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

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Education and Training Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the Quality of: Strategic Planning; Learning; and Transition Arrangements for Education and Training in the WEST BELFAST AREA

Area-Based Inspection: March-April 2009

Contents

Section Page

Part One

SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. THE CONTEXT OF THE AREA 2

3. THE EVALUATION 3

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS 5

Part Two

CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

5. CONCLUSION 9

6. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT 9

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - The Organisations included in the Survey 11

APPENDIX 2 - Quantitative Information 13

Quantitative Terms

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%

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. Introduction

1.1 Many challenges face society and this is now coupled with constant changes in the skills required in the labour market. Often these challenges are driven by rapid technological change and global rather than "single country" economic activity. As the demands of working life change, learners leaving school, college or university face challenges and choices that are, in many ways, very different from those faced by previous generations. All learners will need to understand better how their individual programmes of learning in their different phases of learning connect, and how that learning connects to opportunities for them and for their communities. Those responsible for education and training need to work together more effectively at key transition points, in order to build on the skills, knowledge and attributes which the learner has developed in the preceding phase.

1.2 In this inspection, the Inspectorate evaluated the overall effectiveness of the work by educational organisations in making connections for learning, for children and young people in the West Belfast area. The focus of this area-based inspection reflects the key strategic priorities identified in the most recent Chief Inspector's report namely:

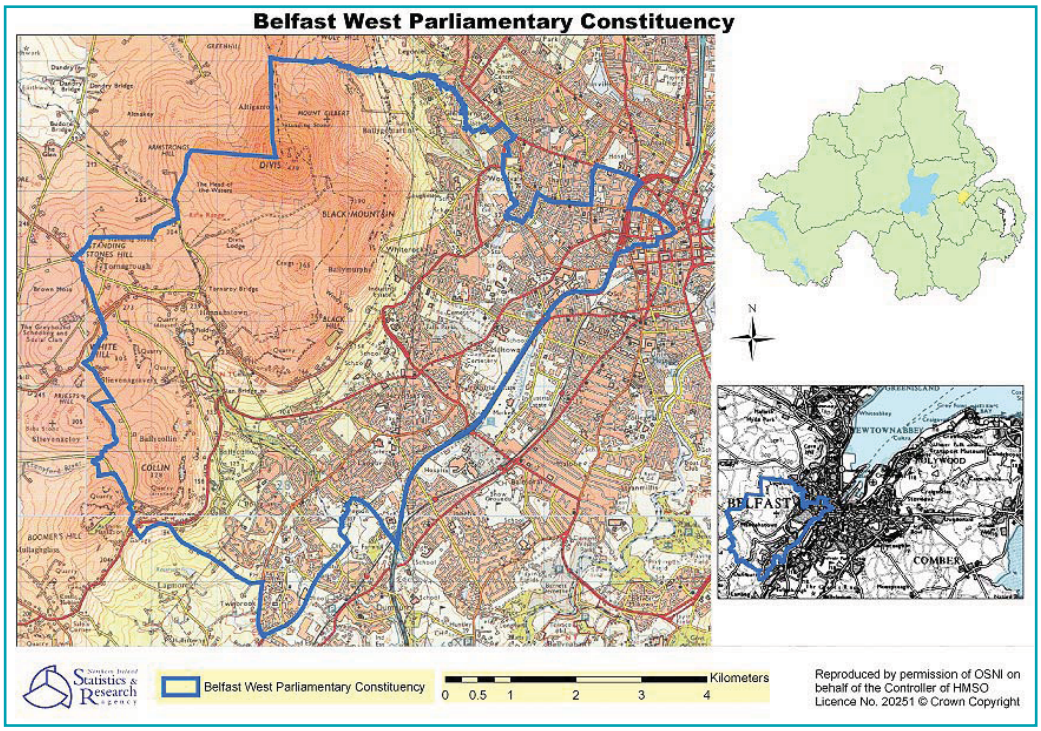
- those with the responsibility for an individual's education need to build more effectively on the skills, knowledge and attributes which the learner has developed in the preceding phase;
- they need to help learners understand better the connections in their individual programmes of learning, and how that learning connects to a better future for them and their community; and
- educational leaders need to be confident that they are including all learners and working together to help them to achieve their full potential.

