTR	12.2	13.1	14.3	14.3	17.5	12.3	11.9	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2008/09) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	29.8	NI Av Year 13	44.3
Year 14	35.8	NI Av Year 14	N/A

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	53		34	
Another School	4%	12.8	11%	2.2
Employment	2%	5.7	11%	11.6
Full-time Further Education	65%	46.6	31%	27.6
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	19%	45.5
Full-time Training	6%	27.5	0%	5.2
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	23%	3.8	25%	4.5
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.5	3%	3.3

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: St Patrick's College, Ballymena **SCHOOL YEAR:** 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	88.3	86.5	95
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	48.4	51	52.4
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	17.7	29.4	31
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	93.6	84.3	85.7
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	40.7	42.1	30.8
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	96.3	89.5	97.4

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE 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*-C	Art and Design Drama* History Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	French Office Technology Polish*	Additional Science Construction English Literature* Home Economics Child Development Information Technology Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Music* Single Award Science		Business Studies* Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Geography* Home Economics Mathematics Systems
GCSE A*-E		Additional Science Construction French History Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Music*	Art and Design Drama* English Literature* Geography* Home Economics Child Development Information Technology Office Technology Polish* Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport/ (PE) Studies	English Home Economics	Business Studies* Double Award Science 1 st Subject Mathematics Systems

GCE A2 Level A*-C	English Literature** Religious Studies**				Biology** Home Economics**
GCE A2 Level A*-E			English Literature** Home Economics** Religious Studies**		Biology**

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

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

** Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 20 pupils over 3 years.

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		Polish	Art and Design Drama Information Technology Music	Additional Science Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Literature Home Economics Child Development	Business Studies Construction English French Geography History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Mathematics Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport (PE) Studies Systems
GCSE A*-E	Double Award Science 1 st Subject Drama English Literature Polish Sport (PE) Studies	Additional Science Art and Design English French History Home Economics Home Economics Child Development Information Technology Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Music Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science Systems	Business Studies Construction Geography Mathematics		

GCE A2 Level A*-C		English Literature Home Economics Religious Studies	Biology		
GCE A2 Level A*-E	Biology English Literature Home Economics Religious Studies				

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

OTHER RESULTS

Occupational Studies	2008		2009		2010	
	Number of Pupils	% Pass	Number of Pupils	% Pass	Number of Pupils	% Pass
Level 1	16	56.2	17	47.1	15	40
Level 2		43.8		47.1		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	
Art & Design	100	100	100	100	100	100	40
Health & Social Care	63.3	96.7	66.7	91.7	56.5	97.8	100
Information Technology	39.1	91.3	33.3	91.7	50	93.8	51
Performing Arts	66.7	100	50	100	40	90	20
Moving Image Arts					100	100	1

ACCOMMODATION

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is traffic congestion at the beginning and end of the school day at the front gates of the school.
- The circular saw and extraction system have not been installed and are stored in the technology and design manufacturing store causing an obstruction which is a health and safety hazard.
- The floor covering adjoining the tiled machine area in technology and design manufacturing room one has become detached and is a trip hazard.

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