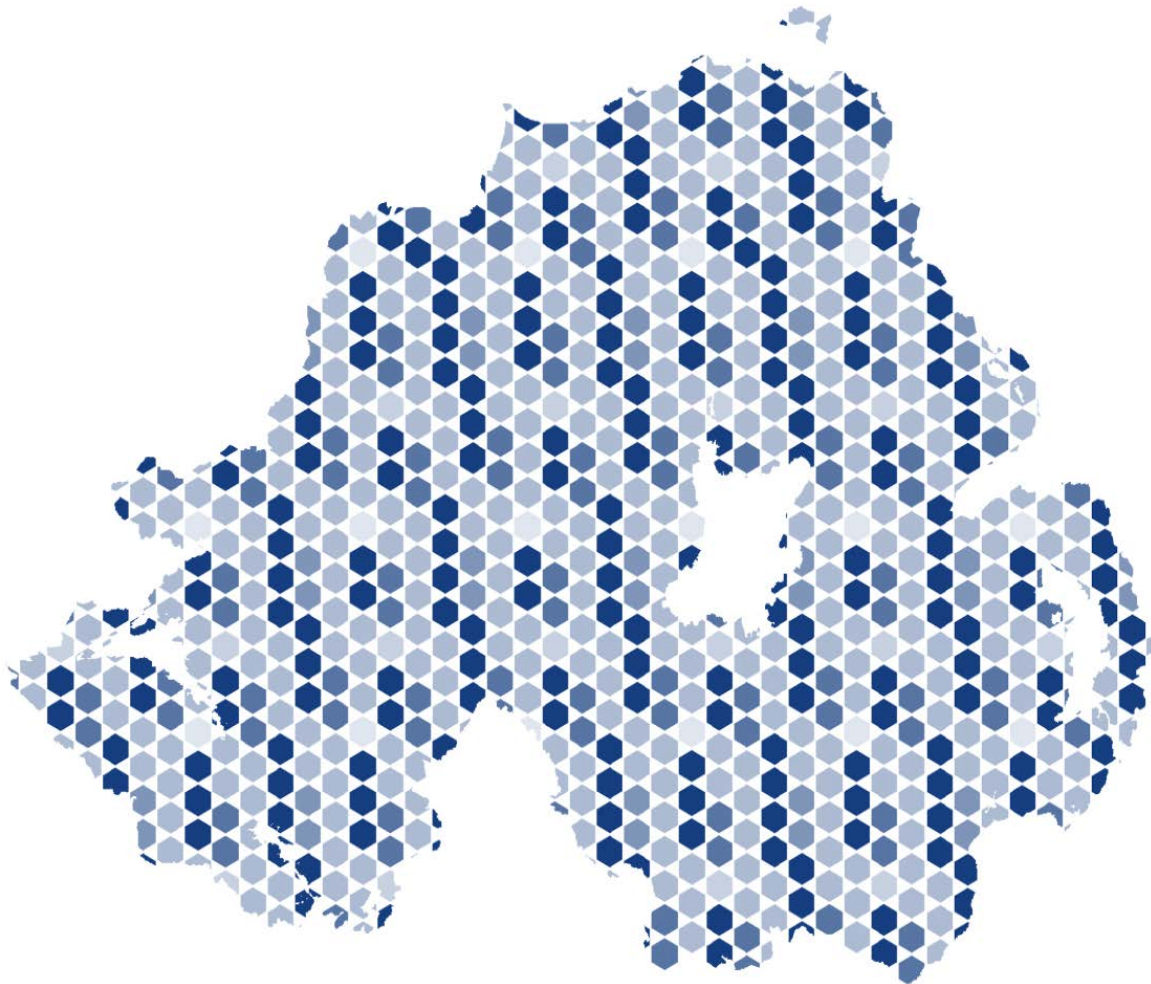


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The High School, Ballynahinch

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

Report of an Inspection
in December 2012



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CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	109	25	23%	14
Teachers	26	18	69%	8
Support Staff	24	11	46%	*

* fewer than 5

QUANTITATIVE TERMS

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%

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

The High School, Ballynahinch, draws its pupils from the town and the wider rural area. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals has risen over the past four years, while the enrolment has decreased significantly. The proportion of the pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs has risen by more than 40% over the same period and represents over half of the school population; forty-five pupils have a statement of educational need. The South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) assesses and places pupils from schools throughout the SEELB in the school's Communication Resource Centre (CRC) in order to provide for the learning needs of those pupils who have been diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. Currently twenty-six pupils attend classes in the Centre and are integrated in mainstream classes when appropriate for their learning needs.

