



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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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

**Portora Royal School
Enniskillen**

Inspected: February 2008

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK	3
3.	SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS	5
4.	CONCLUSION	6
	APPENDICES	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Portora Royal School is situated in Enniskillen in County Fermanagh. It is a single-sex school catering for boys aged eleven to 18. Many of the pupils are drawn from the town and, increasingly, the majority from throughout Co Fermanagh. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years at around 490 pupils. Approximately 5% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and 13% of the year 8 to year 12 enrolment have been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. Over the past five years approximately two-thirds of the intake obtained grade A in the Transfer Procedure. This year the school will celebrate the 400th anniversary of it being granted a Royal Charter.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in addition, on the provision for mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection were also evaluated. In September 2007, the school became a Specialist School for the Performing and Visual Arts (PVA). This specialism incorporates the subjects of art and design, drama, moving image arts (MIA) and music. This inspection evaluated the extent to which the specialism chosen by the school is a core strength and the suitability of the identified targets for improvement. As an additional evidence base for the inspection, lessons were observed in a range of other subjects and inspectors met with subject leaders, heads of learning areas and co-ordinators from a range of other aspects of the school's provision.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND PUPILS

The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching 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 the pupils from years 8, 10, 12 and post-16.

Approximately 120 questionnaires were issued to the parents; 53% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 32 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the life and work of the school. In their written comments, the parents praised the work and dedication of the staff, the strong extra-curricular provision, the approachable teachers and the leadership of the Headmaster. A small number raised concerns regarding the quality of the careers advice and guidance provided for the pupils and the school's procedures for dealing with bullying. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Headmaster, and representatives of the governors, the views of the parents. The few matters of concern which were raised are addressed in this report.

The governors also expressed their strong support for the work of the school. In addition to their endorsement of the positive comments expressed by the parents, they commended the hard work undertaken by the Headmaster and his staff in forming strong and effective collaborative arrangements with other schools and in developing links with the local community. They expressed strong confidence in the leadership provided by the Headmaster.

A majority of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with four providing additional written comments. They were very positive about the work of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the level of respect between the staff and the pupils. They reported that they felt valued by senior management, that they had benefitted from staff development and that they had confidence in the leadership provided by the Headmaster. They considered the outcomes from curricular developments to be good mentioning in particular the work undertaken in developing approaches to making effective use of assessment to improve learning, the greater focus on the promotion of the pupils' thinking skills and the development of the middle management roles. They raised issues concerning the need for a more consistent approach to the standards of behaviour set for the pupils and how inappropriate behaviour is dealt with.

During discussions held with the pupils they reported that they felt safe and secure in the school. They indicated that they were aware of what to do if they had a concern about their safety and well-being. Almost all of the pupils interviewed enjoy the extra-curricular activities but a few stated they would like the opportunity to participate in educational trips not linked directly to sports. A small number of those interviewed stated that they considered that the procedures for responding to incidents arising from misbehaviour were not always administered in a consistent manner by all the teachers. In general, however, they were satisfied with the support and guidance provided by the majority of the staff.

1.4 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 addressing. Among the strengths are: the recent revision of the pastoral system to allocate form tutors for each class and the appointment of four heads of key stage with overall responsibility for pastoral care; the pupils' participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities; and the good leadership provided by the designated teacher for pastoral care and the high level of commitment of the pastoral care team. The school needs to ensure that the deputy designated teacher and the designated governor receive appropriate child protection training. The school also needs to address the concerns identified in the previous paragraph relating to the perceived inconsistencies in the application of the procedures for dealing with incidents relating to poor behaviour and bullying.

1.5 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The school gives very good attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example the improved access of the pupils to drinking water and the healthy break provision. A feature of the school is the extent to which the pupils, through the School Council, and the catering staff contribute to the development of programmes which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. An assessment of the nature and quality of the arrangements for health and well-being practices within the school should be included in the school development plan (SDP) in order to comply with statutory regulations.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 EXAMINATIONS AND STANDARDS

A significant feature of the school's provision is the development of a systematic approach to the analysis of the pupils' performance in internal and external assessments. In addition to the effective use of Classroom 2000 (C2k) data which is used to analyse pupil performance in external examinations, the school administers a range of diagnostic assessment instruments. Under the direction of a very effective co-ordinator, good use is made of the outcomes of these assessments and detailed analyses of the resulting data to identify the pupils who are under-performing and are likely to under-achieve. Significantly, once these pupils have been identified appropriate intervention strategies are implemented. These measures, allied to improved learning and teaching strategies, have the potential to raise the standards achieved by the pupils. The co-ordinator has provided the staff in the school with appropriate in-service training (INSET) on making use of assessment data to effect improvement.

