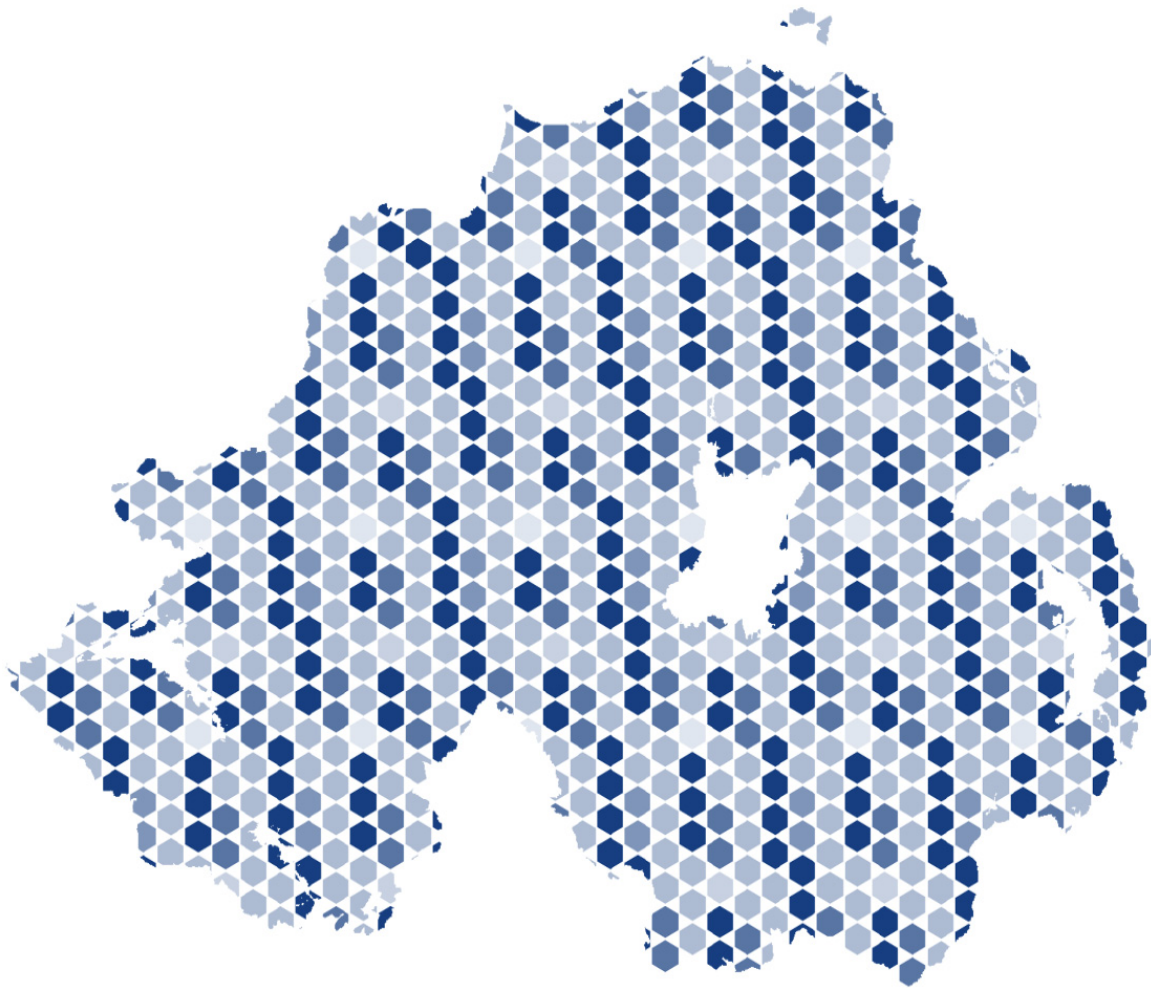


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Larne High School and Learning
Support Centre, Co Antrim

Controlled, non-selective, co-educational 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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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, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

The term '*similar schools*' refers to schools in the same free school meal category as defined by DE, whether they are selective or non-selective.

CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
DE	Department of Education
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EF	Entitlement Framework
FSM	Free School Meals
GCE A	General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
KS	Key stage
LSC	Learning Support Centre
NI	Northern Ireland
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

1. CONTEXT

1.1 The enrolment in Larne High School has decreased slightly over the past four years; there are currently 63 pupils enrolled in sixth form. There are 19 pupils in a Learning Support Centre; this Centre provides for the needs of pupils who have significant delays in their learning and who all have a statement of educational need. The Principal has been in post since January 2011 but previously held the post in an acting capacity for five years. The Vice-principal was appointed to the permanent position in September 2011.

Larne High School	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	522	511	510	506
FSM (Band 2) Percentage	20	19	21	26
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	34 (176)	33 (170)	32 (162)	23 (115)
<i>No. of pupils with statements in the Learning Support Centre</i>	21	23	20	19
<i>No. of pupils with statements in mainstream classes</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	*	*	*	*
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	1	1	3	3
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	5	3	7	6
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	45	62	63	57
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	49	62	60	58

Source: Data as held by the school.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

2.1 In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the learners are to be met more effectively.

2.2 It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, and in particular the sixth form provision, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

* Relates to fewer than 5 cases.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are satisfactory¹.

KEY FINDINGS

All of the pupils, a minority of whom have complex learning, social and emotional needs, are developing effective personal and social behaviours. These skills enable them to interact well with their teachers, school staff and peers, creating a positive climate for learning across the school.

Almost all of the pupils are well motivated, articulate and present their work to a high standard.

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	59.63	64.17	70
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	40.4	34.88	35.09
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well Below Average	Well Below Average	Well Below Average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	20.2	17.44	26.32
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well Below Average	Well Below Average	Below Average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	64.65	80.23	71.93

Source: Data on Year 12 (KS4) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

The levels of prior attainment of the pupils on entry to the school are low; almost half of the pupils in mainstream classes enter the school in Year 8 not having attained level 4 in English and mathematics at KS2.

In 2010, the school identified, as a key priority, the development of the pupils' numeracy skills. In 2011, the level of the pupils' attainment in GCSE mathematics at grades A* to C improved from 23% to 49%, and is now above the NI average; this is a significant achievement and has contributed to the rise in the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in five or more subjects, including English and mathematics, at GCSE level.

The pupils attain good standards in the majority of the vocational and applied subjects offered at GCSE level. By the end of KS4 the pupils who require additional support with their learning make satisfactory progress in relation to their baseline levels of achievement. For the past two years, all pupils have attained at least one or more qualification at GCSE level.

The percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to C in five or more subjects at GCSE level remains below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. The school now needs to address the variation in standards attained in the other areas of study as a key priority, and increase the proportion of pupils taking at least five GCSEs.

¹ For detailed results in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendices 1 and 2.

Comparisons based on NI average	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	80	62.5	50
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	40	37.5	25
Comparison with the NI average for all schools	Below Average	Below Average	Well Below Average
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	93.33	100	92.86
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	In line with average	Above Average	In line with average

Source: Data on Year 142 (A2) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

At GCE A2 level, over a three-year period, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A* to E is in line with the NI average. At grades A* to C, all of the individual subjects perform more than ten percentage points below the corresponding Northern Ireland averages². Small numbers of pupils attain good standards in some of the vocational and applied subjects offered at GCE level.

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the provision in English is good; the quality of the provision in mathematics and science is satisfactory³.

The quality of the lessons observed ranged from inadequate to outstanding. Three-fifths of the lessons observed were good or better, with the majority of these lessons being good. Three out of four lessons taught post-16 were good or very good. The inspection confirms that sharing of the effective examples of good practice in planning, teaching and assessment remains a priority for the school leadership in order to raise standards.

