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*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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

Regent House School
Newtownards

Inspected: November 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Regent House School is a selective 11-18 co-educational school situated in the town of Newtownards. The school draws its pupils from the town and the surrounding rural area, including the Ards peninsula. The intake has remained steady over the last six years; the total enrolment has fallen slightly in this period. Approximately 3% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified about 7% of the pupils who have special educational needs. Approximately 91% of the pupils in the school obtained a grade A in the Transfer Procedure. The school's new and refurbished accommodation provides an excellent environment for learning and teaching.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management and on the developments in self-evaluation throughout the school. Specialist visits took place in chemistry, history and information and communication technology (ICT) and computing; in addition, lessons were inspected across all areas of the curriculum. The inspection included a focus on the school's pastoral care provision and arrangements for child protection.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF 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 the parents, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (BoG), and with groups of pupils from across years 8, 10, 12 and the sixth form. Prior to the inspection, confidential questionnaires were sent to 280 parents; 45% of the parents responded, with about 50% of those taking the opportunity to write additional comments. Fifty-five teachers also completed confidential questionnaires. The responses from the questionnaires, the written comments from the parents and discussions with BoG and teachers, indicated, in nearly all cases, strong satisfaction with the work of the school. In particular, the parents valued the ethos of the school and the fact that their children were well cared-for by the hard-working teachers. The pupils reported that they felt happy and secure in the school. The parents and BoG also commented positively on the quality of the leadership provided by the Principal; this was endorsed by nearly all of the teachers. The few matters raised by the parents in the questionnaires were discussed with the Principal. The school is implementing the procedures outlined in the Department of Education (DE) Circulars 1999/10 "Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection" and 2003/13 "The Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order". The school is also complying with the guidance contained in circulars 2006/06/07/08 and 09, which outline the arrangements for the recruitment of those working with children, pupils and young people. The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has many strengths. Attention is given to the development and implementation of programmes that encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is a developing commitment to promoting healthy-eating, and opportunities are provided for all the pupils to participate in a wide range of physical activities.

1.4 EXAMINATION RESULTS

In 2006, approximately 93% of the pupils achieved grades A* to C in at least seven General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. The results for most subjects were within 5% of the Northern Ireland (NI) average with the exception of four, which were 5% or more below the average for similar schools. At General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level there is a significant variation in the results achieved by the pupils across the subjects. In 2006, approximately 63% of pupils obtained grades A to C in at least three subjects, which is about 8% below the average for similar schools. While these results have shown a 13% improvement over the last three years, in almost half of the 23 subjects taken, these results were 5% or more below the NI averages. The GCE results at A to E are mostly within 5% of NI averages for similar schools. Senior management have appropriately identified the standards achieved, particularly at GCE A level, as a priority for improvement; this issue is being addressed through an annual results analysis by heads of department working with the Principal. Use of comparative pupil and class performance data has been introduced to this process in some departments. The inspection confirms that a more quantitative, and in some cases a more rigorous, approach to benchmarking of results and to target-setting is required to ensure that provision fully meets the needs of all pupils. More details about the examination results are provided in Appendices 3 and 4.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the caring and supportive ethos in the school that promotes successfully the pupils' personal, moral, social and academic development;
- the excellent relationships evident at all levels in the school and the high quality of pastoral care provided to the pupils;
- the exemplary behaviour of the pupils;
- the industrious and committed teachers;
- the examples of high quality of the teaching observed which had many good features;
- the high quality of the leadership provided by the Principal who has a clear vision for the development of the school;
- the encouraging start made in using the process of self-evaluation to promote improvement in all aspects of the work of the school; and
- the rich and varied opportunities provided for the pupils to engage in social, cultural and extra-curricular activities.