1.3 This area-based inspection assesses the extent to which a range of organisations in the West Belfast area work together to provide coherent and relevant educational pathways for learners. This inspection model has been developed mainly to inform policy and provision at a strategic level in order to assist the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS), the employing authorities, and the relevant government departments to plan for and provide an education system which meets the demands for a flexible, appropriately trained workforce in a rapidly changing employment market. One major

challenge facing the education system, is that Northern Ireland (NI) has the highest proportion (almost 21%) of the working-age population in the United Kingdom (UK) with no qualifications.

2. The Context of the Area

2.1 The West Belfast Parliamentary Area, of which this inspection covered a large part, stretches west from the Shankill Road and the Falls Road to Colin Glen, and south from Glencairn to Twinbrook. Almost 83 % of the population come from a Catholic community background and 16.2% from a 'Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)' community background. The overall unemployment levels and levels of economic deprivation are among the highest in Northern Ireland.



2.2 Nearly 80% of the West Belfast population live in the most deprived Super Output Areas[1] in Northern Ireland (NI). The West Belfast parliamentary constituency has the highest percentage of a working age population claiming benefits of any constituency in NI, at 8.9% of the working age population compared to the NI average of 4.7%.[2]

[1] Super Output Areas (SOA) are used within the Noble Measures of Multiple Deprivation (MMD) to enable comparative analysis of small areas across Northern Ireland. The final rank given to an individual SOA is based upon several indicative domains including: income, health, employment, education, environment, services and crime/disorder.

[2] (Source: The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Claimant count Publication of Claimant Count of Northern Ireland Parliamentary Constituencies July 2009)

2.3 Approximately 40% of the post-primary learners are entitled to free school meals and 27% require additional support with their learning. These values are almost twice the respective NI averages.

2.4 Many of the organisations serving the learners in the West Belfast Parliamentary Area, of which this inspection covered a large part, work in particularly challenging social, economic and educational circumstances. Nonetheless, in the meetings and discussions with stakeholders, and in the visits to the large sample of organisations, there was a strong sense of community spirit. This provides a supportive and committed environment in which all of the organisations are working hard to support and meet the educational and social needs of the learners in their care.

2.5 Information about the qualifications and destinations of school leavers is provided in Appendix 2.

3. The Evaluation

3.1 The area-based inspection was carried out in March and April 2009 and the evidence base comes from visits to a large sample of organisations within the area.

3.2 The evaluation was structured around three main areas:

- strategic planning for education and training within the area;
- the quality of learning for young people within the area; and
- the effectiveness of the transition arrangements for young people within and across the various sectors.[3]

3.3 The organisations visited included: three pre-school centres, five primary schools, four post-primary schools, Alternative Education Provision (AEP) in two centres, a special school, a training organisation, the Belfast Metropolitan College, and four youth settings (the organisations visited are listed in Appendix 1).

[3] Key transition points include transition from pre-school to primary school, primary school to post-primary schools, and from post-primary school to further education and training. It may also refer to changes between Key Stage 1 and 2 within a primary school and Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16 at post-primary level.

3.4 The evidence base used included:

- lesson observations;
- self- evaluation reports, furnished by each of the organisations visited and by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), reporting their own evaluation of the quality of provision and outcomes in the three main areas inspected.
- discussions with learners, groups of parents and members of Boards of Governors across the organisations visited;
- discussions with staff, including principals/leaders, governors, members of senior leadership/management teams and middle managers, teachers, lecturers and trainers;
- an evaluation of pastoral care and child protection arrangements in the organisations visited;
- discussions with officers from the CASS of the BELB;
- discussions with a wide range of other stakeholders, including CCMS, employers, businesses, and community groups;
- discussions with representatives of, and attendance at, a meeting of the West Belfast Area learning Community (WBALC);
- discussions with representatives of the Full Service Community Network (FSCN)[4]; and
- discussions with officers from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) careers service who work in schools in West Belfast.

3.5 The interviews with the BELB, CCMS and the educational organisations visited were structured around the self-evaluative reports produced by officers from these bodies. The responses produced and the resulting discussion between the inspection team and the organisations, made an invaluable contribution to the inspection process.

The strengths and areas for development in each of the three foci of the inspection are outlined in the next section of the report.

