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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

Education and Training Inspectorate

Specialist School Inspection (Cohort 1)

Limavady High School

January 2010

BACKGROUND

Limavady High School took part in the first cohort of the specialist schools' pilot project; with a specialism in Performing Arts subjects. The school received a budget of £330,900 over the four years of its designation.

The Minister for Education announced, on 22 April 2009, that schools in the first cohort of the Specialist Schools' pilot project would have the opportunity to apply for an extension of their designation for a fifth year.

"...subject to the school demonstrating that there has been improvement since their designation began in September 2006".

The school was asked to provide the Department of Education (DE) with an evaluation report in December 2009 summarising how it improved during its specialist status in the period since September 2006 (representing some 85% of the initial designation period), and with reference to its prospects for the remaining period; together with a school development plan (SDP) for the proposed extension year 2010-11.

INTRODUCTION

In February 2010 the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) conducted an inspection for the purpose of quality assuring the school's self-evaluation report and its SDP for 2010-11.

In a specialist school baseline inspection report provided by the Inspectorate in October 2006, the school was advised, for the purpose of showing improvement more clearly, it was necessary to:

- extend the action planning process across each of the areas of the specialism, namely in drama, dance, art and design, and moving image; and
- implement robust systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its proposed developments on the experiences of the pupils and the standards they attain.

On the basis of its audit of the three annual self-evaluation reports provided by the school, the Inspectorate continued to monitor the work and progress made by the school and conducted a further formal inspection visit in January 2009. This visit indicated that satisfactory progress had been made in addressing the above issues and recommended that in order to effect further improvement the school needed to:

- ensure that structures are in place to support the development of dance as an integral part of the provision for performing arts; and
- develop more robust approaches to target setting, action planning and self-evaluation.

The annex attached provides a summary of:

- the number of pupils studying the five subjects within the specialism and the standards which they attained in the first three years of specialist status compared with non-selective schools; and

- a summary for the same period of whole school results in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or equivalent and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Level examinations compared with similar non-selective schools.

THE SPECIALISM

The school has successfully broadened curriculum choice. In the first year of designation new courses in moving image arts and performing arts were introduced at GCE A level and dance was introduced at GCSE level. The school continued to broaden choice by introducing moving image arts at GCSE level in September 2009. In addition, it replaced GCSE dance with a BTEC First Certificate in Performing Arts (Dance) in order to meet more appropriately the needs of the pupils. Pupils can also take a Level 2 Occupational Studies course in digital technology in North West Regional College.

Also, the school increased the number of pupils benefiting from these courses. Over half of the GCSE pupils select at least one subject from within the specialism; an increase of over one-quarter since designation. There has also been a growth in the number of pupils taking two or more subjects from within the specialism.

At post-16, there has also been an increase in the number of pupils selecting subjects from within the specialism compared with the period prior to designation. In addition two schools from within the Roe Valley Learning Partnership have benefited from the provision of specialist status at Limavady High School; in 2009, over one-third of the pupils achieving post-16 qualifications in the specialist subjects came from the two other post-primary schools. The annex showing the outcomes for A level grades at A-C demonstrate that these pupils have largely benefited from the provision at Limavady High School.

There are good standards being achieved in two of the five specialist areas and evidence of improvement in one other at GCSE level. The annex shows that since designation, both art and design and media studies remain areas of clear curricular strength; an average of over 40% of pupils have achieved grades A* or A in art and design over the last three years. Drama has been making progress towards its targets whilst digital technology and dance have failed to meet the targets set. The school reduced targets in some subjects after the first year reflecting a more robust approach to target setting and taking account of difficulties with staffing within dance. Where the school failed to meet the targets set it was able to demonstrate that the remedial actions identified and implemented were appropriate.

At GCE A level, two of the three subjects are meeting their targets for grades A-C and are exceeding the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) averages.

The key strengths of the specialism include:

- the consistently high uptake of students opting to take at least one or more subjects and the successful integration of pupils from other schools within the specialist areas;
- the achievements in art and design, media studies and moving image arts;
- the range of enrichment activities offered and the levels of participation by the pupils;

- the central role of the school production in enriching the pupils experiences of the specialist areas; the musical is written and produced in-house and performed both in school and in theatres, locally and in Donegal;
- the quality of teaching across the specialist subjects, throughout the period of designation, which has been good or very good in the majority of lessons observed; and
- the significant number of pupils pursuing visual and performance arts related courses at further and higher education centres.

The school has demonstrated good improvement in the specialism since the start of designation. The leadership team has identified the need to ensure improved outcomes particularly in dance and in digital technology. The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In connection with its specialist status the school set out to raise standards across the school as a whole.

At GCE A level over the period of designation, the overall percentage of pupils attaining grades A-E in at least two subjects has risen steadily and is now meeting the target set by the school and is line with the corresponding NI average.

Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in five or more subjects at GCSE has risen markedly and is now well above the NI average for non-selective schools. Furthermore, the school has increased its range of targets to take account of key stage (KS) 3 outcomes, internal testing and teacher assessments.

Over the same period the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in five or more subjects at GCSE including English and mathematics has improved considerably and although comparable with the NI average for non-selective schools, it remains below the targets set.

Through its self-evaluation processes the leadership team has identified appropriately the need to address under achievement in English and mathematics, particularly for boys. The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

The school has demonstrated good improvement over the period of designation.

COMMUNITY PLAN

The school is able to demonstrate that it has developed effective links with the local community, including the local primary schools, post-primary schools and community groups.

