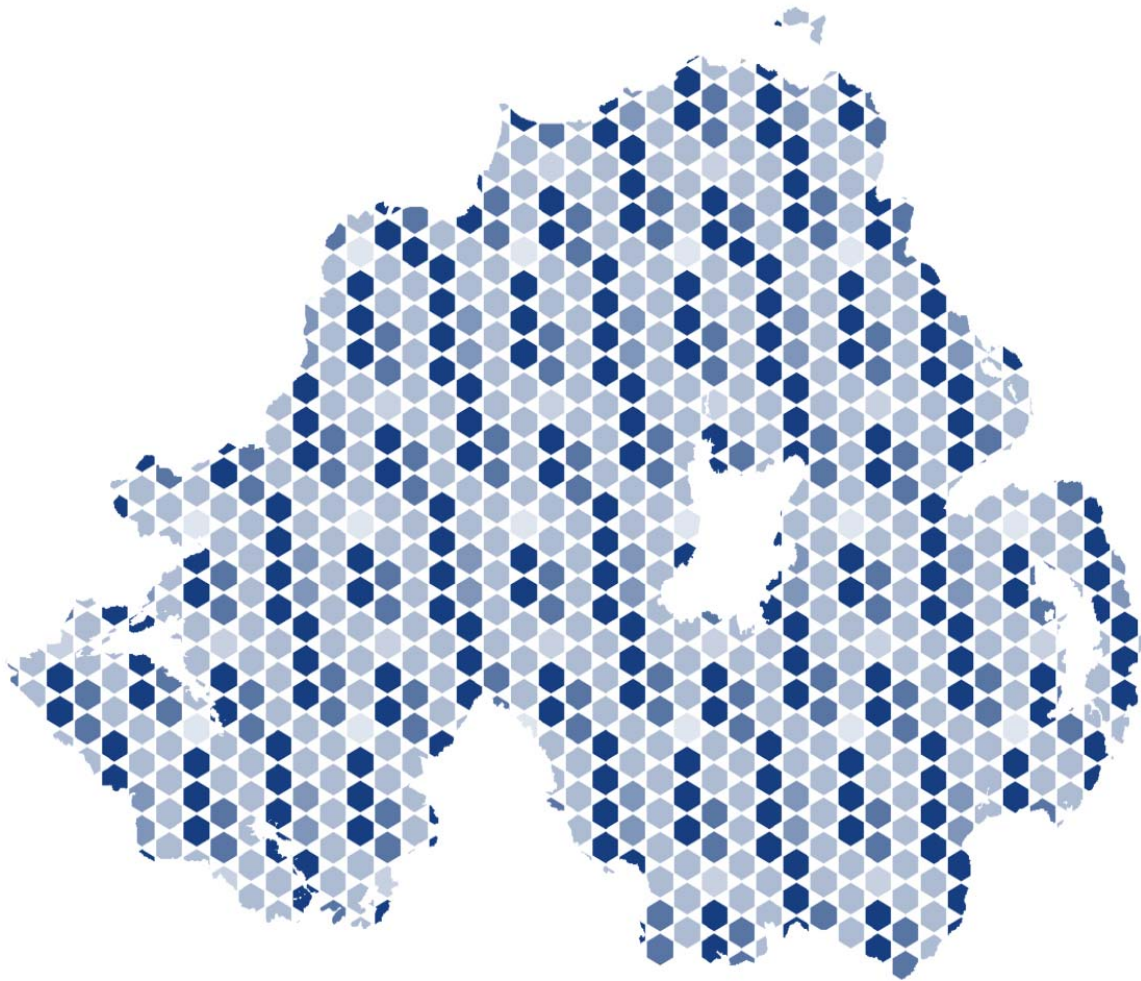


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Mount Lourdes Grammar
School, Enniskillen

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

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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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Mount Lourdes is an 11-18 voluntary grammar school for girls established 100 years ago and situated on a spacious site overlooking the town of Enniskillen. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of accommodation and resources with the recent completion of a major refurbishment programme. The pupils are drawn from the town and the wider rural areas within an approximate 30 mile radius. Although the school had a slight rise in the intake of year 8 pupils in 2009, the overall enrolment for the school of 776 has been declining since 2004 as required by the intake quotas set by the Department of Education. At the time of the inspection, most of the pupils in years 8 to 12 had obtained a grade A or B in the Transfer Procedure. The school has identified 8% of the pupils who require additional support in their learning; approximately 9% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. In the current school year, the school enrolled 29% of its year 13 pupils from non-selective schools.

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) and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

One hundred and fifty-six questionnaires issued to parents; 37% (57) were returned with 31 containing written comments. The responses from the questionnaires, and the majority of the comments from the parents demonstrated very strong appreciation of the school. In particular, the parents praised the values of the school, the excellent ethos, the outstanding pastoral care and the school's holistic approach to education.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school and emphasised their considerable appreciation of the commitment and dedication of the Principal and staff. They highlighted their own active role in contributing to and supporting the life and work of the school. In this, the school's centenary year, the governors spoke of their admiration of the ability of those in the school, to address successfully, both now and in previous years, the pupils' academic and pastoral needs.

