Education and Training Inspectorate

An Evaluation of

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Inspected: 2007-2008

eti

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

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE   CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   In September 2005, The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 became statutory.

1.2   The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 apply to all school development plans prepared after 1 September 2005 and aim to bring consistency to the content of school development plans and to provide a context and framework within which the school can monitor, evaluate and improve the nature of its provision and the standards achieved by its pupils. The regulations and guidance state that an effective plan will assist the school in identifying and building on its strengths and in outlining its areas for improvement so that these can be addressed. In doing so, it offers an effective way to use productively the collective expertise of all the staff, to promote teamwork, and to plan for and implement change for improvement.

1.3   The regulations detail the following:

□   matters to be dealt with by a school development plan;

□   the period for which a school development plan is to have effect;

□   publication of a school development plan; and

□   revision of a school development plan.

1.4   In the preparation and revision of the school's plan, the Board of Governors must consult with the Principal and consider the findings from inspection and any guidance given by the Department, the relevant Education and Library Board and in the case of Catholic maintained schools, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

1.5   In October 2007, the Department of Education (DE) commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) to evaluate the level of implementation of the School Development Plans (SDP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

1.6   This report is based on the findings of the survey, which involved visits to 48 primary, post-primary and special schools (see Appendix) from across the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), carried out between October 2007 and May 2008. The report also takes account of the evaluations of the schools' development planning processes contained within a sample of primary and post-primary inspection reports for the period covering the 2007-2008 inspection cycle.

1.7   During the course of the survey, the Inspectorate held discussions with principals, vice-principals and teachers at senior and middle management levels with responsibility for guiding and implementing the school development planning process within their schools. In addition, relevant curriculum documentation linked to the SDP, including data on standards and school policies, was examined. The graphs in this report provide an evaluation of the quality of school development planning in primary and post-primary schools of the statutory regulations identified in the DE circular 2005/19.

1.8   A number of quantitative terms are used throughout the report to present the findings. These terms 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%

2. MAIN FINDINGS (Primary and Post-Primary combined)

2.1 All of the schools surveyed have an SDP in place and in most of these it covers a period of three years. A significant minority of the schools are in full compliance; a majority are in partial compliance; and a very small number are not compliant with the statutory regulations.

2.2 In the presentation of the school development plan, the majority of schools follow the structure outlined in the DE schedule, using a common framework with supporting action plans and procedures for implementation. A small number of schools present their plans in a format which either lacks sufficient clarity about the planned development of the school, or the necessary information to be useful to the range of stakeholders who need to be involved in the SDP process.

2.3 In a minority of schools other models of school development planning are being used to guide and support the SDP process such as Investors in People and the European Foundation for Quality Management Business Model. While these SDPs do not meet fully with the requirements of the statutory regulations, the SDP is reflective of and underpins well a whole-school development and improvement process.

2.3 Most of the principals report that they had or were about to submit their plan to the Education and Library Board in which their school is located. A majority of the schools expressed the view that they would welcome relevant evaluative feedback from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) and in the case of maintained schools, the CCMS on the quality of their plans.

2.4 In the majority of the schools, the development planning process is well embedded within the leadership and management culture of the school. In the best practice, the schools make good use of relevant published materials, including the Inspectorate's 'Together Towards Improvement', DE's 'School Development Planning Guidance, June 2005' and guidance materials prepared by CASS, and the relevant Employing Authorities to support and contextualise their planning.