The school has undergone a series of significant changes in senior leadership in the last year. The Principal took up her post in September 2012; she had previously been Vice-principal for two years. A new Vice-principal has been appointed, but is yet to take up his post. A new head of junior school was also appointed in September 2012.

The High School, Ballynahinch	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	76	67	41	42
Enrolment	388	370	327	303
% Attendance (NI Average)	90 (91)	90 (91)	91 (91)	
FSME Percentage	10	11	14	15
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	38 (149)	46 (171)	53 (173)	54 (163)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	48	48	44	45
No. of newcomers	*	*	-	-
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	5	7	7	7
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	16	9	7	10
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	76	55	46	79
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	70	57	59	79

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of The High School, Ballynahinch, focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English and science provision, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas; a summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on: the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for safeguarding; 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 the progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate.

KEY FINDINGS

When given the opportunity, as is the case in most of the lessons observed, most of the pupils engage well in appropriately challenging tasks. They make mature and relevant contributions to classroom discussions and they work effectively with their peers in group activities. In a minority of the lessons observed, the opportunities for them to learn independently, to develop their thinking and their creativity are underdeveloped.

The pupils in the CRC demonstrate a good disposition to learning and are developing a range of skills, including coping skills, which are identified appropriately in the individual targets set for them by the teachers.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	94.32	98.73	98.41
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	45.45	48.1	30.5
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Significantly Below average</i>	<i>Significantly Below average</i>	<i>Significantly Below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	38.64	37.97	15.25
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Significantly Below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86.36	93.67	83.05
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	16.6	10	25

The levels of prior attainment of the pupils on entry to the school are low; a majority of the pupils have special educational needs and in two of the last four years almost one-half of the pupils in Year 8 had not attained level 4 in English and mathematics at key stage 2.

The majority of the pupils have a range of complex social, emotional and learning needs; this proportion has risen steadily over the past four years. Most of the pupils identified as requiring additional and intensive support with their learning achieve very good standards in line with their abilities in their academic and social skills

Despite the general ability levels of many of the pupils, over the past three years almost all have been entered for five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. The proportion achieving five or more subjects at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, had been in line with the NI average for similar schools for two out of the last three years; this number fell in 2012 to significantly below the average. The teachers report that the lack of opportunities given to them to attend examination agreement trials, especially for new specifications, during this year had a significant impact on the outcomes. A significant percentage of the pupils did not attain the grades in GCSE English which were projected.

The proportion of pupils achieving any five or more subjects at grades A*- C has remained consistently below the average for similar schools over the last three years. The variation in the performance of individual subjects at grades A* to C is also too wide¹. While the results in one quarter of subjects are well above the three-year average for similar schools, in two-fifths of the subjects the results are more than ten percentage points below. Considering the abilities and needs of the pupils, good progress is being made. However, the variation in outcomes in public examinations requires immediate improvement. The newly-appointed Principal has prioritised appropriately the need to raise more consistently the pupils' levels of achievement. While the standards achieved by the pupils who are entitled to free school meals have improved, they are still too low.

A minority of the pupils take applied level 2 qualifications, which are matched closely and appropriately to their aptitudes and career aspirations. Most of these pupils achieve good outcomes.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is satisfactory

The quality of the provision in English is good and in science it is very good².

Most of the practice in teaching and learning seen in classrooms during the inspection was effective: there were very good relationships between the teachers and the pupils; the teachers used well a range of strategies to engage the pupils actively in their learning; the good quality of the teachers' planning facilitated brisk, purposeful lessons; and the learning was consolidated during and at the end of the lessons. In these instances the pupils achieved good outcomes.