Three-quarters of the teachers and of the support staff completed confidential questionnaires with 22 providing written comments. The vast majority of the staff commented on their sense of pride and privilege in working in what they regarded as a unique school, the outstanding relationships at all levels, their willingness to work hard as team members and their sense of being valued by the senior staff and by the Principal, whose leadership they describe as inspirational.

In discussions held with the pupils, they talked enthusiastically about the support provided by their teachers. The pupils reported that they feel safe in the school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns.

The very few concerns emerging from the parent and staff questionnaires were shared with the Principal and representatives of the governors.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, and leadership and management at all levels and, in addition, on the provision for English, mathematics and physical education. The school's provision for pastoral care, careers education and learning support, and the arrangements for child protection, were also evaluated, as well as the school's approach towards promoting healthy eating and physical activity. As an additional evidence base for the inspection, inspectors observed classes in a wide range of other subjects.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

When, as was most often the case, the teachers have high expectations, the pupils respond enthusiastically and take pride in their work which is presented to a very high standard; they also demonstrated very good levels of personal competence through their independent learning. The school offers a comprehensive range of subjects at both General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level. The school is taking a lead in the Fermanagh Area Learning community in broadening its provision with the addition of a number of applied and vocational subjects.

The pupils' achievement in grades A*-C in at least seven subjects including English and mathematics is well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar selective schools although the school figure has declined over the previous three years. Over the previous three years, the GCSE results at grades A*-B in most subjects were within or above five percentage points of the respective NI average. In a significant minority of subjects, these results are more than ten percentage points above the NI average.

The percentage of pupils achieving grade A-C in three or more A Levels has also decreased over the past three years, however the percentage has remained well above the average for similar schools. Almost all A Level subjects are more than five percentage points above the NI average. The senior leadership team has recognised the need to address the dip in attainment and has responded appropriately. More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendices 2 and 3.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The teachers work hard to plan and prepare thoroughly for their lessons. Most of the teaching observed was good or better, and a significant minority was very good or better. In the best practice observed, the lessons were well-structured and well-paced, good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enrich the teaching, there was effective use of open-ended questioning, the pupils were highly engaged and provided with opportunities to take the lead at times, the pupils' thinking skills and oral skills were well developed and there was good progression in the learning. In the minority of lessons, where the practice was less effective, the teaching approach was predominantly that of exposition, the purpose and the criteria for success were not clear, ICT, where it was used, did not enhance the learning and the teaching strategies and resources did not differentiate sufficiently to support all of the pupils.

2.3 LEARNING SUPPORT

In most of the practice observed, the teachers plan appropriately to support individual pupils and, the work provided in lessons is well matched to the needs of the pupils. The co-ordinator liaises effectively with the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators and provides very good leadership. A series of comprehensive policies, action plans and priorities has been devised to guide the work and to cater for the range of learning, social and emotional challenges which affect a small number of the pupils.

2.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. A distinctive, inclusive and caring ethos permeates the life of the school. The school is characterised by mutually respectful working relationships between the pupils and teachers. The pupils' behaviour is exemplary and a high priority is afforded to their emotional well-being. The older pupils have adopted an enhanced sense of responsibility and take opportunities to display leadership in their various roles as prefects, peer mentors and members of the Student Council. The form teachers and heads of year provide valuable formal and informal support to the pupils. The Vice-principal who is responsible for pastoral care provides strategic direction to all aspects of the programme and monitors constantly the outworking of policies and practices related to the overall welfare of the pupils.

2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is very good. This work is led very effectively by two highly committed teachers who have an extensive knowledge of the pupils' skills, dispositions and aspirations. The pupils benefit from high quality careers guidance and support which enable them to make appropriate career decisions. They have access to and use effectively a wide range of appropriate and up-to-date careers information, including relevant ICT software.

2.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the successful efforts made to develop healthy eating habits through a wide variety of high quality school meals and the emphasis placed on sporting opportunities, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2.7 CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

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

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Principal, who has been in post since September 2005, provides highly influential leadership from which the staff take inspiration. She adopts a measured, strategic approach to organisational development, is sensitive to her colleagues' development needs and is supportive of them in managing change. The governors are fully engaged in strategic planning and policy development, providing both challenge and support.

The Principal is capably supported by a senior leadership team who are complementary in the strengths which they bring to their respective leadership and management roles; there is a particular strength in the analytical approach taken to reviewing and evaluating practice and learning outcomes to inform effective action planning for improvement.

There is a clear and appropriate commitment to develop further the leadership role of middle managers, in particular the heads of subjects. The senior leadership team is developing the accountability of heads of department for quality and standards, and enabling them to implement effectively a process of continuing improvement by making use of the analysis of value-added data, and developing further teaching practices for supporting both underachieving and gifted pupils.

While the school development plan (SDP) does not conform fully to the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, many of the elements not recorded are evident in planning processes and practices. There are appropriate plans, reflecting the stated aims of the school and a vision for the future, to strengthen and develop further the capabilities already evident within the school.

