

**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of
Examination Entry Practice and Policy in
Post-Primary Schools**

August 2017

ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Key Findings	1
3. Recommendations	5
4. Conclusion	6

Appendix 1 -SAER return process and ineligibility criteria

Appendix 2 - Methodology and evidence base including schools visited as part of the evaluation

Appendix 3 - Case study of effective practice: Malone Integrated College, Belfast

Appendix 4 - SAER returns (2015-16) for grammar and non-grammar schools by Free School Meal Entitlement at Key Stage 4

Appendix 5 - SAER returns (2015-16) for grammar and non-grammar schools by Free School Meal Entitlement at post-16

Appendix 6 - Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Chief Inspector's Report 2014-16¹ reported, 'Each year, too many pupils are declared ineligible from inclusion in schools' reported performance in public examinations (around 7%, which is akin to a large post-primary school); the numbers of ineligible pupils can vary across the schools'. The report went on to say that the criteria for the ineligibility of pupils from public examinations, in particular the parental consent criterion, needed to be the subject of further 'investigation and research', which is the purpose of this evaluation.

Between September 2016 and May 2017, the ETI undertook an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of policies on examination entry practice across the post-primary schools in Northern Ireland (NI). The ETI had access to a range of examination entry practice and other policies which exist in schools to support pupils undertaking examinations and to help ensure that each pupil attains to his or her potential.

One of the aims of this work was to evaluate the nature and reasons for the processes and application of the pupil ineligibility criteria (or for those who do not meet the criteria for inclusion in public examination data at GCSE and GCE A Level) in relation to the Summary of Annual Examination Results (SAER) documentation, which is submitted annually by schools to the Department of Education (DE).

As part of the evaluation, the ETI sought the following information from the participating sample of schools.

- The number of pupils, over the past three years, considered ineligible for inclusion in the school's examination data, across the eight ineligibility criteria, including the number of pupils who do not meet the criteria to be included in the SAER return.
- The process, along with the associated documentation, by which the school determines whether a pupil is ineligible for inclusion or does not meet the criteria for inclusion in the school's examination data, including correspondence with parents/carers.
- The number of pupils who have left the school over the past three years, including the date of leaving and their destination.
- The number of candidates, over the past three years, entered externally for examinations in the school.

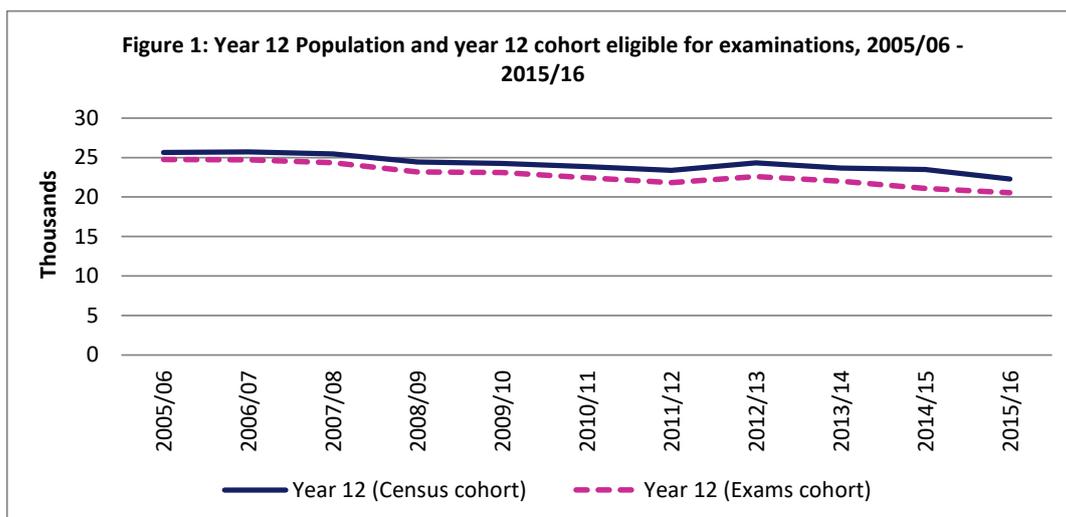
Details on the SAER return process and the ineligibility criteria can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Key Findings

2.1 There is an increasing proportion of pupils who are either being deemed ineligible for inclusion in the SAER returns, or are not meeting the criteria to be included in the return but will be included in a past or future year as depicted in Figure 1².

