



*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**

### **Report of a Standard Inspection**

#### **Our Lady of Lourdes High School Ballymoney**

**Inspected: October 2009**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 CONTEXT**

Our Lady of Lourdes High School is a maintained, co-educational, 11-16 non-selective school. It is located in the town of Ballymoney and draws its pupils from the town and the surrounding areas. Since 2006, the enrolment has risen steadily to its current figure of 222 pupils.

Over the last three years, around 90% of the pupils entering year 8 either obtained a Grade D or did not participate in the Transfer Procedure. Approximately 28% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has identified 70% of its pupils as being in need of additional support with some aspects of their learning. The school has a Learning Resource Centre for 33 pupils with moderate or other learning difficulties. There are ten pupils who have English as an additional language.

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

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection 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 and 12. One hundred and eighty-six questionnaires were issued to parents; just over 40% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 36 contained additional written comments.

The responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were highly affirmative of the work of the school. In particular, the parents praised the Principal and all the staff for their dedication to the education and welfare of their children.

Over one-third of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with three teachers providing additional written comments. Four support staff completed a confidential questionnaire, with two providing an additional written comment. These responses were very positive overall and the staff praised the high quality of the working relationships throughout the school.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school. They highlighted the improved standing of the school in the local area, which they attributed to the culture of high expectation for everyone in the school community and the very good standards achieved in external examinations.

In the discussions held with pupils there is evidence that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety. The pupils report that they value highly the care and commitment shown to them by their teachers and the Principal.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, these very positive comments and the very few issues of concern emerging from the questionnaires and interviews.

### 1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, and leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in addition, on the provision for pupils in English and mathematics. The school's provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection were also evaluated. As an additional evidence base for the inspection, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects. 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

The pupils are highly motivated to give of their best. They work well together and develop confidence and independence. All the pupils, including those with special educational needs, maintain very good standards in their day-to-day work. The school places strong emphasis on ensuring there is good attendance by the pupils and on encouraging them to take pride in their appearance.

The proportion of pupils achieving General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A\*-C in at least five subjects has improved significantly over recent years and, in particular, the performance over the previous two years is in the top 5% of similar non-selective schools in Northern Ireland (NI). Over the previous three years, the GCSE results at grades A\*-C in most subjects were within or above five percentage points of the respective NI average. During this time, almost all pupils attending the school achieved at least five GCSE subjects at grades A\*-E. The school has ensured that pupils with special educational needs have accredited pathways; for example many achieve well in the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) and others have made good progress with Entry Level GCSEs. More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendices 3 and 4.

The school has outstanding procedures in place to monitor the pupils' performance at individual and group level and systematically provide targeted and sensitive support which is tailored to individual needs. There is clear evidence that this support has been successful in helping pupils to improve the standards they achieve.

The school offers a broad range of subjects at key stage 4 which provide good opportunities for pupils across the ability range to follow a curriculum suited to their needs and with the potential for success. In particular, appropriate joint provision has been established with local schools, the college of further education, a training organisation and the youth service. This provision is monitored rigorously to ensure the best quality experiences for the pupils and there are appropriate plans to expand the collaboration in the best interests of the learners. All the staff, including support and ancillary personnel, have accepted the challenge of a small school environment by undertaking additional curricular and other responsibilities with the aim of improving the life-chances of the learners.

### 2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

2.2.1 The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding: just over half the lessons observed were good or very good and a minority was outstanding. In all instances, learning took place in an orderly and caring environment, where high expectation is the norm. The teachers are extremely hard-working, prepare thoroughly for lessons, and show sensitivity and understanding of the pupils' learning needs.

In the best practice observed, lessons were well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. During these lessons, there were very good levels of individual and small group support and the learning experiences were carefully planned, well structured and had appropriate pace and challenge. Teachers enabled the pupils to respond in a more extended way through the use of judicious questioning and by positive reinforcement. The pupils were well facilitated by their teachers to use self and peer assessment to evaluate their own work and improve on their personal best.

In the less effective practice, there were missed opportunities to enhance and consolidate the learning through, for example, the better use of plenary sessions, and the sharing of success criteria with pupils. In some lessons, the activities were over-directed.

There is a limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the pupils' learning, which is exacerbated by a shortage of appropriate ICT resources. The need to improve the pupils' experiences using ICT has been identified by the school as an area for improvement.

The quality of the provision for all pupils and particularly for those with special educational needs, including those in the Learning Support Centre, is very good. The rigorous and regular recording and monitoring of the pupils' progress by the learning support team, together with the excellent encouragement and vision of the Principal and the whole-school commitment to differentiated teaching, have led to good improvement in the pupils' levels of achievement.

The school's capacity to ensure its commitment to all pupils, particularly to those who have learning difficulties, is very good. The pupils' educational and social development is nurtured very well, providing a sound basis for them to learn successfully and feel included.

### **2.2.2 PASTORAL CARE**

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. This is demonstrated in the very good quality of the working relationships between the pupils and the staff, which is founded upon very high levels of mutual respect. The pupils' behaviour was at all times exemplary and they have a clear sense of pride in being a member of their school community. The staff have high expectations for the achievements of all of the pupils. Very good efforts are made by the staff to ensure that the pupils are well supported in achieving their full potential. The school's pastoral team has developed a strong collegial approach to meeting the individual needs of the pupils.

### **2.2.3 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.

## **3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal is outstanding. He has a clear strategic and inclusive vision, which is based on ensuring that every child obtains the maximum academic and pastoral benefits from their experience at school. His focus on raising academic standards, liaising closely with parents and creating a well-ordered and caring school all serve to improve the life-chances of the pupils.