[4] The Full Service Community Network (FSCN) is based in premises in Corpus Christi College, Belfast. It was established in November 2007 and supports the delivery of family support services addressing education, health and employability needs in the greater Falls and Upper Springfield areas of West Belfast through integrated, collaborative working across a range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

4. Summary of Main Findings

4.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

4.2.1 The main strengths are:

- the good or better development planning within individual organisations;
- the very good collaborative working arrangements between the primary schools and feeder pre-school provision; and
- the strong commitment of the various local community and business networks to support the work of the schools/organisations particularly in raising standards and improving career pathways, as evidenced in the various discussions.

4.2.2 The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- align the strategic and operational plans of organisations and their key partners within the area;
- align the above plans with the overall policies as set by DE and DEL;
- provide more opportunities for staff to share good practice and expertise across phases, particularly between staff involved in teaching at the key transition stages; and
- develop more effective self-evaluation arrangements within individual organisations and across the geographical area, focusing in particular on improving further the quality of education and training provision and the standards achieved by learners.

4.3 THE QUALITY OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

4.3.1 The main strengths are:

- the good or better quality of learning within individual organisations, in the majority of the sessions observed;
- the appropriate strong emphasis by the individual organisations, supported by the CASS of the BELB, on improving standards in literacy and numeracy throughout each learner's time at school;
- the good or better motivation of most learners across all phases to achieve success in their education;

- the good range of informal learning experiences provided by the organisations which develops the learners' self esteem and their ability to work collaboratively with their peers and teachers;

- the strong commitment by the organisations and stakeholders to, and the good arrangements for, supporting the various pastoral needs of the learners; and

- the good use of the expertise within the BELB to support teachers in developing appropriate strategies to support those learners whose behaviour is challenging.

4.3.2 The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- develop a shared approach to curriculum planning and support across organisations and phases, focusing in particular on providing continuity and progression for young people in their learning, and on the dissemination of the most effective approaches to learning and teaching;

- provide all learners with a broad and coherent post-16 curriculum;

- develop quality assurance arrangements at organisational and area levels to evaluate and improve the coherence in and relevance of the learners' educational programmes;

- improve the outcomes in public examinations within and across the organisations, supported and challenged by relevant stakeholders including the employing authority as appropriate; and

- address the variation for learners in the quality and access to a broad and balanced careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) programme including the development of the learners' employability skills.

4.4 TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

4.4.1 The main strengths are:

- the very good formal and informal arrangements between the primary schools and feeder pre-school provision to aid the smooth transition of children moving from one phase to the next;

- the positive impact of the newly set up FSCN in strengthening the working relationships and effectiveness of connections between the various stakeholders, for example in their facilitation of collaborative arrangements between groups of schools, other government agencies and local community groups; and

- the developing arrangements within the WBALC to aid the transition of learners through their various stages of education, particularly the key priority set out in their draft vision statement, to involve a wider range of stakeholders outside the schools in their future work, including business and community groups where appropriate.

4.4.2 The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- address the wide variation in the effective transfer of essential information for learners when they leave a particular organisation and move to another, particularly in relation to the standards they achieve; while there are notable individual examples of good practice, in general, this is often inadequate from the primary to post-primary phases, and from the post-primary to further education and training phases; and

- use appropriate quantitative and benchmarked data in order to track the educational progress of individual learner's attainment as they progress within and across organisations.

Part Two

OVERALL CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

5. Conclusion

5.1 In the aspects inspected, the quality of education and training provided in the West Belfast area is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. This inspection has identified strengths which can be built on, as the education system operates increasingly within the context of area based planning. When the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) is established it can capitalise on the positive aspects of provision as it supports and, as necessary, challenges the organisations. The inspection has also identified areas for improvement in strategic planning, the quality of the learning and in the transition arrangements, which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the learners are to be met effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report publicly, the progress made in addressing these areas for improvement.

6. Key Priorities for Development

6.1 To promote continuous improvement in the quality of the education and training within the West Belfast area, and following on from the strengths and areas for improvement, this evaluation has identified a number of key priorities for development.

6.2 **The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning need to:**

- improve further strategic planning through liaising where necessary on current policies and those under development, in order that those which may relate to one sector (but impact substantially on others), enhance the educational pathways of all learners;
- communicate the intended outcomes and inter-relatedness of the policies, clearly and consistently to the education system; and
- review funding of provision to encourage and facilitate increased collaboration within and across sectors.