The quality of provision for SEN is satisfactory. The SENCO provides very good information and advice to assist colleagues in developing strategies to support pupils in mainstream classes who have SEN. There is effective individual support for pupils identified with literacy and numeracy difficulties and the majority of pupils make good progress. The targets within the individual education plans are, at times, too general to guide effectively the teachers' lesson planning and the work in the classroom.

4.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils respond well to the caring and supportive ethos evident in almost all of the classrooms. The Year 8 pupils settle well as a result of the well-planned induction programme and the effective links with the local primary schools. The school works effectively alongside other agencies to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils. The youth club operates on four nights per week, with high levels of participation from the young people in the area, and is a valuable resource to the community. The pupils have practical experience of decision-making in school life through participation in an active school council.

² Appendix 2

³ For detailed findings of the provision in English, mathematics and science, see Appendix 3.

The school has in place appropriate systems to identify, at an early stage, the small number of pupils who are at risk of disengaging from school. The strategies to reintegrate these pupils, including the small number of pupils in alternative education provision, are under-developed.

The provision for the very small number of newcomer pupils is unsatisfactory. The school does not have in place a programme to help these pupils to progress in their learning, to overcome language barriers and to access the full school curriculum.

In discussions with the pupils, all are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

4.3 The curricular provision for the pupils at KS3 and KS4 is good. The curricular provision for the pupils at sixth form is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The Vice-principal and the SLT demonstrate a strong commitment to the rationale which underpins the aims of the Entitlement Framework. The curriculum at KS3 and KS4 is appropriately broad and balanced and meets the needs of most of the pupils. At KS4, the pupils have access to 24 courses. In 2011, the majority of Year 12 pupils were entered for six or fewer subjects at GCSE level. The SLT has identified the need to modify the timetabling structure to increase the number of subjects studied by the majority of the pupils. At post-16, while the pupils have access to 29 courses, including through the Area Learning Community, the entry requirement for some of the pupils to study GCE A level is too low; a significant minority of the pupils struggle with the demands of study at this level. The percentage of Year 14 pupils entered for at least three subjects at GCE A2 level or equivalent is low. There is a need for the SLT to review the sixth form provision.

The provision for CEIAG is satisfactory. The pupils develop employability skills through a suitable range of work-related learning opportunities. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the employment, training and education opportunities available. However, the timetabled programme for careers education lacks the coherence necessary to ensure progression through the key stages. The pupils, particularly at post-16, need access to a wider range of good quality, up-to-date careers information.

The pupils participate at a high level in an appropriately wide range of non-formal and extra-curricular activities, which meet their needs and interests, including sporting, environmental, and arts activities, and the youth club.

4.4 The quality of provision in the Learning Support Centre (LSC) is very good.

The LSC provides a supportive and structured environment, with a high level of pastoral care provided by teaching staff and classroom assistants. The pupils in the LSC are well integrated and participate well in all aspects of school life. The teaching in the LSC is focused effectively on the pupils' individual needs, with effective withdrawal support for those pupils who require additional help with numeracy and literacy.

The majority of the pupils in the LSC are entered for an appropriate range of entry level external examinations and achieve accreditation levels 1-3 across six areas of study to enable them to transfer to further education, training or employment.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The Principal has provided good leadership on pastoral matters during his time as acting Principal. He has developed effective communication channels, knows the pupils and staff well, and is caring and committed to their welfare. As a result, the staff work as a cohesive team.

The views of parents, pupils, staff and governors are sought to guide the school's development planning. The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The work of the staff in implementing the action plans for pastoral development has led to good progress. The action plans for curriculum development do not identify appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the progress made, and need a clearer focus on improving the quality of the teaching and learning in order to raise the standards achieved in public examinations.

The Vice-principal is conscientious and demonstrates a strong commitment to school improvement. The Principal, supported by the Vice-principal and the governors, needs to review the roles and responsibilities of all members of the SLT and middle management to provide a more strategic approach to whole school improvement through greater levels of accountability at all levels of management.

