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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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**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

**Rathfriland High School
Co Down**

Inspected: October 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Rathfriland High School is a co-educational non selective school located within the town of Rathfriland. The school draws its pupils from the town and from a large surrounding rural area. At the time of the inspection the enrolment was 271 pupils, approximately 13% of whom are entitled to free school meals. Whilst in the past number of years the majority of the pupils attending the school have gained grades C or D in the transfer procedure, within the last five years, the number of pupils joining the school with grades higher than these has increased. Within the last two years the number of pupils joining the school who have opted not to take part in the transfer procedure, has also increased significantly.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management at all levels across the school, and, in addition, on the provision for geography, science and physical education. The inspection also evaluated the school's provision for pastoral care, including child protection.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, GOVERNORS, TEACHERS AND PUPILS

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 prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8 and 12. One hundred and thirty questionnaires were issued to the parents; 25% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE), 13 of which contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that almost all of these parents appreciated the hard work and commitment of the Principal, senior management and the teachers.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) also met with representatives of the governors. The governors expressed their appreciation of the positive ethos within the school, the leadership provided by the Principal and senior management team and the commitment of the teachers.

Just over three-quarters of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the returns from the teachers highlighted the strengths in the work of the school and expressed their full support for the work of the Principal and senior management team.

In discussions held with the pupils, they talked of their appreciation of the support provided by their teachers and the good relationships between the teachers and the pupils.

The Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and a representative of the governors about the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement which it is currently implementing. Among the strengths are:

- the caring and supportive ethos;
- the policy and procedures for addressing bullying issues and encouraging good relations amongst the pupils; and
- the strong and effective leadership of the senior teacher and other key personnel involved in pastoral care.

The few areas for improvement identified include the need to:

- consult further with the pupils and parents when revising policies and procedures; and
- develop a stronger sense of team-work and more collaborative links within the pastoral system of the school in the best interests of all of the pupils.

1.5 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The school's programme for the promotion of health and well-being has important strengths. Attention is paid to the development and implementation of healthy eating and physical activity programmes, for example the removal of the tuck-shop, sourcing healthy drinks vending provision, canteen break provision, and ease of access to drinking water throughout the school day, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. The few areas for improvement identified include the need to appoint a Health Education Co-ordinator as a single point of contact to assist in making the delivery of health education more cohesive, and place a stronger focus on monitoring and evaluation efforts to benchmark compliance and progress with ongoing food-related health initiatives.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 STANDARDS

The pupils achieve very good standards in examinations. Over the past three years, the examination results at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level are well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar non-selective schools. In 2007, 61% of the year 12 pupils achieved grades A* to C in five or more subjects. In almost all subjects offered at GCSE level, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to E was above or within five percentage points of the corresponding NI average. More details about the examination results are provided in Appendix 3.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of teaching in almost all the lessons observed was sound, in most cases it was consistently good or better and in a small number it was excellent.

In the best practice clear learning outcomes are shared with the pupils, a varied range of learning and teaching maintains their interest and motivation and targets for progression are identified and agreed with individual pupils. In a minority of lessons, however, there is over direction by the teachers and insufficient opportunities for active participation by the pupils and interaction between teachers and pupils. In these lessons the pupils become increasingly passive and their motivation and interest declines.

2.3 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The senior management team, comprising the Principal, the Vice-principal and the senior teacher, are committed, hard-working and function well as a mutually supportive, cohesive team. Under the leadership of the Principal, the school has established a good range of external collaborative links and partnerships which support and extend the school curriculum and underpins the high regard in which the school is held by the local community.

Appropriately, the school has recently completed a comprehensive review and evaluation of its work; the action plans produced as a consequence of the review provide clear strategic direction for the school. However, embedding a culture of self evaluation at all levels within the school to inform school development planning processes is at an early stage of development and there is a need to establish stronger collaborative partnerships, across the school to enable all staff to contribute to school improvement. 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 agreed action plans.

There is a need to ensure that department development plans reflect whole-school priorities. The school development plan sets out agreed priorities for improvement but needs to be developed further to meet more fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the commitment of the Principal, the senior management team, and the staff to the school and the pupils;
- the very friendly, well-mannered and co-operative pupils;
- the quality of relationships at all levels within the school;
- the quality of pastoral care provision;
- the quality of teaching, which was mostly good and on a few occasions excellent; and

- the good examination results at GCSE level.

Areas for Improvement:

- the further development of a culture of self-evaluation and critical reflective practice, at all levels, to promote the improvement of learning and teaching across the school; and
- strengthen the school's strategic planning and development through the introduction of more rigorous monitoring and evaluation at all levels and through more effective communication;

4. **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the school has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

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

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Rathfriland High
 ii. School Reference Number: 521-0127
 iii. Age Range: 11-16
 iv. Status: Secondary Controlled
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 22.10.07
 vi. Area of Study: Standard

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 8 Intake	38	40	52	72	60
Total enrolment	214	213	227	260	271

1.3 Attendance

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	Average 2006/07	NI Average 2005/06
% Attendance	94	95	92	90	91	93	90

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 18.2 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.746
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.9 iv. Numbers of Teachers involved in Area of Study: (Focused Only) 6

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	31	40	33	22	28	154
Enrolment: Girls	29	31	22	21	14	117
Enrolment: Total	60	71	55	43	42	271
PTR	14.8	16.2	15.3	15.3	12.5	

1.5 Leavers Destinations

2005/06	Year 12	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	43	
Another School	23%	8.3
Employment	7%	12
Full-time Further Education	65%	37.6
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A
Full-time Training	5%	34.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	4.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.5

APPENDIX 2

1.6 NAME OF SCHOOL: Rathfriland High School **SCHOOL YEAR:** 2006/2007

GCSE	2005	2006	2007
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	86.05	100	94.12
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	65.12	55.81	60.78
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86.05	86.05	90.2

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 subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2006, 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	English English Literature Geography Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Religious Studies Technology & Design	Home Economics	Business Studies French Double Award Science 1 st Subject Single Award Science	Art & Design History Learning for Life and Work Sport/PE Studies	
GCSE A-E	English French Geography Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Religious Studies Single Award Science Technology & Design	Business Studies	English Literature History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work Double Award Science 1 st Subject	Art & Design Sport/PE Studies	

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			Art & Design Music	English Literature Double Award Science 1 st Subject	Business Studies English French Geography History Home Economics Learning for Life and Work Mathematics Motor Vehicle Studies Religious Studies Single Award Science Sport/PE Studies Technology & Design
GCSE A-E	Art & Design English Literature Double Award Science 1 st Subject	English History Home Economics Music Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies French Geography Learning for Life and Work Mathematics Religious studies Single Award Science Technology & Design	Motor Vehicle Studies	

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