
RESEARCH REPORT SERIES

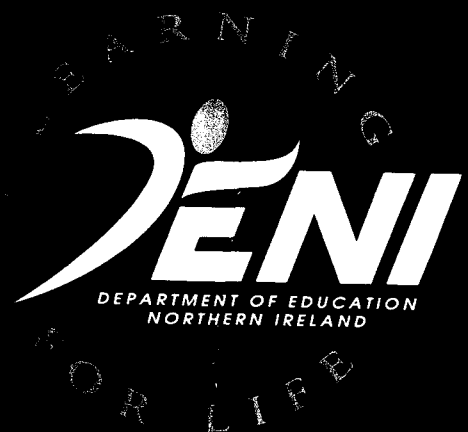
*An Evaluation of the
Craigavon Two-Tier System*

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J Alexander, P Daly,
A Gallagher, C Gray
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Graduate School of Education,
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AN EVALUATION OF THE CRAIGAVON TWO-TIER SYSTEM

J Alexander, P Daly, A Gallagher, C Gray and A Sutherland
Graduate School of Education, Queen's University Belfast

Summary

1. The majority of pupils in Northern Ireland are affected by the 11+ selective system when they transfer from primary to post-primary school. In the Craigavon area an alternative to the 11+ system has developed. This includes automatic transfer from primary school to junior high school, and delayed selection at age 14 years at which point some pupils go to senior high (grammar) schools.
2. This report is based on a comparison between the delayed selection system in Craigavon and the 11+ system used throughout the rest of Northern Ireland.
3. Evidence was collected from a number of sources including school performance tables and the DENI school leavers' survey; information from the Southern Education and Library Board transfer department; and interviews with administrators, teachers, pupils and parents (past and present) associated with the Craigavon school system.
4. Past research indicated that the delayed selection system received a high degree of popular support in the Craigavon area. We found nothing to contradict that claim, but concluded that a significant part of this popularity was based on the fact that in the Craigavon system there was a wide range of alternatives available to pupils and parents. Furthermore, there was evidence that a significant minority opted to take advantage of these alternatives.
5. Comparing the attainment levels of pupils in the Craigavon system with pupils in the rest of Northern Ireland is difficult precisely because there is so much pupil movement within and out of the two-tier schools. It would appear that a higher proportion of pupils in the Craigavon area obtain places in grammar schools, although the popular estimates we heard may be exaggerated. The three senior high/grammar schools in the area achieve creditable levels of performance which may, in fact, be even better if they do indeed include a larger proportion of the age cohort in their intake.
6. There is some evidence, however, that pupils who are not selected at age 14 years are less well served by the Craigavon system, particularly in the controlled sector. The SELB has taken steps in re-

cent years to address this problem and there is already some evidence of improvement. In the interests of these pupils, however, this is a situation which should continue to be monitored.

7. The delayed selection system operated in the Craigavon area might have provided an opportunity for schools to develop new and innovative approaches to the curriculum, inter-school cohesion and co-operation, and such areas as vocational education. While there was evidence that some of these possibilities were being realised, perhaps a little more might have been expected. This is another set of issues which might be addressed in the future.
8. While the delayed selection system operated in the Craigavon area has been a success, the evidence of this study does not suggest that it provides a better alternative to the 11+ system used throughout the rest of Northern Ireland. In particular, the evidence does not suggest that the two-tier system provides a better educational experience than the 11+ system for less-able pupils.
9. We would like to acknowledge the keen interest and co-operation provided by all the people we dealt with in carrying out this study, including officials of the DENI and the SELB, and the large number of people we interviewed in the Craigavon area. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and they do not necessarily represent the views of the DENI or the SELB.

Introduction¹

This paper reports on an investigation of the experiences of pupils in the two-tier system used in the Craigavon area of Northern Ireland. This system involves delayed selection at age 14 years, as compared with selection at age 11 years which is used throughout most of the rest of Northern Ireland. The paper is divided into two main sections. The first part is comprised of the main report. This outlines the aims and objectives of the study, and the sources of evidence used for the enquiry. We then discuss our emergent findings in relation to primary schools, junior high schools, selection at 14 years and senior high schools. The general conclusions emerging from the study are then presented.

In the main report it is not possible to provide the detailed evidence and analysis upon which the conclusions are based. This detail is included in four annexes which are included in the second part of this paper. The annexes provide information on the development of the Craigavon school system (annex 1), an account of the views of teachers on the 11+ (annex 2), an examination of automatic transfer between primary and post-primary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area (annex 3), and a comparative analysis of academic performance and school leaver destinations (annex 4).

The present evaluation

The present study was carried out for the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the study was to compare the experiences of pupils in the Dickson Plan two-tier system with pupils in the traditional 11+ system operated in most other parts of Northern Ireland. The study was to focus on the academic performance of pupils and the relative pressures they faced in school. In addition, the study was to assess the extent to which schools in the two-tier system were able to take advantage of their position outside the particular pressures created by the 11+ system.

The study aimed to contribute as well to a broader policy objective. The Minister with responsibility for education, Tony Worthington, has identified a specific policy priority of meeting the needs of the less able pupils in Northern Ireland. With this in mind, the present study aimed to assess whether or not less able pupils appeared to gain any benefit in the two-tier system in comparison with the 11+ system.

Evidence for the evaluation was collected from three main sources:

1. Evidence on attainment patterns of the schools in the Craigavon area was available from the DENI School Performance Tables. The

analysis of these data was aided by supplementary data provided by DENI on other aspects of the schools, including the gender composition of their pupil enrolments and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In addition DENI provided further attainment data derived from school leaver surveys.

2. Various data were provided by the Southern Education and Library Board. In particular these dealt with patterns of transfer between primary and post-primary schools, and information on transfer patterns of pupils at age 14 years.
3. The third main area of evidence was based on interviews with a wide range of people associated with the schools in the Craigavon area and beyond. In each of the senior high and junior high schools in the Craigavon system we interviewed principals, teachers and groups of pupils. Where possible we interviewed parents and school governors also. We interviewed the principals of the three all-through second level schools in the Craigavon area. We interviewed principals from eight of the primary schools in the Craigavon area, and a sample of teachers involved in the 11+ transfer system in primary schools outside the Craigavon area. In addition, we spoke to a number of individuals who had played, and some who continue to play, a significant role in the Craigavon schools system. This included a number of key officials in the Southern Education and Library Board. It also included Mr Dickson and Mr Armstrong, the two men who arguably can be described as the architects of the two-tier system.

In the remainder of this report we examine our conclusions in relation to various parts of the Craigavon system. In each section we restate the main areas of evidence we used. On occasion the main discussion of the evidence has been placed in an annex.

Primary schools

For this part of the evaluation we used three sources of information to throw light on the role of the primary schools in the two-tier system. We were interested first in gaining some insight into the views of principals whose schools were part of the system and so interviews were held with eight principals. Second, as a counterpoint to this we talked to two groups of teachers and principals from primary schools in other parts of Northern Ireland. All of these interviewees had taken P6 and/or P7 transfer classes. The third area of evidence comprised data from the Southern Education and Library Board on the pattern of movement of pupils from primary to post-primary schools in the Craigavon and neighbouring areas. Following our analysis of these data we also requested some data

on Key Stage 2 assessment results from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

As we summarise in annex two, previous surveys of teachers and principals in Northern Ireland have indicated a degree of opposition to aspects of the 11+ transfer system. However, the emergent picture from these surveys was not one of outright opposition to selection as such, but rather an apparent desire that if selection was to occur, it should happen beyond primary schools, not least because of the perceived negative consequences of the transfer tests on the primary curriculum.

The interviews with the primary teachers and principals, both within and outwith the Craigavon area, would seem to suggest that this general pattern remains intact. Since the last large scale surveys were carried out, the 11+ transfer tests have ceased to be largely verbal reasoning-type tests, but now are attainment tests of English, mathematics and science. The P6 and P7 teachers involved with the 11+ felt that these tests were more appropriate, in that they focused on the taught curriculum, but they were generally opposed to the 11+ due to the deleterious impact they felt it to have on the primary school, and the limiting effect they felt it imposed on the curriculum (see annex 1 for more detail).

By contrast, the situation which we have described above as the preferred option among primary school teachers, that is, selection delayed to a later part of the system and, more particularly, away from the primary school, is the situation in which primary schools in the Craigavon system find themselves. The Craigavon principals interviewed for this study expressed themselves as generally supportive of the system and preferred the two-tier arrangements to the 11+ system. They reinforced their support of the two-tier system on two main grounds: first, the fact that a high proportion of pupils in the junior high schools were selected for entry to the selective senior high schools was seen as an endorsement of the quality of education the pupils received in the primary and junior high schools. Second, while the principals suggested that a proportion of parents had held some doubts about the system at its origins and, in particular, some doubts regarding the junior highs given their innovative status in Northern Ireland, over time this unease had been allayed.

The evidence offered for this claim was linked to the arrangements for transfer from primary to post-primary school in the Craigavon area. Given that the two-tier system operates on the basis of selection at age 14 years, for primary schools designated as part of the system it is assumed by the SELB that pupils will automatically transfer at age 11 years from their primary school to a designated post-primary school: this will be either one of the junior high schools or one of the three all-through

schools in the area. Under the arrangements agreed at the inception of the system, parents do have the right to opt for their children to take the 11+ tests so that they can consider applying for entry to other schools. The principals we interviewed suggested that the number of parents 'opting out' of the two-tier system in this way had steadily reduced over time, thus offering some evidence of increasing confidence in the system.

The one caveat the principals mentioned to us dealt with differences between controlled and maintained schools. They suggested that the proportion of parents 'opting out' of the two-tier system was a little higher in the maintained sector. Two main reasons were offered for this: first, the principals felt there was a little less confidence among Catholic parents in some of the schools in the post-primary sector; second, they suggested also that a wider range of alternatives was available to these parents and that this alone was likely to encourage a little more leakage of pupils from this part of the system.

We were in a position to test some of these claims using data supplied by the SELB. These data comprised details of the pupils who transferred from primary to post-primary school in 1996. The data dealt with primary schools in the SELB where the status quo was that pupils would automatically transfer to a designated post-primary school without taking the 11+ transfer tests. More specifically, we were provided with details on the number of pupils who opted to transfer automatically and the number of pupils who opted to seek entry to another post-primary school, normally after taking the 11+ tests. We have noted above that the SELB contains a number of post-primary schools that operate on a non-selective comprehensive basis². The data we received from the SELB contained information for these schools as well as the schools in the Craigavon area, thus providing a basis for comparison.

Overall we received data on the transfer pattern of 2,552 pupils (see annex 2 for an extended discussion of the data). Of this total 1,360 (53 per cent) were in primary schools designated by the Board as lying within the Craigavon area while the rest were designated as lying within the catchment areas of other non-selective schools in the Board area to which transfer was automatic unless parents decided to opt for their children to take the 11+ transfer tests. Of the total number of pupils 81 per cent opted to transfer automatically while the remaining 19 per cent opted to take the 11+ transfer tests and/or otherwise seek entry to an alternative post-primary school. From Table 1 we can see that a slightly higher proportion of the pupils in the Craigavon area decided to transfer automatically, thus providing some support for the principals' suggestion that the system had achieved a high level of public support. We can see also from Table 3 that the proportion who opted to transfer automati-

cally was higher in controlled schools in comparison with maintained schools. Again this is in accord with the observations put to us by the principals. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the difference in the level of automatic transfer between the controlled and maintained schools, in both sectors the proportion who opted to transfer automatically was higher in Craigavon area schools in comparison with schools in other parts of the Southern Board area.

Table 1: Percentage of pupils automatically transferring from primary to post-primary schools in the SELB by area and management type, 1996 (source: SELB)

	Craigavon area	Other areas
All	83	78
Controlled	88	84
Maintained	78	67

The principals of the primary schools in the Craigavon area interviewed for this study highlighted a number of other concerns, both positive and negative, they had about the system as a whole³. On the negative side they expressed some concern about the eventual fate of pupils who did not achieve a place in one of the selective senior high schools at age 14 years. One aspect of their concern focused on the educational experience offered to these pupils, although they felt that the recent innovation whereby the pupils transferred to Craigavon Senior High rather than the school department of a further education college, represented an improvement. An additional concern, of more direct relevance to the controlled schools, was their worry that pupils who were not selected at 14 years had to move again to Craigavon Senior High school. They felt that some parents were not entirely happy with this additional move and that some opted for an 11-16 or 11-18 school in preference to the junior highs.

Another significant area of concern raised by the primary principals was the variety of procedures operated by the junior highs and all-through schools in the Craigavon area to rank primary pupils for the purpose of streaming or banding. Their concerns were various: the lack of standardisation in the systems used was seen as problematic, but so too would undue standardisation as this might lead to the return of an 11+ test in all but name. Some were concerned that the current systems, particularly those that led to rigid streaming, may in fact represent the effective equivalent of selection at 11 years.

On the positive side the principals identified a number of strengths they felt operated in their schools as a consequence of the two-tier system. Although there were tests for some pupils at the end of the year, these were administered and run by the receiving schools. Pupils were subject to the tests towards the end of the school year⁴ by which time the schools have had an opportunity to complete key stage 2 programmes. The principals took the view that this resulted in significantly less pressure and distortion on the primary curriculum in their schools and allowed them to provide a better educational experience for their pupils. They said also that they came under less pressure from parents, although this might be related both to the relatively high proportion who can predict entry to one of the selective senior high schools later in the system, and to the 'safety valve' of opt-out which, as we have seen above, is used for about 17 per cent of the pupils.

As with the principals' claims on the popularity of the system among parents and the differential pattern of movement in the controlled and maintained sectors, so too we were able to offer some test of their claims regarding the primary curriculum. We indicated above that the principals felt that the two-tier system had a less deleterious impact on the primary curriculum: whereas teachers in other areas were obliged to 'teach to the 11+ tests', in the Craigavon area the schools were able to 'teach to the curriculum'. One way of testing this claim would be to compare the levels achieved by pupils in the Key Stage 2 attainment tests administered by CCEA and carried out in 1997⁵. CCEA was able to provide the research team with the data for this comparison. The results are shown in Table 2. We can see from the table that the proportion of girls rated at level 5 is a little higher than the proportion of boys rated at this level, and that this is true for both English and mathematics. We can see also that the proportion of pupils rated at level 5 is very similar in the Craigavon primary schools to that in all schools across Northern Ireland. Also, this pattern holds for both subject areas, and for girls and boys. However, we can see also from Table 4 that a higher proportion of pupils in the Craigavon schools area rated at level 4 in comparison with the pattern for all schools in Northern Ireland. This difference is particularly marked for attainment levels in mathematics. Clearly we would be wary of placing too much weight on these data. That said, if we accept the limitations of the data, the pattern of results would seem to offer some support for the claims of the primary principals we interviewed for this study. In other words, the Key Stage 2 attainment results suggest that at least some of the primary schools in the Craigavon area appear to gain advantage from the fact that they are systemically distinct from the 11+ transfer system operated in most of the rest of Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Percentage of pupils achieving Key Stage 2 attainment levels by area and subject (source: calculated from CCEA data)

		Level				
		W/1	2	3	4	5
<u>English</u>						
Boys	Craigavon schools	0	7	28	52	12
	All schools	1	10	32	46	12
Girls	Craigavon schools	0	3	23	55	19
	All schools	0	5	25	52	18
<u>Mathematics</u>						
Boys	Craigavon schools	2	4	21	45	28
	All schools	1	7	26	37	29
Girls	Craigavon schools	1	2	15	51	31
	All schools	1	5	23	41	32

Junior High schools

The establishment of the junior high schools in the Craigavon area was completed by 1973, but it was clearly some time before parents became confident in their character. For some parents they may have seemed as little more than secondary schools under another guise. Moreover, with the abolition of the Junior Certificate they did not offer children an opportunity to take public examinations. A number of the teachers interviewed for this study recalled how initially some parents sent their children to schools outside the system. Once established, this trend continued for many years and appears to have been particularly evident in Lurgan, perhaps because its geographical location provided a wider range of alternatives. Here, parents could select a 'traditional' school in Lisburn, Belfast, Newry, Armagh or Banbridge. Schools in all these areas were accessible by public transport and travel costs were paid for by the local education authority.