The school has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

The Principal monitors, evaluates and reviews the provision regularly to ensure it benefits the community and the local economy. He manages effectively the finances to support the delivery of the curriculum and to support the pupils who have additional learning needs.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision.

6.2 The inspection has identified areas for improvement which are the need for:

- continuing the improvements in the standards attained in public examinations;
- sharing the existing good planning, teaching and assessment practice to ensure greater consistency in the quality of provision across all areas of study and to engage the pupils more effectively in their learning; and
- systematic and rigorous arrangements for monitoring and evaluation leading to a more strategic approach to whole school improvement through greater levels of accountability at all levels of management.

6.2 The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Larne High School
 ii. School Reference Number: 321-0038
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Controlled
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 17/10/11
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	70	108	77	89	88
Total enrolment	509	524	511	512	506

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	92.5	89.4	89.2	90	86.9	88.1	86.2	89	91
% Attendance young people on Special Educational Needs Register									

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 36.396 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.791
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 13.903

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	42	45	56	59	33	16	12	263
Enrolment: Total	46	46	22	48	46	23	12	243
PTR	16.142	16.693	18.627	15.217	14.217	6.953	7.723	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2009/10) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	56.7	NI Av Year 13	47.4
Year 14	27.2	NI Av Year 14	34.5

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	49		49	
Another School	6%	14.8	2%	2.4
Employment	51%	5.2	43%	12.3
Full-time Further Education	29%	47.5	27%	28
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	10%	42.5
Full-time Training	8%	25.1	14%	5.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	2%	3.6	0%	5.8
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	4%	3.8	4%	3.9

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

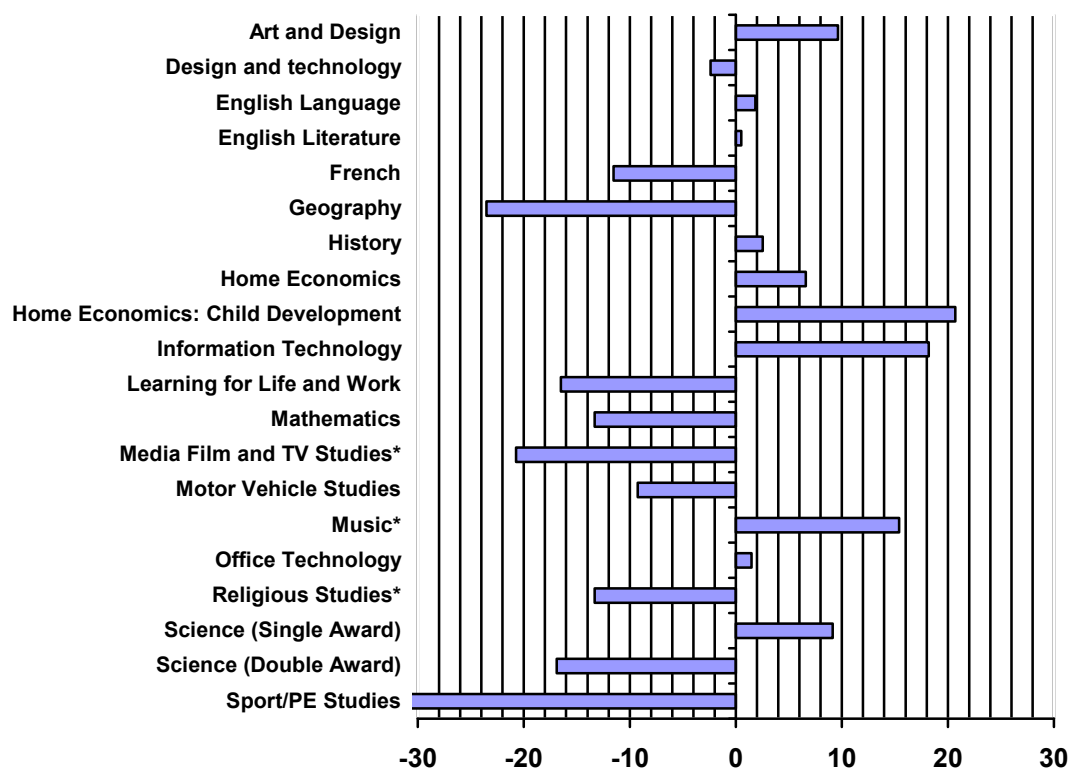
NB: The NI average for all non-selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics in 2010 is 34.9%