Over a three year period the results for most subjects at General certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level have been consistently very good. The results at A*-C grades in GCSE for all of the 14 subjects for which the pupils are entered are within 5% of the Northern Ireland (NI) average for boys in selective schools; the results in just over half of these subjects are more than 5% above the NI average. The percentage of the pupils achieving A*-C grades in seven or more subjects, however, is too low. There is a need for the school to review its examination entry policy to ensure that as many pupils as possible are provided with the opportunity to achieve at this level. An important element in this review will be a greater focus on the provision of appropriate careers education, advice, information and guidance. The examination results at GCE Advanced (A) level are also good. Over the last three years the A level results in individual subjects at grades A-C have been more than 5% above the NI average in half of the subjects. Two subjects, both with very small entries, were more than 5% below the NI average. The percentage of the pupils achieving three or more GCE Alevels at grades A-C is in line with the NI average for boys in selective schools.

The standards achieved in public examinations of the specialist school contributory subjects of art and design, drama, moving image arts (MIA) and music range from good to excellent. Those pupils who take A level MIA and art and design are able to apply their learning in both subjects to support the development of highly creative work. In music, pupils who demonstrate significant talent and aptitude for the subject benefit from timely, additional tutorial support. In performing arts, the pupils from Portora and other neighbouring schools are given good opportunities to study additional examination subjects at both key stage (KS) 4 and GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) level and to do so after normal school hours.

2.2 CURRICULUM

The school is working hard to meet the requirements of the NI Entitlement Framework at post-16 level. In order to achieve this, useful partnerships have been formed with other education providers - notably the South West College (Enniskillen Campus). The practice of providing some subjects at the end of the normal school day is an innovative approach to broaden the curriculum both at KS4 level and post-16. The courses offered at this time are popular and attract pupils from other schools. The long-term impact of these courses on the

overall curricular provision, and the impact they have on the staff and how the school is organised during the normal school day, will need to be monitored over time. The school is unable to provide for the practical components of the home economics element of the KS3 curriculum as despite its best efforts, it does not yet have appropriate accommodation or facilities.

There is an extensive extra-curricular programme. A wide range of both sporting and non-sporting interests are accommodated. A number of the activities are open to others, for example, pupils from a number of neighbouring schools attend the school rowing club.

2.3 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Most of the teaching observed was good or better; in approximately 20% of instances, it was excellent. In the best teaching seen, the learning objectives were shared with the pupils at the outset, the pupils were provided with a variety of stimulating activities, a variety of teaching approaches was used including opportunities for group work, there was a good emphasis placed on the promotion of thinking skills and good use made of ICT to enhance the pupils' learning. In the small minority of lessons where the teaching seen was less effective, the expectations held for what the pupils could achieve was too low and the level of challenge was insufficient. More detailed evaluation of the subjects under focus is provided in Appendix 1.

The quality of teaching seen in the Performing and Visual Arts (PVA) ranges from satisfactory to good, it is mostly good. The teachers are highly committed. They have worked hard with good success to ensure that the planning, which is very thorough, places a suitable emphasis on the development of strategies to promote learning. To this end, the learning outcomes for each lesson are shared with and understood by the pupils. In many of the lessons observed, the teachers took the opportunity to encourage the pupils to use the objectives to review and evaluate their learning. The teachers within the specialism have recently demonstrated their ability to work as a cohesive team in the joint planning and implementation of a challenging cross-curricular project. Specialist School funding has been used appropriately to provide additional equipment and resources, however, a significant proportion of the accommodation used for the specialist subjects is of a poor standard.

