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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)

**Lumen Christi College
Derry**

January 2010

BACKGROUND

Lumen Christi College took part in the first cohort of the Specialist Schools' pilot project, with a specialism in Science. The school received a budget of £354,800.00 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' 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 January 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, to review the targets set in order to demonstrate:

- how the target of 'changing the manner in which the pupils learn', is to be monitored and evaluated;
- how the effectiveness of the links between the partner schools will be monitored and how additional links will be formed; and
- how information and communication technology (ICT) will be used to promote the pupils' independent learning.

On the basis of the three self-evaluation reports provided subsequently by the school to the Department, the Inspectorate continued to monitor the progress made by the school as part of the Specialist Schools' project.

This monitoring indicated that the school had addressed the above issues through the science department developing a system which allowed all departments to track individual pupils, to more accurately assess and record pupil achievement and to refine the process of target-setting to help bring about improvement.

The annex attached provides a summary of:

- the number of pupils studying the specialism of science and the standards which they attained in the first three years of specialist status compared with grammar schools; and

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

THE SPECIALISM

The annex shows that the school exceeded almost all of its challenging attainment targets in science in each of the three years. In chemistry at GCE A level, the school is significantly above its internal targets and exceeds, at A-B grade, the comparable performance in grammar schools. In physics at GCE A level, the school is exceeding its internal targets at A-C and the corresponding grades in grammar schools. Furthermore the school has increased the already high number of pupils taking GCE A levels in biology, chemistry and physics.

In GCSE double award science and in chemistry, physics and biology the school significantly exceeded its own targets and the corresponding grades in grammar schools.

The school successfully broadened its curriculum offer through the provision of GCSE astronomy and a BTEC First Certificate in Engineering in conjunction with the North West Regional College.

The key strengths of the specialism include:

- the very high levels of achievement in public examinations in science both at GCSE and A level;
- the significant, innovative work undertaken by the science department in relation to improving whole-school target-setting;
- the outstanding leadership and vision of the head of science; and
- the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the process led by the science department, the specialist school co-ordinator and senior management.

Participation and achievement in the specialism is very high compared with that in grammar schools. The school has demonstrated outstanding improvement in the specialism since the start of designation.

WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A major objective of the specialist school project in the school is to raise standards across the school as a whole and to focus on how pupils learn.

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 above the corresponding Northern Ireland (NI) average for grammar schools. Over the same period the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A-C in three or more subjects at A level remained above the NI average for selective schools.

Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils obtaining seven or more GCSE grades A*-C is significantly above the NI average for grammar schools. Pupils gaining A*-B and A*-A in seven or more subjects at GCSE also exceeds the targets set by the school: targets were exceeded in each of the three years.

The key strengths of the whole school improvement are:

- the highly consistent and rising attainment of pupils in public examinations; and
- the excellent professional development afforded to all staff as a result of the innovative work undertaken, developed and disseminated by the science department.

Standards are well above those being achieved in similar grammar schools. The school has demonstrated outstanding improvement over the period of designation.

COMMUNITY PLAN

The school is able to provide qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate that it has developed very effective links with the local community, including the local primary and post-primary schools, community groups and with Stranmillis University College.

The key strengths of the community plan are:

- the strong curricular and pedagogic links with the feeder primary schools, in particular the weekly science classes for four feeder primary schools;
- the successful work undertaken with a teacher education institution with regard to planning, teaching and evaluating mathematics and science lessons;
- the links and excellent working relationships with a wide range of external stakeholders who support the specialist subjects; and
- the collaborative programme developed with post-primary schools in the Foyle Learning Community.

The school has demonstrated outstanding 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 and developing the already well-established whole school self-evaluation process.

Over the period of designation the school's capacity for quality assuring its own work within a culture of rigorous self-evaluation has continued to develop and become an integral way of working across the school.