6.3 **The key educational stakeholders need to:**[5]

- collaborate on a strategic plan which includes employers and the wider community, to meet more effectively the current and future needs of all learners and their community;
- facilitate the sharing of expertise between staff, in particular at the key transition stages;
- establish systems which communicate better at each key transition point the attainment, the needs and the progress of each learner;
- support the development of self-evaluation as a means of identifying the most appropriate forms of learning across key transition points; and
- ensure that the development plans produced by individual organisations integrate well with a plan setting out an overall strategy for the area, focusing strongly on the improvement of standards, the sustainability of programmes, and including robust monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

6.4 **The organisations need to:**[6]

- build more effectively on the prior learning at key transition stages in order to raise the standards for all learners and in particular to address the needs of those learners who leave education with no qualifications;
- ensure that their individual development plans are aligned well with an overall strategic plan for the area including the inclusion of joint curriculum planning with other schools to ensure continuity and progression in learning across transition stages between different phases; and
- use, where possible, commonly agreed quantitative and benchmarked data, for the tracking of individual learner's attainment as they progress within and across organisations and ensure the better collection of, and transfer onwards of, necessary information about learners who are entering and leaving their organisations, particularly information on the standards they attain.

[5] Key Stakeholders include the employing and managing authorities (currently ELBs and CCMS and from Jan 2010, the Education and Skills Authority) and other educational bodies for including NICIE, CNaG, LSDA.

[6] Organisations include pre-school providers, primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools, further education colleges, training organisations, alternative education providers and the youth service.

Appendix 1

THE ORGANISATIONS VISITED IN THE INSPECTION

Early Years

Holy Child Nursery

St Maria Goretti

Travellers Pre-school Centre Glen Road

Primary

St Peter's Primary School

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School

St Teresa's Primary School

St Kevin's Primary School

Bunscoil Phobal Feirste

Post-Primary

St Louise's Comprehensive College

De La Salle College

St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School

Corpus Christi College

Special

St Gerard's Resource Centre

AEP

An Munia Tober

The Link Centre, Barrack Street

Youth

West Belfast Area Project

St Teresa's Youth Club

Corpus Christi Youth Centre

St Agnes Youth Centre

FE

Belfast Metropolitan College

Training

Workforce Training Services

Appendix 2

STATISTICAL INFORMATION – Information about learners attending schools in the area

Table 1 - Examination Results 2007-2008

	Percentage of Leavers achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent qualifications)	Percentage of Leavers achieving at least 5 GCSE's grades A*-C (or equivalent qualifications)	Percentage of Leavers achieving at least 5 GCSE's grades A*-C (or equivalent qualifications) inc English & maths	Percentage of Leavers achieving no GCSE's	Total Leavers
School Leavers resident in West Belfast Parliamentary constituency	33.3	53.4	37.7	6.3	1428
NI Average	44.6	64.7	54.2	3.9	24803

Table 2 - Percentage of West Belfast school leavers entering Higher and Further Education

	2001/02			2003/04			2004/05			2005/06			2006/07		
	HE	FE	Total	HE	FE	Total	HE	FE	Total	HE	FE	Total	HE	FE	Total
BELFAST WEST	22.0	16.4	**38.5**	22.9	20.2	**43.2**	22.1	22.4	**44.5**	24.9	22.0	**46.8**	25.1	22.1	**47.1**

Table 3 - Percentage of West Belfast school leavers entering Employment or Training and NI averages 2007-2008

	Percentage recorded as entering Higher Education	Percentage recorded as entering Further Education	Percentage recorded as entering Employment	Percentage recorded as entering Training	Percentage recorded as Unemployed	Percentage recorded as Unknown	Total Leavers
School Leavers resident in West Belfast Parliamentary constituency[2]	25.1	22.1	19.0	22.4	5.7	5.7	1428
NI Average	38.5	27.4	12.1	15.9	3.3	2.8	24803