2.4 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Headmaster has been in post for five years. In the time since his appointment he has dedicated himself, through a process of continuous review and development, to promoting improvement in the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school. In a period of very significant changes in staff he has promoted developments in teaching approaches which put the pupil at the centre of the learning process. The pupil is encouraged to take some ownership of and responsibility for aspects of his own learning and to develop his thinking skills. In this task the Headmaster has been ably supported by the Deputy Headmaster and the other highly committed members of the SLT.

A key element of the development process is the increasing focus placed on the role of middle management in leading learning and teaching initiatives. In recent years many of the middle management posts have been re-appointed. This re-organisation has prompted the middle management team to develop new and often innovative ideas. The development of an effective middle management tier has enabled the SLT to take on a much more strategic role

in guiding the process of curriculum review and in monitoring the effect of the development work on learning and teaching. The middle management tier is comprised of hard-working and effective teachers whose commitment to development and improvement is already having a positive impact on learning and teaching and the standards achieved by the pupils. The commitment of these teachers is illustrated by their willingness to undertake additional professional development; for example, four members of the team are currently undertaking the Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH) course.

The Specialist School programme is well led and managed. The leadership and support provided by the Vice-principal is highly valued by the specialist subject leaders. Key elements of the support include the provision of time for meetings between the key personnel and the arrangements established to monitor and evaluate progress in the programme, particularly the extent to which the school's targets for improvement are being met. The head of the mathematics and ICT learning area has contributed significantly to the production of the sound rationale which underpins these targets. This good start made to self-evaluation will enhance the capacity of the specialist departments to undertake rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their work, and subsequently to inform the development planning and quality improvement processes. This process should be extended to ensure the collaboration of all staff across the specialist subject departments.

The commitment of the staff to the Specialist School programme, and to whole-school development in general, is demonstrated by their contribution to the development of the SDP. The process for identifying priorities has been inclusive and involved the staff through school-based workshops. The SDP shows a number of prioritised areas for development including collaboration with other providers, the outworking of the Specialist School programme, assessment for learning and the further development of ICT. Status reports are prepared regularly to show progress in meeting the set targets. They also show where suggestions from departments for change to the plan are incorporated.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the motivation and attitude of most of the pupils and the quality of the working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the quality of teaching, most of which is good and, on occasions, is excellent;
- the quality of provision in mathematics;
- the developing role of middle management in raising achievement throughout the school;
- the innovative and effective leadership provided by the Headmaster and the SLT; and
- the quality of the extra-curricular provision which reflects the commitment of the teachers and other staff to the pupils.

3.2 The areas for improvement include:

- the need to review the examination entry policy to ensure as many pupils as possible have the opportunity to achieve seven or more qualifications at GCSE level; and
- the need to develop a high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance programme for the pupils.

4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 In the areas inspected the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

4.2 The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be monitored by the District Inspector.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Pastoral care

The strengths of the work include:

- the good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for the pupils;
- the effective support system for those pupils experiencing personal difficulties including the provision of a professional counsellor;
- the new class tutor system including the good use of target support cards to support learning and improve behaviour where necessary; and
- the good leadership provided by the head of pastoral care and the high level of commitment shown by the pastoral team to the welfare of the pupils.

The areas for development include:

- the need to ensure that the deputy designated teacher and designated governor receive appropriate child protection training; and
- the need to consult further with the parents and the pupils to ensure that the requirements included in the DE Circular 2003/13 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order' are fully complied with.

Mathematics

The strengths of the work include:

- the good mathematical environment in the main mathematics classrooms;
- the detailed and innovative planning, which includes appropriate action-planning leading to improvement;
- the majority of the teaching, which ranges from very good to excellent;
- the use of ICT to support teaching, learning and assessing;
- the good standards at GCE A level; and
- the outstanding leadership of the department where there is a clear focus on monitoring and improvement.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The strengths of the work include:

- the high value placed by the school on the development of the pupils' ICT skills and the increasing curriculum provision for ICT at KS4 and post-16;
- the varied and improving opportunities for the pupils at KS3 to develop and apply ICT skills within appropriate subject contexts, and the high level ICT and related transferable skills developed by the pupils in post-16 programmes;
- the mostly good quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons observed;
- the enthusiastic and committed leadership and co-ordination of ICT across the school;
- the good overall levels of commitment and willingness of the staff to the further embedding of ICT to support and enhance subject work; and
- the evolving and increasingly effective uptake by a number of subjects of a whole-school learning platform, enhanced through regular staff development opportunities, to support the work of the school.