¹ See Appendix 1 for details.

² For detailed findings of the provision in English and science, see Appendix 2.

While the quality of planning, teaching and learning was a strength in the two subjects under focus, across the rest of the school it was more variable. One in five lessons seen was less than effective: in that, lessons were not differentiated sufficiently to meet the needs of all of the pupils; the teachers' expectations of what the pupils could achieve were too low; the lessons were over-directed by the teacher; and, consequently, the pupils were unduly passive for prolonged periods. In a small number of instances, this contributed to low levels of disruptive behaviour by a few pupils.

There is inconsistency across the school in the teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies to set high expectations, to provide the pupils with the information they need to improve the standard of their work and to manage the class. The inspection findings confirm the need, which the newly-constituted senior leadership team (SLT) has identified, to challenge the minority of weak practice and to provide sufficient time for all of the teachers to share the good practice consistently in order to raise the standards achieved by the pupils.

3.2 The quality of the provision for special educational needs is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

All of the pupils with special educational needs benefit from an extensive range of well-planned and appropriately-focused support for literacy and numeracy. The planning and teaching for the pupils in the CRC is a model of best practice, ensuring that the pupils learn academic and social skills through small group sessions, individualised support and flexible arrangements for integration with the mainstream classes: they achieve well as a result. The classroom assistants provide well-focused, purposeful support and undertake the detailed daily monitoring of the pupils' progress.

The school leaders prioritise the school's provision for special educational needs and the quality of leadership and management in special educational needs is very effective, ensuring a structured and effective system of support, and resulting in a very high standard of provision for all of the pupils requiring additional support with their learning.

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

KEY FINDINGS

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the inclusion and welfare of all of its pupils. The school is promoting effectively the involvement of the pupils in school decisions based on an appropriate 'Rights Respecting Schools Award' charter. The pupil members of the active, and well-led, student council demonstrate positive leadership; they take collective responsibility, follow through successfully on their ideas and contribute to school development.

The pupils stated that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. The parents who completed the confidential questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school and commented positively, in particular, on the support available for pupils with social and emotional needs. There is an appropriate range of positive behaviour initiatives that meet well the wide range of needs and abilities of the pupils.

The strategic leadership of pastoral care is under review. The quality of the planning and teaching in the pastoral lessons observed was inconsistent. In order to support better the pupils' learning and to raise standards, the SLT needs to implement more systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of its pastoral provision.

The school gives coordinated and appropriate attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Good links with local sporting agencies and a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities promote effectively physical activity.

3.4 The curricular provision for the pupils at is satisfactory

KEY FINDINGS

The curriculum at key stage (KS) 3 is suitably broad and balanced. The flexible working arrangements between the CRC and the mainstream classes enable the pupils who have additional needs to integrate successfully and to access an appropriate range of subjects. At KS4 the school meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework through effective collaboration with another post-primary school and with the local college of further education. However, the range of applied subjects offered is too narrow to meet the wide range of the needs, abilities and career aspirations of all of the pupils. It is timely that the SLT is conducting a review, with a view to extending the collaborative arrangements and increasing further the choice and number of vocational qualifications available to the pupils.

3.5 The quality of the provision for careers education, information and guidance (CEIAG) is satisfactory.

The timetabled provision for education for employability at KS3 and careers education at KS4 is supplemented by an appropriate range of work-related learning opportunities which meets the needs of the pupils. Through the direct CEIAG provision, the pupils, by year 12, develop employability skills and an awareness of the world of work through work experience, interview skills training, links with local businesses and enterprise agencies, and presentations from visiting speakers. However, the contribution made through other subjects across the curriculum is unduly limited.

The pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the employment, training and education opportunities available. They spoke positively about the opportunities to meet the Careers Service advisor, but would benefit from greater access in school to a wider range of good quality, up-to-date careers information, including interactive resources. The newly-appointed teacher in charge of CEIAG has identified appropriate priorities for developing the planning and the provision to ensure greater coherence and progression throughout the key stages.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of the leadership and the management is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The recently-appointed Principal enjoys a strong level of support from the staff. She has a clear vision for school improvement and, in the short period of time since her appointment, has introduced systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning which are focused appropriately on raising standards across the school. The SLT has been re-structured and, whilst the roles and responsibilities of its members are largely operational, they are being developed to be more strategic.