¹ Chief Inspector's Report post-primary section 183 (<https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/chief-inspectors-report-2014-2016>)

² See <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistical-bulletin-5-2017-year-12-and-14-examination-performance-post-primary-schools-ni>



2.2 Most of the schools visited had applied an appropriate examination entry policy taking and interpreted correctly the application of the ineligibility criteria as set out by DE, including the correct process for the external entry of candidates. One school was identified as having highly effective practice in the application and interpretation of the ineligibility criteria, which is detailed in a case study in Appendix 3.

2.3 For the academic year 2015-16, around 2,900 pupils (1,635 year 12 pupils and 1,265 year 14 pupils) were deemed by schools to be ineligible for inclusion or did not meet the criteria in their reported performance in public examinations. These figures are too high; they equate to 7.0% of the overall year 12 cohort and 8.8%³ of the overall year 14 and 15 cohort. Approximately 89% of these year 12 pupils and 64% of these year 14 and 15 pupils attended non-grammar schools.

2.4 Where the school had a higher proportion of pupils with free school meals entitlement, there was a greater number of pupils ineligible for inclusion in the public examinations performance data. There was, however, significant variation in the number of pupils deemed ineligible for inclusion between schools in the same free school meal bands.

2.5 In 2015-16, around 10% of the pupils not included in the returns were deemed by schools to be ineligible for inclusion due to: having serious illness (including mental health issues); pregnancy; or a serious welfare issue. While the DE guidance for use of these ineligibility criteria by schools states specifically that these pupils must have been unable to sit one or more examinations, there was evidence that a significant proportion of them did sit public examinations. For example, there were instances where pupils deemed as ineligible sat as many as eight examinations at GCSE level or equivalent, resulting in inconsistencies across schools in the use of this criterion. Clearly, in these schools the exclusion of the pupils from the schools' data improves the headline outcomes attained by the school in public examinations, and consequently in media-published league tables.

2.6 In 2015-16, just under 10% of the pupils were deemed by schools to be ineligible for inclusion due to their placement in Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision. In a small number of schools, the ETI had significant concerns around the nature and accuracy of pupil-related data held within the school, including insufficient information on the pastoral and educational progress of their pupils who were currently accessing EOTAS provision.

³ A number of pupils fail to meet the criteria to be included in the SAER return as they are studying a three year programme at post-16; these pupils will be included in the return in the following academic year.

2.7 Each year, around 100 year 12 pupils (equivalent to an average year 12 cohort in a post-primary school) are withdrawn from school before the end of June, normally with the consent of their parent/carer (ineligibility criterion 8 at that time)⁴. Almost all of these pupils had left schooling at the latter stage of the academic year and, therefore, most sat no public examinations. It is concerning that most of these pupils are entering the competitive world of work or are progressing to provision in work-based learning having attained no GCSE or equivalent qualifications, impacting detrimentally on their life chances. This practice also contravenes the legislation⁵ governing the education of pupils until they reach compulsory school leaving age.

2.8 Approximately one-quarter of the year 14 pupils in 2015-16 were deemed ineligible for inclusion had been withdrawn from school with the consent of their parent/carer. Despite DE guidance specifying that pupils will only be deemed ineligible under this criterion if the return is accompanied by documentary evidence (such as a letter signed and dated by the parent/carer or attendance records), this evaluation has found significant deficiencies in a majority of the schools visited in the administrative processes associated with this criterion. In a small number of schools, the letters submitted by parents were very similar in their content and provided scant insight or evidence as to the reasons for the pupils' withdrawal from school, despite them having completed almost two years of post-16 non-compulsory education.

