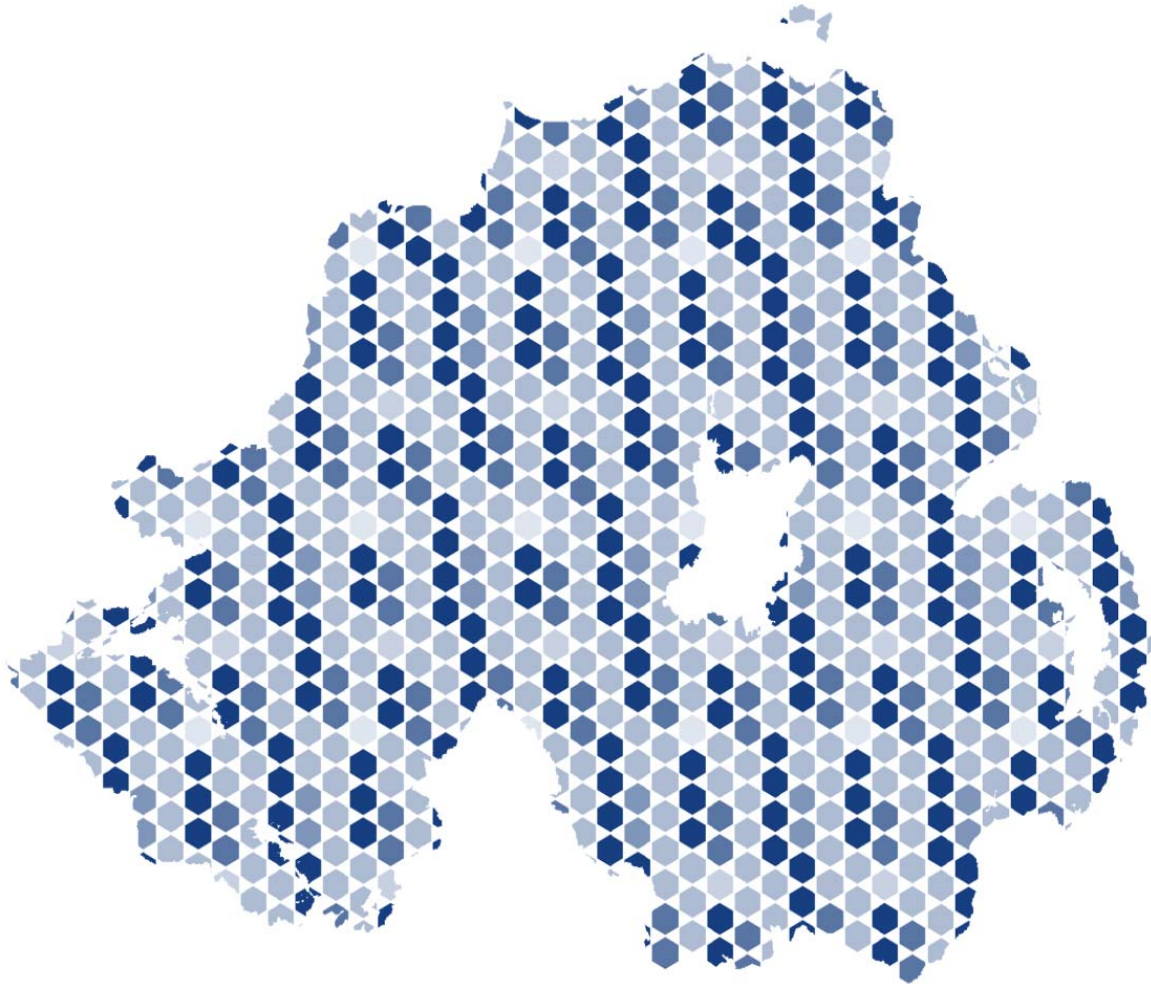


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's College,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in January 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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. CONTEXT

St Patrick's College is a maintained 11-19 boys' non-selective school situated on the Antrim Road in north Belfast. The pupils are drawn from the surrounding area and from further afield. The college serves an area which suffers from high levels of deprivation and a wide range of social issues. Since 2003, the enrolment for the school has risen steadily; the current enrolment in 2009 is 783 pupils. At the time of the inspection, most of the pupils in years 8 to 12 did not take part in the Transfer Procedure. The school has identified just over 26% of the pupils who require additional support with their learning. There are 12 newcomer pupils in the school. Approximately 37% 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 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, 12, 13 and 14.