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 20-29.99%	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	59.63	64.17	70
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	40.4	34.88	35.09
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well below average	Well below average	Well below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	20.2	17.44	26.32
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well below average	Well below average	Below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	64.65	80.23	71.93

Source: Data as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

Comparison of the school's 3 year average for GCSE A*-C with the NI average



GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

NB: The NI averages in 2010 for all schools of pupils entered for A2 level or equivalent: who achieve:

3 or more grades A*-C = 42.7%

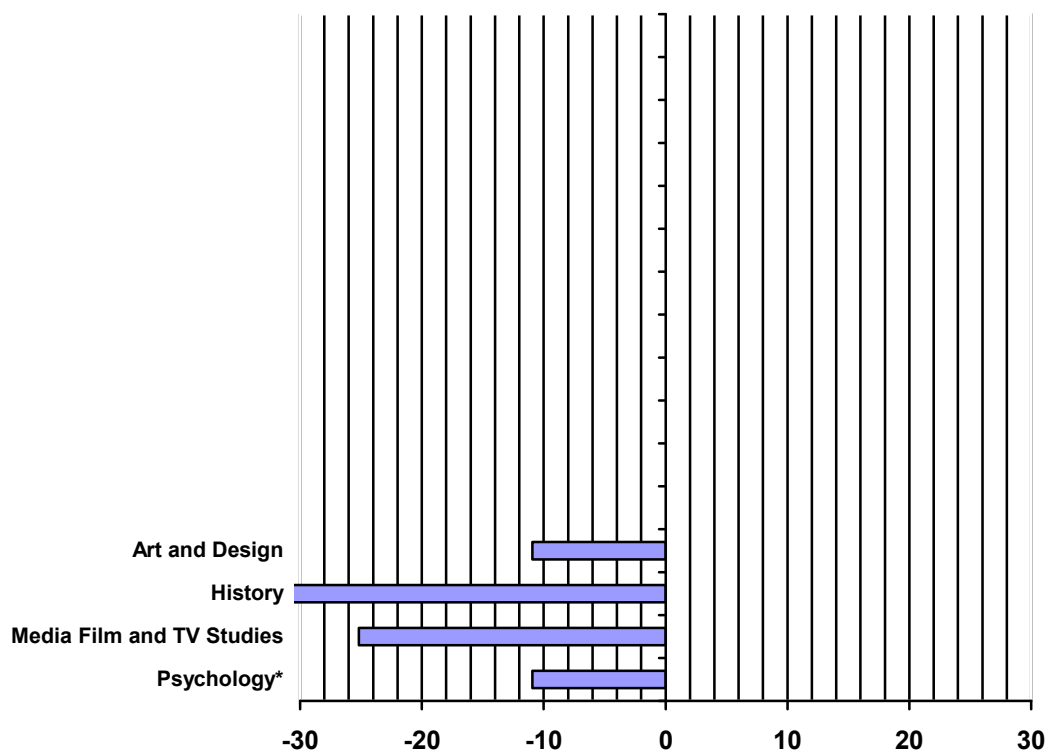
2 or more grades A*-E = 94.7%

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on NI average	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	80	62.5	50
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	40	37.5	25
Comparison with the NI average for all schools	Below Average	Below Average	Well Below Average
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	93.33	100	92.86
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	In line with average	Above Average	In line with average