2.9 Over one-half of the year 14 pupils deemed ineligible for inclusion did not meet the criteria to be included in the SAER data collection for the academic year 2015-16. This is mainly due to the school's need to remove pupils who are re-sitting level 3 examinations and were or will be included in another year's SAER. There was evidence that a minority of schools were using this facility inappropriately, namely to remove pupils who were sitting GCE A2 or equivalent examinations but were likely to attain low outcomes and return to year 15 study.

2.10 There is significant variation in the approach adopted by schools in the use of the criterion 'a pupil has a statement of special educational need'. In effect, there is evidence that a small number of schools are not exercising sufficient discretion in assessing adequately the ineligibility of pupils with a statement of special educational need on an individual basis, which was introduced in 2014-15. There were pupils deemed ineligible for inclusion under this criterion who had not received any specific additional assistance from the school to support attainment in examinations. For example, the curriculum had not been tailored in any particular way to match their specific need nor was evidence presented that the school had given due cognisance to the number of examinations being sat or had put in place any special circumstances to support the pupil in an examination setting.

2.11 There is clear evidence of systematic, rigorous tracking of academic, pastoral and attendance data by a majority of the schools visited, leading to early identification of need. A range of intervention strategies are then used to support the progress of individual pupils in their learning. In these schools, this approach results in well-informed examination entry practice and meaningful assessment data which shows that pupils will attain in line with expectation.

2.12 In the more effective practice, the school's approach is focused on meeting the needs of the pupil, with clear collaboration between all members of staff, including form teachers, year heads and senior leaders, and, if necessary, a range of external agencies. Clear and concise documentation is kept from all meetings with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies and the pastoral and academic data is monitored closely to ensure the actions being taken to support the pupil are having a positive impact.

⁴ Ineligibility Criterion 8 has now changed to 'pupil has left the school system'

⁵ See <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/compulsory-education>

2.13 In a majority of the schools visited, the examination entry policies promote inclusion, support and equality of opportunity. These schools are able to produce evidence of the impact of high levels of support being provided to those pupils struggling with social, emotional, behavioural, medical and academic needs. They promote to good effect the resilience of the pupils to continue with their studies and to attain at an appropriate level. Examples of this support include: an appropriate focus on the personal development and preventative curriculum, which is flexible and responsive to the needs of the pupils; a curriculum offer that is modified to better suit the interests, abilities and career progression pathways of the pupils; and the provision of a tailored suite of support for pupils at risk of disengaging from school and the examination process.

2.14 In too many schools, insufficient consideration is given to the facilitation of a reduced curriculum which is tailored appropriately to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of the pupils, for example, for those pupils experiencing mental health and well-being issues. As a result, in these schools the pupils are unable to manage the perceived demands of their studies and often discontinue close to the end of a two-year course.

2.15 In a minority of the schools visited, there are well-established community links which are effective in helping to improve attendance rates, harness the support of parents/carers and support those pupils at risk of not achieving to their potential.

2.16 In most of the schools visited, the practice of entering external candidates is appropriate and consists largely of the facilitation of former pupils who wish to sit one examination or module in the school. This is normally to improve a grade for a specific higher education course entry requirement. In a small number of schools, there is a strong inclusive ethos where members of the local community are facilitated as external candidates to attend bespoke accredited classes and to be entered as external candidates through the school's examination policy. In these schools, all safeguarding procedures and arrangements are in place and reflect well the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. However, in a few cases safeguarding procedures and arrangements were not sufficiently in place to cover those external candidates participating in classes in the presence of pupils. Consequently, it is important that appropriate risk assessments and/or vetting are being carried out by the schools in these instances.

2.17 A small number of the schools visited had a notably high number of pupils ineligible for inclusion in the SAER return as a result of an inappropriate application and misinterpretation of the ineligibility criteria as set out by DE. Too many pupils who were included in the SAER under the criteria of either serious illness, welfare issues or parental consent, then sat examinations⁶. Also, there were pupils who were ineligible for inclusion in the SAER but were entered as external candidates and then sat their examinations. In each case, the evidence is clear that the inclusion of these pupils in the school's examination results would have impacted adversely on the school's headline performance data and its position in media-published league tables.