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to parents; 40% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 38 contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were mostly affirmative, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the school's focus on raising the aspirations of their sons, the support provided by the teachers, and the high regard in which the college is held in the local community. A minority of the written comments expressed concerns in relation to accommodation issues and careers advice.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the school's focus on inspiring the boys to give of their best, the very good working relationships between the pupils and the staff, and the important focus on establishing links with the local community.

Twenty teachers and five support staff completed confidential questionnaires with ten providing additional written comments. The staff commented positively on a range of issues including the mutual respect between the staff and the pupils and the benefits derived from the staff development opportunities. Almost all of the written responses expressed concerns relating to the quality of accommodation, and the lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities. A small number of the written responses raised concerns related to inconsistent application of the school's discipline policy. The support staff's written responses highlighted issues relating to the quality of communication between senior staff and themselves.

In discussions held with the pupils almost all the pupils talked positively about their experiences in school and reported that they felt safe and secure in school. From the discussions held, it is clear that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

A common feature emerging through the discussions was the excellent working relationships the pupils have with their teachers and their recognition and appreciation of the support and availability of the teaching staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, any areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires. Where relevant, these matters are commented on in the body of the report.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, and leadership and management at all levels and, in addition, on the provision for careers education, advice, information and guidance (CEAIG), mathematics and English. The school's provision for pastoral care and special educational needs (SEN), and the arrangements for child protection, were also evaluated, as well as the school's general approach towards promoting healthy eating and physical activity. As an additional evidence base for the inspection, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects.

In April 2009, the school was selected to take part in the Specialist Schools Programme, beginning in September 2009. The programme aims to develop the concept of specialist schools tailored to meet the particular needs of Northern Ireland's (NI) education system. As part of the inspection, the school's provision for their specialist status in humanities supported by history and religious education was evaluated.

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 motivated and interested learners when given the opportunity; they work well in the lessons that they find engaging and challenging and talk confidently about their learning. The college has introduced a range of applied and vocational subjects, while retaining a core of general qualifications. Importantly, the senior leadership team (SLT) has initiated, and continues to develop, links with other schools and further education institutions to extend the curriculum at Key Stage (KS) 4 and post-16. The SLT should now prioritise broadening the curriculum further in order to meet the needs of all pupils.

The pupils who have special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards in most lessons and in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. The school has provided appropriate additional examination courses for these pupils: for example Council for Curriculum Education and Assessment (CCEA) entry level courses and Occupational Studies. There is a need to develop further the range of accredited pathways for those pupils who have special educational needs in order to improve the options available to them upon leaving school.

Almost all of the pupils in year 12 are entered for five or more subjects at GCSE level. Over the past three years the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in five or more subjects including English and mathematics at GCSE has fluctuated above and below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. In 2009, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more subjects including English and mathematics was above the NI average for similar non-selective schools.

There is wide variation in the performance of individual subjects at GCSE. A minority of GCSE subjects are more than ten percentage points above the equivalent NI average, whereas a significant minority of subjects are more than ten percentage points below.

Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils achieving three or more General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level grades at A-C has increased from 19% in 2007 to 36% in 2009. However, over the same period, most of the subjects are more than ten percentage points below the corresponding NI average for all schools. The overall performance at GCE A-level is below the NI average for all schools.

The senior leadership team (SLT) has identified the need to address the variation in achievement at KS 4 and at GCE A-level, in particular, to improve the standards achieved by all pupils. As part of a whole school numeracy and literacy strategy the school has begun to implement a rigorous testing system to monitor performance and raise the achievement levels of all pupils.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The teachers are hard-working and have established excellent working relationships with the pupils. The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. In the majority of lessons the quality of the teaching was good or better.

In the more effective practice there was:

- a high level of engagement by the pupils;
- a range of topics linked to current affairs and the pupils' interests;
- effective questioning with high expectations of the quality of the pupils' responses; and
- effective use of ICT to promote the pupils' learning.

In the less effective practice there was:

- work that was not sufficiently relevant or interesting;
- a low level of engagement on behalf of the pupils;
- ineffective questioning; and
- a range of low level writing tasks that did not promote adequately the pupils' literacy skills.

In the small number of lessons that were evaluated as inadequate, the pupils were passive and became disengaged from their learning.

The quality of provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory. A team of teachers provides support for these pupils in smaller classes across a range of subjects in Key Stage (KS) 3. They provide a nurturing environment which promotes the pupils' educational and social development and a sound basis for them to learn successfully.