In light of the requirement set out in the SDP Regulations, the school needs to revise the SDP. Such a revision would provide a context for all of the staff to consider collectively the findings of this inspection and the innovations taking place in connected learning and to focus, as priorities, on advancing further the learning and teaching and the school improvement policies. The review should address the need to develop a practical, collegial approach for all teachers to observe, evaluate and share the teaching practices which are most effective in developing the pupils as capable, independent, critical thinkers.

The school deploys its financial resources appropriately, providing pupils with a suitable curriculum, making effective use of all available resources and in doing so, providing good value for money.

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding climate of mutual respect and trust, the commitment of the pupils to learning and the outstanding quality and effectiveness of the arrangements for pastoral care;
- the visionary leadership of the Principal, supported by the SMT and by the governors, who have identified appropriate actions to effect further improvement;
- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in external examinations;
- the range and variety of all of the learning and teaching experiences provided for the pupils, both curricular and extra-curricular, to develop the whole person;
- the quality of the teaching, most of which is good or better and a significant minority of which is very good or better; and
- the dedicated and hard-working teachers who value their place in the school and are valued in turn by the school and the wider community.

5. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SUBJECT AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of provision for English is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the quality of the teaching in the lessons observed, most of which was good;
- the good quality of departmental schemes of work and individual teachers' planning;
- the very good standards achieved in public examinations;
- the very good quality of written work across the year groups and the range of opportunities to write for different audiences and purposes;
- the commitment of the newly-appointed head of department; and
- the good start made to developing the use of data analysis to promote improvement.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to provide a wider range of opportunities for the pupils to develop further their oral skills through, for example, more effective questioning.

Mathematics

The quality of provision for mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good or better quality of teaching in a majority of the lessons observed;
- the good levels of individual support provided for the pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- the use of ICT to support the teaching and learning of mathematics;
- the committed and hard-working teachers who prepare thoroughly for lessons;
- the range of strategies being used to promote an interest in mathematics; and
- the effective leadership of the head of department and the start made to self-evaluating the work of the department.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to raise expectations of the pupils' learning and the standards achieved by reviewing the mathematics curriculum and improving the effectiveness of the teachers' questioning.

Physical Education

The quality of the provision for physical education is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very positive working relationships between teachers and pupils;
- the high levels of commitment and dedication to the pupils displayed by the teachers;
- the very good overall standards achieved in physical education including those attained in public examinations at GCE A Level;
- the quality of teaching observed, all of which was very good with a minority of lessons outstanding;
- the leadership and management of the head of department; and
- the extensive range of extra curricular activities and the sporting successes of the school.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Mount Lourdes Grammar v. Date of Inspection: W/C 12/04/10
 ii. School Reference Number: 242-0041 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	107	100	97	95	99
Total enrolment	865	854	830	818	776

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	95.8	95.2	95.3	92.8	92.4	94.5	91.2	94	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

53.58

- iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):

0.652

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

14.483

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Girls	99	93	98	98	104	141	143	776
Enrolment: Total	99	93	98	98	104	141	143	776
PTR	18.445	16.661	15.511	15.362	14.808	12.162	12.636	

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

Year 13	125.6	NI Av Year 13	91.1
Year 14	135.1	NI Av Year 14	86.3

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	13		139	
Another School	38%	20.5	0%	0.9
Employment	8%	5.5	6%	4.8
Full-time Further Education	54%	58.6	4%	7.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	88%	83.5
Full-time Training	0%	9.6	1%	0.6
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.4	0%	1.2
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	4.5	2%	1.4

APPENDIX 3NAME OF SCHOOL: Mount Lourdes GrammarSCHOOL YEAR: 2009/2010

GCSE	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	100	97.44	95.54
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7subjects	97.37	94.02	91.96
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7subjects including English and Mathematics	96.49	92.31	91.07
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	86.18	78.03	79.87
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	96.68	96.21	97.99

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*-B	Design and Technology English Literature German Religious Studies Spanish	French Geography Music	Art and Design Economics English Home Economics Information Technology Irish Mathematics	Double Award Science 1 st Subject History	Drama**
GCSE A*-C		French German Spanish	Art and Design Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject Drama** Economics English English Literature Geography History Home Economics Information Technology Irish Mathematics Music Religious Studies		

GCE A Level A-C	Design and Technology* English Literature Home Economics Information Technology Music* Politics Spanish Sport/PE Studies**	Art and Design Economics Geography History Physics Religious Studies	Biology Chemistry French German* Irish Sociology	Mathematics	
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* Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 30 over three years.

** Denotes subjects which had a total entry of less than 20 over three years.

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*-B		Drama English Information Technology Irish Music Religious Studies	Art and Design Design and Technology Economics English Literature Geography History Home Economics Mathematics	Double Award Science 1 st Subject French German Spanish	
GCSE A*-C	Art and Design Drama English English Literature History Home Economics Information Technology Irish Mathematics Music	Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject Economics French Geography German Religious Studies Spanish			
GCE A Level A-C	Design and Technology English Literature Home Economics Information Technology Music Politics Spanish Sport/PE Studies	Art and Design Economics Geography History Physics Religious Studies	Biology Chemistry French German Irish Sociology		

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