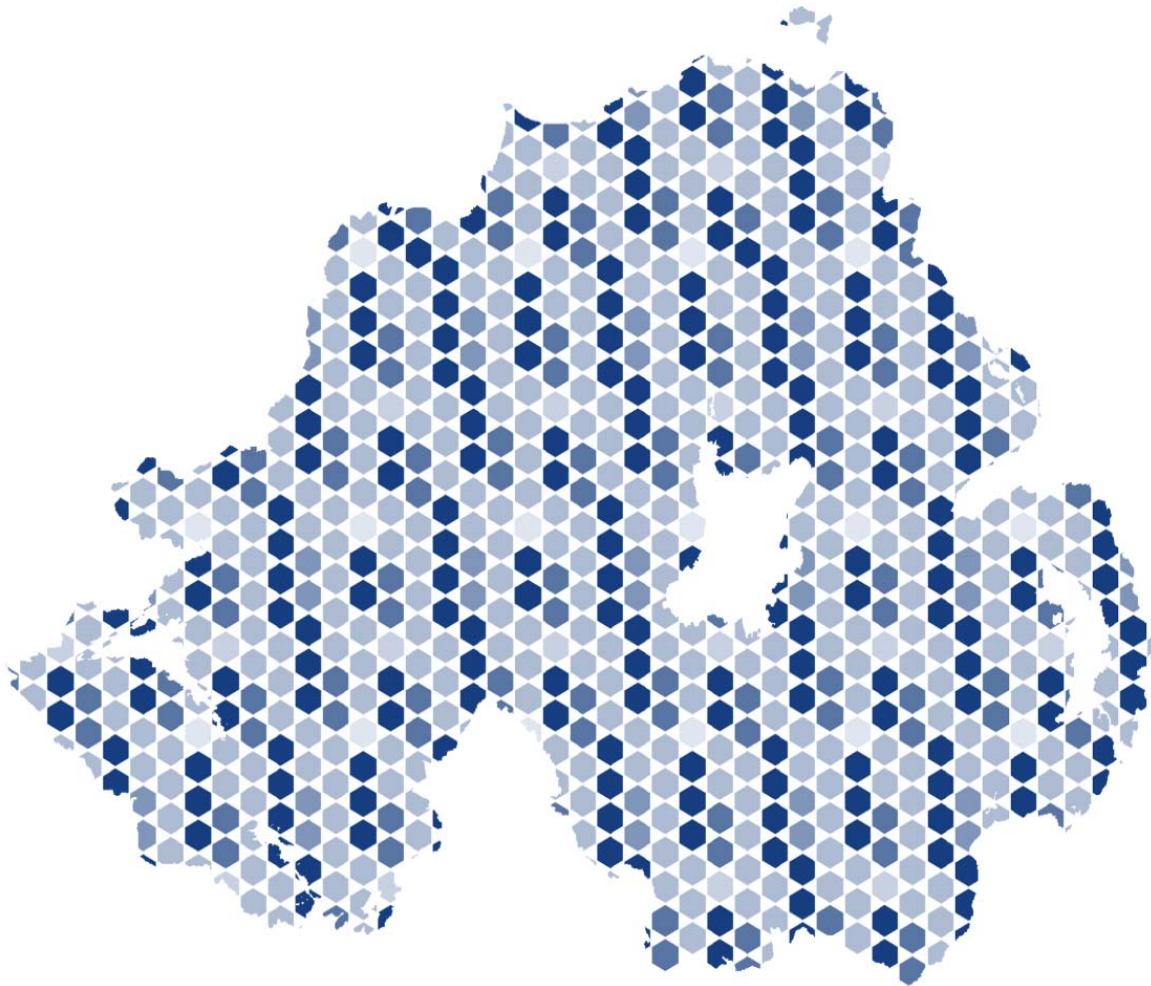


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Our Lady and St Patrick's
College, Knock

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

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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

Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock is a co-educational, voluntary grammar school situated in the Gilnahirk area of Belfast and has 1,265 students enrolled between the ages of 11 and 19. It has a sixth form of 342 students. At the time of the inspection, the College was oversubscribed with almost all students attaining Grades A and B in the Transfer Procedure. The College has identified just over 8% of the pupils who require additional support with their learning. Approximately 1% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 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.

Two hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were issued to parents; 27% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 38 contained additional written comments. The majority of the responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were highly affirmative, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the hard work and commitment of the teaching staff, the appropriate balance between the academic and the pastoral and the friendly, welcoming atmosphere within the school.

