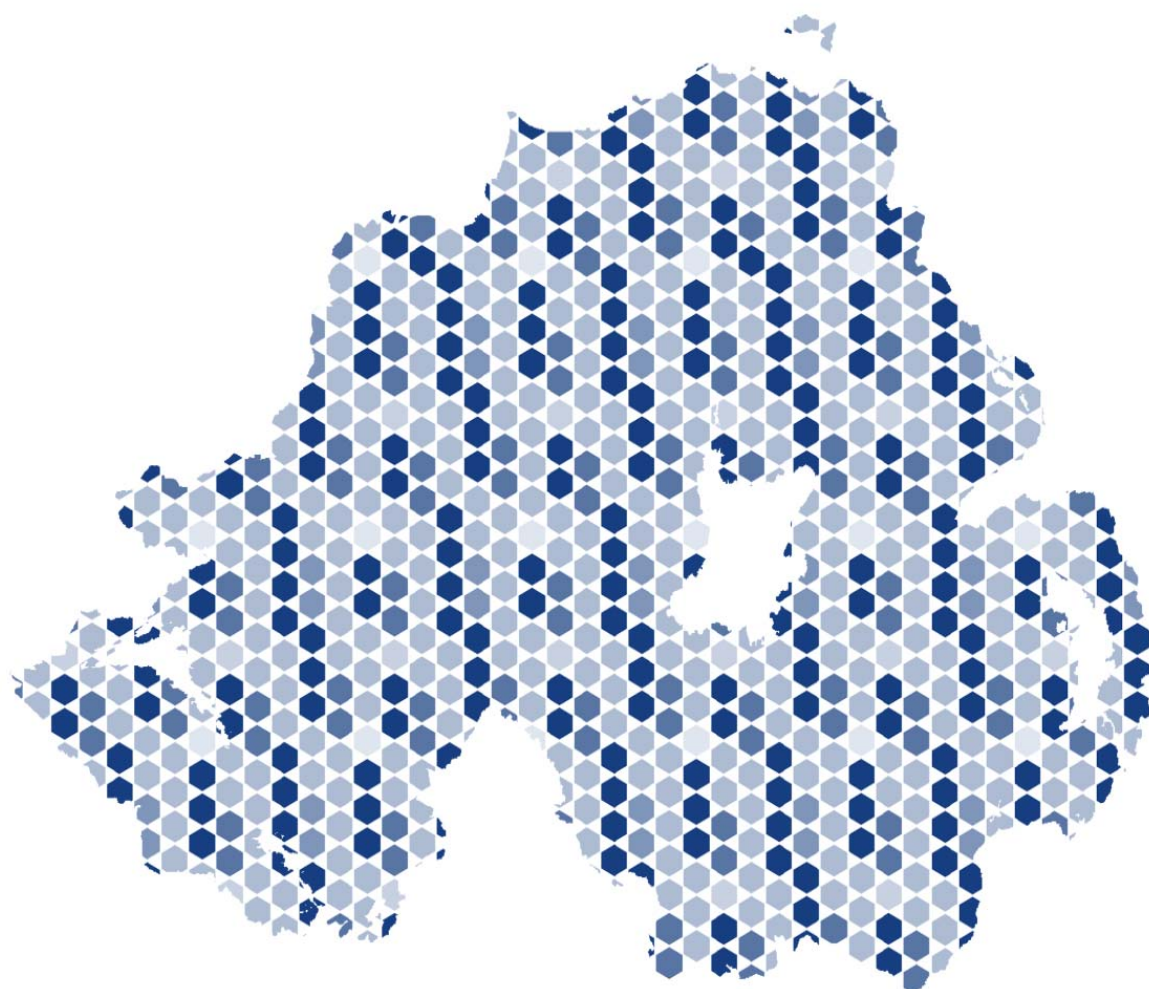


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Limavady Grammar School,  
Co Londonderry

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2010

## CONTENTS

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

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 CONTEXT**

Limavady Grammar School is a co-educational, controlled grammar school. The school is located on a spacious site on the edge of the town and draws its pupils from all sides of the community and from a wide catchment area. The enrolment of the school has remained stable over recent years. Just over three-quarters of the pupils in years 8 to 12 obtained a grade A or B in the Transfer Procedure. The school has identified approximately 6% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, leadership and management at all levels across the school as well as the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection. The provision for English, mathematics and science was evaluated and as an additional evidence base, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects. The inspection also evaluated the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and the school's approach towards promoting healthy eating and physical activity. A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

### **1.3 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, GOVERNORS AND PUPILS**

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

One hundred and eighty-two questionnaires were issued to parents; 90 (49%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 49 contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses from the parents indicated very strong support for the work and life of the school. In particular, they praised the high levels of care and support provided for the pupils, the commitment of the school to developing the pupils' personal and social skills, the effective communications between the school and the parents, and the commitment of the teachers to providing a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The few issues raised were reported to the Principal and the governors.