Transfer at 11

It took several years and evidence that substantial numbers of young people could transfer to senior high schools before the junior high schools began to gain public confidence. As the number of young people entering junior high schools continued to increase the schools decided that some form of banding or streaming was necessary to cater for pupils of different abilities. While most schools accepted the primary school report as a measure of academic ability, others preferred to introduce their

own entrance exams, based on English and mathematics. However, for some this apparently innocuous system was variously described as 'a hidden form of selection,' and 'an endorsement of academic worth'.

During interviews for the present evaluation we were told that children could move freely between classes as a mitigation to labelling effects of streaming. However, the evidence we heard also suggested that movement may have been restricted because, in some schools, groups from Year 8 were following different syllabuses. Moreover, in one school we were told that movement was restricted by a system of 'one up, one down' in order to maintain class sizes. This emphasises a particularly important aspect of streaming or banding as operated in the junior high schools. The main purpose was to rank pupils, and this ranking helped to determine their selective status at age 14.

Transfer at 14

There is presently no single test or procedure used to determine which children go to a grammar school in the two-tier system. The junior high schools use internal examinations, based on the full curriculum, to rank pupils in order of academic ability. However, we found variation in the type of testing favoured by junior high schools. While some include course work and the results from Christmas and summer exams, others use one set of results from summer exams. In all instances marks are rank ordered and used as a basis for grammar school selection. However, the absence of a public examination for the 11-14 schools means that the schools and teachers have only a limited basis on which to monitor their own performance.

Grammar school entry

There is a general sense that, in recent years, grammar schools in the Craigavon area have increased their intake, presumably as a consequence of open enrolment. However, at interview it was claimed that another contributory factor to this increase was that more children transferred to grammar schools outside the Craigavon area. Leakage, it was suggested, was not confined to those who opted for the transfer procedure at 11, but also included children who transferred in later years, most using their junior high school reports as evidence of academic ability. We examine some empirical evidence on this below, but if this view is correct then this leakage would have an impact on the ability profile of pupils entering grammar schools in the area.

Ironically, it appears that this increase, or perceived increase, to grammar places may have proved to be advantageous for a number of junior high schools. Teachers claimed that it had increased public confidence

in the education offered by the schools and increased the popularity of the two-tier system. By contrast, the Catholic junior high schools which retain non selected children may have found it disadvantageous. Open enrolment generally has decreased the proportion of pupils going to secondary schools and, arguably, changed the ability profile of the intake to some schools, thereby depressing their performance potential. The controlled junior high schools are 'spared' this effect as the non-selected pupils go to the campuses of Craigavon Senior High school. The Catholic junior high schools, however, do feel this impact. In addition, the impact of open enrolment may be exacerbated further if these schools lose pupils at age 11, to grammar schools outside the area, and at 14, as increased numbers go to St Michael's.

Staff morale

With a few exceptions we found morale high amongst the teachers we spoke with in the junior high schools. This was confirmed in our interviews with the junior high school principals, all of whom claimed that staff supported the two-tier system and believed that its real benefit lay in the number of children gaining a grammar school place and in the excellent results produced by local grammar schools.

In the 11-14 schools it was generally agreed that opportunities for staff mobility and career advancement were curtailed by their lack of teaching experience at GCSE and A Level; however, most teachers claimed that they were content to remain in their junior high school for the duration of their career. Those teaching in schools catering for 11-16 year olds had more opportunity for advancement, but most said they sought internal rather than external promotion. This does raise the possibility that this relatively small system of junior high schools may be a little too insular if there is low staff turnover in comparison with schools across the rest of Northern Ireland.

Parents and Pupils

All of the parents we spoke to gave their support to the system and said they were happy with the education available within the junior high schools. They told us that once children were banded or streamed at 11 the decision about grammar school entry had, in effect, been made. Thus, their main concern with junior high school was not on outcome at 14, but on entry at 11. Thereafter they thought children could relax and enjoy these interim years before they began their education in earnest at grammar school.

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The views of the pupils were somewhat different. They too talked about the importance they attached to the streaming or banding arrangements,

due to the influence of their ranking on their selective status at 14. It was clear from the pupils we spoke to who had achieved places in the selective senior high schools that they had felt under pressure to maintain their ranking in the junior high school. They said also that the teachers used this fact as a motivator.

Summary

The evidence we collected would suggest that, in accord with the pattern found in previous studies, teachers, principals, parents and pupils are generally satisfied with junior high schools. More recently this may owe much to a steady increase in the number of children from junior high schools who have gained grammar school places. However, if this pattern has occurred as a consequence of open enrolment it may only have enhanced public perception of the 11-14 junior high schools. The same positive effect may not occur for the 11-16 junior high schools. For these schools open enrolment places the same pressure as it does for secondary schools across Northern Ireland, and the 11-16 junior highs are publicly accountable through their position on the School Performance Tables.

This highlights a further issue to arise from this part of our evidence. In the absence of public examinations, it was theoretically possible that the 11-14 junior high schools and their teachers could develop a degree of complacency. Our evidence, which suggests a high degree of streaming or banding, and what appears to be a reasonably intense level of continuous pressure, might indicate that this possibility was not realised. It remains possible, however, that streaming or banding could produce a sense of fatalism among pupils who perceive, from a fairly early stage in their junior high school career, that they are very unlikely to achieve a place in a selective senior high school.

In the course of this study we found that banding or streaming children at 11, was considered by many to be another form of selection. One parent said, 'you know how you dread it when that envelope comes into the house and you think this is it. You know the envelope that tells what their class will be in Junior High school.' There was also some variation between schools in the type of testing used to rank order children for grammar school selection. Several principals and teachers suggested that a more transparent basis for standardisation and selection should be adopted.

Selection at 14

In order to obtain some data on the pattern of transfer of pupils at age 14 years the SELB allowed the research team access to Board records. From

these data we were able to identify the patterns of preferences among pupils in the junior high schools. Table 3 shows the pattern of first preferences for the four junior high schools in the controlled sector. For three of the junior high schools a little over two-thirds of the pupils indicated a first preference for either Lurgan College or Portadown College. In all four schools just under three-in-ten expressed a first preference for Craigavon Senior High school. We can see also that in one of the junior high schools a little over a fifth of the pupils indicated a first preference for a school outside the Craigavon two-tier system.

Table 3: First preference for transfer at 14, 1997 (source: derived from SELB records)

First preference	School A	School B	School C	School D
Lurgan/Portadown				
Senior High	67.9	51.0	67.5	68.8
Craigavon Senior High	28.9	28.0	29.9	31.3
Other school	3.2	21.0	2.5	0.0

We found the success rate of pupils applying to the selective senior high schools to be quite high: in the case of one senior high school 90 per cent of those who placed the school as first preference obtained a place, whereas in the other selective senior high school in the controlled system the success rate was 76 per cent⁶. Thus, while the preference levels for the 'grammar' option indicated on Table 5 are very high, certainly in comparison with the proportion of pupils who can reasonably aspire to a grammar school place in the rest of Northern Ireland, the success rate for entry implies that the aspiration may not be overstated.

Table 4: Second preference choice if first preference is selective senior high school, 1997 (source: derived from SELB records)

Second preference	School 1	School 2
Lurgan/Portadown		
College	28.1	40.2
Craigavon Senior High	39.5	40.9
Other school	32.5	18.9

Table 4 shows the pattern of second preferences for pupils in two of the junior high schools who had placed either Lurgan College or Portadown College as their first preference. We can see from Table 4 that a substantial minority in both junior high schools placed the other selective sen-

ior high school as their second preference. It is noteworthy also, however, that while two-in-five indicated Craigavon Senior High school as their second preference, a significant proportion preferred a school outside the two-tier system if they were unable to gain entry to one of the selective senior high schools. Thus, in one of the schools for whom data are shown on Table 4, a third of the pupils identified a school outside the two-tier system as their second preference while in the other school a little under a fifth of the pupils indicated this as their second preference.

These quantitative data echo a point that was mentioned to us by a number of different people we interviewed for this evaluation. Their point was that the disparate nature of the schools system in the Craigavon and neighbouring areas, allied with the right of parental choice and the guarantee to parents at the origins of the two-tier system that they had the right to opt-out, resulted in quite a high level of movement of pupils between schools. We have seen above that a proportion of pupils opt to go outside the system when they transfer from primary school at age 11 years. The data in this section of the report suggest there is a degree of movement out of the two-tier system at age 14 years as well. In addition, our interviews with some of the principals of the all-through schools in the Craigavon area suggested that they received pupils at these transfer points, and other times.

Throughout Northern Ireland there is movement of pupils between schools for a whole variety of reasons. The data we obtained for this part of the study imply that the extent of pupil movement in and around the two-tier system may be somewhat higher than the province-wide norm⁷. The net effect of this is that a high proportion of the pupils who remain within the two-tier system appear to be successful in gaining entry to a grammar school place and that those who do not gain a place in a selective senior high school have a range of alternatives to which they can seek entry: this includes voluntary grammar schools just outside the Craigavon area, and comprehensive⁸ and secondary schools within and outside the Craigavon area. This particular set of circumstances may go some way to explain the level of popular support that the two-tier system appears to enjoy.

Senior High Schools

The two-tier system now contains four senior high schools. Three of the schools, Portadown College, Lurgan College and St Michael's, are selective senior high schools and operate as 14-18 grammar schools. Craigavon Senior High school operates as a 14-16 secondary school primarily for pupils in the controlled junior highs who do not achieve a place in either Portadown or Lurgan colleges. The genesis of Craigavon Senior

High school has been described in annex one, including the reason why it operates currently on two separate campuses linked to Portadown and Lurgan Further Education colleges.

In order to examine the place of all four senior high schools within the two-tier system we collected data from a variety of sources. We interviewed the principals, teachers, pupils and parents from each school, and, where possible, we interviewed some members of the Boards of Governors of the schools. In addition, we endeavoured to interview teachers and pupils associated with both campuses of Craigavon Senior High school. As a complement to these qualitative data we examined the attainment profile of the senior high schools using two main sources of information: first, we analysed patterns in the DENI School Performance Tables in order to contextualise the attainment profile of schools in the Craigavon area on the basis of public examination results. DENI provided additional information on eligibility for free school meals and gender composition to inform these analyses. Second, DENI provided additional attainment data, derived from School Leavers' surveys, for schools in the Craigavon area and other schools matched on a number of criteria. Finally, since the public examination results of pupils who had, in the past, attended the school departments of Portadown and Lurgan Technical colleges never appeared on School Performance Tables, DENI derived estimates of the results of these pupils to aid comparison over time. In this section of the report we consider the broad themes to emerge from all these data.

Selective senior high schools

There are three selective senior high schools in the two-tier system and, as we have seen above, they now take a higher proportion of pupils from their main feeder schools, the junior highs, in comparison with the proportion transferring from primary to grammar schools in other parts of Northern Ireland. When we interviewed the principals, and some teachers and pupils in these schools, a fairly high degree of consensus on most issues emerged. A clear consensus was that they favoured the current system and would wish it to be retained. All of them described some degree of parental suspicion when the system was originally established - indeed, there were some teachers in the schools at the time of the change who were not reconciled with the initiative. In all but one situation, however, we were told that parents came round to accept the system once it became clear that selection was being retained and that the two-tier system did not entail a shift to comprehensive education. In one school we were told that there remains a difficulty in attracting high ability boys, but the school has targeted this as an issue for school marketing.

Almost all of those to whom we talked were in favour of the two-tier system on the grounds that it removed the supposed disadvantages of selection at 11, while not introducing comprehensive education. Selection at 14 was described as both more accurate and fairer, and it was seen as allowing for late academic developers. At the same time, for many a significant attraction was that it retained a form of selection. For some the selection procedure meant that their school had a wider social mix than was the case in grammar schools more generally. For others, the large proportion of pupils transferring into the senior highs provided for a wider ability mix than might be found in other grammar schools. Despite these distinctive features, however, we were told that the schools achieved good academic results. Another advantage claimed by some was that pupils transferring at age 14 years were more mature and responsible, and, as a consequence, the schools had insignificant disciplinary problems. There was a recognition by some that the pupils were, perhaps, subject to a little more pressure because of the additional transfers involved in the system, but this was seen to operate to their advantage in terms of attainment.

One issue on which there was less consensus concerned the links between schools in the two-tier system. At its inception it was envisaged that the junior and senior high schools, and the technical colleges, would form a cohesive unit. In one senior high school a situation and style of practice was described for us that appeared to match closely this aspiration. There appeared to be close liaison between the senior high school and its main junior high schools on a wide variety of matters, and regular transfer of information in both directions. In another senior high school we heard a mixed picture: on the one hand the advantage of linked schools was highlighted, although in practice there did appear to be some degree of tension on certain issues between the schools. In the other senior high school there appeared only to be weak links between it and the associated junior highs, although this was mentioned as a priority for change.

We have noted above the claims by the schools that they achieved high levels of academic achievement, especially since they received a higher proportion of pupils from their feeder junior highs in comparison to the proportion transferring from primary to grammar schools elsewhere. We were able to explore aspects of this claim using data on the DENI School Performance Tables and additional data provided from DENI school leavers' surveys. The detailed commentary on the data is included in Annex 3. Here we confine our comments to the broad patterns revealed by our analysis.

It is perhaps worth noting two general points. First, we eschewed the idea of seeking to identify a single attainment indicator in favour of an approach which attempted to incorporate a range of measures: these included not only attainment levels of single year groups, but also measures of the proportion of pupils achieving attainment criteria, year by year patterns of leaving and staying, time series data and leavers' post-school destinations. In addition, in our analyses of the patterns we attempted to give due regard to relevant contextual factors for which data were available, including the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the gender composition of school enrolments.

The second point to highlight at this stage is that it is not possible, using the data available to the research team, to derive a simple statistical measure of the predictive efficiency of the two-tier system. The main reason for this was highlighted by an earlier section of this report where we found a high level of movement of pupils through and out of the two-tier system. Thus, a statistical analysis which was confined to the measured attainment of pupils in the selective senior high schools, Craigavon Senior High school and the non-selected pupils in the maintained junior high schools, would represent only a proportion of the pupils who had begun their educational career in a primary school designated as lying within the Craigavon area schools' system. Given the extent of pupil movement that exists in the system, the only reliable and valid procedure for deriving a statistical measure of the predictive efficiency of the two-tier system would be to follow a cohort of pupils from Craigavon area primary schools through to age 16 or 18 years⁹. There was insufficient time available in the present study to complete such an exercise.

This does not mean that no comment can be offered on the attainment patterns achieved by the selective senior high schools. Again, however, a 'health warning' on any conclusions needs to be flagged. Due to the extent of movement of pupils in the Craigavon area, it is not possible to identify exactly the proportion of pupils who achieve grammar school places. Thus, the derived figure differs if we use (a) pupils selected or not selected in the two-tier system, (b) include pupils in the all-through schools, or (c) calculate the figure for the SELB area as a whole. The most reasonable estimate is that the proportion of pupils who achieve grammar places in the Craigavon and neighbouring areas is higher than the average for Northern Ireland as a whole and that the ability range of pupils entering the selective senior high schools in the two-tier system is probably wider than is the case for an average grammar school in the rest of Northern Ireland. However, we would suggest also that the popular perception in the Craigavon area of the extent to which this occurs is probably exaggerated.

With these caveats in mind we turn to our main conclusions regarding the attainment patterns of the selective senior high schools in the two-tier system. Acknowledging the limitations in talking of the two-tier system as if it operates entirely separate from the rest of the schools in Northern Ireland, Table 5 shows the 'systems' comparison calculated for Year 12 pupils from the 1995/96 School Performance Tables. We can see from this table that overall 55 per cent of Year 12 pupils in the two-tier system passed five or more GCSEs at grades A-C and 84 per cent passed five or more GCSEs at grades A-G. In schools in the rest of Northern Ireland 52 per cent passed five or more GCSEs at grades A-C and 84 per cent passed five or more GCSEs at grades A-G.