In the other subjects these pupils are fully included in the majority of lessons and, in the best practice, detailed individual education plans are used effectively in planning lessons. However, the school has recognised the need to involve the subject teachers in writing individual education plans to include more focused subject-specific targets and intervention strategies to meet the needs of all pupils.

2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The key features of the pastoral care include: the inclusive, caring and supportive ethos throughout the school, characterised by the excellent working relationships between the pupils and teachers; the wide range of extra-curricular activities; the effective support systems in place for pupils experiencing personal difficulties, including the availability of a school chaplain; the strong sense of community; the high level of commitment of the pastoral team to the welfare of the pupils; and the very good behaviour and exemplary appearance of the pupils.

2.4 INCLUSION

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all pupils. The teachers work hard to identify those pupils at risk of dropping out of school and are developing strategies to promote inclusion. It is timely that the school is putting in place arrangements to monitor the pastoral care and educational provision for pupils who are currently receiving alternative education provision off-site.

There are currently twelve newcomer pupils in the school. These pupils interact well with their peers and the school is very successful in making them feel welcome. They are taught by the language support teacher who continues to support them when they integrate in the mainstream classes.

2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The provision for CEAIG is satisfactory. Currently the work is led by two highly committed teachers who have an extensive knowledge of the pupils' skills, dispositions and aspirations. The pupils have a good understanding of the world of work and have access to adequate up-to-date information. In supporting the ongoing development of CEAIG, the SLT needs to ensure that the development of a coherent CEAIG programme forms an integral part of the school development plan (SDP) and takes account of all contributory aspects of the curriculum, and associated staff development needs.

2.6 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 (DE).

2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, demonstrated, for example, in the boys' success in local and regional healthy cookery competitions and their nutritional knowledge.

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of the leadership and management provided by the Principal and the senior leadership team is good. Since taking up his appointment in 1998, the Principal has led energetically and successfully the challenging process of raising the standing of the school in the local and wider community. He knows the pupils very well and focuses appropriately on raising their self-confidence and self-esteem. In addition, he has led and sustained important improvements in the quality of the education of the pupils under his care. In this important work he is supported by the recently-appointed Vice-principal and the assistant principals who carry out a range of pastoral and curricular roles effectively.

The SLT needs to review the School Development Planning process, taking account of the inspection findings and in particular making stronger links between assessment and the associated target-setting processes at departmental and whole-school level in order to meet more fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

In addition, the SLT needs to prioritise the school improvement initiatives focused on raising standards and embed a culture of self-evaluation at all levels in the school to inform more effectively the school development planning process. The self-evaluation reports prepared by staff prior to the inspection provide a useful start to involving all staff in the development planning process, including the implementation and regular review of the agreed action plans.

The teachers work hard and with some success to overcome the difficulties they face through shortage of appropriate accommodation and lack of access to ICT resources. It will be important that the governors and the employing authority work together to address the deficiencies in accommodation.

The governors are hard-working and highly committed to the school community. Although well informed about school developments, they need to become more appropriately involved in the school development planning process.

4. SPECIALIST SCHOOLS' PROGRAMME

In April 2009, the school was accepted onto a modified two year Specialist Schools Programme to commence in September 2009. The school has adjusted its original targets to address the reduced timescale and the new circumstances related to Specialist School status.

Religious Education is an area of clear curricular strength within the school and has the potential to promote quality teaching and learning across the school. The department has very good links with other schools and the wider community.

For the purpose of showing improvement within the specialism more clearly, the history department needs to review departmental planning to include a sharper focus on the development of effective learning and teaching strategies.

The Inspectorate will continue to monitor the work of the school as part of the Specialist Schools' Programme.

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding ethos of the school; characterised by a strong sense of community and the effective and warm relationships at all levels;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care;
- the motivation of the pupils and their ability to articulate confidently, their pride in their school and their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of their teachers;

- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, the majority of which was good or better;
- the innovative and effective links with the local and global community; and
- the charismatic leadership of the Principal who has led and sustained important improvements in the quality of the education of the pupils under his care.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- address the variation in the standards achieved by the pupils across all subjects, matching more closely the teaching and learning strategies to the needs and interests of the pupils;
- review the School Development Planning process, taking account of the inspection findings and, in particular, making stronger links between assessment and the associated target-setting processes at departmental and whole school level; and
- develop appropriate action plans to address the areas for improvement identified in the careers, history, mathematics and SEN provision.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SUBJECT AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision in English is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the recent improvement in standards at GCSE in English and English Literature;
- the hard work and appropriate expectations of the teachers;
- the very good example set by the head of English in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the work and in the start made to the analysis of data to set appropriate targets for improvement;
- the wide range of opportunities to develop literacy skills offered to the pupils beyond the curriculum; and
- the good start made to promoting pupil peer and self-evaluation.