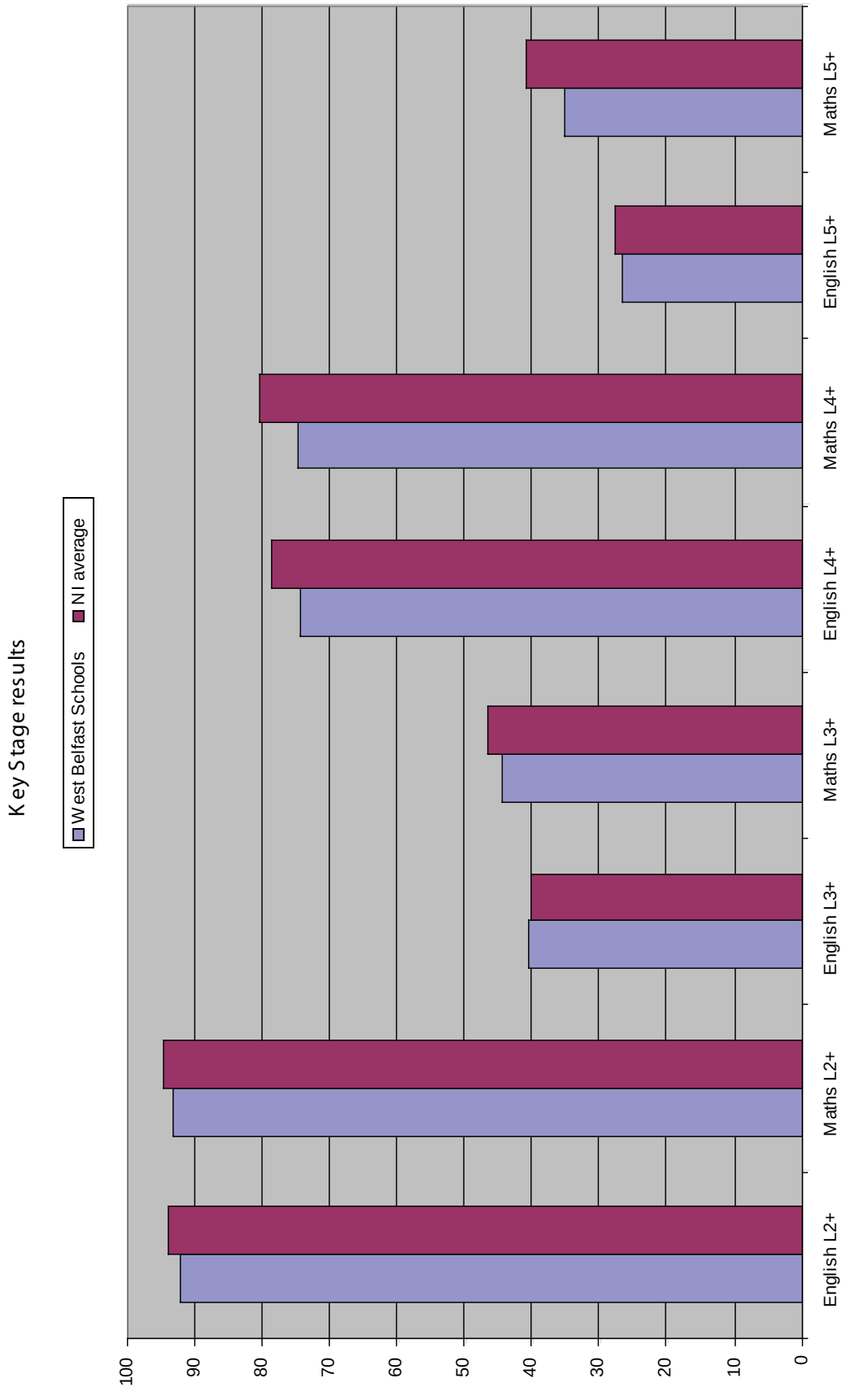
Table 4 - Key Stage Assessment Results