The middle managers are committed to improvement in their respective areas of responsibility. Therefore their departmental improvement plans need to identify more explicitly the specific strategies required to improve the quality of the learning and to raise the standards all of the pupils achieve. A higher priority needs to be placed on ensuring that all staff have access to continuous professional development opportunities, in particular to attend essential training in the new examination specifications and assessment arrangements.

The current school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010. The SLT has made a start to the analysis of performance data which is informing action planning and needs to be taken further. The action plans do not identify appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the progress made; a clearer focus on methods of improving the quality of the teaching and learning is needed.

The governors are well informed about important aspects of the work and life of the school and they support the Principal well; they have a good awareness of whole-school performance in public examinations and the need to raise the standards attained by the pupils. They maintain an overview of the outworking of the SDP. They are appreciative and supportive of the teachers' commitment and value highly the school's role in the community.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education; there is a need to carry out a risk assessment on the various access points to the school buildings.

The school has developed effective links with parents, local businesses and the wider community. A range of other agencies and professionals assist with specialist work and give good support to vulnerable pupils to help reduce or remove barriers to learning. The positive partnership with the maintained secondary school is developing further the inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school.

There are inadequacies in the accommodation and resources, notably in information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning and teaching across the school. The staff make good use, within the physical constraints, of the existing accommodation³.

5. CONCLUSION

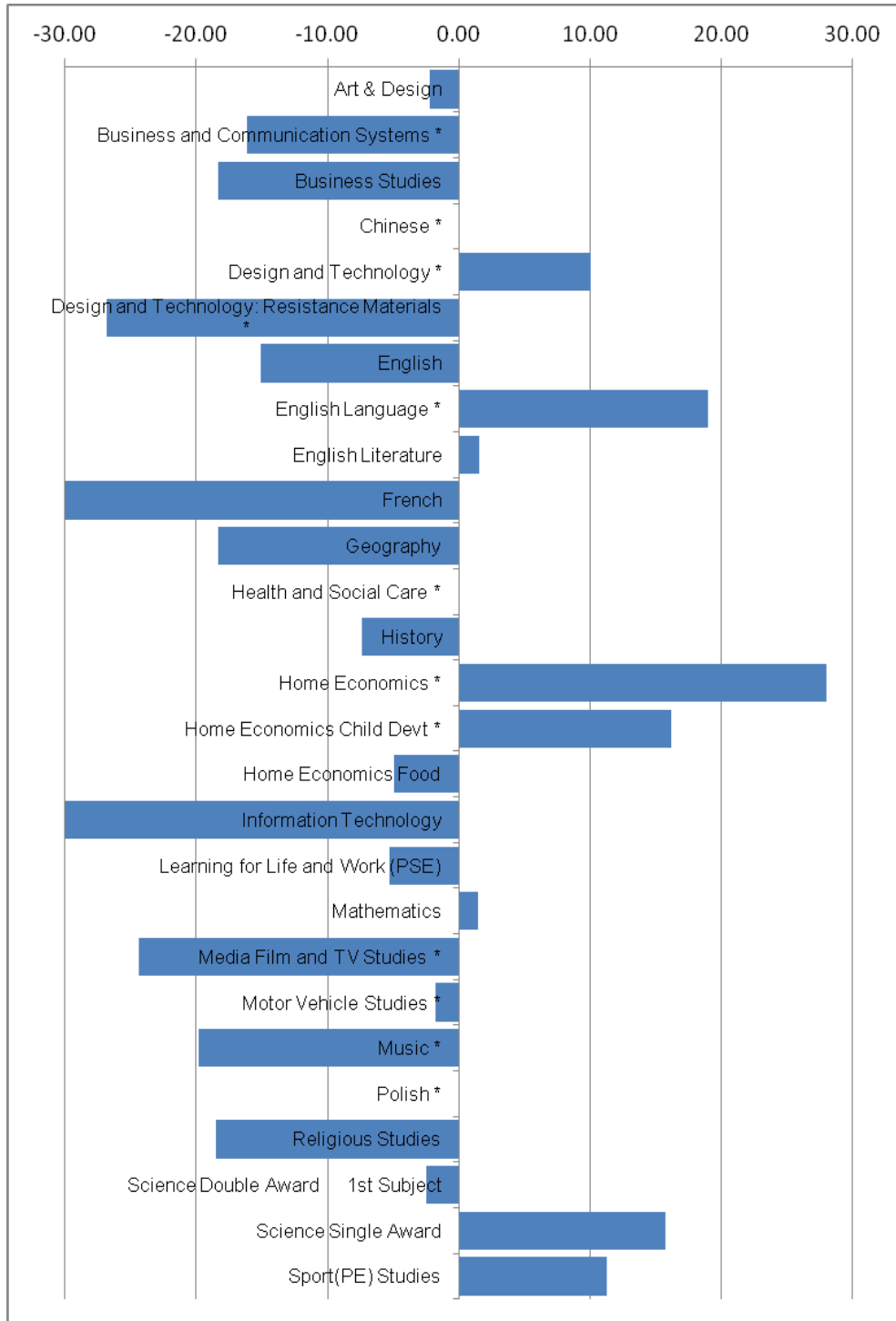
5.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed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