The area for improvement includes the need:

- to raise further the standards at GCSE and GCE A Level, as identified in the department's own action plan.

History

The quality of provision in history is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very positive working relationships between staff and pupils;
- the quality of extended responses by the pupils in oral discussion;
- the use of educational visits, the locality and external links to engage and motivate the pupils' interest in the past;
- the strong focus on the development of empathy skills amongst the pupils, through, for example, the Holocaust commemoration; and
- the good start made to self-evaluation by the head of department in order to bring about improvement.

The areas for improvement to include the need:

- to raise standards at GCSE and GCE A-level; and
- to review departmental planning to promote a greater range of effective learning and teaching strategies in order to ensure that teaching and learning is consistently good or better.

Mathematics

The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

The strengths of the work include:

- the improving standards achieved by the pupils at Key Stage 3 and GCSE;
- the hard work and commitment of the teachers in supporting the pupils;
- the good or better quality of teaching in a half of the lessons observed;
- the willingness of the pupils to think mathematically and explain their reasoning when given the opportunities; and
- the enthusiasm and leadership of the head of mathematics and the numeracy co-ordinator.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise further the standards at GCSE through the matching of the work more closely to the needs and abilities of the pupils;
- to improve the quality of the teaching and learning through using effective questioning strategies and engaging the pupils more actively in their learning; and
- to develop strategies for self-evaluation within the department, including the effective use of performance data.

Religious Education

The quality of provision for Religious Education is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the positive working relationships at all levels;
- the very good standards achieved in public examinations;
- the quality of teaching observed, most of which ranged from good to outstanding;
- the very good quality of the department's self-evaluation leading to improvement;
- the high levels of commitment and dedication to the pupils displayed by the teachers; and
- the very good leadership and management of the head of department.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Patrick's College
 ii. School Reference Number: 123-0026
 iii. Age Range: 11-17
 iv. Status: Roman Catholic Maintained
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 25/01/2010
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	119	119	120	112	137	130
Total enrolment	746	718	709	703	737	783

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	92.6	91.1	87.5	84.5	86.2	87	93.9	89	90

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 53.56 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.761
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.62 iv. Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study (Focused only): 0

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	130	141	115	130	123	103	41	783
Enrolment: Girls	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enrolment: Total	130	141	115	130	123	103	41	783
PTR	14.09	15.14	17.048	14.548	15.206	13.514	11.32	

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

Year 13	90.9	NI Av Year 13	40.9
Year 14	71.4	NI Av Year 14	N/A

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	44		72	
Another School	2%	11.3	0%	1.7
Employment	0%	8.7	4%	18.6
Full-time Further Education	45%	41.8	40%	22.4
Full-time Higher Education	0%	N/A	8%	42.8
Full-time Training	9%	30.3	29%	4.9
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	43%	4.4	17%	5.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.5	1%	4

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE SCHOOL YEAR: 2009/2010

GCSE	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	93.81%	90.76%	93.40%
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	35.40%	37.82%	36.79%
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	68.14%	70.59%	69.81%
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	26.55%	16.81%	26.42%
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	19.23%	14.81%	36%
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	84.62%	88.89%	88.00%

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*-C	Art & Design Home Economics* Sport/PE Studies	Music Religious Studies	Drama* French Spanish	Business Studies English English Literature History Science Double Award 1 st Subject	Design and Technology Geography Information Technology Irish Mathematics Office Technology Polish* Science Single Award
GCE A level A-E	Double Award Vocational Science*		Art & Design Business Studies English Literature History Irish Music* Politics Religious Studies		Design and Technology Information Technology

* Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 30 over 3 years.

** Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 20 over 3 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	Drama English English Language Home Economics Mathematics Music	Art & Design Business Studies Design and Technology English Literature Geography History Information Technology Irish Mathematics Additional Media Film and TV Studies Religious Studies Science Double Award 1 st Subject Spanish Sport/PE Studies	French		Science Astronomy
GCE A level A-E	Polish	Art & Design Business Studies Drama English Literature French Geography History Irish Mathematics Media Film and TV Studies Music Politics Religious Studies	Accounting/Finance Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Vocational Science Economics Home Economics Information Technology Physics Sociology Sport/PE Studies		Computer Studies/Computing Psychology

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