Table 5: Comparative performance of pupils in the two-tier schools vs. schools in the rest of Northern Ireland (source: calculated from 1995/96 DENI School Performance Tables)

	Year 12 Pupils	5+ GCSEs grades A-C	5+ GCSEs grades A-G
Two-tier system			
selective schools	51	61	90
non-selective schools	49	39	10
all schools	100	100	100
Rest of Northern Ireland			
selective schools	36	42	65
non-selective schools	64	58	35
all schools	100	100	100
Two-tier schools	100	55	84
Rest of Northern Ireland	100	52	84

Turning next to a comparison of individual schools: when we compare these senior high schools with grammar schools across the whole of Northern Ireland, taking due regard of the demographic characteristics of the schools, we find that on most measures the senior high schools achieve a level of performance that is as good as other comparable grammar schools, and that, on some measures, is better. The senior high schools appear to do particularly well when we consider the attainment levels of year 12 pupils. The pattern is a little more mixed for year 14 pupils where Portadown College and St Michael's achieve a level of performance that is broadly equivalent to comparable grammar schools. The proportion of school leavers from the controlled senior high schools who go to higher education is lower than comparable grammar schools, but the proportion who go to further education is higher. This would accord with claims from the schools that they actively encourage pupils

to consider a wide range of post-school options, including vocational qualification options. Furthermore, we found little or no evidence that pupils who left these schools before the age of 18 years did so because of poor examination performance: to the contrary, the level of achieved performance implied that most decisions to leave for an alternative were by choice. The information available from the schools implied further that this was informed choice.

We examined time series data using School Performance Table data for 1992/93 and 1995/96, and finer levels of attainment using school leavers' survey data from 1992/93 and 1994/95. The results from these analyses suggest that the senior high schools are improving at the same rate as other grammar schools on some measures, and are improving at a faster rate on most levels of attainment.

The broad pattern of results outlined above would indicate some degree of support for the claims of the schools in that their achieved levels of academic performance appear to be at least equal to comparable grammar schools in other parts of Northern Ireland, are better on some measures, and show evidence of somewhat higher levels of improvement over time. This pattern becomes even more positive if we accept the likelihood that the ability range of the pupils entering these schools is wider than is the case for grammar schools across Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the pattern of improvement in the senior high schools over time is enhanced even more when we consider the likelihood that they appear to have undergone a more rapid period of growth, as a consequence of open enrolment, in comparison with other grammar schools.

There are a number of factors which might help to explain the attainment patterns identified above. There may be systemic advantages for these pupils in the two-tier system. We have seen above some indicative evidence that primary pupils in this area have achieved higher levels on the Key Stage 2 attainment tests, perhaps because of the different impact of 'transfer' tests in the Craigavon schools as opposed to 11+ schools. We have seen also that pupils going through junior high schools and selective senior high schools appear to have a fairly continuous level of pressure for academic achievement imposed upon them: in the junior high schools this is caused by the streaming or banding arrangements and the perceived need to maintain a ranking position; in the senior high schools it is derived from the fact that as soon as the pupils enter the school they are working towards GCSE results. Thus, the system may provide a basis for educational gains at the primary level, and something equivalent to 'hot-housing' between the ages of 11 and 16 years.

One other factor may be worth mentioning briefly. In one of the senior high schools in the system a rigorous system of internal monitoring of

pupils and departments operates. This monitoring system makes efficient use of data to inform the progress of pupils over time, and is used to fine-tune the quotas operated by the junior high schools for entry to the senior high. The system has operated for some years and, more recently, has been incorporated into the CLASS system. All of these features are commonly associated with effective schools and may help to explain, at least in part, the comparatively high levels of achievement obtained by the pupils in this school.

There is, however, another side to this relatively glowing picture of pupil performance in this part of the two-tier system. We have described above the range of perceptions and views we found among principals and teachers in the selective senior high schools. One further area of consensus among them was that a weakness of the two-tier system lay in the options it provided for pupils who were not selected at age 14 years. It is to these pupils we now turn.

Pupils not selected at age 14

In annex one we note the difficulties identified in the school departments of the further education colleges and the limitations on the educational experience offered to pupils in these departments in the past. These limitations were made evident both through studies which analysed attainment data and the information revealed during the investigation of alternative arrangements in the early 1990s. In this section of the report we are concerned with the views expressed by the principal, teachers, pupils and parents currently associated with both campuses of Craigavon Senior High school. Towards the end of the section we examine attainment data for pupils in Craigavon Senior High school and the pupils aged 14-16 in the maintained junior high schools.

Some of the teachers we interviewed for this study had worked in the school department of the further education colleges and their memories were not favourable. They described how they found themselves teaching pupils whose needs lay outside their experience and who the teachers often felt were disaffected. The impact on staff morale and pupil performance was considerable and they believed that the reputation of the colleges as a whole suffered. In consequence, they suggested, the number of pupils transferring to the school departments of the colleges declined. While this may have helped to restore the broader reputation of the colleges, it only served to marginalise still further the school departments within the colleges.

The investigation which led to the opening of Craigavon Senior High school had the virtue of addressing some of the problems which had been evident for some time, but had the effect, the teachers felt, of re-

ducing confidence among the wider public due to the uncertainty created by the enquiry. During this period, they felt, more pupils were lost to schools outside the two-tier system and they expressed uncertainty as to how long it will take for confidence, and hence pupil numbers, to be restored.

The teachers we interviewed generally dislike the split site system. While this was true of both sites, teachers in Portadown complained that their colleagues in Lurgan were particularly disadvantaged, because most things are organised around the larger Portadown campus. Operating one school on two campuses necessitates heads of departments travelling between the two sites and it was claimed this did not occur as often as it should. The school policy is to run the schools separately, keeping staff on their own site mainly because of time-tabling constraints. Although attempts have been made to develop a whole school identity with pupils from both sites, this has proven difficult.

Craigavon Senior High school tries to encourage pupils to enter for as many public examinations as possible, in the hope that high expectations on the part of the school will be reflected in the pupils' performance. The pupils are encouraged to stay in education after 16, usually in one of the Further Education colleges in the area.

It was only in our interviews in Craigavon Senior High school that we found a significant degree of dissatisfaction with the two-tier system as a whole. Some of those to whom we talked felt that the two-tier system was really geared to meet the interests of the junior high and selective senior high schools. They expressed concern about the lack of standardisation across the junior high schools and some of the teachers felt that they had to spend significant amounts of time covering basics that should have already been completed by that time. Furthermore, the teachers complain they have the pupils only for two years, yet are expected to produce examination results comparable with secondary schools across Northern Ireland that have had pupils from the age of 11 years. Not only does this make their academic task difficult, but it also militates against the development of a school identity¹⁰. Some of the teachers, but particularly on the Lurgan campus, felt that retaining pupils in the junior high school to 16 years would probably be preferable to the current arrangements. It was only in this school that we found a degree of support for a return to the 11+: some of the teachers did not like the 11+ system, but felt that a modification of it would be preferable to their current situation. Similarly, some of the pupils said they would prefer the 11+, although in one case this was on the basis that with the 11+ 'you only fail once'. More generally many of the pupils felt that the school did not enjoy a good reputation in the area.

The views above paint quite a negative picture. It is important to note that the senior management of Craigavon Senior High school are clearly aware of the problems facing the non-selected pupils in this part of the system in the past, and of some of the continuing weaknesses that may exist in the system. Not only are they aware of the problems, but it is clear also that they are trying to tackle these difficulties in the new circumstances provided by the Senior High school development.

The attainment patterns for non-selected pupils in the Craigavon area in large part accorded with the comments described above (see annex three for further details). The results for pupils in Craigavon Senior High school were lower when compared with secondary schools. The results of pupils in the past, when they were based in further education colleges, were, if anything, even lower. The new school is still in the very early stages of development and the senior staff are clear as to the priorities they have to address: the evidence suggests that they may be turning a corner, and indeed that the measures introduced by the senior management are already having a positive effect, but there is still a considerable distance to go. One bright feature of these data is that despite the relatively low levels of performance of pupils in this school, the proportion who stay in education, particularly in further education, is relatively high. This might indicate a particular advantage of the two-tier system with intrinsic links into the FE sector.

The performance pattern of the two maintained junior high schools was very variable. One of these schools achieved a relatively high level of performance across a range of criteria, whereas the levels achieved in the other school were markedly lower. It was unclear why this was happening. However, one possibility was that a higher than average proportion of leavers from the latter school were reported as entering employment. If this is accurate it might explain low attainment levels if a significant number of the pupils feel that their employment prospects are so good that academic achievement is unimportant. This explanation must, however, remain speculative.

Conclusions

The two-tier system in the Craigavon area has achieved a high level of popular support and most people associated with the system would support its retention. Part of the reason for this popular support is that the system appears to have solved some of the more negative aspects of selection at 11+. However, our evidence suggests that another aspect of the popular support is linked to the small size of the system, the right of parents to go outside it, and the fact that this removes one of the most significant problems with the 11+ system, that is, the once-and-for-all nature of the selective decision: the two-tier system allows for a number of other chances.

Evaluating the attainment consequences of the two-tier system is extremely difficult due to the extent of movement of pupils between schools, not all of which is directly and easily measurable with the datasets available to the research team. It appears that a higher proportion of pupils achieve grammar places in the area, but this is difficult to estimate with any accuracy. The three grammar schools (Senior Highs) in the system show evidence of creditable levels of performance that generally place them within the mainstream of grammar schools, but this might, in fact, be better if their intake is comprised of a wider ability range than grammar schools across Northern Ireland. However, the performance levels of some pupils who are not selected at 14 is less good, and some of these pupils seem to bear the brunt of the negative aspects of the system. It has been suggested that the 11+ selective system has tended to focus attention on more able pupils to the neglect of the less able¹¹. Whatever the merits of this particular view, a similar problem appears to exist within the two-tier system. Furthermore, the needs of these pupils do not appear to have been given the attention they might have deserved over the years.

The evidence available for this study does not lead us to the conclusion that the two-tier system currently provides the basis for a systemic alternative to selection at 11. This is not to say that the two-tier system is somehow inferior to the 11+ system of grammar and secondary schools. The evidence we have examined highlights some potential strengths in the two-tier system: there is some indication of benefits in the primary schools; a pattern of good performance in the selective senior high schools, especially considering the higher than average proportion of pupils who go to these schools; and evidence of good links with further education in some parts of the system. However, the popularity which the system appears to enjoy may be closely linked to the extent to which movement in and out of the system is available. In other words, the system as it exists may be either too porous, too small, or both, to allow for a complete test of its comparative position vis-a-vis the 11+ selective system unless this was addressed by a longitudinal study.

A number of issues arising from the study might be worthy of future attention. It might have been expected that schools in the Craigavon area, particularly primary and junior high schools, would have been able to develop creative new directions, freed as they were from the constraints of the 11+ system. As we have seen, in fact, the schools do face selective pressures for their pupils aged 11 years as well as their pupils aged 14 years. Nevertheless, this is one area that might be developed.

It was perhaps a little surprising that a greater degree of cohesion and co-ordination was not found between the schools in the two-tier sys-

tem. There were some very good examples of strong links between some of the schools and colleges, but this was not so in every case. One of the potential strengths of the two-tier arrangement lies in the benefits of this cohesion, in particular due to the possibilities it allows for the development of stronger vocational education routes.

We noted above that the two-tier system does not appear to provide a panacea for the needs of less able pupils. Indeed, one of the weaknesses we identified was in the experience faced by these pupils, particularly in the controlled sector. We noted also, however, that the Southern Education and Library Board has taken steps in recent years to address this issue and the early evidence from school performance tables suggests that an important corner has been turned and improvement is being achieved. Clearly, however, this is an issue which the Board will want to monitor closely in the future.

ANNEX ONE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRAIGAVON SCHOOL SYSTEM

Secondary education in Northern Ireland

The structure of post-primary education in Northern Ireland was laid down by the 1947 Education Act which provided for free and compulsory second level education for all pupils. Following the 1944 Education Act for England and Wales, in Northern Ireland a selective system of second level education was adopted. Thus, at age 11 pupils would undergo a transfer process through which a proportion would be selected to attend grammar schools¹². In the 1960s there was a move away from selective second level education in Britain towards a variety of alternative models including delayed selection and comprehensive or non-selective systems. The immediate reason for this shift lay in the election of the Labour government under Harold Wilson and Anthony Crossland's circular 10/65¹³. More generally, however, a number of other factors contributed to this change including a lowered confidence in the tests used to select pupils at age eleven years, empirical evidence on social class biases in the selective tests and procedures, a sense that more parents wanted access to the academic type of education provided by grammar schools and an argument that only in comprehensive systems could true equality of opportunity be provided.

In Northern Ireland a series of reports from the Advisory Council on Education from 1964 onwards raised some questions regarding the future of the selective system. Much of the research evidence available for Northern Ireland seemed to confirm the picture emerging from the rest of the United Kingdom¹⁴. A report in 1964, and a subsequent White Paper, suggested that any drastic change to the system was unrealistic, but it encouraged local experiments with other types of school systems¹⁵. A later report in 1973 was more critical and recommended the abolition of selection at eleven¹⁶. Steps in this direction were initiated by the Labour government, then responsible for Northern Ireland under Direct Rule, but these steps were halted following the election of the Conservative government in 1979. Thereafter matters largely rested until the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, in its report on underachievement in secondary schools in Northern Ireland, raised some issues regarding selection including the need to draw lessons from alternatives to the 11+ within Northern Ireland.

Development of the Craigavon system

In only one area of Northern Ireland was the opportunity to experiment with alternative arrangements to the 11+ selective system taken, although there were a number of areas where non-selective schools had existed

prior to this period and in which this practice continued. The new experiment was in the area designated, in the early 1960s, for the new city of Craigavon following the invitation to innovate in the 1964 report from the Advisory Council on Education. As with all innovations it arose due to a mixture of circumstance, opportunity and the presence of key individuals. The planned development of the new city of Craigavon provided an opportunity to develop a new type of second level school system, and the Ministry had just issued an invitation for such innovations. Although only a small minority of pupils in Northern Ireland were in schools that operated outside the selective system, more of these schools tended to be in or close to the County Armagh area. Part of the reason for innovation was also linked to perceived difficulties in the selective system itself: due to the infrequent level of transfer between grammar and secondary schools, some of the latter had begun to develop A Level courses and this was seen by some as wasteful of resources¹⁷. Thus, some saw a recasting of the system as a contribution to a more efficient system of selection and a more efficient use of existing school buildings. Alongside all of these factors was a desire to retain, as far as possible, the advantages seen to accrue from the academic traditions of grammar schools.

A new model for the Craigavon area was proposed in 1964 by the then Director of Education in Armagh, Mr Jack Dickson¹⁸. His model was partially based on a system operating in Leicestershire, although with significant differences. The model involved all pupils transferring at age 11 (in practice the age of transfer in Leicestershire was to move to age 10) from primary to junior high school, with any selection of pupils for academic courses occurring only at age 14 years. The perceived advantages of this system were that it deferred selection to a later stage, allowed for the more efficient use of existing building stock, and retained a distinctive academic track in the system while allowing junior high schools to retain the full range of pupil ability. At the time, however, there were a number of perceived difficulties that had to be addressed. The system implied that junior high schools would operate for only three years which might raise some problems as to the loyalty and attachment felt by pupils and staff, and to the place of these schools between the primary and higher secondary stages. A question-mark lay over the position of pupils at the point of selection at age 14: should they then transfer into existing grammar and secondary schools, or should new schools be developed?

In 1965 the context changed again as a decision was announced to raise the school leaving age to 16 years by 1970, the development of a new regional technical college was under way in Portadown and decisions on its role and size were needed, and the new city proposals for Craigavon gave further encouragement for educational experimenta-

tion and for 'developing the new kinds of schools or complexes required by the new technological era'¹⁹. The two-tier model which was then taken to public consultation involved the following elements:

- * transfer of pupils at age 11 years from primary to junior high school;
- * selection of pupils at age 14 for an academic curriculum at senior high school;
- * pupils not selected at 14 would transfer to a technical high school department of a technical college;
- * there would be flexible transfer arrangements for pupils between the two parts of the upper tier;
- * the senior high school, the school department of the technical college and the feeder junior high schools would form a unit within which there would be the closest co-operation; and,
- * parents retained the right to 'opt out' of the system by entering their children for the 11+ examination and seeking entry to grammar schools outwith the two-tier system.