2.2 Areas for improvement include:

- the need to raise further the standards achieved by the pupils in external examinations, particularly at GCE A level, by developing the self-evaluation process more consistently across the school as a whole, and making better use of the available quantitative information to benchmark and set suitable targets for improvement;
- the need to develop further the professional links between senior and middle management and the teachers, and with the involvement of the BoG, in order to ensure that the provision reflects the broader vision for the school and meets more fully the needs of all pupils; and
- the need to determine management and teaching roles and responsibilities for the progressive development of an appropriate range of ICT skills and the further embedding of ICT in years 8 to 10, with the aim of providing a more secure basis for the use of ICT to enhance learning both across all subjects and also within the specialist computing courses in years 11 to 14.

3. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in many aspects of its education and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas, which need to be addressed to ensure that the provision meets effectively the needs of all the learners. A follow-up inspection is required. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

APPENDIX 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The mobile fume cupboards in laboratories S12 and S13 have no gas or water supplies fitted.
- The store for volatile, corrosive and flammable chemicals needs natural ventilation. The fume cupboard in this store recently failed a safety test and action to repair it is urgently needed.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Regent House, Newtownards v. Date of Inspection: W/C 13/11/06
 ii. School Reference Number: 441-0063 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary Grammar

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 8 Intake	211	211	212	211	212
Total enrolment	1455	1407	1393	1394	1385

1.3 Attendance

Year 2005/06	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2005/06	NI Average 2004/05
% Attendance	96.5	95.5	95.6	94.6	96.2	96.1	95	96	95

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

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	113	132	114	110	118	93	78	758
Enrolment: Girls	99	79	98	101	93	75	82	627
Enrolment: Total	212	211	212	211	211	168	160	1385

1.5 Staying On Rate (2005/06) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	85.8	NI Av Year 13	90.4
Year 14	75.1	NI Av Year 14	84.5

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2004/05	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	46		177	
Another School	8	19.4%	4	1.3%
Employment	0	4.4%	17	3.7%
Full-time Further Education	29	59.4%	11	9%
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	144	82.5%
Full-time Training	7	11.6%	0	0.9%
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0	1.5%	0	1.1%
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	2	3.6%	1	1.6%

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Regent House, Newtownards

SCHOOL YEAR: 2005/2006

GCSE	2004	2005	2006
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	99.5	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	88.5	93.8	92.8
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	92.3	97.2	96.6
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2004	2005	2006
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	50	57.1	62.8
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	89.5	93.8	96.2

Within this report, when commenting on examination results of individual subjects, the respective CCEA average is used as a proxy for the corresponding average for all pupils in NI taking that subject.

TABLE 1 showing GCSE and subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2006, 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		Economics Religious Studies	Business Studies, Chemistry, Drama English, English Literature, French, Geography German, Geology, History, Home Economics, Information Technology, Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Music, Physics, Double Award Science 1 st Subject, Spanish, Sport/PE studies	Biology, Latin	Art and Design, Design & Technology

GCE A Level A-C	Home Economics,	Further Mathematics, Spanish	Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, German, History, Latin, Mathematics, Politics	Music, Physics	Art & Design, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Studies/ Computing, Design and Technology, Drama, History of Art & Design, Religious Studies, Geology
GCE A Level A-E			Art & Design, Biology, Computer Studies/ Computing, Business Studies, Design and Technology, Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, German, History, History of Art & Design, Home Economics, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Physics, Politics, Religious Studies, Spanish	Chemistry, Geology	

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	Art & Design, Biology, Drama, English, History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Music	Business Studies, Chemistry, Computer Studies/ Computing, Design & Technology, Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, Home Economics, Latin, Additional Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies, Double Award Science 1 st Subject, Spanish, Sport/PE Studies	German, Geology		
GCE A Level A-C	Art & Design	Drama, English Literature, French, Geography, German, History, History of Art & Design, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Politics, Religious Studies, Spanish	Biology, Chemistry, Design and Technology, Economics, Home Economics, Latin, Physics		Computer Studies/ Computing, Geology

GCE A Level A-E	Art & Design, Biology, Chemistry, Design and Technology, Drama, Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, German, History, History of Art & Design, Home Economics, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Physics, Politics, Religious Studies, Spanish	Computer Studies/Computing, Geology			
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