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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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

**Knockbreda High School
Belfast**

Inspected: October 2009

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK	2
3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS	3
4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS	4
5. CONCLUSION	4
APPENDICES	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Knockbreda High School is a co-educational controlled secondary school situated in the outskirts of Belfast. Thirty-three per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals; approximately 16% of the pupils enrolled at the school require 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, prior to the inspection, for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires based on the life and work of the school, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8 and 12.

One hundred and twelve questionnaires were issued to parents; forty were returned, duly completed to the Department of Education (DE), and 14 of these contained additional written comments. The majority of responses from the questionnaires were positive, indicating support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents commented on the good individual support that their children receive and the caring ethos in the school.

Over half of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with four teachers providing additional written comments. Five support staff completed a confidential questionnaire. A majority of the staff who responded raised concerns relating to aspects of leadership and management and communication within the school. The governors expressed strong support for the work of the school and the leadership of the Principal.

The pupils expressed their appreciation of the care and support provided by their teachers, in particular their form teachers. They said that they enjoyed school, that they felt safe and secure and knew the staff to whom they could turn if they needed help or support.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported the key matters arising from the parents', teachers' and support staff's questionnaire to the Principal and Vice-principals in the school. Some of these matters are dealt with in more detail within the body of the report.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in particular, on the quality of provision and outcomes in the following subjects: English, technology and design, and science. The school's provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs, were also evaluated. In addition to classroom visits in the aforementioned subjects, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects in order to add to the inspection evidence base. A summary of the main findings for the subjects under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

The pupils are well motivated and when their teachers have appropriately high expectations of them, and understand and meet their individual needs, they respond in a positive manner and take part enthusiastically in class.

In 2009, approximately one-quarter of the Year 12 pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level including English and mathematics, which is just above the respective Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. Over the previous 3 years the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE level has risen, although this percentage remains well below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. Over the same period, GCSE results at grades A*-C in approximately half of the subjects were more than five percentage points below the respective NI average, and in a significant minority of subjects were more than ten percentage points below.

The senior management team (SMT) recognises the need to address the significant variation in the results at GCSE, across the subjects, in comparison to the corresponding NI averages, if the pupils are to achieve the standards of which they are capable, in all subjects.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 4.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of teaching in just over half of the lessons observed was good or better. In the subjects under focus, the quality of teaching ranged from very good to inadequate with the majority of lessons being satisfactory.

In the best practice observed there were opportunities for the pupils to engage actively in their learning. These lessons were well structured with clear learning intentions, an effective variety of teaching strategies were employed, and opportunities were provided for the pupils to talk about their learning. Furthermore, the work was matched well to the pupils' individual needs and abilities. However, in almost half of the teaching observed, there was less effective practice. This was characterised by lack of pace and challenge, reflecting the teachers' low expectations of the pupils, with insufficient focus on the intended outcomes.

2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for pastoral care within the school is good. The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care, the year heads and form teachers are committed and dedicated to the welfare of their pupils. In turn, the pupils are courteous and well-behaved in class and in the communal areas of the school. Well-considered strategies have been introduced recently to link the pastoral care of the pupils and the standards they achieve. The good work started through the personal tutorial system, should be regularly monitored and adjusted to ensure that individual targets are measurable and reflect realistically high expectations of the standards the pupils can achieve.

2.4 CHILD PROTECTION

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

2.5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. In a small number of departments, where there is a shared understanding of how best to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and teachers use effective strategies and approaches, outcomes for the pupils are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) manages the provision for pupils on the SEN register, supported by a dedicated and skilled teacher who withdraws small groups of pupils for additional support with their learning. The SENCO draws up appropriate Individual Education Plans (IEPs), in collaboration with colleagues across the school and the IEPs provide the subject teachers with practical guidance and information. In the best practice, the teachers plan meticulously to differentiate work, and the pupils are clear about what is expected of them, and complete their tasks with interest and enthusiasm. More often, the pupils with special educational needs are not engaged in their learning and are insufficiently challenged by their teachers, who pay limited attention to their individual needs.

A small development team has drawn up an action plan which identifies appropriately a number of areas for future development. These include the need for the SMT to: work with all departments to agree what constitutes high quality provision for those pupils who have special educational needs; monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching for those pupils who have special educational needs; and disseminate the existing good practice in the school.

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

While the Principal and Vice-principals demonstrate a strong commitment to the pastoral care and well-being of the pupils, the strategic leadership of the school is inadequate. Roles and responsibilities of the SMT are not clearly defined and there are ineffective procedures for communication and consultation among the staff. There is no systematic, collegial approach to drive forward improvement and as a result, much of the work that takes place has little impact on the quality of learning and teaching and on the standards achieved by the pupils.

The SMT has attempted to build leadership capacity among middle management through, for example, the creation of curriculum development teams and involvement with the Regional Training Unit in providing professional development for members of the middle management tier. However, the capacity at middle management level to undertake rigorous self-evaluation remains inadequate.