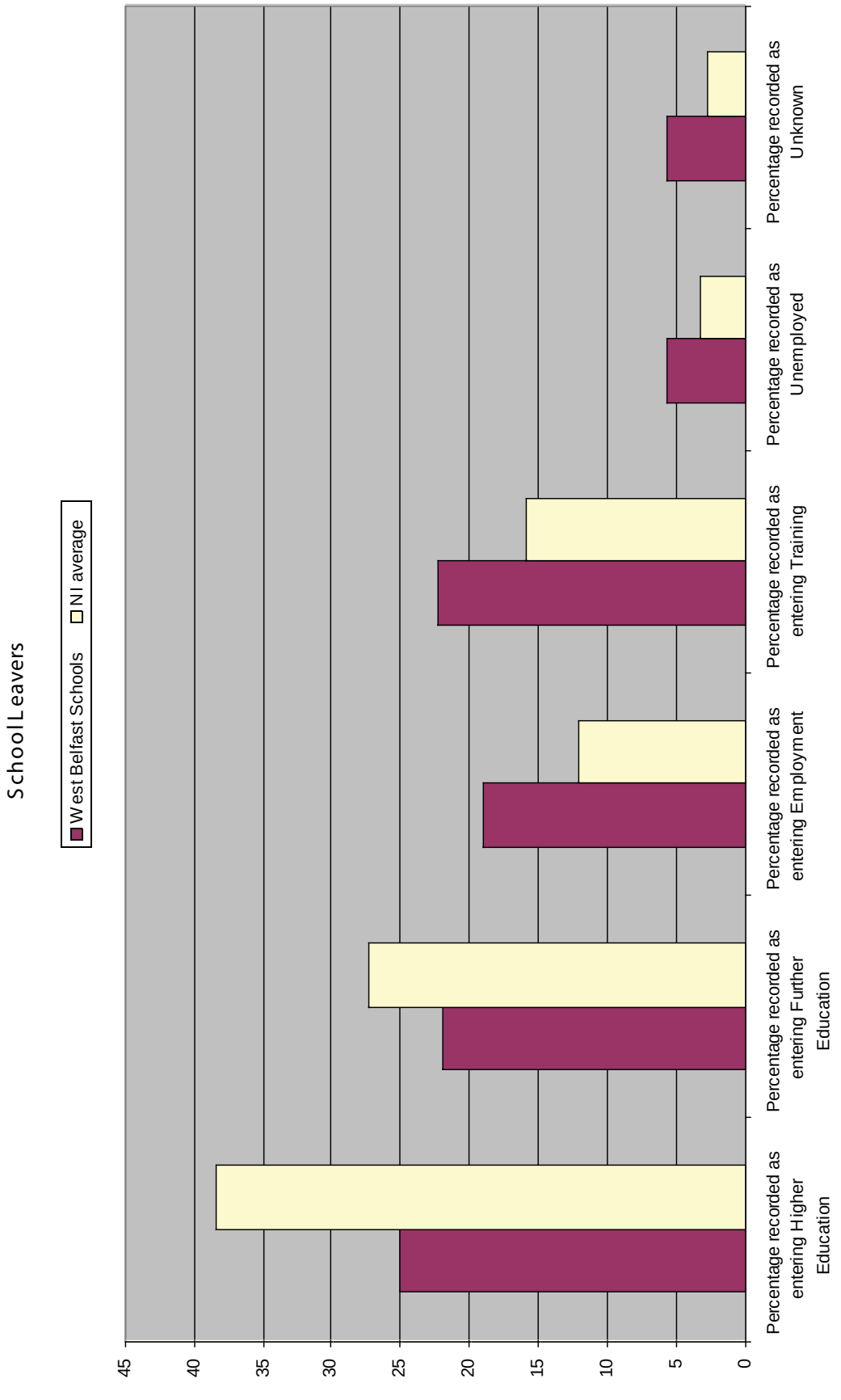
Key Stage 1 Assessments for schools in the West Belfast Area 2007/08