Just over half of the teachers and thirteen support staff completed confidential online questionnaires with eleven providing additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires were mostly positive; staff commented on the effectiveness of the Principal and the senior leadership team (SLT), the opportunities for staff development and the sense of community within the school. A small minority of the responses expressed concerns relating to inconsistent approaches to dealing with behavioural issues; these are addressed within the body of the report.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school. In particular, they value the leadership of the Principal and his vision for the school, the wide range of sporting, cultural and artistic activities provided and the spirit of co-operation between the schools in the Roe Valley Learning Community (RVLC).

The pupils talked enthusiastically about the support provided by their teachers, the good relationships within the school and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including those with an international dimension. They reported that they feel safe in the school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK**

### **2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

The pupils are highly motivated, articulate and show a very strong sense of pride in their school. They co-operate well with each other and with their teachers and have good social skills. Their behaviour is almost always exemplary. They work independently and, when given the opportunity, they participate appropriately in the planning and organising of tasks and contribute well to group and whole class discussions. In most classes the teachers set realistically high expectations and monitor the work effectively, consequently the pupils present their work to a high standard.

The pupils have excellent opportunities to engage in a wide range of sporting, social, cultural and international extra-curricular activities which add significantly to their overall education experience.

The pupils' achievement in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A\*-C in at least seven subjects including English and mathematics has declined over the previous three years, from excellent to satisfactory compared to the average for similar Northern Ireland (NI) selective schools. Over the previous three years, the GCSE results at grades A\*-B in most subjects are within or above five percentage points of the respective Northern Ireland (NI) average. In a minority of subjects, these results are more than ten percentage points above the NI average.

The pupils achieve variable standards at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level. Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more GCE A Level grades A-C has ranged from well below to well above (in 2009) the NI average for similar selective schools. Over the previous three years, most subjects are within or above five percentage points of the respective NI average at GCE A-C. A minority of subjects are more than ten percentage points above, while a similar proportion are more than ten percentage points below this average.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendices 2 and 3.

The school has been proactive in broadening the curriculum at key stage (KS) 4 and sixth form to provide appropriate pathways for the pupils. In addition at GCE A level, the school has reorganised the options available to allow almost all pupils to choose a wider range of subjects. As part of the RVLC, the pupils have access to a good broad and balanced curriculum matched to their needs and interests; the scheme is well co-ordinated with good levels of co-operation and communication reported between the different partners.

### **2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

There was a wide variation in the quality of teaching observed ranging from outstanding to inadequate; two-thirds of the lessons were good or very good, although just over one-quarter of the lessons had areas for improvement. The teachers are hard-working and committed and give significant additional time to support the pupils' learning, for example, through the daily after-school homework club.

In the best practice, teachers share clear learning intentions with pupils at the start of the lessons and provide opportunities for effective consolidation of learning at the end. Most teachers use their very good subject knowledge to enthuse and engage the pupils. There is a variety of well-planned and purposeful paired and group activities to involve the pupils in the learning and promote and enhance their thinking skills and personal capabilities. In addition, a virtual learning environment is used creatively to stimulate and support the pupils' independent learning.

In the less effective practice, there is over-directive whole-class teaching with missed opportunities to engage the pupils actively. Lessons lack appropriate pace and challenge to motivate the pupils and keep them focused and activities are poorly matched to the pupils' interests and learning needs. Closed questioning limits the opportunities for pupils to respond and there is ineffective assessment of their work. In general, insufficient use is made of the available information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the pupils' learning.

The quality and frequency of the marking of the pupils' work lacks consistency. In the best practice, the teachers identify suitable targets to help the children improve the quality of their work and to encourage them to take increasing responsibility for their learning.

The school has identified clearly those pupils who are in need of additional support for their learning. Some useful initiatives have been introduced to address these needs; for example, the achievement club, where identified year 8 pupils are supported well by sixth form mentors and also some follow-up with year 12 pupils who are not meeting their targets. In general, this support needs to be reviewed to ensure that the programmes are more effective in raising standards for these pupils.

## 2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for pastoral care within the school is good. There is a comprehensive induction programme for new pupils. The pupils are actively involved in making decisions about matters which affect them and the leadership skills of senior pupils are well developed, for example through the sixth form mentoring scheme. The pastoral team is caring and highly dedicated to the welfare and progress of the pupils. It is appropriate that the School Development Plan includes the need to review the pastoral policies focusing on positive behaviour strategies to increase the opportunities for rewards and confirm the high standards of interest, co-operation and consideration shown by the pupils.

## 2.4 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## 2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the pupils' success in a variety of cookery competitions and the wide range of sporting opportunities available to them both during and after school. The whole-school food policy needs to be broadened in order to guide and support more effectively the approaches to healthy eating.

## **2.6 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is very good. There is an appropriate action plan in place to take forward this work at both school level and within the RVLC. There are clearly defined and agreed roles and responsibilities for the staff and this ensures a coherent programme across the year groups, which is monitored and reviewed regularly and effectively to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. The head of CEIAG provides very good support and guidance to all staff and promotes a collegiate working environment within the careers provision. The pupils have access to up-to-date, well-organised relevant resources, including ICT based careers information materials. In the careers lessons observed, the teachers used a wide range of appropriate learning and teaching strategies. From discussions and lesson observation, there is evidence that the pupils have a very good understanding of progression routes available to them and make effective use of careers information.

## **3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **3.1 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The Principal who has been in post for just over a year provides very good leadership and has a clear vision for the development of the school. He has led the staff in the introduction of a number of important initiatives including a more rigorous whole-school approach to self-evaluation, a rationalisation of roles and responsibilities at senior and other management levels, a strategic emphasis on staff development and an increased emphasis on learning, teaching and assessment. Recently, the SLT has been appropriately re-organised and the new structure has the potential to provide greater strategic leadership for the school. Effective lines of communication between senior and middle management have been established; these are promoting greater support and coherence in directing the work of the school. These initiatives are clearly linked to the priorities identified in the school development plan (SDP), which complies fully with the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations Northern Ireland (NI) 2005 Order. The inspection findings have already been identified as priorities in the SDP. The teachers are addressing well the challenges set by the newly established leadership team and are making significant progress in response to taking the development work forward in the interests of the pupils.

There is a clear and strategic staff development programme which is linked appropriately to whole-school priorities; for example, the innovative strategies taken to develop the management skills of the middle management team and the useful shadowing arrangements to facilitate succession in key responsibilities.

A useful start has been made to the process of self-evaluation at all levels in the school. There has been clear dissemination of a significant amount of information and data about the pupils' abilities and performance. The heads of department and other middle-managers need to make more consistent use of this information to inform targets and programmes for pupils, which address their particular learning needs, and to track their ongoing progress.

The leaders at all levels need to ensure that the good to outstanding teaching is disseminated more widely throughout the school. In general, they need to develop more effective monitoring and evaluating strategies to ensure the pupils are provided with more consistently challenging learning experiences and to promote improvement and raise standards.

The governors show high levels of commitment to the life and work of the school. They are well informed and fully involved in strategic planning and policy development.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

##### **4.1 The main strengths of the school include:**

- the good standards achieved by the pupils;
- the good provision for pastoral care and the very good provision for careers;
- the development of the pupils' personal and social skills through the outstanding range of extra-curricular provision;
- the quality of the teaching which, in over two-thirds of the lessons seen, ranged from good to outstanding;
- the broad and balanced curriculum provided for the pupils which is enhanced further through the collaboration with other partners in the Roe Valley Learning Community; and
- the very good leadership of the Principal who has introduced appropriate actions to promote improvement.

##### **4.2 The areas for improvement, which have already been identified by the school, include the need to:**

- improve the consistency in the quality of learning and teaching; and
- develop further the role of leaders at all levels in the monitoring and evaluating of the quality of learning, teaching and assessment and the standards achieved by the pupils.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.



**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SUBJECT AREAS UNDER FOCUS**

**English**

The provision in English is good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the good achievements and standards of pupils in English and English Literature;
- the quality of the teaching observed, two thirds of which was good or very good;
- the very good working relationships between the teachers and pupils in nearly all of the lessons observed;
- the pupils' motivation and their ability to work independently and collaboratively;
- the hard work, commitment and collegiality of the teachers of English, guided effectively by the head of department; and
- the use made of available performance data in order to improve standards.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to embed a wider range of teaching and learning strategies, including more effective use of ICT and assessment for learning, in order to engage the pupils more actively in their learning.

**Mathematics**

The quality of the provision for mathematics is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good standards attained by the pupils in public examinations, particularly in GCSE mathematics;
- the pupils' ability to learn independently;
- the good to very good teaching in a significant minority of the lessons observed;
- the quality of the working relationships and the individual support provided for the pupils during mathematics lessons; and
- the progress in reviewing schemes of work at KS3.

The areas for improvement are:

- to use a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to engage the pupils more actively and collaboratively in their learning;

- to develop further, and more consistently across the department, the assessment for, and of, learning; and
- to develop a more rigorous approach towards monitoring and evaluating the work of the department to promote improvement.

## **Science**

The quality of the provision in science is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations;
- the hard-working and committed teachers who support the pupils effectively in their learning;
- the quality of the teaching observed which, in almost all lessons, ranged from good to outstanding;
- the uptake of all science subjects at post-16 level and the range of extra-curricular activities related to science available to the pupils;
- the good start made in the process of evaluating the quality of the provision within science; and
- the excellent leadership provided by the three heads of department.

## **Accommodation**

The specialist accommodation for science (physics and biology) has deficiencies which are impacting negatively on the quality of the pupils' learning experiences.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Limavady Grammar v. Date of Inspection: W/C 12/04/10  
 ii. School Reference Number: 241-0048 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection  
 iii. Age Range: 11-18  
 iv. Status: Controlled

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	131	132	134	133	129
Total enrolment	899	886	897	910	901

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	96.7	96.3	94.8	93.7	94.2	95.3	92.3	95	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

56.27

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

0.77

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

16.03

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	63	69	67	70	61	54	60	444
Enrolment: Girls	66	64	64	62	67	64	70	457
Enrolment: Total	129	133	131	132	128	118	130	901
PTR	18.48	19.05	18.15	16.02	15.72	12.36	14.29	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2007/08) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	101.5	NI Av Year 13	91.1
Year 14	91.4	NI Av Year 14	86.3

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	13		119	
Another School	15%	20.5	1%	0.9
Employment	8%	5.5	9%	4.8
Full-time Further Education	77%	58.6	6%	7.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	81%	83.5
Full-time Training	0%	9.6	0%	0.6
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.4	3%	1.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	4.5	0%	1.4

# APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Limavady Grammar School SCHOOL YEAR: 2009/2010

<b>GCSE</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	99.2	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	98.4	98.5	93.1
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	98.4	97	93.1
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	96.1	93.9	86.3
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	96.1	92.4	86.3
<b>GCE A2 Level or equivalent</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	70.4	66	77
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	91.7	93.4	92

## EXAMINATION RESULTS

*Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2009, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages*

Table 1

	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*-B	Art and Design Biology Chemistry History Home Economics Spanish	English English Literature Geography Mathematics Physics	Additional Mathematics Design and Technology – Graphics Products Design and Technology - Manufacturing Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject French Information Technology Religious Studies	Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies German Music*
GCE A Level A-C	Classical Civilisation* English Engineering** German** Health and Social Care** Performing Arts** Religious Studies**	Art and Design Biology Design and Technology Physics Spanish**	Chemistry Computer Studies/ Computing** English Literature Geography History Home Economics Information Technology Mathematics Polish** Politics Sport/PE Studies**		Accounting/Finance Business Studies** French Further Mathematics** Music**

\* Denotes subjects with total entry of less than 30 over three years.

\*\* Denotes subjects with total entry of less than 20 over three years.

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

**Table 2**

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-B		Design and Technology Information Technology Music	Additional Mathematics Art and Design English English Literature History Home Economics Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Geography Mathematics Physics Single Award Science Spanish	Business Studies Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject French German
GCE A Level A-C	Polish	Art and Design Business Studies English Literature French Further Mathematics Geography] German History Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies Spanish	Accounting/Finance Biology Chemistry Classical Civilisation Design and Technology English Home Economics Information Technology Performing Arts Physics	Computer Studies/ Computing Health and Social Care Sport/PE Studies	Engineering

**Table 3**

<b>Level 3 Advanced General Certificate of Education</b>			
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>Total Entry over 3 years</b>
	<b>% A-C</b>		
Moving Image Arts	100%	100%	

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