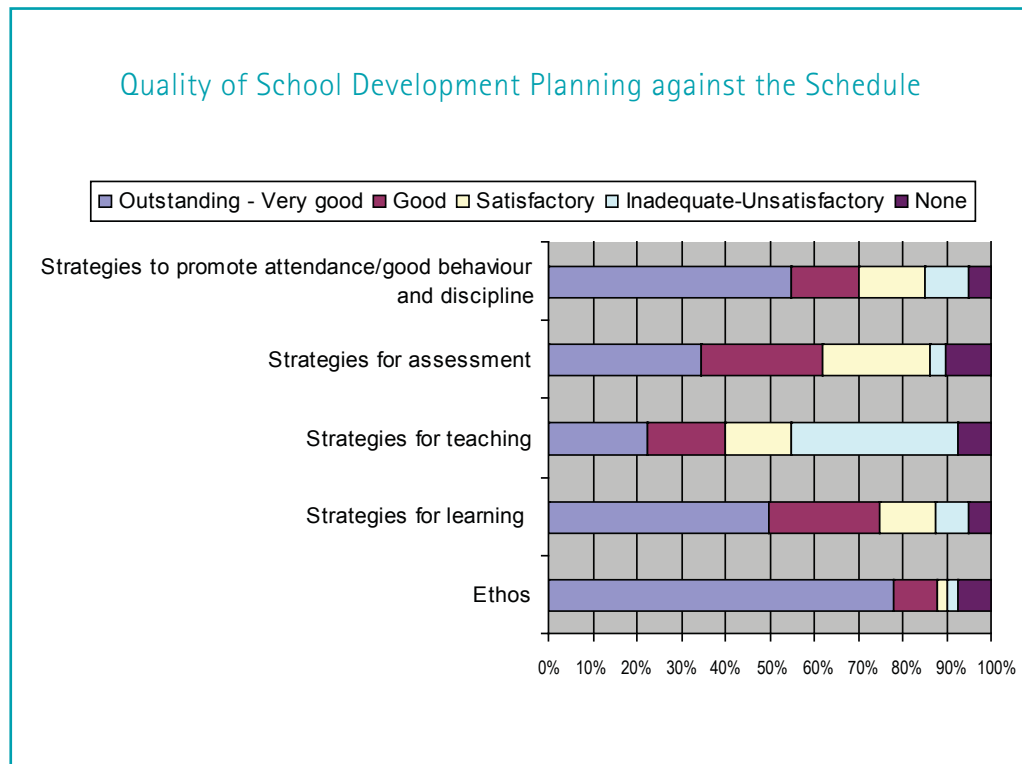## Quality of School Development Planning against the Schedule

Figure 1

2.5   In the majority of the schools (Figure1), there is a good balance between issues related to improving the quality of the learning, the standards achieved, and issues focused on organisational and resource development. The SDPs in these schools are linked closely to the aims of the school and deal appropriately with pastoral and curriculum matters, including those related to the implementation of the revised curriculum. In the best practice, the SDP includes specific and detailed actions to address DE's priorities in raising standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). In a minority of the schools, the development plans do not address adequately the quality of teaching and learning, and planned improvements in standards and achievements. In a small number of schools, the plans contain too many priorities while others fail to address adequately curricular matters and are narrowly focused on organisational, accommodation and resource issues.
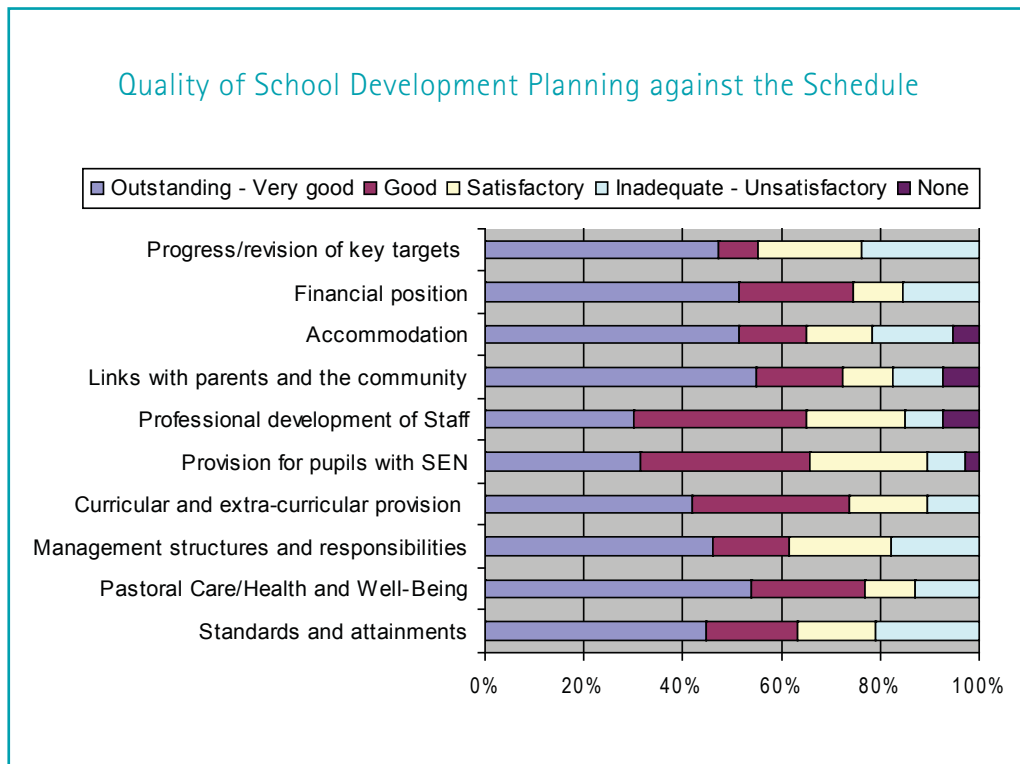
Quality of School Development Planning against the Schedule