2.18 In most of the schools visited there is the need to: formalise the examination entry processes, for example, the formulation and regular review of a pupil-centred policy; and improve the recording and retention of all administration, including correspondence with parents/carers and accurate record-keeping of the destinations of all pupils including those pupils deemed ineligible for inclusion in the SAER.

⁶ It states clearly in the SAER guidance to schools to be eligible for inclusion in the SAER a pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, welfare issues or parental consent, is unable to sit any examinations.

2.19 There is evidence to show that a small number of schools are not monitoring closely enough the progress of pupils at post-16, particularly those returning to level 3 study without having attained at grade A* to C in GCSE English and/or mathematics. Schools need to consider carefully if post-16 provision in the school is the most appropriate pathway for each individual pupil, taking into account the school's retention rates between years 13 and 14 and the nature and effectiveness of the ongoing support throughout post-16 study.

3. Recommendations

For schools:

3.1 To adhere to the ineligibility criteria in the SAER returns as set by DE.

3.2 To strengthen the administrative aspects of the examination entry process in order to ensure all documentation relating to the application of the ineligibility criteria is comprehensive. Schools should record and retain all correspondence with parents/carers, external agencies and any other associated relevant documentation.

3.3 To formalise the examination entry processes, for example, through the formulation and regular review of a policy outlining clearly the pupil-centred procedures, and which is ratified, and monitored regularly, by the board of governors.

3.4 To review regularly the personal development and preventative curriculum, and its impact, across the school to ensure the social, emotional and cognitive needs of all pupils are met fully, enabling them to have sufficient resilience to complete their courses successfully in terms of the appropriate number, type and level of qualification being studied.

3.5 To ensure parents/carers are fully informed about implications of the process to which they are agreeing, including the potential educational and financial impact of their decision and about the fact that their child will be deemed ineligible for inclusion in the SAER return.

3.6 To ensure rigorous attention is given to the arrangements for safeguarding and child protection when the school is facilitating external candidates to study and/or sit examinations in the school.

3.7 To review regularly the curriculum offer and the associated careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to ensure the provision meets effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

For the Department of Education:

3.8 To review and clarify the SAER ineligibility criteria outlined in section A of the SAER returns in Appendix 1 in order to reduce the potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation by schools.

3.9 To review the current procedures for those pupils categorised as "do not meet the criteria".

3.10 To provide further guidance for schools on the appropriate procedures for the facilitation of external candidates sitting examinations in schools.

3.11 To consider mechanisms for supporting schools to raise the outcomes for pupils in EOTAS provision who may be at risk of underachievement, and to encourage schools to take ownership of the learning experiences of these pupils and the outcomes they attain.

3.12 To develop further the accountability mechanisms in order to ensure consistency and integrity in the application of the SAER ineligibility criteria by schools; for example, to carry out a regular quality assurance exercise involving a sample of schools to ensure appropriate interpretation and application of the criteria and to inform the regular review of the SAER process by DE.

3.13 To work proactively to minimise the adverse impact of the release to the media of school's performance data in its current form, as this evaluation provides evidence that the misapplication and misinterpretation of the ineligibility criteria in a small number schools was driven by a desire to attain favourable positions in the media-published league tables.

4. Conclusion

While there are many examples of effective practice in examination entry practice and policy in post-primary schools, there is evidence that there is some confusion, misinterpretation and inappropriate application of the ineligibility criteria as set out by DE in a small, but significant, number of schools.

Description of the Summary of Annual Examination Results (SAER) data collection process and ineligibility criteria 2015-16.