Widespread consultation on this model was carried out by Dickson and his Deputy, Mr Harry Armstrong, previously the principal of one of the controlled grammar schools that was being invited to join the system. A total of eighteen public meetings were held throughout the area and advertised in the local press. Meetings were held also with principals, teachers and members of the management committees from schools in the area. A straw poll was taken at the end of each meeting and the results reported to the Armagh Education Committee. The minutes of a committee meeting dated September, 1965, report that overall a majority of parents, teachers and school management committee members were in favour of the new system. Significantly, however, a majority of parents, teachers and management committee members in the two controlled and one Catholic grammar school in the area were opposed to the plan at this stage. Furthermore, there was implacable opposition to the innovation from Protestant voluntary grammar schools lying just outside the Craigavon area.

The two controlled grammar schools in the Craigavon area were persuaded to join in the scheme. A number of factors can be seen to have influenced their decision. First, a former principal of one of the schools was an active advocate of the system. Second, during the course of discussions on the proposal, the principal of the other grammar school was persuaded to come out in favour of the scheme. Third, the proposal did not involve the abolition of the grammar schools *per se* even though it did involve a change in their character, and both schools were permitted to retain their preparatory departments. Following the establishment of the new system a number of teachers in these schools chose to take early retirement or otherwise to leave the system. Most, however, re-

mained.

The principals and teachers in Catholic schools had been lukewarm towards the proposed new scheme. However, amendments to the scheme in 1967 persuaded the Vicar-General, Monsigneur Haughey, that the rights of the Catholic grammar schools were protected and that suitable provision had been made for pupils in Catholic schools who would not transfer to a grammar education at age 14. Consequently, by December, 1967, the Catholic authorities had given their endorsement to the scheme. This endorsement had an effect in the Lurgan area, where the Catholic schools came into the two-tier system, but not in the Portadown area where schools retained their previous status²⁰, albeit that none of these were grammar schools.

The opposition of the Protestant voluntary schools outside the Craigavon area remained implacable. According to Armstrong²¹ this opposition provided for the geographical limits of the two-tier system. In fact, Armstrong went further to suggest that the scheme was only possible because the two Protestant grammar schools in the Craigavon area were controlled schools, and hence owned and managed by the Education Board, rather than voluntary schools, where they are owned by a separate interest and a majority of their management committee is comprised of trustees.

Agreement was finally reached to initiate the new system from September, 1969. In the same year the decision to abolish the junior certificate examination created a gap as it had been intended that this would provide the basis for selection at age 14 years. After careful consideration it was agreed that a system akin to the review procedure then operated by secondary and grammar schools would provide the basis for selection at 14 years.

Operating the Craigavon system

The new city of Craigavon was projected to grow to a population of approximately 100,000 people, help stem the movement of people to Belfast and, in time, subsume the two existing towns of Lurgan and Portadown. The new two-tier school system was meant to grow and develop within the new city. In the event while the infrastructure of the new city exists in part, the population never reached its target figure, and the two towns of Lurgan and Portadown retained their separate identities. The basis of the two-tier schools system was put in place, but it did not grow. Indeed, some of the schools within the Craigavon area that should have developed as part of the two-tier system, in fact developed into all-through comprehensive schools.

Up to 1993 the Craigavon school system had the following components. On the controlled side there were four junior high schools, two senior high schools and school departments in two technical colleges. On the maintained side there were two junior high schools and one senior high school. In addition, there was one controlled comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16 years, and two maintained comprehensive schools for pupils aged 11-18 years in the Craigavon area.

Since the system was established a number of changes have occurred. In the original scheme, pupils from all the junior high schools who were not selected for senior high school were expected to transfer to the school departments of the technical colleges. However, in the early years of the system only boys from the Catholic junior high schools tended to transfer to the technical colleges while the girls tended to remain in their junior high school²². Following some sectarian incidents between pupils in the school department of the technical colleges the Catholic authorities decided that, in future, none of their pupils would transfer to the colleges. In 1992 Brownlow, the controlled comprehensive school, changed status to become a controlled integrated school²³. In 1993 the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) decided to reorganise arrangements for pupils in the school departments of the technical colleges, now named further education colleges (the reasons for this are discussed in greater detail below). It was decided that these pupils would, in future, transfer to a new school, Craigavon Senior High school, with two separate sites in the Lurgan and Portadown areas. In 1996 St Michael's Senior High school reverted to the name St Michael's Grammar school, although its role in the two-tier system did not otherwise change. The current situation is outlined in Table A1, which shows schools in the two-tier system, and Table A2, which shows the other schools in the Craigavon area.

Table A1: Schools in the Craigavon two-tier system

Age 11-13 years	Not selected at 14 years	Selected at 14 years
Killicomaine JH Clounagh JH Tandragee JH	Craigavon Senior High, Portadown campus	Portadown College
Lurgan JH	Craigavon Senior High, Lurgan campus	Lurgan College
St Mary's Girls' JH St Paul's Boys' JH	St Mary's Girls' JH St Paul's Boys' JH	St Michael's

Table A2: Other schools in the Craigavon area

<u>School</u>	<u>Age range</u>
Brownlow	11-16 years
Drumcree High	11-18 years
Lismore High	11-18 years

Evidence on the Craigavon system

A number of research and evaluation studies have provided information on aspects of the Craigavon system, although attention has tended to focus on the schools specifically involved in the two-tier system. An early evaluation carried out for NICER²⁴ found that, by 1978, the system had generated support among parents, more especially among those whose children had transferred at age 14 years to senior high schools. Parents believed that delaying transfer until 14 was a good idea. While the pupils accepted the two transfers involved in the two-tier system, there remained evidence that pupils from more advantaged social backgrounds achieved higher levels of performance and were more likely to obtain places in senior high schools. Teachers in the two-tier system favoured the abolition of the 11+ selection system, but only those in the junior high schools were clearly in support of the two-tier system. Teachers in the senior high schools and in the school departments of the technical colleges were dissatisfied with many aspects of the system and, in particular, felt that greater inter-school liaison was needed. Many were in favour of a common examination at age 14 years. The teachers in the senior high schools felt under pressure as their first two years with pupils were directed towards public examinations at age 16 years, whereas teachers in the technical colleges felt that they were left to deal with less able and sometimes disruptive pupils.

The report as a whole offered a number of recommendations. From the present point of view perhaps the most important was the recommendation for a reappraisal of the curriculum for non-selected pupils in the technical colleges. This recommendation was based on the fact that questions had been raised as to the appropriateness of the curriculum offered to at least some of these pupils.

A survey of teachers following the 1973 ACE report which recommended a move away from selection, found that primary school teachers preferred a number of alternatives to selection at 11+, including the two-tier system²⁵. However, this preference appeared to be based more on removing the pressure of selection from the primary school rather than removing the principle of selection per se. Analyses of the participation

and performance of a cohort of pupils drawn from across Northern Ireland found a higher level of social inequality in selection at 11 years as compared with selection at 14 years²⁶. In addition, it was found that pupils in the two-tier system did better at age 16 years, compared with their performance at age 12 years, than pupils in the grammar/secondary system²⁷. A survey of primary principals and teachers in 1985²⁸ confirmed the main patterns that had been found in previous research. Thus most principals and teachers felt that the 11+ system distorted the curriculum of primary schools, put undue pressure on some pupils and disadvantaged particular categories of pupils. In addition, while generally not opposing the principle of selection, most of the principals and teachers preferred that selection would occur at a later stage, outside the primary school. A study of a cohort of pupils who transferred from primary to post-primary school in 1981²⁹ found that selection at 14 years, as opposed to 11 years, was a more accurate predictor of performance at 16 years. However, two factors contributed to this pattern. First, it would be expected that correlations between selection and later performance would be higher when selection occurs later rather than sooner. Second, the higher correlation in the two-tier system was more of a consequence of the particularly poor performance of the pupils not selected at 14 than of any better performance of pupils selected at 14: thus, whereas 18 per cent of the cohort pupils in the grammar/secondary system left school with no qualifications, this was so for 26 per cent of the cohort pupils in the two-tier system.

The 1993 reorganisation and Craigavon Senior High school

In the early 1990s the SELB identified a number of concerns regarding the educational provision for pupils who were not selected for entry to senior high schools in the controlled sector, and who subsequently transferred from junior high school to a school department in either Portadown or Lurgan further education colleges. A commercial company was invited to examine the situation and offer an appraisal of alternative options for the future. A copy of the report was made available to the research team by the Board.

The review was prompted by a number of concerns including moves by the further education colleges to increase their provision for post-16 students; the new statutory curriculum requirements created by the 1989 Education Reform Order; apparent dissatisfaction among pupils and parents in one part of the system and a subsequent increase in movement into the other area; and concerns within the further education colleges that their development was being hampered by the presence of school age pupils.

The report highlighted a number of weaknesses in the provision for school pupils in the further education colleges. Their teachers operated under FE regulations rather than schools regulations with the effect that they were contracted to work for fewer days than the teaching days required for school pupils, and had fewer contracted contact hours per week than the pupils required for their curriculum. The staffing structure within the FE colleges did not provide a sufficient basis for the introduction of the Northern Ireland curriculum, and there were problems due to the operation of two codes of discipline within the one institution, that is, for school and FE students within the FE college. The report concluded that while the arrangements appeared to command a degree of popular support in the area of one town, this was clearly not so in the area of the other town. In any case, the report concluded that the pupils 'spend two years of their compulsory schooling in less than ideal educational circumstances'.

The investigation at that time found no support for a move to a totally non-selective system, but selection at 14 was found to be more popular than selection at 11. The report argued that any changes to the system should be confined to the parts of it which were seen to be weakest. While there were educational and other advantages to the establishment of a single destination for non-selected pupils in the controlled sector, it was nevertheless felt that popular opinion supported the provision of sites in the two main population centres in the area. On the basis of this report and its own deliberations the SELB decided to establish a new school, Craigavon Senior High school, for pupils in the controlled sector who were not selected for entry to either Portadown or Lurgan senior high schools. The new school was to have two campuses in Portadown and Lurgan. In time the new school might have new buildings, but in the interim the campuses were established as distinctive entities attached to the two Further Education colleges.

1997 Select Committee memorandum

In 1996 the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee of the House of Commons decided to carry out an enquiry into underachievement in Northern Ireland secondary schools³⁰. As part of the evidence considered by the Committee, the Southern Education and Library Board submitted a memorandum on the two-tier schools' system in Craigavon³¹. Here we will merely reiterate points highlighted in this memorandum regarding the Board's perception of the advantages of the two-tier system.

The SELB highlighted a change in the proportion of pupils selected at 14 for entry to selective senior high schools. Prior to open enrolment the entry proportion had been fixed at a third of the total; after open enrolment the SELB suggested that over half the relevant cohort transferred

to selective senior high schools. Despite this higher level of participation in grammar school education, the SELB suggested that the attainment levels achieved by these schools stood up well when compared with 11-18 grammar schools in the rest of Northern Ireland.

The SELB memorandum mentioned seven specific advantages of the two-tier system. There was no distorting effect on the curriculum of the final year of primary school. While junior high schools were unstreamed in their first year, a 'sifting process' in the second and third year allowed for more academically inclined pupils to take a wider range of subjects. Selection at 14 was strongly influenced by pupil and parent choice, and appeared to avoid the damage to self-esteem caused by 11+ 'failure'. The new arrangements (from 1993 onwards) for non-selected pupils to attend Craigavon Senior High school offered new experiences and the 'opportunity to develop academically and socially'. Pupils in the third year of junior high school had an opportunity to take on leadership roles that might not be available in an 11-16 or 11-18 school. Craigavon Senior High school had, as one of its founding principles, the aim of fostering links with further education. Finally, the system commanded the professional confidence of teachers in the primary, junior high and senior high schools.

Above we can see the advantages in the Craigavon system as identified by the SELB. The Board's perspective on this is helpful in that it provides some criteria by which the system can be judged.

ANNEX TWO TEACHERS AND THE 11+

Introduction

As noted in the main report, we discussed the 11+ system and its perceived consequences for primary schools, with a small number of P6 and P7 teachers. This short note offers an account of the themes to emerge from these interviews.

Background

The group consisted of six primary school teachers, evenly divided into P6 and P7 teachers. Most taught in working class areas in Belfast including Lenadoon, Twinbrook and Poleglass. Those from further afield included teachers from Larne, Newry and Newtownabbey. One P7 teacher was taking a non transfer class and believed that, compared to his peers, he had more time to concentrate on teaching the national curriculum. This was also the belief of the wider group who pointed out that he had several advantages; first he could concentrate on the needs of weaker children and second, he was not 'wasting time on practice tests for an exam they would fail anyway'. When asked how he persuaded parents to opt out he pointed out that it was not an easy task, but since not one of his class scored above 20 in their past tests he felt the evidence supported his argument. Similar experiences were related by other teachers, most of whom claimed that parents refuse to listen to teachers. There were some interesting quotes to support their views; one teacher said he was so irritated he told a parent, 'look you could put a dog in front of your child and he would still pass, the child doesn't need coaching'. By contrast, a middle class parent advised not to enter the child argued, 'my child has rights too'.

The transfer exam

There was a consensus among the group that the transfer exam was not a fair test. The high English content of the test was argued to advantage middle class children. They felt that the test suited children from homes where conversation between children and parents was the norm, where children were encouraged to read and where they had had books read to them. One teacher pointed out it was too late for parents to begin at P5 or P6 to try and catch up; children needed an enriched language experience from birth. He believed that without this early experience there was very little a school could offer a child, in terms of the 11+.

Common curriculum

The science content has been reduced over the past two years from level 5 to level 4 and most teachers felt that it was now more clearly defined. However, they agreed that they could not possibly teach the whole syllabus and were reduced to rote learning. In effect, they said, they write information on the blackboard and the children learn it by heart. One teacher said if he has time later in the P7 year he tries to give his children an opportunity to try out some experiments, but this is post 11+.

One teacher said the pressure placed on teachers throughout the P6 year was dreadful. They were left in a system of accelerated learning driven by the 11+. She recounted how in a recent inspection a P6 teacher removed all the children's science books from the class so that the inspector wouldn't see how far behind they were. Moreover, she said the system is ridiculous and teachers lie to inspectors telling them everything is fine when it's not.

Parental expectations

Parental expectations have increased, and the teacher of an over-subscribed middle class primary said she has had parents tell her to drop art and PE and to concentrate on giving more practice tests. She said she recently had one mother complain her son was tired all the time, but had little sympathy. She pointed out this child was at school all day, went home, finished his homework, completed a practice test and then went to his tutor! There was general agreement that coaching has increased and often parents feel pressurised into having children coached because, 'that's what good parents do'. It was pointed out that many parents do not have any understanding about what the test includes or how it is marked. Some believe that there is a hidden cut off point, that is, a specific criterion score for assessing suitability for a grammar school, when in fact the test ranks pupils.

School expectations

A good teacher is seen to be one with a high pass rate at 11+. If the children do well it is generally assumed they were a good group, but if they do badly it was because of poor teaching. Most of the schools offered school tuition. One offered 1 day per week from 3-5, another Saturday mornings plus two weeks in August when the children come in during the holidays to start getting ready for the 11+. Another said the children were not given the Hallowe'en holiday and were encouraged to come in on Saturday mornings. In the predominantly middle class school parents preferred to pay tutors and the teacher said they seemed to believe if it was paid for it must be good.

Overall it was agreed that the test has improved in the last year or two and is more clearly defined and somewhat reduced; for example, science is now taught at level 4 rather than 5.

Changes

When asked how they would improve the system most said they were against the 11+. One was convinced that comprehensive education was the way forward. Interestingly, most disputed this and one teacher pointed out that comprehensive education would use streaming and therefore was another form of selection. She also said that selection began from P1 when children were divided into reading groups and was an inevitable part of the education system. She was not keen on the present 11+ and agreed with one teacher's suggestion that the onus should be placed on grammar schools to do their own selecting. This suggestion was warmly welcomed and they discussed for a few minutes the advantages this would have for primary schools. Generally, they disliked the present test and believe that it is set to fail children; they would like it replaced. One teacher counted 18 trick questions in the last test (those which could be interpreted in several ways) which he felt many adults would have had problems with. He was adamant that this is a test set to fail children.

ANNEX THREE

PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND AUTOMATIC TRANSFER IN THE SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

This note is based on data provided by the Transfer Office of the Southern Education and Library Board area. In the SELB there are a number of designated primary schools where it is assumed that pupils will automatically transfer to a designated post-primary school. Parents have the right to opt-out of this and have their child take the 11+ transfer tests. We were concerned here with the number of pupils who opted to transfer automatically or to take the tests. It was possible to compare the rates for the two alternatives in the Craigavon area and in other parts of the SELB outside the Craigavon area.

Overall there were data on 2,552 pupils. Of these 1,360 (53 per cent) were in primary schools designated as being within the Craigavon area and 1,192 (47 per cent) were in schools designated as lying in the catchments of other non-selective schools in the SELB. Of the total pupil population 81 per cent opted to transfer automatically and 19 per cent opted for an alternative route. However, within the Craigavon area a higher proportion (83 per cent) opted to transfer automatically in comparison to the other non-selective areas, where 78 per cent opted to transfer automatically. The proportion of pupils in controlled schools who opted to transfer automatically was higher, at 86 per cent overall, in comparison with pupils in maintained schools, where the proportion automatically transferring was 74 per cent. In the two integrated primary schools in the database only a minority opted to transfer automatically. In all three types of school the proportion of pupils who automatically transferred was always higher in the Craigavon area in comparison with the other nonselective areas in the SELB.

It is perhaps worth noting that the number of pupils in the controlled sector was higher than the other two sectors: in the controlled schools there were 1,593 (62 per cent) pupils, in comparison with 903 (35 per cent) in the maintained sector and only 56 (two per cent) in the integrated sector.

There were data on 14 Catholic primary schools designated as part of the Craigavon schools system, and hence with the assumption that most of their pupils would transfer automatically to either St Mary's Junior High or St Paul's Junior High. Eight of the schools send two-thirds or more of their pupils to the relevant Junior Highs. Two schools send the highest proportion of their pupils to Lismore High while four schools send the highest proportion of their pupils to Drumcree High. Only in the cases of the two that send pupils to Lismore and one of those that send pupils to Drumcree were more than 10 pupils involved. The two

that send pupils to Lismore are in BT65. The two schools that send the most number of pupils to Drumcree High are both in BT62.

All but two of the Catholic schools that are designated as being in non-selective catchment areas send their pupils outside the Craigavon area. There are two schools which send their pupils to Drumcree High: one sends its only pupil, the other sends eight of its nine pupils.

This all occurs within a context where, overall, 74 per cent of pupils in the Catholic schools opt to transfer automatically and 26 per cent opt to take the 11+ and/or seek entry to schools other than the designated schools. Among primary schools designated as being within the Craigavon area 78 per cent opt to transfer automatically, as compared with 67 per cent who opt to transfer automatically in non-selective areas outside Craigavon.

There are only two integrated primary schools in the dataset, one each designated for the Craigavon area and for a non-selective area. It is to be expected that the catchment area for these two primary schools is wider than for primary schools under other management arrangements. Not surprisingly, therefore, only a minority transfer automatically. Pupils from these schools go to a variety of post-primary schools, including integrated schools in the wider area.

There are 28 controlled primary schools designated as being in the Craigavon area and for whom automatic transfer to one of the Junior Highs is assumed unless the parents opt differently. Five of the schools send a majority of their pupils to schools outside the Junior Highs. Only one of these five sends the majority of its pupils to schools outside the Craigavon area (although another sends a little under a third of its pupils outside the Craigavon area). Of the four remaining primary schools, two send most of their pupils to Lismore High, one sends most to Drumcree High, and the other sends most to Brownlow High. It is worth noting that an additional two of the primary schools send about a fifth of their pupils to Brownlow, even though most of the pupils in both cases go to the designated Junior High. In all cases where the majority of pupils are being sent to a Junior High, the clear majority go to the same Junior High.

There were 36 controlled primary schools in areas designated for automatic transfer to a non-selective school. In all but two cases the majority of the pupils in these schools transferred to schools outside the Craigavon area.

Overall 86 per cent of pupils in the controlled primary schools opted to transfer automatically and only 14 per cent opted for some alternative

route. Within the Craigavon area the proportion of pupils in controlled schools who opted to transfer automatically was a little higher, at 88 per cent, while in other non-selective areas the proportion from controlled schools who opted to transfer automatically was 84 per cent.

Table A3: Number and percentage of pupils transferring from selected primary to post-primary schools in the SELB, 1996 (source: SELB)

Type	transfer to designated schools		transfer to other schools	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
All schools	2,056	80.6	496	19.4
Craigavon schools	1,128	82.9	232	17.1
Nonselective schools	928	77.9	264	22.1
Controlled schools	1,370	86.0	223	14.0
Integrated schools	21	37.5	35	62.5
Maintained schools	665	73.6	238	26.4
<u>Controlled</u>				
Craigavon schools	690	87.7	97	12.3
Nonselective schools	680	84.4	126	15.6
<u>Integrated</u>				
Craigavon schools	12	48.0	13	52.0
Nonselective schools	9	29.0	22	71.0
<u>Maintained</u>				
Craigavon schools	426	77.7	122	22.3
Nonselective schools	239	67.3	116	32.7

Out= those who opted to transfer automatically

In=those who opted not to transfer automatically (take 11+)

ANNEX FOUR

ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL LEAVER PATTERNS

Introduction

In this annex we discuss evidence on the patterns of performance achieved by the Craigavon area schools in comparison with other schools in Northern Ireland that share important characteristics of these schools. Two main sources of evidence were used. Firstly, the School Performance Tables, published annually by DENI, provide a detailed school-by-school account of attainment patterns for Year 12 and Year 14 pupils, and details of the destinations of school leavers. In addition, DENI provided details of the numbers of boys and girls in each school and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals for the 1995/96 School Performance Table. The main part of our discussion examines patterns evident from these data, as identified using the Datadesk 4 exploratory data analysis software.

The second main source of information was additional data provided by DENI from the 1992/93 and 1994/95 School Leavers' Surveys. On the basis of Performance Table patterns a number of matching schools were identified for each of the Craigavon area schools. Comparing the performance profile of school leavers, disaggregated by year of leaving, provided an extra insight into the patterns revealed by the School Performance Tables.

In the discussion below we examine the patterns for grammar and secondary schools separately. Throughout the discussion we have eschewed the attempt to identify the single most significant attainment or performance indicator for a school type. Rather, the approach we have taken is to attempt to review the broader profile of schools, both in terms of their pupil attainment levels and the destinations of their leavers. It is our view that this more broadly based approach offers a better insight into the general performance of schools. Throughout the analysis we have used the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals as a school-level measure of social disadvantage. Clearly this is an important contextual variable which needs to be taken into account in any analysis of attainment data. It is equally true that individual level data are preferable to aggregate school level data. In this case, however, only the former are available. It should be noted also that the free school meals percentage measures social disadvantage and not social class profile. An MEd dissertation completed in the School of Education, Queen's University, a number of years ago suggested that the social class profile of one of the senior high schools in Craigavon was markedly different from grammar schools across Northern Ireland. This may be an added contextual feature of the schools in the area, but it is one we are unable to measure for this study.

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

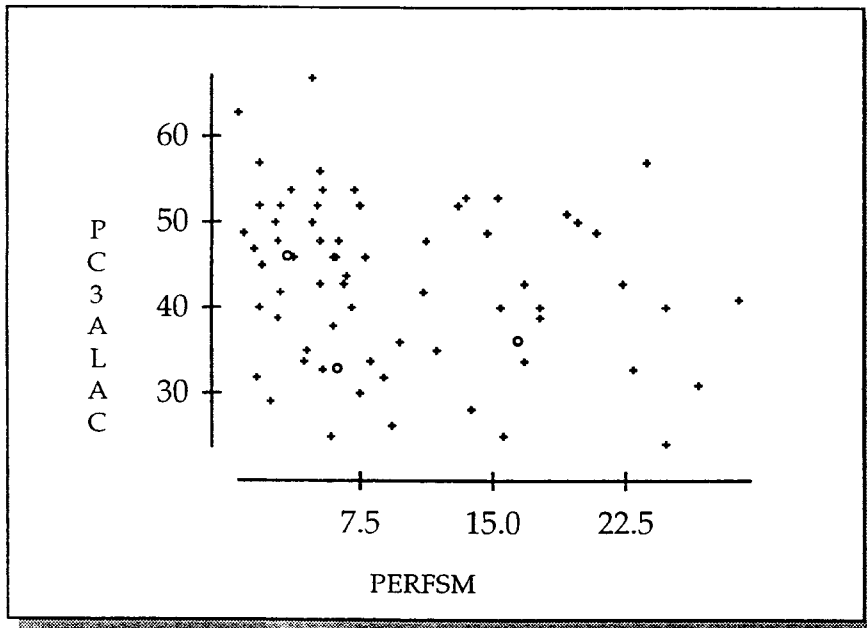
Grammar schools, attainment measures 1995/96

Overall there is no significant difference in the distribution of schools on the basis of GCSE or A Level results when we compare Protestant and Catholic schools. There is however, a significant difference in the proportion of pupils getting free school meals (FSM) between these schools, with the distribution in Protestant schools being much narrower and markedly lower than is the case for Catholic schools. These differences (and non-differences) are interesting and there is a relationship between FSM and school performance. Schools were placed into one of four bands on the basis of their FSM level: the band where the schools had the lowest level of FSM contained 17 schools, all of which were Protestant schools. The next contained 19 schools, all but one of which were Protestant schools. The third band contained 17 schools, twelve of which were Catholic and the final band, containing the schools with the highest level of FSM, contained 17 schools, all of which were Catholic.

The median levels of Year 12 pupils obtaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above were at 95 per cent or higher for each FSM band and there was no significant difference across the bands. There was a difference in the distribution of the schools, but this was more the result of individual outliers. Looking at each of the three Senior High schools (SHs) in relation to schools within their FSM band we find that Portadown College (band 1) has an above average level, as has Lurgan College (band 2): both are at about the 75th percentile for schools in their FSM bands. The position of St Michael's is below average for its band, with the school sitting a little below the 25th percentile on the scale. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that 8 of the 17 schools in this band are single-sex girls' schools, all of which achieve a higher level on this criterion than St Michael's.

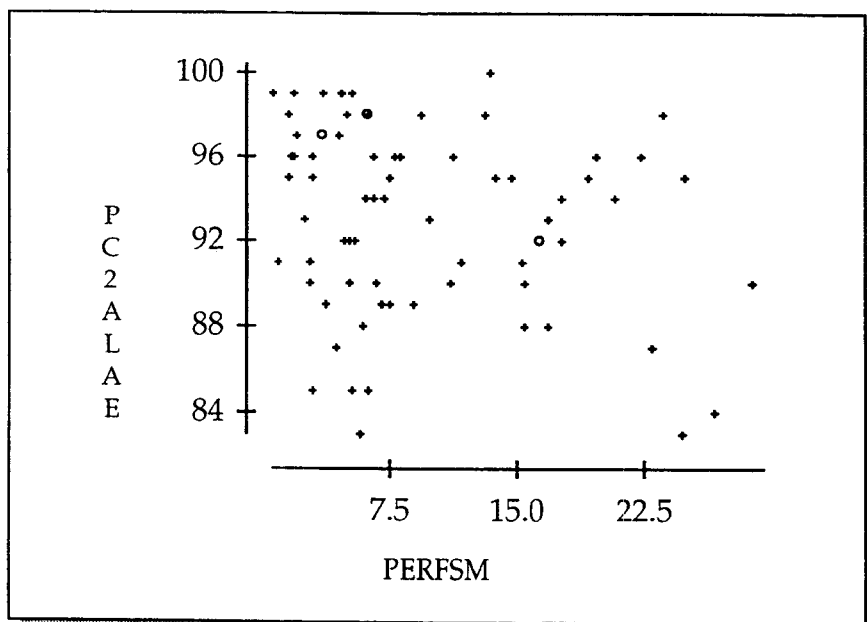
When we move the criterion to the proportion of Year 14 pupils passing two or more A Levels at grade E or above, we find that the medians across all bands are 92 per cent or higher, and while the medians do step down linearly across the FSM bands, there are only small differences between the averages. The distribution of schools within FSM bands vary, but only as a consequence of outliers. Portadown College and Lurgan College sit at about the 75th percentile on the distribution of schools within their FSM bands indicating an above average performance on this indicator. On this criterion St Michael's sits at the median level for schools in its FSM band.

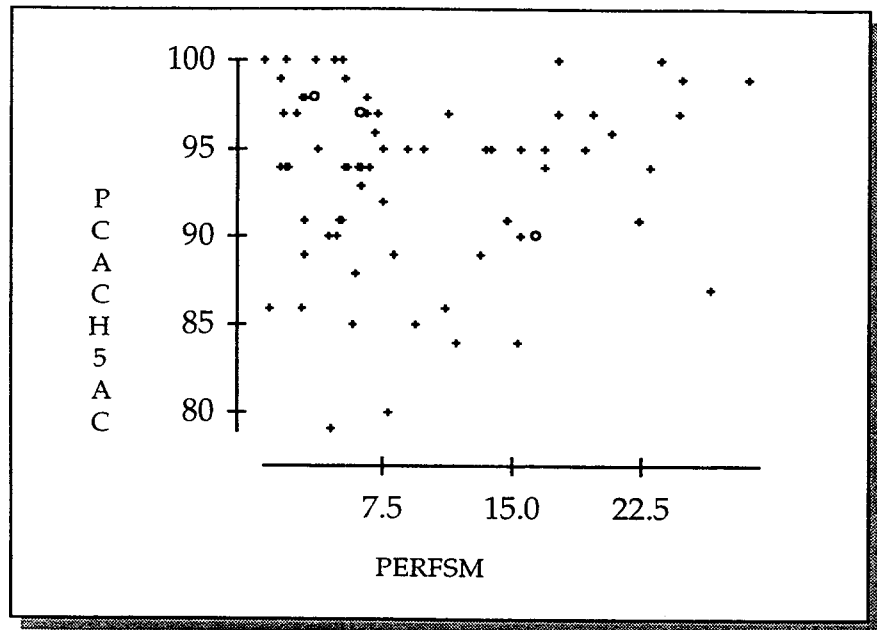
When we move the criterion to the proportion of Year 14 pupils passing three or more A Levels at grade C or above the medians fall to between



40 and 47 per cent for each band: the median and interquartile range for band 1 are 47 and 11, for band 2, 43 and 16, for band 3, 42 and 16 and for band 4, 40 and 16. As before the medians step down across each band, but the differences are small. This time Portadown College has a performance level at the median for schools in its FSM band, while St Michael's has a level which is a little below the median but within the interquartile range. By contrast, the performance level of Lurgan College on this criterion falls below the 25th percentile and is significantly lower than other schools in its FSM band: most of the schools in this FSM band are, like Lurgan, coeducational.

The graphs on this page show the performance patterns of individual grammar schools as measured against the proportion of their pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Four criteria are presented: the proportion of Year 14 pupils passing three A Levels at grades A-C; the proportion of Year 14 pupils passing two or more A Levels at grades A-E; the proportion of Year 12 pupils passing five or more GCSEs at grades A-C; and the proportion of leavers who went to higher education. The three senior high grammar schools in the Craigavon area are identified by a circle on the graph. The graphs illustrate the overall pattern, but for the analysis discussed in the text the schools were banded on the basis of their FSM levels.*

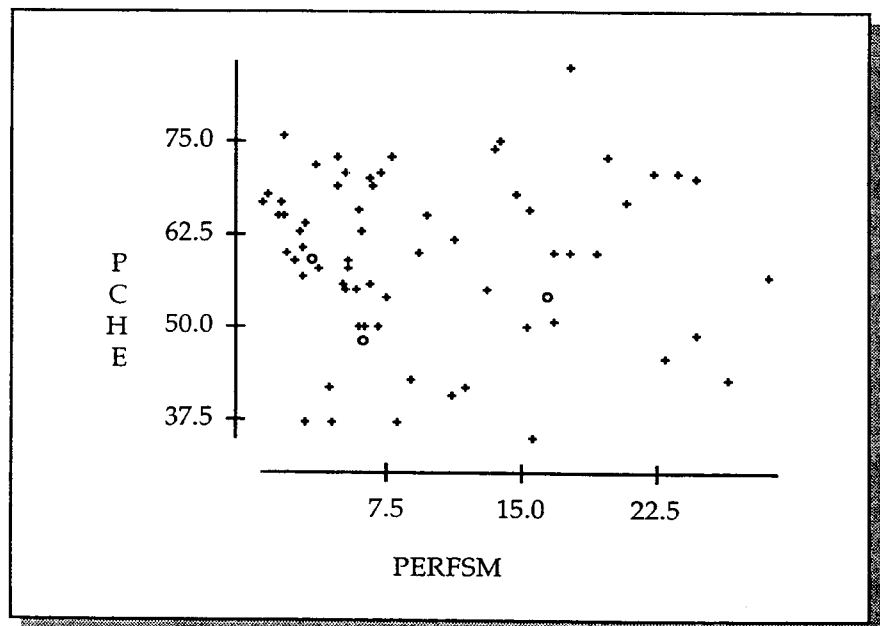




School leaver destinations

On average about 60 per cent of leavers from grammar schools went to higher education (HE) and a little under three-in-ten went to further education (FE). The figures for entry to HE vary little across the FSM bands, although it is a little lower (not significantly so) for band 2 schools: this may be related to achievement levels and patterns of exit from Northern Ireland as mediated by religion.

When we consider band 1 schools the average going to HE is 64 per cent. Portadown College sits at the lower end of the distribution in a group of four schools below the 25th percentile. There is one other outlier,



Royal School Armagh, which is well below the rest and has a proportion going to HE of a little under two-in-five. Lurgan College also sends a proportion of leavers to HE that is below average for schools in its FSM band. It sits in a group of five schools in this band that lie below the 25th percentile on the distribution. St Michael's, on the other hand, has a proportion of leavers that is only a little below the median for its band. Within its band, in other words, it has a more typical pattern in its proportion of leavers going to HE.

The proportion of leavers going to FE is about 28 per cent for each FSM band, but the distributions tend to vary across the bands. Within band 1, in particular, most of the schools are grouped tightly around the median figure, but there are a small number of outliers at either end of the scale. Portadown College is an outlier at the upper end of the distribution, sending almost two-in-five leavers to FE. Within the band the figure is higher only for Royal School Armagh which sends over half its leavers to FE. Within its band Lurgan College is much more typical and sits just a little above the median. This pattern is almost the same for St Michael's where the proportion going to FE is just a little above the median for its FSM band.

A comparison of grammar school patterns, 1992/93 and 1995/96

On the criterion of five or GCSE passes at grade G or above, practically all schools achieved the same high level in 1995/6 as in 1992/3. The three Senior High schools conform exactly with this pattern.

On the criterion of five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, in 1995/96 the average grammar school was achieving 4 per cent more at this level than in 1992/3. The Senior Highs were a little below this: two had exactly the same level of performance in both years, while St Michael's was 4 per cent down in 1995/96.

Moving to the proportion of Year 14 pupils who passed two or more A Levels at grade E or above we find that, on average, grammar schools improved their levels on this measure by 3 per cent. The improvement for each of the Senior Highs was above average. Thus, for Portadown College it was up 4 per cent, for St Michael's it was up 15 per cent and for Lurgan College it was up 23 per cent.

An examination of the level of performance in 1992/93 with the level of increase between 1992/93 and 1995/96 shows a ceiling effect in that the highest level of improvement is shown by grammars which achieved low performance in 1992/93. Given the performance of the Senior Highs in 1992/93, the level of increase which they show over time fits this general pattern.

On average grammar schools increased their level on the criterion of three A Level passes at grade C or above by 22 per cent. The level for each of the three Senior Highs had, however, increased at a higher rate: thus, for Lurgan College the level had gone up 28 per cent, for Portadown it had gone up 39 per cent and for St Michael's it had gone up by 80 per cent. As with the previous measure, schools that had achieved a lower level in 1992/93 tended to show also a higher level of increase over time (the correlation between these measures was -0.67, and the regression equation had an R squared (adjusted) of 44 per cent). Lurgan Collge was slightly below the regression line, but the other two Senior Highs were entirely typical as they fitted the general pattern: both were actually on the regression line.

If we compare the proportion of school leavers who went to higher education in 1992/93 with 1995/96 we find a significant correlation (0.68) and a regression line that accounts for 46 per cent of the variance. The pattern then is fairly robust, with a tendency for more of the schools where a lower proportion of leavers went to higher education in 1992/93 (typically less than 50 per cent) having an even lower level again in 1995/96. To that extent Lurgan College goes against this trend, albeit that it sits on the regression line for the entire dataset. St Michael's and Portadown College appear typical in the patterns, both sitting almost exactly on the regression line for the entire dataset.

If we compare the proportion of school leavers going to further education again we find a correlation between 1992/93 and 1995/96 although it is a little less strong (0.63) and there is a little more scatter around the regression line (R squared (adjusted) = 39 per cent). Lurgan College and Portdown College appear to send a somewhat higher proportion of their leavers to further education than most grammars, while the pattern from St Michael's is somewhat more typical. All three hover around the regression line for the entire dataset, with Lurgan slightly below the line and Portadown slightly above the line: whereas in 1992/93 Lurgan sent more of its leavers to further education (approx 38 per cent) than in 1995/96, in 1995/96 Portadown sent more of its leavers to further education (again about 38 per cent) than in 1992/93.

Matching grammar and senior high schools

As indicated above, DENI supplied the research team with additional data on schools selected to provide broad matches to the senior high schools in the Craigavon area in terms of their pupil profile. For each of the three selective senior high schools, two grammar schools were identified as matches and data were made available from the 1992/93 and 1994/95 school leavers surveys.

The 1992/93 school leavers' data suggested there was no consistent pattern of leaving among the three senior highs and their matches: in two of the senior high schools a lower proportion of pupils left at Year 12 in comparison with their matched schools, although in both cases more pupils from the senior highs left after Year 13. In the case of the third senior high school the proportion of leavers was higher in comparison with the two matching grammars.

In two of the senior high schools many of the Year 12 leavers appeared to have done so as a matter of choice as the proportion passing seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above was higher than the matching schools. This was not so for the third senior high school where three-quarters of the Year 12 leavers had passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, but only six per cent had passed seven or more GCSEs at this level.

For Year 14 leavers the pattern of results, as measured by the proportion who passed three or more A Levels at grade E or above varied across the schools. One of the senior highs had a markedly higher proportion achieving this level, in comparison with its two matches, one senior high sat between its two matches and one had a lower proportion achieving this level than its two matches.

When we consider the overall attainment profile for school leavers from the senior high schools and their matches for 1992/93 we can see the following emergent pattern. One of the senior high schools has an attainment profile that is lower across all levels than its two matching grammar schools, except for one element: a slightly higher proportion of leavers from the senior high school passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above in comparison with the matching schools. The pattern for the other two senior highs is somewhat different. In both cases the senior highs have a considerably higher profile than one of the matching schools, and a slightly lower profile than the other matching grammar school, due to a lower proportion of leavers achieving three A Level passes. This may be at least partially explained by the fact that for both senior high schools a higher proportion of Year 12 leavers have passed seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above. Some of these leavers may have been able to stay on to take A levels, and thus boosted the overall profile of the senior high schools, but clearly opted to leave at 16. On the basis of the 1994/95 school leavers' data the proportion of Year 12 leavers had fallen for both these senior highs, in comparison with their matching grammar schools, while the proportion of Year 12 leavers with seven or more GCSE passes at grade C or above remained higher. Indeed, in the case of the third senior high school the proportion of Year 12 leavers with seven or more GCSE passes was now also higher than its two matching grammar schools, albeit only marginally so in one case. This pattern of a higher increase in the attainment profile of the senior high schools

in comparison with their matches continued when we examined the proportion of Year 14 leavers who passed three or more A Levels. This time two of the senior high schools had a higher proportion of Year 14 leavers meeting this criterion than their two matching schools. While the proportion achieving this criterion for the third senior high remained lower than both its matching schools, the gaps between the three schools had narrowed considerably.

When we consider the overall attainment profile of the schools for 1994/95 we find that two of the senior highs are achieving higher levels of attainment than their matching grammars across the profile. This indicates a significant level of improvement in the position of these senior highs in comparison to the leavers' data from 1992/93. The attainment profile of the third senior high school can be seen to have improved over time as well. In 1994/95 it had achieved close to parity in its profile with one of its matching schools although it remained some way behind the other matching grammar school.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Secondary schools: patterns of attainment, 1995/96

As with the grammar schools the secondary schools were divided into four FSM bands with roughly equal numbers of schools in each band. In fact there were 39 schools in three bands and 38 in band 2. Again as with the grammar schools there was a difference in the distribution of Protestant and Catholic schools across the bands. Thus in band 1 there were 35 Protestant, 3 Catholic and 1 integrated school; in band 2 there were 19 Protestant, 18 Catholic and 1 integrated school; in band 3 there were 15 Protestant, 23 Catholic and 1 integrated schools and in band 4 there were 5 Protestant, 34 Catholic and no integrated schools. (This banding excludes schools which did not have any pupil in Year 12, that is mainly newly opened integrated schools and the Junior High schools in the Craigavon area which transfer all of their pupils at age 14 years.)

Attainment: five or more GCSEs at grade G or above

The median performance on this criterion stepped down across the four FSM bands, with a median of 82 in band 1, 76 in band 2, 76 in band 3 and 66 in band 4. The range of performance measures was narrowest within band 1 and widest within band 2.

Craigavon Senior High was the only Craigavon school in band 1 and its performance level was the second lowest in this group: this placed it as an outlier among band 1 schools (in fact, its performance level was lower than all the other Craigavon schools also, even though they were all in bands 3 or 4).

The two Catholic Junior Highs, Lismore and Brownlow were all in band 3, although their performance levels on this criterion varied widely. The highest level was achieved by St Mary's Junior High, which achieved the third highest level among schools in this band (the two schools above it were also all-girls schools). Brownlow was the next highest with a level that put it just about the 75th percentile on the distribution. St Paul's Junior High and Lismore achieved the same level on this criterion and sat just below the 25th percentile on the distribution of schools in band 3. Finally, Drumcree, the only Craigavon area school in Band 4, achieved an above average performance on this criterion, with a level which placed it at the 75th percentile on the distribution of schools in this band. The actual level achieved was higher than that achieved in either Lismore or St Paul's Junior High, both of which were in band 3.

Attainment: five or more GCSEs at grade C or above:

On this criterion the median level across bands 1 to 3 is almost identical (27, 26 and 28 respectively). The median for band 4 is a little lower, at 18, but the distributions within each band are quite wide so that differences between the bands are small.

Craigavon Senior High has the next to lowest level on this criterion within band 1. The only Craigavon area school within band 4 is Drumcree and, on this criterion, it has achieved an above average performance, with a level that puts it above the 75th percentile.

Within band 3 the Craigavon area schools were distributed across the scale. The lowest was St Paul's Junior High which had no pupils achieving this criterion and thus sat at the very bottom of the distribution. St Mary's Junior High sat below the median, but well within the interquartile range. Brownlow sat at just about the median for schools in this band. By contrast, Lismore had an above average performance on this criterion and sat well above the 75th percentile. [The pattern for Lismore, with a relatively low proportion passing five or more GCSEs at grade G or above and a relatively high proportion passing five or more GCSEs at grade C or above suggests a high variability in the performance levels of its pupils: quite a lot do very well at age 16, but quite a lot evidently do poorly].

Leavers' destinations

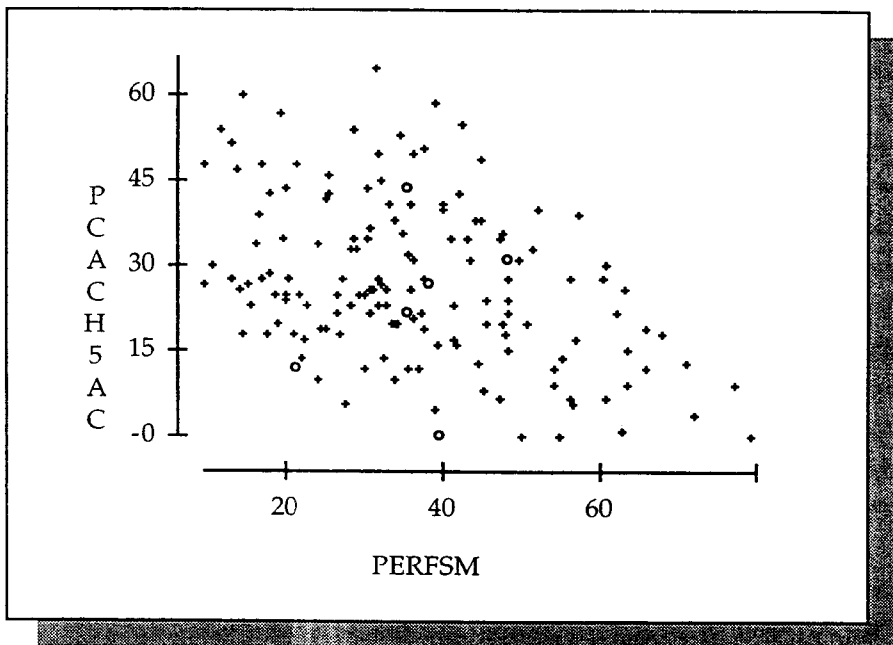
Secondary schools, in general, send a significant proportion of their pupils either to further education, youth training or employment. A smaller number of schools will send pupils to higher education. On average 40 per cent of leavers from band 1 schools go to further education. The comparable figures are 33, 34 and 29 for bands 2, 3 and 4 schools

respectively. Within band 1 the figure for Craigavon Senior High is above average, albeit within the interquartile range. However, given the relatively low performance of pupils from this school, this high rate of entry to further education seems to suggest an advantage of the system. Within band 3 Lismore and St Paul's Junior High send almost the same proportion of their leavers to further education, and this was close to the median level for this band. The proportion of leavers from Brownlow who went to further education was well above average, and above the 75th percentile. The proportion of leavers going to further education from St Mary's Junior High was the highest in the band: in fact there were only two secondary schools (both band 1) with comparably high proportions of leavers going to further education and only one of these was higher than St Mary's: they were Markethill High and City of Armagh.

The proportion of leavers going to youth training varies across the bands with 27 per cent in band 1, 31 per cent in band 2, 24 per cent in band 3 and 31 per cent in band 4. In band 1 the proportion from Craigavon Senior High is just a little above the median for the band. In band 3 Brownlow sent hardly any of its leavers to youth training, while the proportion for St Paul's, Lismore and St Mary's are almost the same at a fifth, and all sit below the median for their band, although above the 25th percentile. The proportion of leavers going to youth training from Drumcree is also low and below average for its band: it sits well below the 25th percentile for its band with only two other schools in the band having a lower proportion of leavers going to youth training.

The proportion of leavers recorded as entering employment steps up across the bands, with figures of 14, 15, 17 and 23 respectively for each of bands 1 to 4. In band 1 the proportion for Craigavon Senior High sits just below the median for its band. In band 4 Drumcree sits just a little above the median for its bands. The distribution of Craigavon area schools in band 3 varies more widely: St Mary's Junior High sends practically no leavers to employment and sits right at the bottom of the distribution in its band. Lismore and Brownlow sit just below and just above the median for the band respectively, sending one-in-seven and one-in-five leavers to employment respectively. The highest recorded proportion of leavers entering employment was for St Paul's Junior High where a figure of 43 per cent is recorded, the second highest level for schools in band 3 and among the eight secondary schools recording the highest proportion of leavers entering employment.