Sixty-four teachers and 18 support staff completed confidential questionnaires with 29 teachers and five support staff providing additional written comments. The teachers commented positively on the strong working relationships within the school, the opportunity to contribute to the School Improvement Plan and the support provided by the Principal and Vice-principals. The support staff's written responses highlighted issues relating to the quality of communication they had with senior staff.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the quality of the pastoral care and the contribution the relatively new Principal and the senior management team have made to the school.

In discussions held with the pupils, they talked enthusiastically about their participation in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, the support provided by their teachers and the very good relationships throughout the school. They reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, any areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, and 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 physical education (PE) 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.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

In the course of the inspection, the pupils showed high levels of motivation and engagement in their learning; when given the opportunity, they gave confident and articulate responses and worked well collaboratively in group or paired activities. They showed a pride in their school and their behaviour was exemplary.

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.

A very high percentage of pupils achieve grades A* to B in at least seven General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects; this percentage has grown steadily over the past three years with the majority of subjects either five or ten percentage points above the Northern Ireland (NI) Average.

The percentage of pupils achieving seven or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, over the past three years has also grown steadily and is well above the NI average for similar schools.

The pupils achieve excellently in General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Level; for example, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more GCE A Level grades A-C, over the last three years, is well above the NI average for similar selective schools. Over the three years, almost all subjects are within or above five percentage points of the respective NI average at GCE A-C.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendices 3 and 4.

The Principal and the senior management team demonstrate a strong commitment to the rationale which underpins the aims of the Entitlement Framework; this is communicated effectively to staff at all levels within the school. The school regards its collaboration with other education providers as a priority and is making a good contribution to the development of the Castlereagh Area Learning Community. The school has made progress towards broadening the curriculum at key stage (KS) 4 and sixth form, and there are appropriate targets outlined within their school development plan in preparation for the implementation of the Entitlement Framework by 2013.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding with most of the lessons being good or better. The teachers are hard-working and committed and have established very good working relationships with the pupils.

In the best practice:

- there is effective questioning that promoted thinking skills and elicited extended responses from the pupils;

- lessons are well paced and built on previous learning;
- learning intentions are clearly shared, revisited in the course of the lesson and consolidated at the end; and
- teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge.

In the less effective practice:

- there is a tendency for lessons to be overly teacher directed;
- there is an over use of closed questions which require limited response from the pupils;
- learning intentions are vague with poor consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson; and
- opportunities are missed for the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

2.3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school has identified clearly those pupils who are in need of additional support for their learning. Appropriate individual support is provided for pupils by the special needs teacher and detailed individual education plans are used effectively in planning learning. The school links with a wide range of external support agencies. While the needs of the pupils are reviewed on a regular basis through the work of the special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO), the school has recognised the need to track more effectively the progress made by those pupils who receive additional support.

2.4 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for pastoral care within the school is very good. The Vice-principal for pastoral care provides strong and effective leadership and is well supported by her colleagues in the pastoral team. The school is highly committed to the ongoing development of the pastoral provision and there is an appropriate action plan in place to take this work forward. Among the strengths of the pastoral provision are the very supportive and inclusive ethos; the learning experiences provided for the pupils beyond the classroom which develop their personal and social skills; and the effective communication of pastoral policies and information to parents.

2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The provision for CEIAG is very good. This work is led very effectively by the highly committed Head of Careers, supported well by a team of teachers who have an extensive knowledge of the pupils' skills, dispositions and aspirations. The work of the careers team is complemented well by the support offered by a Department for Employment and Learning careers adviser. The pupils use effectively a wide range of appropriate and up-to-date careers information including relevant information and communication technology software and subsequently they have a very good understanding of the world of work. As a result of the high quality careers advice and guidance provided, the pupils develop the skills necessary to make appropriate career decisions.

2.6 CHILD PROTECTION

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

2.7 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the popular cookery club and the strong emphasis on sport both during and after school. The area for improvement identified includes the need to ensure all food provision in school, consistently meets the compulsory nutritional standards.

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of the leadership and management provided by the Principal and the senior management team is very good. The Principal has been in post for eighteen months and provides clear and realistic direction based on a knowledge of and vision for the school. He inspires confidence and respect among the staff and pupils. Together with his senior management team he has begun a process of sharing and reviewing objectives and targets through the school development planning process. They now need to underpin this further with a more rigorous, whole school framework for self evaluation.