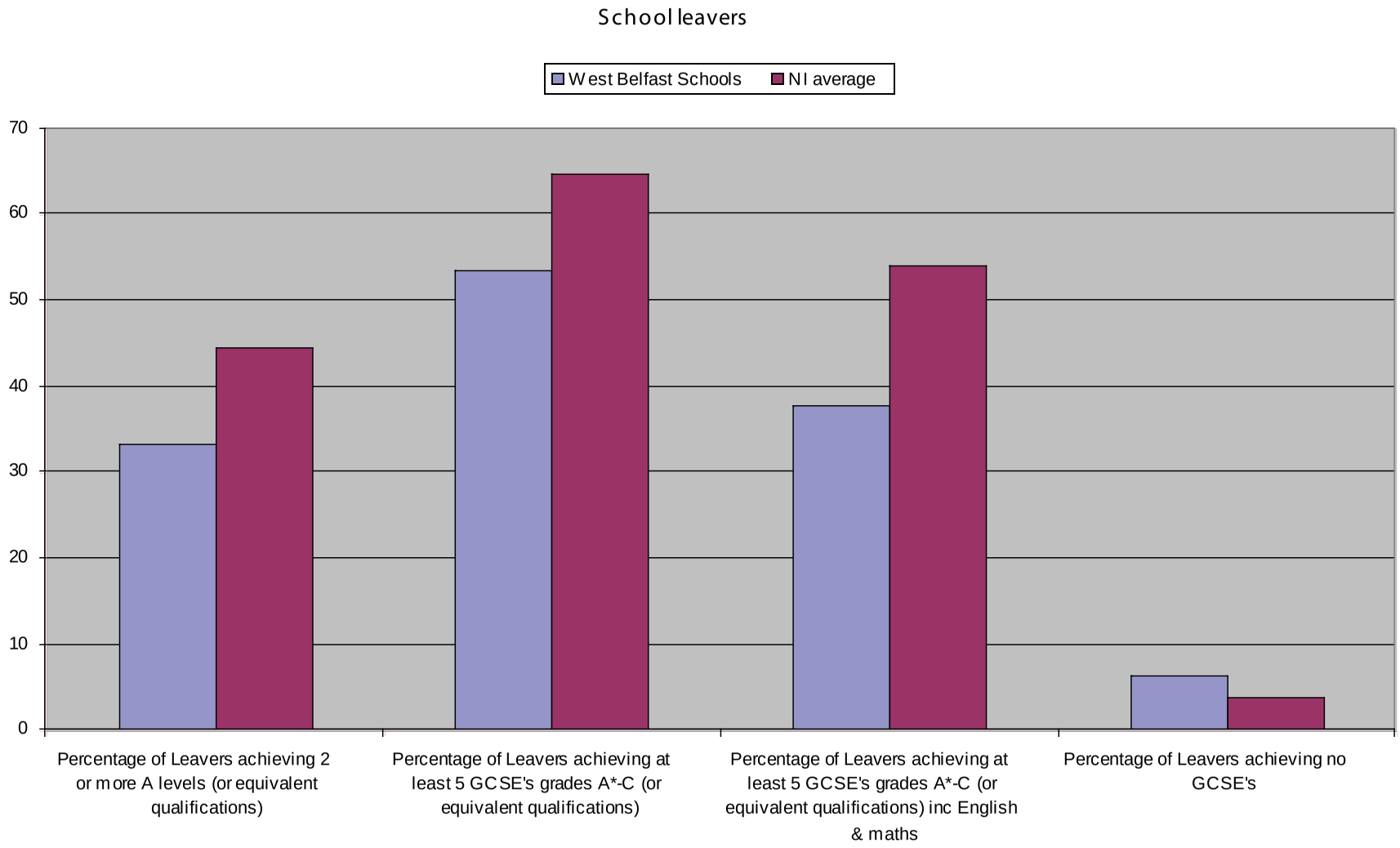
	Percentage of learners achieving Level 2 or above		Percentage of learners achieving Level 3 or above	
	English	Maths	English	Maths
West Belfast Inspection Area	92.3	93.3	40.7	44.5
NI Average	94	94.6	40.3	46.5

Key Stage 2 Assessments for schools in the West Belfast Area 2007/08

	Percentage of learners achieving Level 4 or above		Percentage of learners achieving Level 5 or above	
	English	Maths	English	Maths
West Belfast Area	74.6	74.9	26.8	35.2
NI Average	78.8	80.6	27.7	41.1


Key Stage results
West Belfast Schools
NI average
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
English L2+
Maths L2+
English L3+
Maths L3+
English L4+
Maths L4+
English L5+
Maths L5+


School Leavers
West Belfast Schools
NI average
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Percentage recorded as entering Higher Education
Percentage recorded as entering Further Education
Percentage recorded as entering Employment
Percentage recorded as entering Training
Percentage recorded as Unemployed
Percentage recorded as Unknown


School leavers
West Belfast Schools
NI average
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percentage of Leavers achieving 2 or more A levels (or equivalent qualifications)
Percentage of Leavers achieving at least 5 GCSE's grades A*-C (or equivalent qualifications)
Percentage of Leavers achieving at least 5 GCSE's grades A*-C (or equivalent qualifications) inc English & maths
Percentage of Leavers achieving no GCSE's

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE