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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**

**Assumption Grammar School**  
**Ballynahinch**

**Inspected: November 2006**

## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	MAIN FINDINGS	2
3.	CONCLUSION	3
	APPENDICES	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 CONTEXT

Assumption Grammar School is a voluntary grammar school situated on the outskirts of Ballynahinch. The current enrolment is 908; approximately 5% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Of the current year 8 pupils, 85% achieved A or B in the transfer test. The pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area; only a small number come from the town of Ballynahinch.

### 1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management at whole-school level, English, technology and design and information and communication technology at a whole-school and subject level. The inspection also considered the school's pastoral care provision, including child protection.

### 1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNORS, PUPILS AND TEACHERS

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 as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (BoG) and groups of pupils from years 8, 12 and sixth form, including form prefects. Prior to the inspection, 161 questionnaires were issued to the parents; 44% were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 45 contained additional written comments. Fifty per cent of the staff responded to the online questionnaire with eight additional written comments.

The BoG expressed their strong appreciation of the leadership and management provided by the Principal and the senior management team, the school's focus on, and achievement in, academic excellence and the high regard with which the school is held in the community. The staff acknowledged that the supportive leadership provided by the Principal and the enriched pastoral programme are strengths of the school. The pupils talked enthusiastically about their wide range of experiences and, from the discussions, there is evidence that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety/care and welfare.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and the BoG the responses from the parental questionnaires which indicated that the parents appreciate greatly the work of the school, in particular, the committed staff and the opportunities for the pupils to develop their confidence and their talents. The small number of concerns raised by the parents were discussed with the Principal and the BoG. The inspection findings confirm that the confidence expressed in these aspects of the school's work is well placed.

There are significant strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The school has procedures in place which implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars. The BoG, staff, parents and pupils are fully aware of the school's procedures and have had the opportunity to contribute to the revision of helpful policies which guide the work of the school. Among the strengths are the collegiality, commitment and care displayed by the various pastoral teams and, in particular, the important role which the form prefects play in supporting the younger pupils. The school has

appropriately identified the promotion of positive behaviour and the further development of the school council as priorities within the school development plan.

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, which 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 range of physical activities.

#### 1.4 EXAMINATION RESULTS

Overall, the standards achieved by the pupils across the subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level are very good. The school currently offers 24 GCSE and 25 GCE A level subjects. In 2006, almost 98% of the pupils achieved grades A\* to C in at least seven GCSE subjects and, at GCE A level, almost 76% of the pupils achieved grades A to C in at least three subjects. In addition, 96% of the pupils achieved grades A to E in at least three GCE A level subjects. These GCSE and GCE A level results are well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar selective schools. More details about the examination results are provided in the appendices to this report.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### 2.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the positive ethos and the mutual respect observed in lessons;
- the excellent working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the motivated, articulate, responsive and confident pupils who settled quickly to learning;
- the very high quality of the pastoral care provided for the pupils and the commitment of the pastoral care team to the safety and the welfare of the pupils;
- the significant role played by the form prefects in the pastoral care system and the part played by the annual drama festival to the induction of the pupils in year 8;
- the quality of the teaching, which is consistently sound, a majority of which is good or better with a few examples of outstanding practice;
- the excellent achievements of the pupils in public examinations;
- the wide range of enriching curricular and extra-curricular opportunities offered to the pupils;
- the good start made in promoting and developing the culture of self-evaluation and the significant progress made by a majority of the departments;

- the high level of support by parents for the school and its high standing in the local community; and
- the effective pastoral leadership of the Principal who knows the school, staff and pupils well and is supported ably by the senior managers of the school.

2.2 An area for improvement is:

- the more consistent development, within and across departments, of strategies which will involve the pupils more actively in their learning, in line with the current review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, and the consequent rigorous evaluation of the impact of these strategies by management at all levels.

### 3. **CONCLUSION**

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

The school's progress on the area for improvement will be followed-up by the District Inspector.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch  
 ii. School Reference Number: 442-0086  
 iii. Age Range: 11-18  
 iv. Status: Voluntary Grammar  
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 20/11/06  
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Year 8 Intake	138	136	135	133	127
Total enrolment	929	928	929	921	908

1.3 Attendance

Year 2005/06	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2005/06	NI Average 2004/05
% Attendance	96.2	94.9	94.3	93.8	95.2	95.1	94.1	95	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: Girls	127	136	131	132	137	133	112	908
Enrolment: Total	127	136	131	132	137	133	112	908
PTR	17.21	18.49	17.58	15.48	16.41	13.54	12.87	

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

Year 13	89.6	NI Av Year 13	90.4
Year 14	94.8	NI Av Year 14	84.5

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2004/05	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	14		123	
Another School	100%	19.4	1%	1.3
Employment	0%	4.4	1%	3.7
Full-time Further Education	0%	59.4	7%	9
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	89%	82.5
Full-time Training	0%	11.6	0%	0.9
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.5	2%	1.1
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.6	0%	1.6

**APPENDIX 2**

**1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL:** Assumption Grammar School,  
Ballynahinch

**SCHOOL YEAR:** 2006/2007

<b>GCSE</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects</b>	100	100	100
<b>Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects</b>	96.3	94.7	97.8
<b>Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects</b>	98.5	98.5	100
<b>GCE A2 Level or equivalent</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels</b>	86.4	87.2	75.3
<b>Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels</b>	98.3	97.6	96.1

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.

## EXAMINATION RESULTS

*Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2006, in comparison with the respective 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, Business Studies, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Drama, English, English Literature, French, Geography, History, Home Economics, Information Technology, Irish, Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Music, Religious Studies, Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject, Sport/PE Studies	Biology, Spanish	Physics
GCE A Level A-C	Economics*, Information Technology*, Business Studies, Applied Information and Communication Technology	Drama, English Literature, History, History of Art & Design*, Irish*, Music*, Physics*, Religious Studies, Spanish*.	Art & Design, Biology, Chemistry, Design & Technology*, French, Geography, Home Economics*, Mathematics, Sociology	Politics	

\* Less than 30 pupils took subject.



*Table showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.*

*Table 2*

	<b>100% - 96%</b>	<b>95% - 86%</b>	<b>85% - 76%</b>	<b>75% - 66%</b>	<b>65% - 0%</b>
GCSE A-C	Art & Design, Biology, Chemistry, Drama, English, English Literature, History, Home Economics, Information Technology, Irish, Mathematics, Music, Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies, Design & Technology, French, Geography, Additional Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies, Double Award Science 1 <sup>st</sup> Subject, Spanish			
GCE A Level A-C	Art & Design	Business Studies, Drama, English Literature, French, Geography, History, History of Art & Design, Irish, Politics, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish,	Applied ICT, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Home Economics, Information Technology, Physics	Design & Technology	

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