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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

Dromore High School

Inspected: January 2008

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK	2
3.	MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS	3
4.	MAIN FINDINGS	3
5.	CONCLUSION	4
	APPENDICES	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Dromore High School is a controlled, co-educational non-selective school catering for the 11-16 age range. It is situated at the southern edge of the town and draws its pupils from a wide rural hinterland, as well as from the town itself. The school has been oversubscribed for a number of years, but the year 8 intake has remained steady because the admissions number has been fixed at its current level by the Department of Education (DE). Over the last three years approximately 56% of the intake did not participate in the Transfer Procedure, 32% obtained grades C or D and 12% obtained grades A or B. Approximately 8% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has identified 12% of the pupils as having special educational needs. Currently there are two pupils with English as an additional language.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, and leadership and management at all levels across the school, and in addition specialist provision in mathematics, science and history. The inspection also evaluated the school's provision for pastoral care, including child protection. A summary of the main findings for the subjects under focus is shown in Appendix 1.

In June 2007, the school was selected to take part in the Specialist Schools' Pilot Programme, beginning in September 2007. The programme aims to develop the concept of specialist schools tailored to meet the particular needs of Northern Ireland's education system. As part of the inspection, the school's provision for their specialist status in science was evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, GOVERNORS, PUPILS AND TEACHERS

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the completion of questionnaires by a sample of parents, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (governors) and with groups of pupils from years 8 and 12. Prior to the inspection, 156 confidential questionnaires were sent to a sample of the parents of pupils attending the school; 79 (51%) of the parents responded, and 43 of these provided additional written comments.

The responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents indicated, in the majority of cases, strong satisfaction with the work of the school. In particular, the parents mentioned the high standing of the school in the community, the caring and supportive teachers, the good standards of education the pupils receive and the quality of pastoral care.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school; they praised, in particular, the school ethos, the leadership of the Principal and senior management team, the good standards achieved in external examinations and the hardworking teachers and support staff. In addition, the governors highlighted the need for sixth form provision and some of the difficulties facing Dromore High School pupils when applying for sixth form places in local grammar schools.

In discussions held with the pupils, they talked enthusiastically about what they enjoy in the school and the approachability of and encouragement from the teachers. They indicated that they know whom to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

Almost half of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire. Overall, the majority of the teachers who completed the questionnaire expressed their satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the school. In particular, almost all teachers indicated that the Principal provides effective leadership, there is good communication between senior managers and staff, and they felt valued by the Principal and management of the school. A significant minority of these teachers expressed their concern about inconsistencies in dealing with indiscipline.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal, and a representative of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 STANDARDS

Overall the pupils achieve very good standards in public examinations. Over the past three years, the examination results at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level for pupils obtaining grade C or above in five or more subjects has remained consistently well above the Northern Ireland average. Over the same period, most of the subjects offered at GCSE level, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was above or within five percentage points of the corresponding Northern Ireland average. More details of all of the examination results can be found in Appendix 4.

2.2 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of most of the teaching observed was good or better, a minority of the lessons were outstanding and a small number had significant weaknesses.

In the most effective practice, the lessons were characterised by:

- the sharing of the learning intentions and success criteria with the pupils at the start of a lesson;
- the good range of teaching strategies matched to varying learning styles in the class;
- the effective questioning to promote the pupils' thinking skills;
- the thoughtful plenary sessions to reinforce and assess the pupils' learning; and
- the well-planned work in a suitable context that enabled the pupils to build on their prior learning experiences. In addition the teachers encouraged the pupils to make extended responses that were valued and consolidated.

In the less effective practice, the lessons were characterised by:

- the over-emphasis on whole-class activities, which lacked pace and challenge and did not take account of the range of abilities within the class;
- the limited opportunities for the pupils to be actively engaged in their learning; and
- the learning intentions and success criteria not being shared fully with the pupils.

The school, through its own processes of self-evaluation, has identified the need to disseminate the existing good practice across the school particularly, through the sharing and reviewing of the range of effective strategies for learning and teaching, in order to further actively engage and challenge all of the pupils. The inspection endorses this as a key priority.

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Principal, who has been in post for 10 years, provides highly effective leadership. He has a clear strategic vision for the school and has put in place very well understood lines of communication between himself, the senior management team (SMT), the staff, parents and governors. He has developed an appropriate distributive leadership structure to manage the needs of the school; for example, focusing on making effective links between the pastoral and academic dimensions through ensuring close liaison of the year heads and heads of department. Within this effective structure the Principal is supported ably by the hard work and commitment of the Vice-principals and the senior teachers who lead a number of important initiatives and teams with notable effect.

The culture of self-evaluation is well-established throughout the school, and there are good strategies in places for monitoring and evaluation. Effective use is made of the analysis of quantifiable internal and external data by the Principal, SMT and heads of department to set targets for improvement, including examination success.

The school development plan sets out clearly how whole school aims and targets are translated into learning outcomes, identifies the contribution of the departmental and learning area action plans and includes the long term planning associated with the science specialism. There is a good match between the priorities of school development planning and staff development. The school, in addition to using a variety of in-service training (INSET) providers, also makes good use of its in-house expertise and has the internal capacity for sustained self improvement.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the caring and supportive ethos;
- the dedication, commitment and professionalism of the staff;
- the very good standards achieved in public examinations;

- the good or better standard of most of the teaching;
- the clear focus on self evaluation and action planning by management at all levels to promote improvement; and
- the effective leadership and vision of the Principal and his management team.