Each May, schools are sent tables including lists of all year 12 and year 14/15 pupils recorded on the annual school census in the previous October in order to identify those pupils who will be included in or excluded from school level examination performance data. Schools must also add any relevant pupils who were not on the lists, such as those who arrived in their school after Census date in October. From these lists, schools indicate which of the pupils, if any, are ineligible for inclusion in the SAER and, in addition, those pupils who do not meet the criteria to be included in the current year's SAER data collection. All returns are completed and returned to DE before the end of the academic year and relevant information about each pupil's eligibility status for SAER performance returns data is recorded by Analytical Services Unit (ASU). These returns are signed off by the school principal.

During October/November, ASU provide all schools with paper copies of their summary performance data for final checks and validation. Principals sign the data as 'true and accurate' and return same to the Department. ASU carry out final checks to ensure accuracy and consistency. Once all final validated data are received and any necessary changes made, ASU closes the database.

The SAER criteria is detailed below:

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS (SAER) 2015/16⁷

Pupils meet the criteria to be included in the statistical return if they are in year 12 or in the final year of an A-level or equivalent course of study for the first time (usually year 14).

Pupils can only be removed from the annual school performance data under two conditions:

- A. The pupil is ineligible for inclusion in the return under one of the eight reasons detailed below; or
- B. A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 academic year return, but will be (or has been) included in the return in a different academic year.

A. Pupil Ineligibility

Pupils can only be deemed ineligible for inclusion in the examination return for the following 8 reasons:

1. A pupil has died.
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit any examinations. – *In the case of pregnancy, please indicate if the pupil was referred to the School Age Mothers programme.*
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.

⁷ See SUMMARY OF ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS (SAER) 2016/17 letter to schools where reasons in section A have been amended slightly and clarified for the SAER returns 2016-17.

5. A pupil has a statement of special educational needs*.
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme. – *Please note that only pupils placed in EOTAS through the Education Authority (formerly, Education and Library Board) referral service will be deemed ineligible.*
7. A pupil has serious welfare issues that have culminated in the inability to sit any examinations. – *Please indicate in the return if the pupil was referred to the Education Authority (formerly, Education and Library Board) or any other agency for support.*
8. A pupil has been withdrawn from the school with the consent of their parent/carer. – *Pupils will only be deemed ineligible under this reason code if this return is accompanied by documentary evidence, such as a letter signed and dated by the parent/carer. (DE Circular 2015/02 provides advice on the removal of a pupil from the school register).⁸*

* **Note** – Under reason 5 ('A pupil has a statement of special educational needs'), schools should exercise discretion in assessing the ineligibility of each stated pupil on an individual basis.

B. Pupils who do not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 academic year return

Pupils may also be removed from the return if they fail to meet the criteria to be included. These are pupils who:

1. have already been included in the SAER return in a previous academic year. For example, a pupil in year 15 who is in the final year of an A-level for the second time;
2. will be included in the SAER return in a future academic year. For example, a pupil who is in census year 12 but is studying in year 11 or a pupil in census year 14 who will not progress to the final year of their level 3 course of study until year 15.

In the event that a pupil is being removed from the performance return on the basis that they do not meet the criteria, it is necessary to indicate on the attached form the academic year in which this pupil has been/will be included in the return.

Revised letter to schools: SUMMARY OF ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS (SAER) 2016/17

I am writing to request that you identify all pupils in year 12 and those in the final year of an A-level or equivalent course who will be ineligible for inclusion in the examination statistics which will be collected by the Department in September once results are available.

Pupils meet the criteria to be included in the statistical return if they are in year 12 or in the final year of an A-level or equivalent course of study for the first time (usually year 14).

⁸ Reason 8 has been changed to: 8. A pupil has left the school system.

Pupils can only be removed from the annual school performance data under two conditions:

- A. The pupil is ineligible for inclusion in the return under one of the eight reasons detailed below; or
- B. A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2016/17 academic year return, but will be (or has been) included in the return in a different academic year.

