



# BALLYCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

Inspection Report Summary





## Summary

Carried out in January 2012, this latest inspection report of Ballycastle High School closes with a ringing endorsement: “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 pupils.”

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by the school ranged from outstanding to good.

The Department of Education inspection had a triple focus; concentrating initially on the overall effectiveness of the school (the pupils, the curriculum and the school’s leadership); then offering a detailed consideration of the work of the Mathematics, Modern Languages and Science Departments; and, finally, looking at pastoral care, pupils requiring additional support and the school’s curriculum.

### **THE STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY THE PUPILS ARE VERY GOOD**

With regard to the first of these - the school’s effectiveness - the inspectorate presented the following findings. The assessment of the pupils was extremely complimentary, concluding that they “are respectful, courteous and friendly... take great pride in their school and engage fully with the learning process, responding confidently to the high expectations of their teachers.” The report considered the school to be “meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and [the school] has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.” Also highlighted was the “excellent curricular and pastoral links with the neighbouring Cross and Passion College.” The positive benefits of joint post 14 [curricular] provision in fostering good community relations were also noted.

### **THE CURRICULAR PROVISION FOR PUPILS IS OUTSTANDING**

The pioneering work done in Ballycastle in relation to the curriculum has led to the current provision being described as “**outstanding**”. The inspectorate drew attention to the fact that “pupils benefit from an extensive range of formal and informal educational, social and cultural experiences.” The Key Stage 3 curriculum [the range of subjects studied by pupils in Years 8, 9 & 10] is summarised as “appropriately broad and balanced and meets well the needs of the pupils.” At Key Stage 4, and post-16 “the school has extended its curricular offer to include a wide range of applied and vocational courses which meet the pupils’ abilities, interests and career aspirations, thereby underpinning the pupil-centred ethos of the school.” The community dimension to this provision is further emphasised by the acknowledgement that “the range of courses is informed by well-conceived consultation between the two Ballycastle post-primary schools and with local



employers.”

The extent of this joint provision also comes in for commendation: “Over half of the pupils at KS4 and post-16 benefit from shared lessons at Cross and Passion College and the continuing commitment of both schools to improving this arrangement demonstrates a willingness to make the curriculum and the timetable serve the needs of all the pupils.”

The quality of the school’s leadership is summarised as “**very good**”. The judgment of the Principal and Vice-principal is that they “provide highly effective and strategic leadership and have drawn confidence and respect from the pupils, staff and Governors.” There is also positivity with regard to their wider working relationships: “They are well-informed about, and responsive to, the needs of the pupils and the local community and possess complementary leadership skills which promote school improvement and they are supported by the other members of the SMT [Senior Management Team]”. The “quality of the middle management is very good. The heads of department and co-ordinators have responded very positively to the findings of previous inspection visits and are implementing well-informed strategies.... Governors are supportive and are committed fully to the school’s wider collaborations.”

The three departments that were subject to special scrutiny drew the following verdicts on their provision: “mathematics is **very good**, in modern languages it is **good** and in science it is **outstanding**.”

### **THE QUALITY OF THE CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT OF PUPILS IS VERY GOOD**

The final focus was pupil centred. “The quality of provision for SEN [Special Educational Needs] is **good**. The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through the effective use of baseline testing and good individual support is provided by the teachers and the classroom assistants.” Also drawing positive comment was the inclusive nature of the school’s ethos: “The school is strongly committed to supporting pupils who are at risk of marginalisation and, through, effective strategies, ensures their inclusion and retention in school”. This important facet of school life is further emphasised by this finding: “The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is **very good**. The pupils respond well to the caring, and inclusive ethos, which is focused clearly on learning, achievement and mutual respect. There are very good working relationships between the pupils and the staff and the pupils’ behaviour in the classes observed was always excellent.”

The all-round nature of the school’s community care and attention is highlighted in the following series of comments: “The staff ensures, through the well-planned



induction programme, that all new pupils are welcomed into the school community and are given good support... The school gives appropriate priority to developing the pupils' leadership skills and in involving them in decision-making... The pupils from both schools work well together and demonstrate high levels of mutual understanding and respect... The pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.”

The inspectors made this significant value judgment on opportunities afforded to the pupils: “The pupils benefit from an extensive range of formal and informal educational, social and cultural experiences... The provision for Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance is very good.”

This report is complimentary about the school and its position in the community: “the school is held in high regard by the community and its important, collaborative arrangements with Cross and Passion College reveal admirable and highly effective leadership at all levels, including by the Principal, the Principal of Cross and Passion College and other key personnel in the High School and the College... the school meets the needs and expectations of the school and the wider community very effectively.”

The full report is available at:

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/standard-inspection-ballycastle-high-school-321-0124.pdf>