5.2 The main areas for improvement are the need for:

- the SLT to develop and strengthen the strategic nature of the leadership at all levels in the school by developing management structures and self-evaluation procedures; and
- the leadership at all levels to implement more rigorous, systematic processes to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching and to broaden further the choice of applied courses, in order to meet the needs of all of the pupils and improve consistently the standards being attained.

1.1 GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*-C from 2009-10 to 2011-12



* total number of entries fewer than 20

^ no entries in 2012

no entries in 2010

1.2 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Other courses taken from 2009-10 to 2011-12

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Horticulture				Achievement			
		2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award				10	Pass			9
Total entered for the award				10	Merit			1
Number of units				1				

Awarding Body	CCEA							
Course	Occupational Studies				Achievement			
		2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award		10	14	13	Level 1	1	2	5
Total entered for the award		12	14	13	Level 2	9	12	8
Number of units		5	5	5				

1.6 LEAVERS DESTINATIONS 2010/11

LEAVERS DESTINATIONS 2010/11	Year 12	Percent.	NI %
TOTAL	87		
Another School	13	15%	15.8
Employment	6	7%	4.4
Full-time Further Education	41	47%	45
Full-time Training	25	29%	28
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	*	*	3.3

*fewer than 5

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH AND SCIENCE

English

The provision for English is good.

The main strengths are:

- the very good teaching in one half of the lessons observed;
- the close, productive links and sharing of good practice with the learning support staff and the Communication Resource Centre;
- the effective leadership of the head of English who is addressing well the recent drop in the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C in English, which has been in line with the NI average in three of the past five years; and
- the good standards achieved in GCSE English Literature where the percentage of pupils achieving A*-B is in line with the NI Average.

The areas for improvement are:

- to disseminate more widely the most effective practice in order to improve the standards for all of the pupils; and
- to address urgently the staff development for the newly-introduced GCSE English specification which had been missed.

Science

The provision for science is very good.

The main strengths are:

- the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers in most of the lessons observed;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection which was always satisfactory and in nearly all of the lessons was good or better;
- the range of effective teaching strategies provided for the pupils, particularly the opportunities for them to engage in practical work;
- the hard-working teachers who are committed to ensuring the pupils achieve high standards;
- the very good leadership and management provided by the head of department; and
- the outstanding results achieved by the pupils in single award science at grades A*-C and the very good results achieved by the pupils in GCSE single award science and double award science at grades A*-E.

ACCOMMODATION AND RESOURCES

- The buildings do not comply with SENDO legislation; all of the science and home economics rooms are on the first floor.
- There are shortcomings in the accommodation and facilities for physical education; there are no changing or toileting facilities convenient to the pitches.
- The pupils in the school and Communication Resource Centre have limited access to ICT resources.

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