The main area for improvement is:

- the need to develop further the good start made to the monitoring and evaluation of the provision for ICT, and to continue to extend the opportunities for the pupils at KS3 and KS4 to develop a broad range of ICT skills.

Performing and Visual Arts (PVA)

The school has identified appropriate and measurable targets for improvement to demonstrate:

- that the performing and visual arts is an area of clear curricular strength, which has stable levels of attainment;
- how the strengths in the performing and visual arts have the potential to promote quality learning and teaching and whole-school development; and
- viable financial planning to allocate funding.

For the purpose of showing improvement more clearly the school needs to review:

- the arrangements for the co-ordination and development of extending existing links with other schools, further education colleges and the wider community, including business and industry.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Whilst the Inspectorate did not conduct a full health and safety audit, a number of issues were identified. These include:

- the poor quality of the paint and plasterwork in some areas of the school;
- the storage of the gymnastic mats in the physical education department; and
- the condition of the changing facilities, especially for visiting female pupils.

ACCOMMODATION AND RESOURCES

- The school has endeavoured to improve the quality of its accommodation. Despite this there are still significant shortcomings. These need to be addressed in the interests of enhancing the provision for the pupils.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Portora Royal School v. Date of Inspection: W/C 18.02.08
 ii. School Reference Number: 242-0042 vi. Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary Grammar

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 8 Intake	70	71	71	71	75
Total enrolment	492	497	488	477	490

1.3 Attendance

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2006/07	NI Average 2005/06
% Attendance	96	96	94	94	93	94	93	94	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

31

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

76.12

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

15.94

Year 2007/08	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	75	70	73	72	73	70	57	490
Enrolment: Total	75	70	73	72	73	70	57	490
PTR	15.459	14.607	14.689	14.151	14.866	11.432	10.705	

1.5 Staying On Rate (2006/07) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	81.1	NI Av Year 13	88.8
Year 14	74.6	NI Av Year 14	85.0

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2005/06	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	20		70	
Another School	25%	17.2	1%	1
Employment	0%	4.3	13%	4.6
Full-time Further Education	35%	58.5	6%	9.8
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	79%	80.8
Full-time Training	40%	15.4	0%	1.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	0.9	0%	0.9
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.8	1%	1.8

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Portora Royal School, Enniskillen

SCHOOL YEAR: 2007/2008

GCSE	2005	2006	2007
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 7 subjects	88.73	81.08	80
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	92.96	89.19	93.33
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2005	2006	2007
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	72.8	71.2	66.04
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	89.8	92.4	94.34

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2007, 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	German Spanish	Art and Design English Literature French Latin Learning for Life and Work Technology and Design	Additional Mathematics Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Geography History Mathematics Music		
GCE A Level A-C	Chemistry Design and Technology (New Code) Physics	Art and Design English Literature Mathematics Music	Biology Economics Further Mathematics Geography History Moving Image Arts*	German	French

* Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 20 over the three years.

NOTE:

1. The results for Moving Image Arts are based over a 2-year period.
2. Over the last 2 years 100% of pupils taking Moving Image Arts achieved grades A or B.

GCE A Level A-E		Chemistry French Physics	Art and Design Biology Design and Technology (New Cods) Economics English Literature Further Mathematics Geography German History Mathematics Music		
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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	Biology Mathematics Music	Additional Mathematics Art and Design Chemistry Double Award Science 1 st Subject English English Literature Geography History Latin Learning for Life and Work Physics Technology and Design	French German Spanish		
GCE A Level A-C	Further Mathematics	Art and Design English Literature German History Mathematics Music Moving Image Arts	Biology Chemistry Design and Technology (New Code) Economics French Geography Physics	Sport/PE Studies	

GCE A Level A-E	Art and Design Design and Technology (New Code) Economics English Literature Further Mathematics Geography German History Mathematics Music	Biology Chemistry French Physics Sport/PE Studies			
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