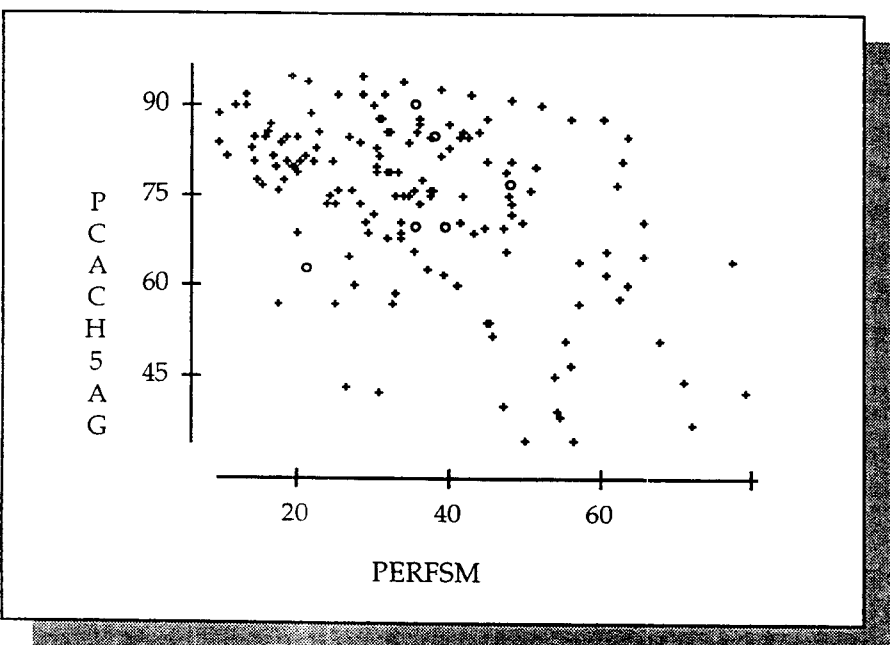
If we combine the figures for the proportion of leavers going to higher education, further education or transferring to another school we obtain an estimate of the proportion of leavers who remain in education. This varies across the bands, being about a half for bands 1 to 3, and a third for band 4. In band 1 the figure for Craigavon Senior High places it at the median level for the group. In band 4 the figure for Drumcree is



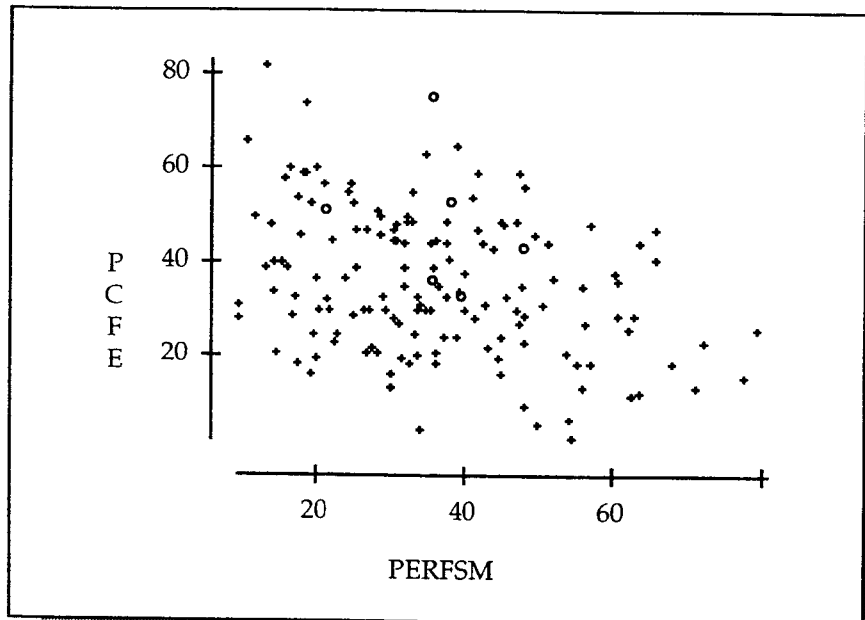
well above average, being above the 75th percentile for the band. In band 3 again the schools vary across the distribution. The figure is lowest for St Paul's Junior High, putting it on the 25th percentile, Lismore is just above average, while the figures for Brownlow and St Mary's Junior High are well above average, with only two other (all-girls) secondary schools having a higher level: overall they are among the top seven secondary schools in terms of the proportion of leavers who stay in education.

Destinations: 11-16 secondary schools

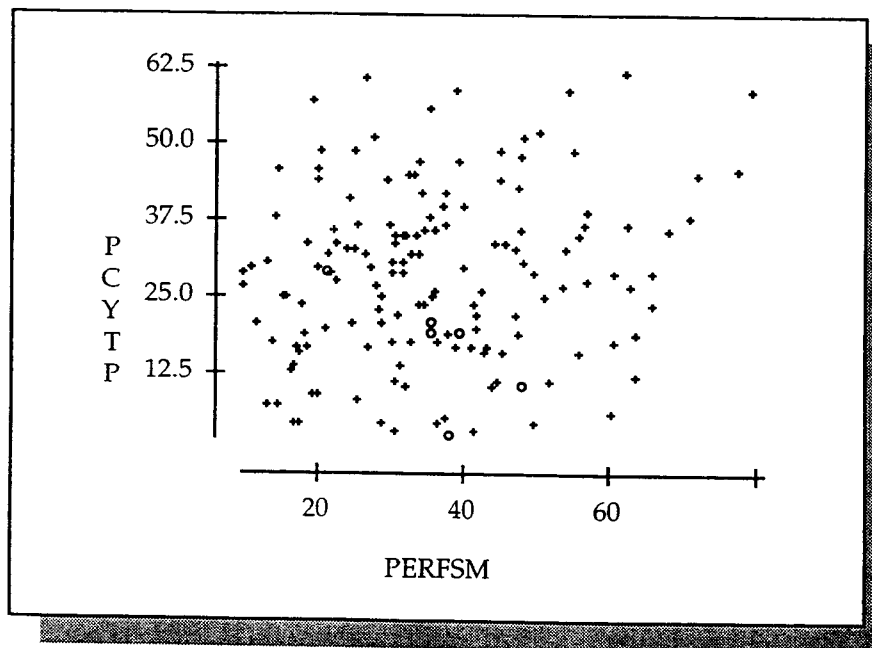
Among the schools which take pupils only up to age 16 (Years 8 to 12) the proportion of school leavers who stay in education averages at 47



The graphs on this page show the performance patterns of individual secondary schools as measured against the proportion of their pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Four criteria are presented: the proportion of Year 12 pupils passing five or more GCSEs at grades A-C; the proportion of Year 12 pupils passing five or more GCSEs at grades A*-G; the proportion of leavers going to Further Education; and the proportion of leavers going to government training. The schools marked with a circle are based in the Craigavon area and include the three all-through schools, the two Catholic junior high schools and Craigavon senior high school.*



per cent. The proportion for St Mary's Junior High and Brownlow is very much higher than this at 76 per cent. The proportion for Craigavon Senior High is about the median (51 per cent) while that for St Paul's Junior High is below average for secondary schools at 33 per cent. Not surprisingly there is a relationship between the achievement of year 12 pupils and their destinations: the correlation between the proportion getting five or more GCSEs at grade G or above and the proportion of leavers who stay in education is 0.59. On this comparison St Mary's Junior High and Brownlow are at the virtuous end of the scale, achieving high levels on both measures. Craigavon Senior High achieves a relatively high level of stayers in education despite having a relatively low performance level. By contrast, St Paul's Junior High combines a low performance level with a low proportion staying in education (although,



as noted above, the data record a significant proportion of the leavers from St Paul's Junior High going to employment). There is a slight difference in the pattern between the schools as well: whereas the leavers who stay in education from Craigavon Senior High and St Mary's Junior High (and to the lesser extent that they do stay, St Paul's Junior High) tend to enter further education, an above average proportion of leavers from Brownlow also transfer to another school.

The proportion of school leavers who fail to achieve the equivalent of one GCSE at grade G is relatively high for Craigavon Senior High. When we examine the proportion of year 12 pupils who obtain five or more GCSEs at grade G or above we find that, among 11-16 schools, Craigavon Senior High has a well below average performance level (below 25th percentile for secondary schools, despite having a relatively low FSM), St Paul's Junior High is below average, but within the interquartile range for secondary schools, Brownlow is above average (for secondary schools, being at the 75th percentile level) while St Mary's Junior High is well above average on this criterion.

Destinations and attainment: 11-18 schools

If we examine the patterns only for the 11-18 secondary schools we find that Drumcree is about average in terms of the proportion of Year 12 pupils who pass five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, but is slightly below average in terms of the proportion passing five or more GCSEs at grade G or above. The pattern for Lismore is even more diverse: it is well above the average for 11-18 secondary schools on the 'five or more at grade C' criterion, but is significantly below the average on the 'five or more at grade G' criterion.

The number of Year 14 pupils taking A Levels in secondary schools generally is quite small: although there are two secondary schools with more than 100 taking A Levels, and 6 with more than 50, the average (median) is only 21. Drumcree has 14 and Lismore has 38. Among the A Level pupils, Lismore has a proportion achieving one A Level pass at grade E or above, two passes at the same grade level and three or more A Levels at grade C or above, well above the average for 11-18 secondary schools. Drumcree, by contrast, is about average for one A level pass, a little below average for two A Level passes and well below average for the three A Level criterion (no pupils achieved this level in Drumcree, or in 14 other 11-18 secondary schools).

Destinations of leavers

Obtaining a clear pattern on the destinations of leavers is difficult because some will be leaving in Year 12, 13 and 14. Looking at the propor-

tions of leavers going to HE we see that Drumcree had a below average level while Lismore had an above average level (in comparison with the average for secondary schools). By contrast, while both Drumcree and Lismore had an above average proportion going to further education, in comparison with secondary schools, only for Drumcree was this difference significant. The proportion of pupils who transfer from an 11-18 school to another school is relatively low. The proportion of leavers who entered youth training varied between the two Craigavon area schools: while the proportions for both were below the average for 11-18 secondary schools, only in the case of Drumcree was this significantly so - here the level was about half the level for Lismore. That said, the recorded figure for leavers going into employment was higher for Drumcree than Lismore.

The proportion of leavers from both schools that stay in education in some way or other is almost identical and well above average in comparison with 11-18 secondary schools.

A comparison of secondary schools in 1992/3 and 1995/6

Five or more GCSEs at grade G or above

On average secondary schools increased their levels on this measure by 3 per cent, and half of the schools fell between a decrease of 5 per cent and an increase of 14 per cent. All but one of the Craigavon schools fitted this pattern exactly. The only exception was Brownlow College where the level of increase was much higher at 119 per cent. This was the highest level of increase for any second level school between these two years.

Five or more GCSEs at grade C or above

This measure may be a little onerous for secondary schools. However, on average secondary schools increased their performance on this measure between 1992/3 and 1995/6 by 12 per cent, with half of them lying between a decrease of 12 per cent and an increase of 43 per cent. Of the three all-through schools in the Craigavon area Brownlow again showed the highest level of increase at 127 per cent, and Drumcree was also above the average at 72 per cent. The level of increase for Lismore, at 31 per cent, was a little less spectacular. The situation in the two Catholic Junior High schools was much more varied: St Mary's Junior High had increased at a very high level of 178 per cent, but St Paul's Junior High had actually regressed: in 1992/3 a little over a quarter of Year 12 pupils had achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, but in 1995/6 no pupils achieved this level.

Two A Level passes at grade E or above

As we saw above, only a minority of secondary schools have sixth forms and offer A Levels, but this is so for two of the all-through schools in the Craigavon area. On this measure the average increase among secondary schools was 16 per cent, with half of them achieving an increase of between 2 per cent and 33 per cent. Drumcree fell below this level with a decrease of 18 per cent, while Lismore had an above average increase of 37 per cent.

Three A Level passes at grade C or above

On average the secondary schools increase their level on this measure by 4 per cent, although there was a great deal of variability across schools. Drumcree had no pupils achieving this level in 1995/6. In Lismore the level of increase was a spectacular 492 per cent. This was matched only by the Girls' Model school, which showed an increase of 441 per cent. The next closest schools were those with increases of 175 per cent and 116 per cent.

School leavers' destinations

Most leavers from secondary schools go to further education or enter youth training. For these comparison schools the average (median) level for the proportion of leavers who went to further education was a little over a third, while the median for those leaving to enter youth training was a little under three-in-ten. The other main category is those who leave to enter employment where the median is a little under one-in-seven.

Typically there has been a decrease in the proportion of leavers from secondary schools who leave to attend another school. Interestingly, however, this level has increased markedly for all of the all-through schools in the Craigavon area.

On average there has been an increase of 15 per cent in the proportion of leavers from secondary schools who go into youth training, although there is a small minority of schools where the level of increase is very much higher. Among the three all-through schools, however, the pattern is somewhat different: in Brownlow the proportion in 1995/6 is actually down 92 per cent compared with 1992/3, in Drumcree it is down 25 per cent and only in Lismore does the level increase, this time by 55 per cent. For the two Junior High schools the proportion entering youth training has decreased also over this period.

The pattern of change in the proportion of leavers entering employment has varied a little also. Typically for secondary schools this level has

increased by 23 per cent, although again this varies considerably among schools. Among the all-through schools in Craigavon this level has increased by 89 per cent for Drumcree, and decreased for the other two schools: all three fit within the typical secondary school pattern. The level has decreased also for St Mary's Junior High, but for St Paul's Junior High the level has increased by 342 per cent, marking it as an outlier even among secondary schools.

On average there has been a decrease in the proportion of leavers going to further education of 16 per cent, although half of the secondary schools had levels between a decrease of 34 per cent and an increase of 13 per cent. Two of the all-through schools, Lismore and Drumcree, lie within this range, with decreases of 3 and 20 per cent respectively, as does St Paul's JH with a 4 per cent increase. However, both Brownlow and St Mary's Junior High show a markedly higher increase in the proportion of leavers going to further education, with increases of 36 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. If we compare their rate of increase with the proportion of leavers who go to further education in 1995/96 we see, for most schools, a relationship between this increase and the 1995/96 level. St Mary's Junior High and Brownlow stand out for having both a high level of increase and a high proportion of leavers going to further education in 1995/96. The other all-through schools and St Paul's Junior High show a pattern that is medial for the main group of schools. This is true also for their place among schools in the Southern Education and Library Board only.

On average, secondary schools sent 3 per cent more of their leavers to higher education in 1995/96 in comparison with 1992/3, with half the schools falling between a decrease of 26 per cent and an increase of 25 per cent. For the two all-through schools for whom this is relevant, Drumcree had a decrease of 66 per cent while Lismore had an increase of 7 per cent. The minority of secondary schools who send leavers to higher education is comprised of de facto comprehensive schools, a number of secondary schools which have traditionally attracted a proportion of qualified pupils and a few others. On the basis of the proportion of their leavers who go to higher education, Drumcree sits towards the bottom of this group while Lismore sits in the middle. Of the entire group of secondary schools sending leavers to higher education a number are de facto secondary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area. The rate of increase in the proportion of leavers going to higher education is similar for the whole group, although Lagan College has an atypically high increase, but in relation to the proportion going to higher education in 1995/96, Lismore sits towards the bottom of the group, while Drumcree sits a distance below the others.