☐ Outstanding - Very good ■ Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Inadequate - Unsatisfactory ■ None

Progress/revision of key targets
Financial position
Accommodation
Links with parents and the community
Professional development of Staff
Provision for pupils with SEN
Curricular and extra-curricular provision
Management structures and responsibilities
Pastoral Care/Health and Well-Being
Standards and attainments

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Figure 2

2.6   In the majority of schools, the SDP identifies the steps which the school intends
       to take to achieve its objectives. This often includes an evaluation of previous
       teaching and learning, school developments, review of targets (Figure 2), and
       details of specific targets to be achieved, and identifies clear success criteria for
       improvement. In the least effective SDPs, there is no evaluation of previous work,
       any indication of how the targets have been arrived at, how and by whom they are
       going to be monitored and evaluated, or any identification of appropriate criteria to
       monitor implementation and measure success.

2.7   Most of the development plans contain a copy of the school's annual financial
       outturn statement; however, very few plans include detailed financial planning
       to cover the three year period of the SDP. Often there is little detail, in either the
       development plan or the accompanying action plans, concerning costs for staff
       training, staff time, substitute cover, resourcing and the use of outside agencies
       including other funding streams to support the implementation of the plan.

2.8   Most of the schools make specific reference in their planning to the Professional Review and Staff Development (PRSD) scheme. In the best practice, schools have aligned appropriately the scheme with priorities identified in the SDP.

2.9   The majority of schools include appropriately the use of quantitative and qualitative data to inform the development planning process, such as external examination results, key stage assessment information, internal assessment data and information derived from attitudinal surveys. A significant minority of both primary and post-primary schools do not make effective use of target-setting and benchmarking data, for example, based on DE circulars, to inform the SDP priorities or to demonstrate success.
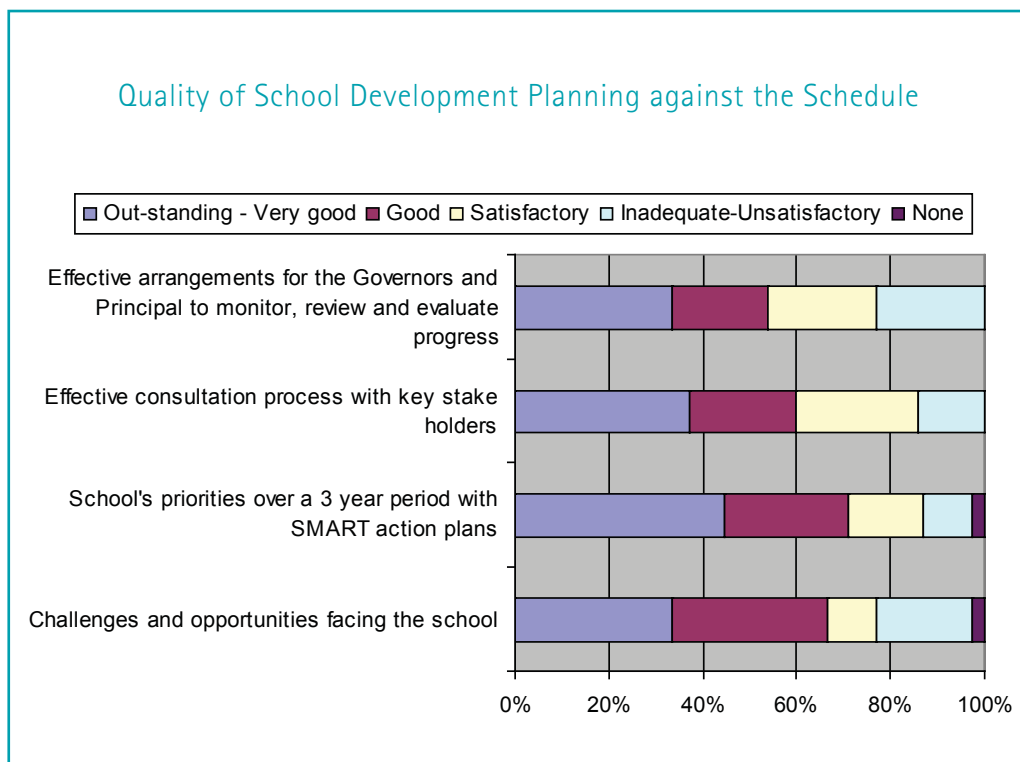
Quality of School Development Planning against the Schedule

Legend: ■ Out-standing - Very good ■ Good □ Satisfactory □ Inadequate-Unsatisfactory ■ None

- Effective arrangements for the Governors and Principal to monitor, review and evaluate progress
- Effective consultation process with key stake holders
- School's priorities over a 3 year period with SMART action plans
- Challenges and opportunities facing the school

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Figure 3

2.10   The majority of schools make appropriate reference in their SDPs to the various challenges and opportunities facing their schools. In a significant minority of the schools, particularly in those schools that are experiencing declining enrolments or other specific educational challenges, there is little cognisance taken of these factors in their development planning processes (Figure 3).

2.11   The majority of schools draw upon an appropriate evidence base to determine the nature and priorities of the plan. They consult extensively with staff when formulating their SDPs; they use the outcomes of School Development Days (SDDs), staff focus groups and questionnaires to make submissions to senior management teams. In a minority of schools, little or no formal consultation takes place to identify the key priorities for the SDP. While the majority of schools have developed effective procedures to audit the views of pupils, including pupil-councils, pupil-focus groups and questionnaires on specific aspects of the plan, in a minority of schools this process is limited.

2.12   Most schools report that parents are consulted on specific aspects of the plan, such as policies related to homework, behaviour, pastoral care and child protection and on issues linked to the health and well being of the pupils. Most schools recognise that more could be done to communicate and engage parents in curriculum matters, particularly in relation to target-setting to improve standards and attainments.

2.13   A significant minority of principals report that consultation with their governors on school development planning is limited. In most schools, the SDP is presented to governors for formal adoption; in a significant minority of schools, there are no clear procedures in place by which the governors can systematically monitor, review and evaluate the implementation and impact of the SDP on the life and work of the school.

3. MAIN FINDINGS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

3.1 The following strengths are identified in those primary schools where there are strengths in meeting the requirements of Circular 2005/19 and in the development planning process:

❑ the majority of the schools make appropriate reference to standards and include specific targets for literacy and numeracy particularly for the current academic year and with a strong focus on the quality of teaching and learning;

❑ good use is made of self-evaluation support materials and quality indicators such as those indicated in Together Towards Improvement, internal and DE benchmarking data to help schools to set their own improvement priorities;

❑ the principals encourage others to undertake a leadership role and support a culture of self-evaluation wherein there is a sharing of responsibility for monitoring and evaluation from classroom teacher level through to senior management level;

❑ parents are well consulted about aspects of the SDP; for example, pastoral care, discipline and the quality of the ethos; most schools involve the governors in the SDP process mainly on issues to do with staffing, enrolment, special educational needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language provision; and

❑ the PRSD process continues to evolve and the majority of staff development courses are aligned well to the priorities identified in the SDP; almost all schools linked effectively their training needs to the revised curriculum training programmes.

3.2 In those primary schools where there are areas for improvement in meeting the requirements of Circular 2005/19 and in the development planning process, the governors need to:

- ❑ take a more proactive role in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the school development plan on a regular basis in the following key areas: the management of staff attendance, pastoral care policy and procedures, management structures, teaching and learning, accommodation, financial management, the setting and revision of targets defined as DE priorities in literacy and numeracy;

- ❑ ensure that there is strong commitment and engagement from the principal and the leadership team to the planning process, including the identification of clear roles and responsibilities and communication arrangements;

- ❑ ensure that a rigorous and robust process of review is undertaken on any previous SDP targets set or work carried out by the school;

- ❑ ensure that all staff are involved in the planning process and that the children and parents are consulted and their contributions valued;

- ❑ use more effectively the schedule as set out in the statutory guidelines as a framework for planning;

- ❑ prioritise the areas for improvement and ensure they are appropriate;

- ❑ ensure that learning and teaching and the standards that the children achieve are at the centre of the development planning process; and

- ❑ make more effective use of quantitative and qualitative school data, and DE benchmarking data to inform the SDP priorities, in particular, with reference to target-setting for literacy and numeracy.

4. MAIN FINDINGS IN POST–PRIMARY SCHOOLS

4.1   The following strengths are identified in those post-primary schools where there are strengths in meeting the requirements of Circular 2005/19 and in the development planning process:

❑   the dedicated and steadfast commitment from leadership and management towards planning for improvement;

❑   the high value given to the contributions of staff by the leadership and management within the school leading to an increased sense of ownership and greater breadth of commitment to development planning;

❑   the systematic and planned approach in providing staff development opportunities which are aligned well to the SDP;

❑   the identification of whole school priorities including literacy, numeracy and ICT which are successfully integrated into the work of the school with appropriate baselines and SMART[1] targets for improvement;

❑   the focus on the pupils' learning and their attainments being central to the development planning process;

❑   the appropriate balance struck between targets to improve and support the pupils' pastoral development including health and well-being and their attainments in public examinations;

❑   the good use of quantitative and qualitative information to inform future planning including information obtained from the emerging culture of self-evaluation, particularly in relation to peer classroom observations facilitated through PRSD;

❑   the well embedded culture of accountability at all levels within the school; and

1   S-Specific M-Measurable A-Achievable R-Realistic T-Time-bound

❑ the regular and systematic review and evaluation of progress, as prioritised in the school development plan.

4.2 In those post-primary schools where there are areas for improvement in meeting the requirements of Circular 2005/19 and in the development planning process, the governors need to:

❑ take a more proactive role in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the school development plan on a regular basis in the following key areas: the management of staff attendance, pastoral care policy and procedures, management structures, teaching and learning, accommodation, financial management, the setting and revision of targets defined as DE priorities in literacy and numeracy;

❑ ensure that there is strong commitment and engagement from the principal and the leadership team to the planning process, including the identification of clear roles and responsibilities and communication arrangements;

❑ ensure that a rigorous and robust process of review is undertaken on any previous SDP targets or work carried out by the school;

❑ ensure that all staff are involved in the planning process and that pupils and parents are consulted, and their contributions valued;

❑ use more effectively the schedule as set out in the statutory guidelines as a framework for planning;

❑ prioritise the areas for improvement and ensure they are appropriate;

❑ ensure that pupils' learning and the standards they achieve are at the centre of the development planning process; and

❑ make more effective use of quantitative and qualitative school data, and DE benchmarking data to inform the SDP priorities, in particular, with reference to target-setting for literacy and numeracy.

5. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS COMMON TO PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY

5.1   It is clear that the school development and planning process in both primary and post-primary schools have many similarities; in almost all schools the preparations for educational changes in the revised curriculum and the attention to PRSD are evident in the SDPs. The main areas for improvement in the SDP process common to both sectors include the need for:

❑   a more proactive role for governors;

❑   improved monitoring and evaluation, by the principal, leadership team and staff;

❑   better consultation arrangements with pupils and parents;

❑   a stronger focus on teaching and learning outcomes and pupils' attainment;

❑   improved target-setting in literacy and numeracy; and

❑   areas for improvement to be prioritised over the three-year period of the plan.

6.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   The statutory regulations set out a common framework to assist schools in their school development planning processes. The evaluation has shown that in those schools where effective development planning is part of the school culture, it is making a positive contribution to the motivation of staff, the quality of learning and teaching and the standards which the learners attain. While all of the schools visited during the survey have a SDP in place, there is variation in the level of compliance in meeting the regulations, with many schools struggling with aspects of the development planning process, particularly in relation to monitoring and evaluating and the engagement of the governors.

6.2   School leaders[2] need to:

❑   develop further self-evaluation processes including the analysis of performance and target-setting data and be more evaluative in the use of this information to promote improvement in learning, teaching, achievements and standards;

❑   keep the changing context of the school under review in order to manage change, including staffing and the budget, to set targets for school improvement and to allocate resources to ensure equality of opportunity for all the learners; and

❑   improve consultation with parents and children and young people in order to encourage active partnerships in the school development planning process.

6.3   Education and Library Boards (and subsequently ESA) need to:

❑   provide additional support for school governors to assist them in their strategic role in monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of the SDP; and

---

2   *School leaders refers to the governors and the principal.*

❑ provide feedback to all schools on the quality of their SDPs and in particular target support, advice and guidance needed by those schools who have difficulty in leading and managing the school development and planning process.

6.4 The Department of Education needs to:

❑ provide guidance to ELBs and educational partners on their roles and responsibilities in providing feedback to individual schools on the quality and effectiveness of their SDP including the effectiveness and use of financial resources to support the plan;

❑ develop a common phase-related reporting format for all schools, to be included in the SDP, in relation to base lining and the identification of targets to improve overall standards and attainments including numeracy and literacy; and

❑ ensure that revised guidance DE provides is sufficiently flexible to allow schools to use a range of relevant processes in formulating their plans, and take account of the use of other development planning approaches used by schools to effect improvement.

Appendix

SCHOOLS VISITED DURING THE SURVEY

Primary Schools

WELB

Enniskillen Model Primary School
St Patrick's Primary School, Castlederg
Holy Trinity Primary School, Enniskillen
Recarson Primary School, Omagh
Holy Family Primary School, Derry
Longtower Primary School, Derry

SELB

Bush Primary School, Dungannon
Bridge Integrated Primary School
Cloughoge Primary School, Newry
Derrylatinee Primary School, Dungannon

SEELB

All Childrens Integrated Primary School, Newcastle
Brownlee Primary School, Lisburn
Kirkistown Primary School, Newtownards
Kircubbin Primary School, Newtownards
St Luke's Primary School, Twinbrook

NEELB

Castleroe Primary School, Coleraine
Macosquin Primary, Coleraine
Moyle Primary School, Larne
St Anthony's Primary School, Larne
St Patrick's Primary School, Loughiel

BELB
Botanic Primary School, Belfast
Springhill Primary School, Belfast
St Therese of Lisieux Primary School, Belfast
Harding Memorial Primary School, Belfast
Holy Rosary Primary School, Belfast

Post–Primary Schools

WELB
Castlederg High School
Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen
Sacred Heart College, Omagh
St Fanchea's College, Enniskillen
St Michael's College, Enniskillen

SELB
Killicomaine Junior High School, Portadown
Integrated College, Dungannon
St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan
Tandragee Junior High School

SEELB
De La Salle High School, Downpatrick
Laurelhill Community College, Lisburn
Saintfield High School
St Colm's High School, Twinbrook
Sullivan Upper School, Holywood

NEELB
Loreto College, Coleraine
Sperrin Integrated College, Magherafelt
Jordanstown Special School, Newtownabbey

BELB

Hunterhouse College, Belfast
Rathmore Grammar School, Belfast
Dominican College, Fortwilliam
St Rose's High School, Belfast
Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast
Wellington College, Belfast