He is well supported by a very effective Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with clearly defined and complementary roles. There is an effective and inclusive structure of action groups to guide and review the work of the school. There is good accountable leadership at all levels.

A strong culture of self-evaluation and departmental accountability permeates the life and work of the school. There is effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and the pupils' achievements, using a range of reliable sources of evidence, such as examination performance, standardised tests, the pupils' work and lesson observations. This process of self-evaluation has reliably informed the SLT about the quality of the school's provision and has assisted the school to set and identify appropriate targets in order to raise standards further.

The school development plan (SDP) sets out agreed priorities for improvement and complies fully with the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. There are very good opportunities for consultation about the SDP within the school community and sufficient importance is placed on the evaluation of previous targets, with a view to informing current priorities and setting future targets.

There is excellent communication between the Principal and the governors, who are well informed, dedicated and play an active and appropriate role in overseeing the work of the school.

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

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

- the inclusive, pupil-centred ethos, which is characterised by a commitment to ensure that every pupil obtains the maximum academic and pastoral benefits from their experience at school;
- the very good working relationships at all levels and the very good support of the parents and the governors;
- the quality of the teaching observed, of which just over half was good or very good and a minority was outstanding;
- the very good standards the pupils achieve, exemplified by the rising trend in their levels of attainment in public examinations;
- the outstanding procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school with a clear and effective focus on raising achievement; and
- the excellent visionary leadership of the Principal, supported ably by a dedicated SLT and a conscientious teaching and non-teaching staff.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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

**English**

The strengths of the work include:

- the very good working relationships in all classes, underpinned by effective classroom management;
- the quality of the teaching, most of which is good or better, and a minority of which is excellent;
- the very good standards achieved in public examinations, especially at GCSE level;
- the standard and range of extended writing across all year groups;
- the effective use of self-evaluation to inform the work of the department; and
- the very good leadership of the Head of Department.

**Mathematics**

The strengths of the work include:

- the motivated pupils and their ability to work collaboratively and independently;
- the good standards that the pupils achieve in mathematics and the improving levels of attainment;
- the quality of the teaching observed, a majority of which was good or very good;
- the effective use of an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies to engage the pupils actively in their learning;
- the effective self-evaluation and associated action to promote improvement with a clear focus on raising the standards; and
- the use of available performance data to monitor, track and set targets at departmental and individual level.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to continue to raise the levels of attainment at GCSE, as identified appropriately by the department.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The traffic arrangements for the setting down and picking up of pupils need reviewed to provide greater safety for the pupils.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

- The flat roof in the technology department is unsatisfactory and consequently parts of the accommodation are liable to flooding which is disruptive to the pupils' learning experiences.
- Many of the exterior windows are single glazed and consequently there is an adverse effect on the pupils' learning due to cold and drafts. This situation also adds to the school heating costs.
- The exterior of the school is in poor condition and in need of refurbishment; this is in contrast to the high standard of cleanliness and maintenance in the interior of the school.



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Our Lady of Lourdes High School and Learning Resource Centre  
 ii. School Reference Number: 323-0075  
 iii. Age Range: 11-16  
 iv. Status: Roman Catholic Maintained
- v. Date of Inspection: W/C 05/10/09  
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	52	39	43	40	50
Total enrolment	227	202	202	211	222

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	96.2	94.6	94.3	92.5	92	0	0	94	90

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

17.2

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

0.77

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

12.9

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	30	22	29	30	33	0	0	144
Enrolment: Girls	20	19	17	8	14	0	0	78
Enrolment: Total	50	41	46	38	47	0	0	222
PTR	14.19	13.09	14.38	10.12	13.09	0	0	

1.5 Leavers Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	33			
Another School	9%	11.3	N/A	1.7
Employment	6%	8.7	N/A	18.6
Full-time Further Education	45%	41.8	N/A	22.4
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	42.8
Full-time Training	36%	30.3	N/A	4.9
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	4.4	N/A	5.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	3%	3.5	N/A	4

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Our Lady of Lourdes High School  
and Learning Resource Centre,  
Ballymoney

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	45	76	81
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	100	96	97

## EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE 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*-C	Art and Design Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject* Geography Motor Vehicle Studies* Single Award Science	Design and Technology* English Home Economics Child Development Religious Studies	Drama* Sport/PE Studies*		French Home Economics* Irish* Mathematics
GCSE A*-E	Design and Technology* Geography Home Economics* Motor Vehicle Studies*	Art and Design French Irish* Religious Studies Single Award Science	Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject Drama English Home Economics Child Development Mathematics Sport/PE Studies*		

\* Denotes subjects with a total of less than 30 candidates over the previous 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*-C			Art & Design Drama	Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject Home Economics Child Development Irish	Design and Technology English French Geography Home Economics Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport/PE Studies
GCSE A*-E	Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject	Art & Design Drama English French Home Economics Home Economics Child Development Irish Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Design and Technology Geography Mathematics Single Award Science	Motor Vehicle Studies	

**Table 3**

**OTHER RESULTS 2007-2009**

<b>Awarding Body</b>	<b>ASDAN</b>			
<b>Certificate of Personal Effectiveness</b>	<b>2008</b>		<b>2009</b>	
	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Awarding Body</b>	<b>CCEA</b>					
<b>Occupational Studies</b>	<b>2007</b>		<b>2008</b>		<b>2009</b>	
	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number of pupils</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>75</b>

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

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