A. Pupil Ineligibility

Pupils can only be deemed ineligible for inclusion in the examination return for the following 8 reasons:

1. A pupil has died.
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit any formal examinations. If a pupil has undertaken 1 or more examinations in the Summer 2017 examination series they must be included in performance returns. *In the case of pregnancy, please indicate if the pupil was referred to the School Age Mothers programme.*
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated. *Please provide details of the school the pupil has transferred to or the country they have moved to.*
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.
5. A pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Schools should exercise discretion in assessing the ineligibility of each stated pupil on an individual basis, i.e. having a statement doesn't automatically exclude a pupil from the cohort.
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme. – *Please note that only pupils placed in EOTAS through the Education Authority referral service can be deemed ineligible.*
7. A pupil has serious welfare issues that have culminated in the inability to sit any formal examinations. If a pupil has undertaken 1 or more examinations in the Summer 2017 examination series they must be included in performance returns. *Please indicate in the return if the pupil was referred to the Education Authority or any other agency for support.*
8. A pupil has left the school system. Please note that if a pupil was recorded on your school census in October 2016 and was entered for any qualification(s) in your school in the Summer 2017 examination series, regardless of whether the entry was made as an internal or external candidate, the pupil must be included in SAER returns. *(DE Circular 2015/02 provides advice on the removal of a pupil from the school register).*

B. Pupils who do not meet the criteria to be included in the 2016/17 academic year return

Pupils may also be removed from the return if they fail to meet the criteria to be included. These are pupils who:

1. have already been included in the SAER return in a previous academic year. For example, a pupil in year 15 who is in the final year of an A-level for the second time and was included in last year's return.

2. will be included in the SAER return in a future academic year. For example, a pupil who is in census year 12 but is studying in year 11 or a pupil in census year 14 who will not progress to the final year of their level 3 course of study until year 15.

In the event that a pupil is being removed from the performance return on the basis that they do not meet the criteria, it is necessary to indicate on the attached form the academic year in which this pupil has been/will be included in the return.

Should you indicate that a pupil will be reported in 2017/18 and this pupil does not return to school for the 2017/18 academic year, or leaves school in 2017/18 prior to the completion of the 2016/17 SAER data collection process you must inform the Department.

In such cases, please provide details of all final Level 2 / Level 3 qualifications this pupil has achieved on leaving school, the Department can then determine if it is appropriate for this pupil to be included in the SAER return.

Methodology and Evidence Base including schools visited as part of the evaluation

A representative sample (based on size, sector and geographical area) of 34 schools was visited as part of the evidence-gathering for the evaluation. Nine of the post-primary schools inspected during the period September 2016 to May 2017 were included in the sample of schools which underpinned the evidence base for the evaluation; in addition, the ETI conducted inspection visits to a further 25 schools.

A team of inspectors and associate assessors (AAs) visited schools and met with principals, senior leaders and examination officers to discuss the school's examination entry policy and practice. Prior to the visit, the schools were invited to complete a short pro-forma which sought information around their examination entry practices and this formed the basis of the discussions during the visit.

The ETI thanks all of the schools that shared their experiences and insights into this work; the schools involved in the evaluation are listed below.

Specifically, the evaluation involved:

- discussions with the principal, senior leaders and examination officers on their examination entry policy and practices in school;
- an analysis of the school's documentation, including SAER returns, attendance records, examination results, tracking and assessment data and follow-up intervention processes provided by the school;
- a review of the documentation associated with the application of the ineligibility criteria, including meetings where appropriate, with external agencies and engagement with other professionals; and
- a review of the involvement of the parents/carers of those pupils considered ineligible for inclusion in the school's SAER, in particular, for those pupils ineligible due to serious illness, welfare issues or parental consent.

The schools which supported this evaluation are listed below:

St Mary's CBGS, Belfast
Christian Brothers' School, Belfast
St Louise's Comprehensive College, Belfast
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch
St Colm's High School, Dunmurry
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh
Mercy College, Belfast
Newry High School
Cullybackey High School
Banbridge Academy
St Joseph's College, Coalisland
Foyle College, Londonderry
St Patrick's Comprehensive College, Maghera

Omagh High School
Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore
Dalriada School, Ballymoney
Slemish College, Ballymena
Sullivan Upper School, Holywood
Glastry College, Newtownards
Dominican College, Belfast
Belfast Boys' Model School
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint
Malone Integrated College, Belfast
Rainey Endowed School, Magherafelt

In addition to the schools visited above, a selection of post-primary schools inspected between September 2016 and May 2017, were also part of the evaluation and we thank them for their participation.

