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*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

**St Paul's High School
Camlough**

Inspected: October 2008

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

St Paul's High School is a 11-19 co-educational maintained non-selective school situated in Camlough, three miles from Newry, serving a wide area of south Armagh. The enrolment has increased steadily over the last six years, 26% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 20% of the pupils as being in need of additional support with their learning.

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), the school council, school prefects and groups of pupils from years 8, 12, 13 and 14. Two hundred and ten questionnaires were issued to the parents; 35% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and thirty-two contained additional written comments. The responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were almost unanimously affirmative of the work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the school's pupil-centred inclusive ethos; the dedication and hard work of almost all the teachers; the provision for pupils of all abilities; the wide range of extra-curricular activities; the leadership provided by the Principal and the very high regard in which the school is held in the community.

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. The governors expressed their commitment and strong support for the school, highlighting the Principal's leadership; the emphasis placed on the pupils' academic, emotional, social and spiritual development; the hard work and dedication of the staff; the work of the senior management team (SMT); the links with the community and other organisations; and the pupils' good achievements.

Forty percent of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with nine providing additional written comments. The responses were almost entirely positive citing, in particular, the high quality of working relationships throughout the school, the support from the SMT and other colleagues for the work they do and the strong focus on the pupils' care and achievements.

Twenty-three support staff completed a confidential questionnaire, with five providing additional written comments. Most commented positively on the work of the school.

In discussions, the pupils talked enthusiastically about the opportunities that are available to them and of their appreciation of the care and commitment of the teachers. They know who to go to if they are concerned about their work, personal safety or well-being.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the learning, teaching, leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in addition, on the provision for pupils in English, mathematics, science and the Learning Support Centre (LSC). The school's provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection were also evaluated, as was the school's approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. As additional evidence for the inspection, inspectors observed classes in most other subjects. A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus and the LSC can be found in Appendix 1.

In June 2008, the school was selected to take part in the Specialist Schools' Programme, beginning in September 2008. The programme aims to develop the concept of specialist schools tailored to meet the particular needs of Northern Ireland's education system. As part of the inspection, the school's provision for their specialist status in science was evaluated.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Across the school, almost all pupils display a high level of interest in their work and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. They cooperate well with their teachers and, when required, collaborate effectively, in small groups or in pairs. The pupils willingly engage in discussion and it is evident that almost all enjoy their time in school, feel valued and are encouraged to give of their best.

The standards achieved by the pupils in external examinations are very good. The school offers a comprehensive range of subjects at both key stage (KS) 4 and sixth form. In recent years, there has been a useful broadening of the KS4 and sixth form curriculum with the addition of a number of applied subjects offered in collaboration with other organisations. A majority of pupils are entered for five or more subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. The number of pupils receiving grades A*-C including English and mathematics is well above the corresponding Northern Ireland average for similar non-selective schools. In addition, 60% of the pupils received grade C or above in three subjects and 98% achieved grade E or above in two subjects taken at General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level. More details of the examination results can be found in Appendix 4.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good and, in a minority of lessons, it was outstanding. Most of the lessons were clearly structured and well paced, often with a range of activities which challenged and engaged all of the pupils. In almost all of the lessons observed, the teachers shared the learning intentions with the pupils and consolidated them during the lesson. The outstanding lessons were imaginatively planned and resourced; the teachers and the pupils interacted well with each other; and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) greatly enhanced the learning.

There is a strong focus on the dissemination of good practice. Across the school, the teachers share resources and their expertise and engage in useful and productive debate about effective teaching strategies and their link to the raising of standards. The school supports new and inexperienced staff well; the SMT provide them with good and innovative opportunities to develop professionally and personally. The support staff and the school chaplain make a significant contribution to the life and work of the school and to the welfare and learning of the pupils.

2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. This is demonstrated through the positive working relationships at all levels, the cognisance taken of the individual needs of the pupils and the inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school. The Vice-principal in charge of pastoral care supported ably by the pastoral team, provides effective leadership and has developed a strong collegial approach to the provision in this area.

2.4 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by DE.

2.5 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through effective healthy eating policies and wholesome food provision in the canteen, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.6 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Principal and SMT provide outstanding leadership. The Principal is a visionary and inspiring leader, his management ensures the best possible provision for the pupils with a strong focus on enabling them to make a valuable contribution to their community. The long-serving and very able curricular Vice-principal and the effective senior leadership team support the Principal very well. Through collegial management, they use their various skills well to bring an informed and balanced approach to school development planning and improvement.

The Principal encourages and empowers all of the staff to develop professionally and builds their capacity to support and sustain the outstanding quality of senior leadership and management.

The self-evaluation and school development planning processes are well embedded at all levels to the benefit of the pupils. The excellent school development plan is informed by a rigorous analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The plan takes account of the external and internal factors which impact on the school's work and meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

The science specialism is an area of curricular strength; the school has set appropriate and measurable targets for improvement and has already begun to use the science specialism to develop existing links with other schools, Southern Regional College, local employers and the wider community.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The main strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the pupils who display a clear sense of enjoyment and pride in being a member of the school community;
- the outstanding quality of pastoral care and support for learning which is clearly linked to the personal development of the pupils and their achievement in public examinations;
- the high quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was very good, with a minority being outstanding;
- the outstanding leadership and management of the Principal and SMT;
- the very good standards achieved by the pupils across the ability range; and
- the highly effective contribution the school makes to each child's spiritual, emotional, social and academic development.