Source: Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

Comparison of the school's 3 year average with the NI average



OTHER RESULTS

OTHER RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business	74	100	88	93	75	100	30
Construction	38	46	47	100	46	77	41
Health and Social Care*	50	100	100	100	100	100	6

OTHER RESULTS: POST-16

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in at least two of the last three years.
(All Level 3, unless otherwise stated)

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business (Level 2)	75	100	78	100	71	100	33
Business	50	100	45	100	40	100	37
Engineering* (equivalent to 4 GCSEs A* - C)	75	92	71	86	85	92	32
Engineering	---	---	0	50	0	66.67	5
Health and Social Care	80	100	67	100	45	100	30
Information Technology	60	100	50	100	91	90	26
Sports Studies*	---	---	100	100	100	100	10
Travel & Tourism	44	100	40	100	29	100	21

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision for English is **good**.

The strengths include:

- the effective working relationships in almost all of the lessons observed;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or very good;
- the good standards attained by the pupils in GCSE English and GCSE English Literature;
- the detailed planning and schemes of work for KS3 classes; and
- the effective leadership of the head of department.

The area for improvement is the need:

- to develop further the processes for monitoring and evaluation within the department in order to identify and disseminate the best practice in teaching and learning.

Mathematics

The quality of the provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

The strengths include:

- the positive working relationships between the pupils and their teachers;
- the good levels of individual support for the pupils in the lessons observed during the inspection;
- the ability of the pupils, when given the opportunity, to work collaboratively and discuss their learning;
- the good standards of the pupils' presentation of mathematics; and
- the commitment of the head of department and the departmental team to improve the quality of the provision.

The areas for improvement are:

- to continue to raise attainment in GCSE mathematics;
- for the teachers to use a wider range of strategies to engage the pupils actively, and to use effective assessment for learning to inform these strategies; and

- for the head of department, supported by the departmental team, to develop further self-evaluation with a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards.

Science

The quality of the provision in science is **satisfactory**.

The strengths include:

- the good or very good teaching observed in just over one-half of the lessons, characterised particularly by activities where individual groups of pupils had frequent opportunities to work at a brisk pace, and demonstrate initiative and independence as they completed experimental or written work to a good standard;
- the effective coverage of scientific content in nearly all the lessons observed, accompanied by a clear exposition and explanation of key facts by the teacher;
- the frequent experimental work and other practical activities observed in the majority of lessons, during which the pupils developed a range of experimental and investigative skills to a good standard;
- the good standards achieved by most of the pupils, including those attained in GCSE Single Award Science; and
- the quality of the departmental documentation, including detailed schemes of work for KS3.

The areas for improvement are:

- to continue to raise the standards of achievement for a minority of the pupils which are presently inadequate, including those attained in GCSE Double Award Science;
- the need to disseminate the very good practice seen in order to provide more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning; and
- for the leadership and management of the department to focus strongly on the department working more effectively as a team, and on improved arrangements for departmental self evaluation leading to further improvement.

Scope and Method of the Inspection

The standard inspection of Larne High School focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>. The evaluation, based on the quality indicators, enabled ETI to make a judgement about the public value provided by the school.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities. Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science provision providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Detailed findings are reported in Appendix 3.

The inspection also focused on the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for CEIAG and the progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

The arrangements for the inspection included:

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire to the inspection;
- meetings with representatives from the governors; and
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

All parents received a letter with details of how they may request a questionnaire if they wished to do so. Questionnaires were issued to parents of pupils who attend the Learning Support Centre.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents (School and Learning Support Centre)	23	5	22	3
Teachers	36	36	100	12
Support Staff	12	9	75	1

The questionnaires returned by the parents, the teachers and support staff were highly positive in almost all respects, with most expressing praise for the work of the Principal; a minority of the teachers and support staff commented that inappropriate behaviour could be dealt with more effectively. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires, including the concerns raised by the small number of parents. Where appropriate, these areas have been commented on within the report.

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