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 further improvement.

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 well motivated, highly articulate pupils whose behaviour is exemplary;
- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations, including the excellent results at GCE A level;
- the quality of the teaching which, in over three-quarters of the lessons seen, was good or better;
- the very good leadership provided by the Principal and his senior management team;
- the very good provision for pastoral care and the very good arrangements for the delivery of CEIAG; and
- the wide range of non-formal and extra-curricular enrichment activities available in the school.

5. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is very good. The educational and pastoral needs of the pupils are being well met. The parents can have confidence in the school's capacity for sustained self-improvement. No follow-up inspection is required.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The provision in English is very good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very good standards of the pupils' work and the priority given to upholding the very good outcomes in public examinations;
- the quality of the teaching observed, three quarters of which was good or better;
- the very positive working relationships between the teachers and pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- the pupils' motivation and ability to work well collaboratively in a range of contexts;
- the hard work, commitment and collegiality of the teachers of English, guided effectively by the dedicated head of department; and
- the good progress made in recent years in revising the schemes of work.

Mathematics

The quality of provision for mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations, including GCE Further Mathematics;
- the good or better quality of teaching in most of the lessons observed;
- the good levels of individual support provided for the pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- the committed and hard-working teachers who prepare thoroughly for lessons;
- the start made to incorporating Financial Capability into the mathematics curriculum; and
- the enthusiasm and commitment of the recently appointed head of department.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to develop monitoring and evaluation strategies in order to improve the quality of pupils' experiences, particularly the level of mathematical thinking arising from the teachers' questioning.

Physical Education

The quality of the provision for PE is good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the very positive relationships between staff and pupils;
- the very good overall standards achieved in PE including those attained in public examinations;
- the very high levels of participation in PE and the pupils' positive attitudes to physical education;
- the quality of teaching which was always satisfactory and in the majority of the lessons observed was good or better;
- the very supportive working relationships across the PE department; and
- the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and the sporting successes of the school.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to ensure the consistency of experience of all learners in physical education through developing further the culture of self evaluation in the PE department.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Our Lady and St Patrick's College v. Date of Inspection: W/C 19/04/10
 ii. School Reference Number: 442-0259 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	183	184	184	185	180
Total enrolment	1248	1256	1250	1262	1265

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	97	95.9	95.3	96.1	96.7	96.4	95.7	96	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 88.5 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.67
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.29

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	87	104	106	88	117	96	86	684
Enrolment: Girls	93	82	79	97	70	83	77	581
Enrolment: Total	180	186	185	185	187	179	163	1265
PTR	14.787	14.985	14.904	14.622	15.287	12.573	12.386	

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

Year 13	92.3	NI Av Year 13	91.1
Year 14	89.7	NI Av Year 14	86.3

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	22		165	
Another School	9%	20.5	0%	0.9
Employment	5%	5.5	3%	4.8
Full-time Further Education	86%	58.6	5%	7.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	92%	83.5
Full-time Training	0%	9.6	0%	0.6
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.4	0%	1.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	4.5	0%	1.4

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Our Lady and St Patrick's College,
Knock

SCHOOL YEAR: 2009/2010

GCSE	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	97.28	99.45	99.46
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	96.74	95.03	99.46
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	94.57	95.58	99.46
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	94.57	92.82	99.46
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	80.7	85	85.98
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	94.74	98.11	97.56

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and (GCE A2⁺) 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	Business Studies Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject French German Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Physics Religious Studies Spanish	Biology Chemistry Drama English English Literature History Home Economics Mathematics	Additional Mathematics Art and Design Geography Information Technology Music Sport/PE Studies	Irish	
GCE A Level A-C	Biology Business Studies Computer Studies/ Computing Design and Technology Home Economics Physics Sociology Spanish Sport/PE Studies	Chemistry English Literature French Further Mathematics History Irish Religious Studies	Art and Design Drama Economics Geography Information Technology Mathematics Music Politics		German

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		Drama Information Technology Music	Additional Mathematics Art and Design English English Literature History Home Economics Irish Learning for Life and Work (PSE) Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Geography Latin Mathematics Physics Spanish	Business Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject French German
GCE A Level A-C		Art and Design Business Studies Drama English Literature French Further Mathematics Geography German History Irish Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies Spanish	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Economics Home Economics Information Technology Physics Sociology	Computer Studies/Computing Sport/PE Studies	

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