Ashfield Boys' School, Belfast
Bangor Academy and Sixth Form Centre
De La Salle College, Belfast
Belfast Model School for Girls
Dundonald High School

St Brigid's College, Derry
Coláiste Fierste
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Mount Lourdes, Enniskillen

Case study of effective practice: Malone Integrated College, Belfast

“The outworking of the school’s policy of inclusion is a strength, evidenced by the high level of good quality support programmes provided to those pupils dealing with personal, medical, mental health and other issues; the school works to good effect to ensure they have the resilience to continue with their studies, enter examinations and attain appropriate qualifications.” (ETI Inspection Report, May 2017)

Context

Malone Integrated College is a co-educational non-grammar school set in an urban location. Around two-thirds of the pupils have free school meal entitlement and the school has identified over one-third as having special educational needs. One-fifth of the pupils are newcomers.

<p>How does the school identify pupils that are to be included in the SAER?</p>	<p>The school has a policy that all pupils will be entered into examinations across all of their subjects. The leadership team, heads of year, heads of department, and outreach officer discuss the barriers to success using all available pastoral and assessment data. Pupils at risk of underachievement and/or disengagement are identified effectively and with sensitivity and appropriate interventions are put in place to support these pupils. The impact of these interventions is monitored and home visits are undertaken by the outreach officer to support pupils and their families experiencing barriers to learning. The leadership team, outreach officer, and respective heads of year then meet in April each year to identify any students that still remain at risk of underachieving in their examinations.</p> <p>Only after all these processes have been followed are those individual pupils who have been identified as having specific need, i.e. where the sitting of examinations would be detrimental to their health and well-being, are deemed ineligible for inclusion in the SAER returns. We then follow the correct guidelines for including pupils in the school’s SAER returns and these pupils do not sit any examinations.</p> <p><i>“there are well-established community links and outreach programmes which are effective in utilising a variety of innovative techniques that are helping to improve outcomes for those pupils at risk of not achieving.”</i> (ETI Inspection Report, May 2017)</p>
<p>How is the school’s ethos reflected in its examination entry practice?</p>	<p>The school has an inclusive child-centred ethos which strives to build resilience. Pupils are encouraged to achieve of their best through the highly effective use of data which monitors their progress and supports interventions. The curriculum available is tailored to facilitate positive learning experiences through appropriate qualification selection, match to ability and career interests and to meet effectively individual needs of the pupils.</p> <p><i>“the school works to good effect to ensure they have the resilience to continue with their studies, enter examinations and attain appropriate qualifications.”</i> (ETI May 2017)</p>

<p>What are the roles and responsibilities of staff to support the process?</p>	<p>All staff monitor closely pupil progression across all key stages. Pupils most at risk of underachieving or marginalisation are identified at pastoral, departmental and leadership levels. Intervention strategies are put in place at all levels to support these pupils. There are good lines of communication at all levels to ensure any concerns are reported and dealt with in a timely manner. The staff at the Personal Education Centre provide tailored pastoral and academic support for pupils, in conjunction with outside agencies and community partners. The principal, members of the senior leadership team, heads of year and outreach staff meet termly to review the progress of pupils. The leadership team discuss and agree the any disapplication of pupils from the examinations with parents, staff and the individual pupil.</p>
<p>What advice would the school give to other schools regarding the administration of the process?</p>	<p>Our advice is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify at an early stage, pupils at risk or underachievement or marginalisation, so support programmes and appropriate interventions can be put in place; • ensure there is an appropriate curriculum which stimulates pupils and allows them to experience success; • work closely with home and the wider community to enable pupils to build resilience; • invest in interventions specific to each pupil's needs, know ALL your pupils as one size does not fit all; • provide positive learning experiences, be persistent with encouragement and go the extra mile; • use data regularly to monitor progress and identify areas for development and improvement; and • set realistic targets and recognise and celebrate progression (even if it is minor).
<p>What is the impact of the school's approach to examination entry practice and policy?</p>	<p>This approach has increased the aspiration and self-belief of our pupils as illustrated by improved attendance in classes and at revision sessions. Furthermore, it has had a wider impact in the community by enabling pupils who potentially may be at risk of underachievement or marginalisation to recognise they can, with support, develop their personal resilience and attain in public examinations. Our approach has facilitated a positive mindset and can-do attitude among staff and pupils, and it has resulted in school improvements which are real and tangible, for example, a significant proportion of year 12 pupils now progress into year 13 study.</p>