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

- the vision and commitment of the Principal who has supported and facilitated the specialist school agenda;
- the strong strategic leadership of the Principal and Vice-principals;
- the outstanding quality of staff development led by the science department particularly in relation to tracking and target setting;

- the strong contribution the school is now making to the local primary schools; and
- the strong commitment, through the specialism, to ensuring the pupils are taught and learn in a contemporary manner.

At the time of the Inspectorate's visit in January 2010, the school had prepared a detailed, well-informed SDP including more appropriate, revised targets, implementation strategies and priorities for action for the proposed one year extension of specialist status.

CONCLUSION

In all three plans: for the specialism, the whole school and the community, the improvement made in quality and standards is outstanding.

The Department can have confidence that the school's targets, implementation strategies and priorities for action have resulted from effective monitoring, staff preparation and development, leadership and planning capability.

SPECIALIST AREA

Double Award Science

GCSE A^{1*}-A

	2007 (C1) Year 1	2008 (C2) Year 2	2009 (C3) Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	63	56	57	47
Target %	56	56	57	60%
Actual %	77.8	63.6	64.5	
Difference	+21.8	+7.6	+7.5	
NI average for grammar schools	29	30	31	

GCSE A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	81	88	76	79
Target %	100	100	100	100
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	=	=	=	
NI average for grammar schools	94	93	95	

Biology

GCSE A*-A

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	33	33	45	39
Target %	85	85	85	89
Actual %	84.6	97.1	91.9	
Difference	-0.4	+12.1	+6.9	
NI average for grammar schools	45	42	41	

GCSE A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	39	34	49	44
Target %	100	100	100	100
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	=	=	=	
NI average for grammar schools	96%	95	94	

* Uptake as on 1 September of the following academic year, eg, June 2007 figure refers to uptake September 2007.

A Level A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	42	50	38	47
Target %	90	88	88	92
Actual %	91.3	80.6	90.5	
Difference	+1.3	-7.4	+2.5	
NI average for grammar schools	84	84	85	

Chemistry

GCSE A*-A

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	36	32	46	39
Target %	85	85	85	89
Actual %	92.3	94.1	93.9	
Difference	+7.3	+9.1	+8.9	
NI average for grammar schools	50	48	48	

GCSE A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	39	34	49	44
Target %	100	100	100	100
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	=	=	=	
NI average for grammar schools	95	94	94	

A Level A-B

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	34	36	38	29
Target %	69%	70%	72%	72%
Actual %	73.9%	85.7%	84.4%	
Difference	4.9	+15.7	+12.4	
NI average for grammar schools	67%	70%		

A Level A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	40	41	45	35
Target %	84	83	88	88
Actual %	87	97.6	100	
Difference	+3	+14.6	+12	
NI average for grammar schools	83	83	87	

Physics

GCSE A*-A

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	24	27	40	29
Target %	58	58	60	65
Actual %	61.5	79.4	81.6	
Difference	+3.5	+21.4	+21.6	
NI average for grammar schools	4	46	46	

GCSE A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	39	34	49	44
Target %	100	100	100	100
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	=	=	=	
NI average for grammar schools	93	92	92	

A Level A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	18	23	23	15
Target %	95	88	90	90
Actual %	94.7	95.8	92	
Difference	-0.3	+7.8	+2	
NI average for grammar schools	78	78	79	

WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

7+ GCSEs A*-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	120	122	125	123
Target %	97	97	97	97
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	+3	+3	+3	
NI average for selective schools	93	92	89	

7+ GCSEs A*-C including Mathematics and English

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	120	122	125	123
Target %	97	97	97	97
Actual %	100	100	100	
Difference	+3	+3	+3	
NI average for selective schools	87	88	88	

3+ A Levels A-C

	2007 Year 1	2008 Year 2	2009 Year 3	2010 Year 4
No of students	116	114	111	108
Target %	77	78	78	79
Actual %	91	87	86	
Difference	+14	+9	+8	
NI average for grammar schools	74	74		

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