If we combine the proportions of leavers going to higher education, further education, or transferring to another school we obtain an estimate

of the proportion of leavers who stay in education. If we do this separately for schools in 1992/93 and 1995/6 we can compare any change over time. When we do this we find, not surprisingly, a correlation of 0.63 between the proportion staying in education in 1992/93 and the proportion staying in education in 1995/96. The regression line for the data is significant and explains 39 per cent of the variance, although there is evident scatter around the regression line. Two of the 11-16 schools in the Craigavon area, St Mary's Junior High and Brownlow, sit markedly above the regression line: in 1992/3 a little under a half of their leavers stayed in education, but by 1995/96 this figure had risen to almost 80 per cent. Lismore sits a little above the regression line, while Drumcree and St Paul's sit almost on the line itself.

The scatterplot for the data suggests that schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area tend to sit disproportionately towards the upper end of the scale. Interestingly, there are a number of 11-16 and 11-17 schools in the Southern Board area, all of which offer potential competition to the Craigavon area schools, and all show marked levels of improvement in the proportion of their pupils who are recorded as staying in education. These schools include Markethill High, City of Armagh, Banbridge High, Dromore High, Rathfriland High, St Patrick's High Banbridge and St Mary's High Newry. In addition, two 11-18 schools (apart from grammars) which offer potential competition to the Craigavon area schools also show high positive residuals: these schools are Newry High and St Catherine's Armagh.

Matched schools

In order to provide an additional perspective on the patterns of attainment in the schools in the Craigavon area, DENI provided access to additional information, based on 1992/93 and 1994/95 School Leavers' surveys, on the Craigavon area schools and identified matching schools. The matching schools were identified on the basis that they had broadly similar proportions of pupils on free school meals (FSM) and had broadly similar enrolment levels. When possible we tried to identify matching schools which had a similar pupil composition in terms of sex. It should be noted that exact matches cannot be identified, not least because of the different types of pupils in Craigavon area schools as compared with secondary schools in the rest of Northern Ireland. Any conclusions drawn from these matchings should, therefore, be treated with caution: our primary concern was to see if a little extra information would throw additional light on the analyses above based on patterns in the school performance tables.

1994/95 survey data

Drumcree was matched against one other 11-18 school. In Drumcree 62 per cent of leavers went at the end of Year 12 and only 10 per cent of leavers went at the end of Year 14. In the matching school only 47 per cent of leavers went at the end of Year 12 and 29 per cent left at the end of Year 14. Among the Year 12 leavers in both schools, there was a wider distribution in the performance of pupils from Drumcree: thus, 54 per cent had five or more GCSEs at grade G or above, 16 per cent had five or more at grade C or above, and 10 per cent had seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above; the corollary of the first datum is that 46 per cent achieved less than 5 GCSEs at grade G or above. In the matching school the distribution among Year 12 leavers was narrower: 64 per cent passed five or more at grade G or above, 6 per cent passed five or more at Grade C or above and 3 per cent passed seven or more at Grade C or above. It would appear then that a slightly higher proportion of the better qualified pupils in the matching school stayed in the school beyond age 16 years. The overall pattern of leavers reflects a slightly wider variation among the leavers from Drumcree. While 6 per cent of the Drumcree leavers had achieved one or more A Level pass, this was so for 8 per cent of the leavers from the matching school. In both schools a little over a quarter of the leavers had passed seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above. In Drumcree two-in-five of the leavers had passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, in comparison with a little over a third in the matching school. In Drumcree, however, a slightly higher proportion of leavers had failed to obtain five GCSEs at grade G or above: in Drumcree the proportion of leavers who missed this criterion was 28 per cent, while in the matching school it was 24 per cent. The main conclusions to emerge from this comparison are that the pattern of performance among leavers from Drumcree is a little wider than the comparison school, and this may be largely due to a tendency for slightly more of the better qualified pupils in Drumcree to leave school at age 16 years.

Two matching schools were identified for St Paul's Junior High: one was an 11-16 Catholic school like St Paul's, the other was an 11-18 Protestant secondary school. All three were boys' schools. Although the second matching school was 11-18, in fact 87 per cent of its school leavers left at the end of Year 12.

Two patterns are evident from a comparison of the profiles of attainment of leavers from these three schools. Firstly, the patterns for St Paul's and its comparison Catholic school are actually quite similar. In St Paul's 29 per cent of leavers failed to achieve five or more GCSEs at grade G or above, whereas in the comparison school 22 per cent failed to reach this criterion. None of the St Paul's leavers achieved five or more passes at grade C or above, but only two pupils (out of about 90) achieved this in

the comparison school. The second point to emerge from the comparison is that the profile for the third school is quite different from both, primarily in its much wider range. Thus, in this school, among Year 12 leavers 44 per cent failed to achieve five or more GCSEs at grade G or above, but 12 per cent achieved five or more passes at grade C or above, and four per cent passed seven or more at this grade level. Among the relatively small number of pupils in this school who stayed on beyond 16, there was a disproportionate representation of higher achievers, thus affecting the overall distribution a little. That said, there were still 43 per cent of leavers from this comparison school who had failed to pass five GCSEs at grade G or above, even though there were 18 per cent who passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and ten per cent of leavers who passed seven or more GCSEs at this level. None of the leavers from this school were recorded as having any A Level passes. While this group suggests that the performance of St Paul's Junior High is comparable to other similar schools, it does not suggest that any added value is obtained in the school due to the presence of an all-ability cohort in the first three years, and it might suggest that at least some of the pupils in the last two years could be more academically stretched.

Brownlow College had two 11-16 schools identified as matches. The performance profile of Brownlow was superior to both comparison cases. Whereas 11 per cent of the leavers from Brownlow had failed to achieve five GCSE passes at grade G or above, this was so for three-in-five of the two comparison schools. Fourteen per cent of the Brownlow leavers passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 6 per cent passed seven or more GCSEs at this level. In one of the comparison schools 6 per cent passed seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above, but no other leavers passed five or more GCSEs at this grade level. In the other comparison school 17 per cent of leavers had passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 3 per cent passed seven or more at this grade level. This group of schools suggest that there is a general academic benefit in Brownlow, perhaps most marked by the lower proportion of pupils failing to achieve five or more passes at grade G or above. Brownlow does better at the higher end of the profile in comparison to one of the other schools, but has a comparable level of performance with the other. In terms of a straight comparison, Brownlow comes out reasonably positively. However, Brownlow is the only one of the three that is a designated comprehensive school, yet there is little evidence here to suggest that a section of the pupils are achieving at a markedly higher level than in at least one of the comparison cases.

The comparison cases for St Mary's Junior High were provided by two highly regarded Catholic girls' secondary schools, both of which can take pupils 11-18. If we compare the Year 12 leavers we can see a similar profile of performance across all three schools. In each case about a fifth

of the leavers had failed to achieve five or more GCSEs at grade G. However, whereas 12 per cent of the leavers from St Mary's Junior High had achieved five or more passes at grade C and 4 per cent achieved seven or more passes at this level, a little under three-in-ten in the comparison schools achieved five or more passes at grade C, and 8 per cent in one school and 17 per cent in the other had achieved seven or more passes at this grade level. In both comparison schools there was a trend for more of the better qualified pupils to stay on so that the profile of their leavers was usually enhanced when all leavers were taken into account. This comparison suggests, then, that St Mary's Junior High, while achieving a level of performance that is relatively high in comparison to secondary schools in general, and schools within its own FSM band, does not achieve quite the same level of performance as two schools that share a lot of characteristics with it. Countervailing to this, the comparison schools have the potential advantages accruing from being able to provide post-compulsory education and, in particular, A levels, but even among Year 12 leavers they have more pupils achieving at the higher levels, and St Mary's Junior High has the potential advantage of an all-ability cohort for the first three years.

The analysis of data from the school performance table suggested that Lismore had a variable profile with a relatively high proportion of leavers with high grades and with low grades. This is confirmed in the analysis of performance profiles with the comparison schools. The two comparison schools are Catholic co-educational secondary schools, one of which is 11-16. Looking at Year 12 leavers first, we can see already the much wider spread among Lismore leavers: thus, while 39 per cent of Year 12 leavers from Lismore had failed to achieve five GCSEs at grade G or above, this was so for 31 per cent of Year 12 leavers from one comparison school and 20 per cent of leavers from the 11-16 school. Among Lismore Year 12 leavers 14 per cent passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 8 per cent passed seven or more GCSEs at this level. In one of the comparison schools only 12 per cent of Year 12 leavers achieved five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above and only 2 per cent passed seven or more GCSEs at this level. The profile of the 11-16 school however was different: 40 per cent of leavers passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 26 per cent passed seven or more GCSEs at this grade level. Obviously some of the higher achievers stayed beyond age 16 years in Lismore: taking all leavers into account 12 per cent passed one or more A Level, a third passed seven or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 38 per cent passed five or more at grade C or above. However, a quarter of leavers from Lismore failed to reach the five or more at grade G criterion. Lismore presents something of a conundrum: clearly the school does relatively well at the top end of the ability range, but it might be questioned whether the school is fully comprehensive in its intake: 60 per cent of its leavers go at the end of Year 12, and of those

who stay to Year 14 less than half achieve A Level passes even though practically all of the Year 14 leavers have achieved seven or more GCSE passes at grade C or above. All this is allied with a relatively poor level of performance at the lower end of the ability range in the school.

Further Education

The attainment results for the pupils in the school departments of the further education colleges did not appear on the DENI School Performance Tables, hence it was not possible to compare their attainment directly with other schools over time. However, the DENI Statistics Branch were able to calculate attainment data for these pupils using further education information. These data were supplied for the years 1992/93, for both campuses separately, and 1994/95. The data indicate that the performance levels of the pupils were markedly below the Northern Ireland average. In 1992/93, for example, 27 per cent of pupils in secondary schools passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 75 per cent passed five or more at grade G or above. By contrast, on one FE site in the Craigavon area 11 per cent passed five or more at grade C or above and 18 per cent passed five or more at grade G or above. The figures for the other campus were lower, with no pupils passing five or more at grade C and only six per cent passing five or more at grade G or above. In 1994/95 data were available only for the college as a whole. On this occasion 10 per cent of the pupils passed five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and 26 per cent passed five or more at grade G or above. Again this was markedly lower than the Northern Ireland average for secondary schools in this year. There was no evidence that the FE college pupils were entering for other examinations in significant numbers.

NOTES

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the high level of co-operation we received from the Department of Education (DENI) and the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) during the course of this study. In addition we were warmly received in all of the schools in the Craigavon area where we spoke to principals, teachers, pupils and parents. A great many individuals gave us their time and the benefit of their experience. The study was carried out in a relatively short time period and was only possible thanks to the co-operation of all these people. Of course, the views in the report, and any flaws it contains, remain the responsibility of the authors alone.

² This is not to claim that they all can claim to have comprehensive entry profiles.

³ Some of the principals expressed concern about the impact that evaluation projects, including the present one, might have on the system: since the two-tier system was small they felt that some parents were concerned about the future stability of the system. When evaluation projects were being carried out, the principals felt, this could heighten concern as to the future of the system as a whole. The danger, they felt, was that an unduly negative evaluation of the system could become a self-fulfilling prophecy if parents opted out as a consequence of a negative report.

⁴ In the 11+ system pupils take the two tests in the first term of their final year.

⁵ Due to industrial action by members of INTO attainment level data were not obtained in many Catholic primary schools. The data available from the CCEA are therefore based only on a subset of the entire primary school system. In addition, the data are not corrected for any other variable such as, for example, social disadvantage. With these caveats in mind the data available for schools in the Craigavon area were broadly comparable with the data available for Northern Ireland as a whole.

⁶ In the maintained schools 84 per cent of those from the two junior high schools who expressed a first preference for St Michael's grammar school gained a place. It should be noted that the Board records represent a snapshot at the time of transfer. As became clear when we talked to people in the two-tier system there appears to be quite a lot of movement between schools at different times.

⁷ It is, of course, hard to offer an exact statement on this due to an absence of province-wide data. It is also worth noting that open enrolment may have increased movement between secondary and grammar schools beyond Year 8.

⁸ Some of these schools are comprehensive in that most of their pupils automatically transfer from primary school at age 11 years, but it is unlikely that all would have a fully comprehensive intake in terms of ability.

⁹ This was the approach used in the last large-scale assessment of the predictive efficiency of the 11+ transfer procedure: Gallagher, AM (1988)

Transfer pupils at 16. Belfast: NICER.

¹⁰ We came across two striking examples of this: on one campus of the school we were told that no prefect system operated for pupils as two years did not provide a sufficient time to organise such a system or for pupils to gain status within the school; second, at interview, one of the changes the pupils said they would like in the school was the development of a sixth form so that they could stay in the school rather than having to transfer to further education at 16.

¹¹ Gallagher, Tony (1997) Memorandum submitted to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. In Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Second Report: Underachievement in Northern Ireland Secondary Schools. House of Commons Paper 79. London: HMSO.

¹² In the original scheme it was intended that some pupils would be selected to follow a special route through technical colleges. In practice, however, only small numbers of pupils followed this route and the system developed into a bilateral one of grammar and secondary schools, rather than a trilateral one of grammar, technical and secondary schools.

¹³ Simon, B (1997) A seismic change: process and interpretation. In R Pring and G Walford (Eds) *Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal*. London: Falmer.

¹⁴ See series of reports in the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research Transfer Procedure Project: Sutherland, AE and Gallagher, AM (1986) *Transfer and the upper primary school*; Wilson (1986) *Transfer and the structure of secondary education*; Sutherland, AE and Gallagher, AM (1987) *Pupils in the Border Band*; Gallagher, AM (1988) *Transfer pupils at sixteen*.

¹⁵ Advisory Council on Education (1964) *Secondary school organisation; Conditions of recognition; Supply of teachers; and Selection procedure*. Four short reports of ACE for Northern Ireland. Ministry of Education Cmd 471. Belfast: HMSO.

¹⁶ Advisory Couil on Education (1973) *Reorganisation of secondary education in Northern Ireland*. Ministry of Education Cmd 574. Belfast: HMSO.

¹⁷ A Ministry of Education report in 1955 (Report of the Committee on Secondary School Examinations) recommended that no specific external examination should be provided for pupils in secondary schools as only a minority of these pupils were suited to academic subjects. A later report in 1967 (*The curriculum of the secondary (intermediate) school*) recognised that the success of pupils in secondary schools in public examinations did raise some questions regarding the supposed link between performance on the transfer tests and academic ability, but nevertheless concluded that 'it is wise ... to recognise that most of our [secondary school] pupils will not benefit from academic courses such as lead to GCE O Level'.

¹⁸ Mr Dickson was interviewed for this evaluation and provided access to many of his papers from the period.

¹⁹ McKernan, J (1981) *Transfer at 14: a study of the Craigavon two-tier system as an organisational innovation in education*. Belfast: NICER.

²⁰ At interview one informant suggested that one of the all-through 11-18 Catholic schools in the area had originally planned to be part of the two-tier system, but that this was never implemented because the local population never expanded to the expected level.

²¹ At interview and at a presentation to the INTO Forum on Selection, 1997.

²² At one stage there had been a plan to build a new maintained high school close to St Michael's for pupils not selected at 14, but this plan never came to fruition.

²³ This was possible following a vote among parents using procedures created under the 1989 Education Reform Order.

²⁴ McKernan, J (1981) *Transfer at 14: a study of the Craigavon two-tier system as an organisational innovation in education*. Belfast: NICER

²⁵ Wilson, JA and Spelman, BJ (1977) *The organisation of secondary education*. Belfast: NICER.

²⁶ Wilson, JA (1985) *Secondary school organisation and pupils progress*. Belfast: NICER.

²⁷ Wilson, JA (1982) *Progress at 16*. Belfast: NICER. The baseline used for these analyses was derived from tests administered to the pupils at age 12 years. Since the pupils in the grammar/secondary schools were likely to have spent more time practising for the 11+ tests, it was possible that they were more test-trained. Hence the baseline performance for the pupils in the two-tier system may have been an underestimate.

²⁸ Sutherland, AE and Gallagher, AM (1986) *Transfer and the upper primary school*. Belfast: NICER.

²⁹ Gallagher, AM (1988) *Transfer pupils at 16*. Belfast: NICER.

³⁰ The report was published in February, 1997, House of Commons Paper 79.

³¹ Supplementary memorandum submitted by the SELB. Appendix 7, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Second Report.



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