The School Development Plan (SDP) does not meet the associated regulations and the school development planning process is not sufficiently focused on raising standards, improving the quality of learning and teaching or on developing a broader and more relevant curriculum for the pupils. There is variation in the quality of the action plans produced by departments as part of the school's process for improvement; many, for example, are not adequately linked to the SDP. In a minority of departments, a good start has been made to the analysis and interpretation of performance data, including DE benchmarking, to review and inform further improvements in learning. This good practice needs to be disseminated.

The school needs further external support to improve leadership capacity at all levels, to help develop a collegial school development planning process and increase the knowledge and skills of the staff to engage in effective self-evaluation.

4. **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

The main strengths of the school include:

- the good quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection;
- the courteous and well-behaved pupils; and
- the good standards in public examinations achieved in mathematics and art and design.

The areas for improvement identified are the need to:

- improve the overall standards achieved by the pupils, including standards in public examinations;
- improve the quality of leadership at all levels throughout the school; and
- develop a rigorous school development planning process involving all the staff which focuses strongly on effective learning and teaching and incorporates a robust process of self-evaluation and review.

5. **CONCLUSION**

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. A follow-up inspection will be carried out within 12 to 18 months after the inspection.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FOR THE SUBJECTS UNDER FOCUS

English

The strengths of the work include:

- the good relationships which exist in many of the classes;
- the innovative and creative teaching strategies in a minority of classes; and
- the willingness of many of the pupils to engage in the learning process.

The areas for improvement include the urgent need to:

- improve the inadequate standards including those in public examinations;
- plan for teaching and learning in a more coherent and collegial manner; and
- adopt a more strategic approach to bring about improvement in teaching, learning and outcomes.

Technology and Design (T&D)

The strengths of the work include:

- the good working relationships at all levels;
- the commitment of the staff to improvement;
- the well-ordered environment in the T & D department with good visual displays; and
- the strong emphasis on the care and health and safety of all pupils.

The areas for improvement are the urgent need to:

- raise the inadequate standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level;
- improve the quality of teaching to include more frequent opportunities for the pupils to engage in practical activities; and
- revise the key stage 3 curriculum to provide a more varied technological experience which builds on the pupils' interests and provides appropriate progression and challenge.

Science

The strengths of the work include:

- the good quality teaching observed in a minority of classes;

- the extensive analysis of results achieved in public examinations and a comparison of these to NI averages for similar schools;
- the good quality schemes of work for years 8 and 9, which usefully set out a range of teaching strategies, resources for the pupils' use and homework; and
- the successful completion of practical work, including some investigative activities, with a due regard for safety, in the lessons observed.

The areas for improvement are an urgent need to:

- raise the inadequate standards of achievement for a significant minority of the pupils, including those attained in public examinations;
- improve leadership and management of the department, in particular to enable the department to work more effectively as a team; and
- disseminate the good practice observed to all the classes, particularly the effective display, explanation and assessment of expected learning outcomes and their associated success criteria.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is a need for technician support for technology and art and design.
- The technology and design workshops should not be used as general classrooms.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Knockbreda High
 ii. School Reference Number: 421-0086
 iii. Age Range: 11-17
 iv. Status: Controlled
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 05/10/09
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	121	75	85	125	88
Total enrolment	646	609	574	563	551

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	95.1	94.4	92.9	93.6	85.3	0	0	0	90

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 38 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.812
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.026

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	42	63	51	54	66	N/A	N/A	276
Enrolment: Girls	46	66	43	46	74	N/A	N/A	275
Enrolment: Total	88	129	94	100	140	0	0	551
PTR	12.393	15.016	13.545	13.236	15.349	N/A	N/A	

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

Year 13	1.4	NI Av Year 13	40.9
Year 14	N/A	NI Av Year 14	N/A

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	143		2	
Another School	13%	11.3	0%	1.7
Employment	8%	8.7	0%	18.6
Full-time Further Education	59%	41.8	50%	22.4
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	0%	42.8
Full-time Training	8%	30.0	0%	4.9
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	3%	4.4	0%	5.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	8%	3.5	50%	4

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Knockbreda High School, Belfast

SCHOOL YEAR: 2009/2010

GCSE	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	89.23	79.2	87.7
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	25.38	34.4	36.07
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	65.38	67.2	71.31

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE 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*-E	Spanish	Art and Design Geography Mathematics	Chinese English Literature History Music Office Technology Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject English French Home Economics Child Development Home Economics Food Single Award Science	Business Studies GNVQ Hospitality and Catering Information Technology

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*-E	Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Literature	Art and Design Chinese English French History Home Economics Child Development Home Economics Food Information Technology Music Office Technology Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies Design and Technology Geography Mathematics Single Award Science Spanish	GNVQ Hospitality and Catering	

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

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