The key strengths of the community plan are:

- the successful links and working relationships with a wide range of external stakeholders who support the specialist subjects;

- the effective work undertaken with a range of community groups and business partners to extend the learning opportunities for the pupils;
- the work carried out with a large number of local primary schools leading to reported improvements in the children's and their teachers' skills in dance, drama, art and digital technology and promoting a more effective transition for children from KS2 into KS3;
- the opportunities provided by the school for children from a large number of local primary schools to showcase and celebrate their work in the arts to large audiences; and
- the collaborative programmes developed to improve access to the entitlement framework and a range of arts-related enrichment activities for pupils in post primary partner schools.

The leadership team needs to ensure a more rigorous evaluation of the impact of the community plan. The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

The school has demonstrated good improvement through its community plan over the period of designation.

LEADERSHIP AND SELF-EVALUATION

Throughout the period of designation the school produced self-evaluation reports which were found by the Inspectorate to be effective in supporting the development of self-evaluation processes within the school.

Over the period of designation there has been improvement in the school's ability to implement quality assurance processes of its own work within a developing culture of self-evaluation.

The key strengths of leadership and self-evaluation in the school are:

- the strong commitment of the Principal to meeting the needs of all pupils across the full ability range within the school and across the Roe Valley Learning Community;
- the strategic leadership of the Principal and Vice-principal who have a clear vision for the future development of the school;
- the hard-working leadership team who have promoted a culture of monitoring and evaluation across the school, including the increasingly rigorous analysis of data to inform target setting and action planning;
- the use of specialist status as a catalyst for contributing to the delivery of the entitlement framework within the partner post primary schools; and
- the strong contribution the school makes to the local community.

To promote further improvements in the standards the pupils attain across a range of subjects, the leadership team needs to develop further its work in linking the school development plan with action plans which are focused more sharply on specific strategies to enhance teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

In all three plans: for the specialism; the whole school and the community the improvement in quality and standards is good; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision.

In its school development plan for a prospective extension year, the school is appropriately clarifying its targets in the specialist subjects for a prospective extension year and planning a further extension of access in the specialism for students so that it can demonstrate additional improvement for the investment.

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

SPECIALISM**GCSE DRAMA A*-C**

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	21	35	22	32
Target %	86	68	77	56.3
Actual %	76.2	62.9	77	
Difference	-9.8	- 5.1	0	
NI average for non-selective schools	76.7	78.6	79.2	

GCSE ART & DESIGN A*-A

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	35	30	24	44
Actual %	48.6	40	38	
NI average for non-selective schools	23	24	23	

GCSE ART & DESIGN A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	35	30	24	44
Target %	90	91	100	79.5
Actual %	74.3	86.7	96	
Difference	-15.7	-4.3	-4.0	
NI average for non-selective schools	75.3	77.3	76.4	

GCSE MEDIA STUDIES A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	0	13	39	29
Target %	N/A	69	78	69
Actual %	N/A	61.5	74	
Difference	N/A	-7.5	-4.0	
NI average for non-selective schools	N/A	64.3	65.6	

OCCUPATIONAL STUDIES DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY LEVEL 2

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	10	9	13	7
Target %	N/A	66.7	77	100
Actual %	20	77.8	54	
Difference	N/A	+11.1	-23	

This course is accessed at the North West Regional College by the pupils of Limavady High School.

GCSE DANCE A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	0	9	5	7
Target %	N/A	29	67	100
Actual %	N/A	22.2	20	
Difference	N/A	-6.8	-47	
NI average for non-selective schools	N/A	57	41.7	

A Level ART & DESIGN A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	2	3	7	9 (10)
Target %	100	100	100	100
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	0	0	0	
NI average for non-selective schools	85	87	87	

The figures in brackets represent the total number of students taking the qualification including those from schools within the Roe Valley Learning Partnership.

A Level MOVING IMAGE ARTS A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	5	8 (11)	6 (12)	8 (10)
Target %	100	100	83.3	100
Actual %	100	100 (100)	83.3 (92)	
Difference	0	0	0	
NI Average for non-selective schools	77	79	N/A	

The figures in brackets represent the total number of students taking the qualification including those from schools within the Roe Valley Learning Partnership

A Level PERFORMING ARTS A-C

	2007 Year 1 AS level	2008 Year 2 A2 level	2009 Year 3 A2 Level	2010 Year 4
No. of students	8(11)	4 (6)	6 (11)	7 (10)
Target %	N/A	100	83.3	100
Actual %	50 (55)	50 (66)	66.7 (63.6)	
Difference	N/A	-50	-16.6	
NI Average for non-selective schools	N/A	N/A	N/A	

The figures in brackets represent the total number of students taking the qualification including those from schools within the Roe Valley Learning Partnership.

WHOLE SCHOOL

GCSE 5+ A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	134	143	118	157
Target	60	63	63	65
Actual	46	59	67.8	
Difference	-14	- 4	+ 4.8	
NI average for non-selective schools	44.9	50.3	49	

GCSE 5+ A*-C including English and Mathematics

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	134	143	118	157
Target	30	34	37	41.4
Actual	15	32	30	
Difference	-15	-2	-7	
NI average for non-selective schools	28.8	30	30	

2+ A LEVEL A-E

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No. of students	26	34	33	40
Target	100	100	94	100
Actual	88	91	94	
Difference	-12	-9	0	
NI average for non-selective schools	93.6	93.1	N/A	

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