5. **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents and the community can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FOR THE SUBJECTS UNDER FOCUS

Pastoral Care and Child Protection

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths.

The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are:

- the caring and supportive ethos;
- the frequent examples of courtesy, good behaviour and positive response from most of the pupils;
- the commitment and diligent work of the Vice-principal and other key personnel for pastoral care; and
- the procedures in place to assess and improve overall pupil attendance.

The areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- continue to monitor and evaluate further the quality of provision within the Personal Development programme to ensure consistency in the interests of all pupils.

History

The strengths of the work include:

- the very good relationships between teachers and pupils;
- the good results achieved by pupils in GCSE examinations;
- the quality of the teaching, which in the majority of lessons was very good;
- the variety of active learning approaches to engage the pupils imaginatively with the past;
- the well-planned lessons to promote the development of the pupils' thinking through challenging historical enquiries; and
- the effective leadership of the head of department resulting in a culture of reflection within the department and a strong commitment to improvement.

Mathematics

The strengths of the work include:

- the good behaviour of the pupils and positive ethos within most classes;
- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in key stage 3, GCSE and Additional Mathematics;
- the effective leadership of the newly appointed interim head of department; and
- the commitment and hard work of the teachers.

The areas for improvement are the need to develop:

- effective questioning that will promote mathematical thinking and engage the pupils in active learning; and
- a wider range of teaching and learning strategies, promoting greater progression in the learning and supported by more effective schemes of work.

Science

The strengths of the work include:

- the science specialism is an area of clear curricular strength;
- the setting of appropriate and measurable targets for improvement to demonstrate how the science specialism will be used to develop existing links with other schools, Further Education Colleges and the wider community;
- the viable financial planning to allocate funding for the science specialism;
- the excellent leadership of the head of department;
- the extensive departmental documentation which is of an excellent quality, including a development plan with action plans and associated targets for improvement which are appropriate, realistic and achievable;
- the very good teaching seen in most classes and the pupils' use of a wide range of written resources from which they clearly benefit;
- the provision of a wide range of practical work in the majority of classes;
- the effective explanation of the learning outcomes expected by the teachers used to structure lessons well for the pupils in years 8 and 9; and
- nearly all of the pupils reaching satisfactory to very good standards, in line with their abilities.

For the purpose of showing improvement within the science specialism more clearly, the school needs to review some of the specialist school targets in order to demonstrate:

- how the strengths in the science specialism have the potential to promote quality teaching and learning and whole school development.

The Inspectorate will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of the Specialist Schools' Programme.

ACCOMMODATION

- There is no multi-purpose resource area/s in accordance with Building Handbook regulations, for the recently refurbished home economics provision.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Dromore High School vii. Date of Inspection: W/C 28.01.08
 ii. School Reference Number: 521-0064 viii. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Controlled Secondary
 v. Number of Families: 695

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 8 Intake	158	150	154	157	154
Total enrolment	779	779	773	781	778

Year 2007/08	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	98	84	81	81	77	421
Enrolment: Girls	56	75	72	74	80	357
Enrolment: Total	154	159	153	155	157	778
PTR	17.24	17.30	16.24	14.50	14.13	

1.3 Attendance

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	Average 2007/07	NI Average 2005/06
% Attendance	96.1	95.6	92.6	91.3	90.9	93	90

1.4 Contact ratio and pupil teacher ratio

i. Total Number of Teachers:

49.35

iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):

0.77

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

15.77

1.5 Leavers Destinations

2005/06	Year 12	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	151	
Another School	21%	8.3
Employment	5%	12
Full-time Further Education	34%	37.6
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A
Full-time Training	34%	34.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	3%	4.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	3%	3.5

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Dromore High School

SCHOOL YEAR: 2007/2008

GCSE	2005	2006	2007
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	98.73	91.33	99.35
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	55.7	56.67	55.19
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	84.81	84	87.66

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table 1 showing GCSE subject results, over the three years ending in June 2007, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-C	Drama English Language English Literature Geography Mathematics Mathematics Additional Music Sport/PE Studies Technology and Design	Information and Communication Technology	French History Home Economics Motor Vehicle Studies Portuguese Religious Studies Science Double Award 1st Subject	Business Studies	Art and Design German Learning for Life and Work Science Single Award
GCSE A*-E		Drama French Home Economics Mathematics Mathematics Additional Music Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Art and Design Business Studies English Language English Literature Geography German History Information and Communication Technology Portuguese Science Double Award 1st Subject Science Single Award Technology and Design		Learning for Life and Work Motor Vehicle Studies

Table 2 showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-C	Portuguese		Art and Design Music	Drama English Literature German Information and Communication Technology Mathematic additional Science Double Award 1st Subject	Business Studies English French Geography History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Religious Studies Science Single Award Sport/PE Studies Technology and Design
GCSE A*-E	Art and Design Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Literature Portuguese	Additional Mathematics Drama English German History Home Economics Information and Communication Technology Music Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies French Geography Learning for Life and Work Mathematics Religious Studies Single Award Science Technology and Design	Motor Vehicle Studies	

Table 3 showing the results for pupils taking Occupational Studies

	No. of pupils entered	Percentage of pupils achieving level 1	Percentage of pupils achieving Level 2
2006	32	50%	50%
2007	29	53%	48%

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