4. 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.

Mathematics

The main strengths of the mathematics department include:

- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations;
- the good levels of individual support given to the pupils during lessons;
- the quality of teaching in the lessons observed, most of which was good and a significant minority of which was very good;
- the good start that has been made in developing the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning;
- the good start that has been made in reviewing the schemes of work for years 8 and 9; and
- the commitment and hard work of the departmental team.

The area for improvement is the need for the teachers to:

- identify and share good practice and develop teaching and learning strategies that actively engage the pupils more consistently.

English

The main strengths of the English department include the:

- very good standards achieved in English at KS3 and KS4;
- effective use of statistical data to identify and target underachievement;
- standard of teaching, where most of the lessons observed were good or better and a significant minority were very good or excellent;
- hard working and committed head of department;
- responsive pupils who are growing in confidence and competence in talking and listening; and
- the well-resourced and welcoming library.

The area for improvement is the need for the teachers to:

- develop further the planning to include the identification of appropriate learning and teaching strategies and success criteria and to ensure that this guidance is implemented consistently across the classes.

Science

The main strengths of the science department include:

- the excellent leadership of the head of science, ably supported by the teachers in charge of biology, chemistry and physics;
- the comprehensive departmental documentation which is of an excellent quality, including the development plan setting out appropriate priorities;
- the excellent teaching seen in a majority of the lessons, characterised by the active involvement of the pupils, and their accurate scientific record of a wide range of practical and investigative work;
- well-developed culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement, including the good use of quantitative and benchmarked data to track the progression in the pupils' learning and the standards they reach;
- teachers' good use of learning intentions to structure lessons effectively; and
- the very good standards attained in public examinations and evident in the pupils' practical and theoretical work.

Learning Support Centre

The main strengths of the LSC include:

- the high expectations staff have for all pupils, the clear understanding pupils have about expected standards of work and behaviour and the caring, supportive atmosphere;
- the very good standards which the pupils achieve given their wide range of special educational needs;
- the very good programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance which supports transition to adult and working life;
- the wide range of appropriate accredited courses and the suitable pathways well matched to the abilities and interests of the pupils;
- the good quality teaching which is well planned and focuses effectively on the pupils' individual needs; and
- the outstanding leadership given by the head of the LSC and the good co-operation between the Principal and LSC staff.

The area for improvement is:

- the need for a review, in consultation with the Southern Education and Library Board, of the number of pupils attending the LSC which at the time of the inspection was too large.

ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

- There is insufficient science accommodation to meet the current curricular requirements.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Paul's High v. Date of Inspection: W/C 20.10.08
 ii. School Reference Number: 523-0157 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Roman Catholic Maintained

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 8 Intake	243	244	254	250	259
Total enrolment	1292	1328	1379	1402	1459

1.3 Attendance

Year 2007/08	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2007/08	NI Average 2006/07
% Attendance	93	92.8	89.6	88	88.4	93	92.2	93	90

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

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	128	130	144	131	133	46	39	751
Enrolment: Girls	131	116	102	113	101	85	60	708
Enrolment: Total	259	246	246	244	234	131	99	1459
PTR	15.85	17.19	15.41	15.51	15.0	12.81	12.93	

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

Year 13	54.7	NI Av Year 13	37.4
Year 14	31.3	NI Av Year 14	25.2

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2006/07	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	140		105	
Another School	1%	11.1	0%	2
Employment	14%	12.4	10%	19.5
Full-time Further Education	29%	37.2	13%	21
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	62%	42
Full-time Training	40%	30.1	0%	6.6
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	6%	4.1	4%	4.3
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	9%	4.9	10%	4.6

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: St Paul's High School, Bessbrook

SCHOOL YEAR: 2008/2009

GCSE	2006	2007	2008
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	99.31	95.7	99.44
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	61.38	56.45	66.67
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	93.1	83.87	88.33
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2006	2007	2008
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	54.24	49	59.26
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	96.61	100	98.15

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2008, 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 st Subject Drama English French GNVQ Construction and the Built Environment Home Economics Home Economics Child Development Information Technology Irish Music Single Award Science Spanish Sport/PE Studies	Design and Technology Geography Mathematics	Business Studies English Literature History Russian	Religious Studies	

GCE A-E			Art and Design Biology Business Studies Chemistry Design and Technology: Product Design Drama English Literature French Geography History Home Economics Information Technology Irish Mathematics Music Physics Religious Studies Sociology Sport/PE Studies		
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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	Russian		Information Technology Music	Accounting/Finance Art and Design Double Award Science 1 st Subject Drama English Literature	Business Studies Design and Technology English French Geography GNVQ Construction and the Built Environment History Home Economics Home Economics Child Development Irish Mathematics Office Technology Religious Studies Single Award Science Spanish Sport/PE Studies

GCE A-E	Accounting/Finance Art and Design Biology Business Studies Chemistry Computer Studies/Computing Design and Technology: Product Design Drama English Literature French Geography History History of Art and Design Home Economics Information Technology Irish Mathematics Music Physics Politics Religious Studies Sociology Sport/PE Studies				
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