APPENDIX 4

Year 12 Ineligible Pupils, SAER 2015/16						
	Non-grammar Schools					
	Free School Meal Band					
	0-19.99% FSM	20-29.99% FSM	30-39.99% FSM	40-49.99% FSM	50%+ FSM	Total
1. A pupil has died	*	0	*	0	0	*
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	0	8	8	12	31	59
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.	0	*	#	9	10	29
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.	0	*	19	#	19	46
5. A pupil has a statement of special educational need.	13	173	225	205	180	796
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme	*	#	58	51	109	248
7. A pupil has a serious welfare issue that has culminated in the inability to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	*	#	30	29	46	136
8. A pupil has been withdrawn from school with the consent of their parent/ guardian.	0	5	23	14	38	80
A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 SAER data collection	0	8	12	20	16	56

Year 12 Ineligible Pupils, SAER 2015/16				
	Grammar Schools			
	Free School Meal Band			
	0-4.99% FSM	5-9.99% FSM	10%+ FSM	Total
1. A pupil has died	0	0	*	*
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	*	*	9	14
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.	*	*	7	12
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.	0	0	*	*
5. A pupil has a statement of special educational need.	*	#	48	64
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme	*	#	14	22
7. A pupil has a serious welfare issue that has culminated in the inability to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	0	*	#	11
8. A pupil has been withdrawn from school with the consent of their parent/ guardian.	0	*	#	14
A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 SAER data collection	*	*	41	46

Source: SAER

* denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Figure not disclosed under rules of statistical suppression

APPENDIX 5

Post 16 Ineligible Pupils, SAER 2015/16						
	Non-grammar Schools					
	Free School Meal Band					
	0-19.99% FSM	20-29.99% FSM	30-39.99% FSM	40-49.99% FSM	50%+ FSM	Total
1. A pupil has died	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	0	*	17	#	11	37
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.	0	*	6	*	*	12
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.	0	0	0	0	*	*
5. A pupil has a statement of special educational need.	0	20	20	13	31	84
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. A pupil has a serious welfare issue that has culminated in the inability to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	0	0	*	0	#	8
8. A pupil has been withdrawn from school with the consent of their parent/ guardian.	*	#	52	44	124	245
A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 SAER data collection	0	58	145	51	163	417

Post 16 Ineligible Pupils, SAER 2015/16				
	Grammar Schools			
	Free School Meal Band			
	0-4.99% FSM	5-9.99% FSM	10%+ FSM	Total
1. A pupil has died	0	0	*	*
2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	*	*	18	24
3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.	0	*	*	*
4. A pupil is in a special unit approved by the Department.	0	0	0	0
5. A pupil has a statement of special educational need.	6	6	28	40
6. A pupil has been placed in the EOTAS scheme	0	0	*	*
7. A pupil has a serious welfare issue that has culminated in the inability to sit <u>any</u> examinations.	*	*	*	*
8. A pupil has been withdrawn from school with the consent of their parent/ guardian.	*	#	45	68
A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2015/16 SAER data collection	5	31	286	322

Source: SAER

* denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Figure not disclosed under rules of statistical suppression

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate**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%

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2017

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of
Examination Entry Practice and Policy
in Post-Primary Schools

August 2017

