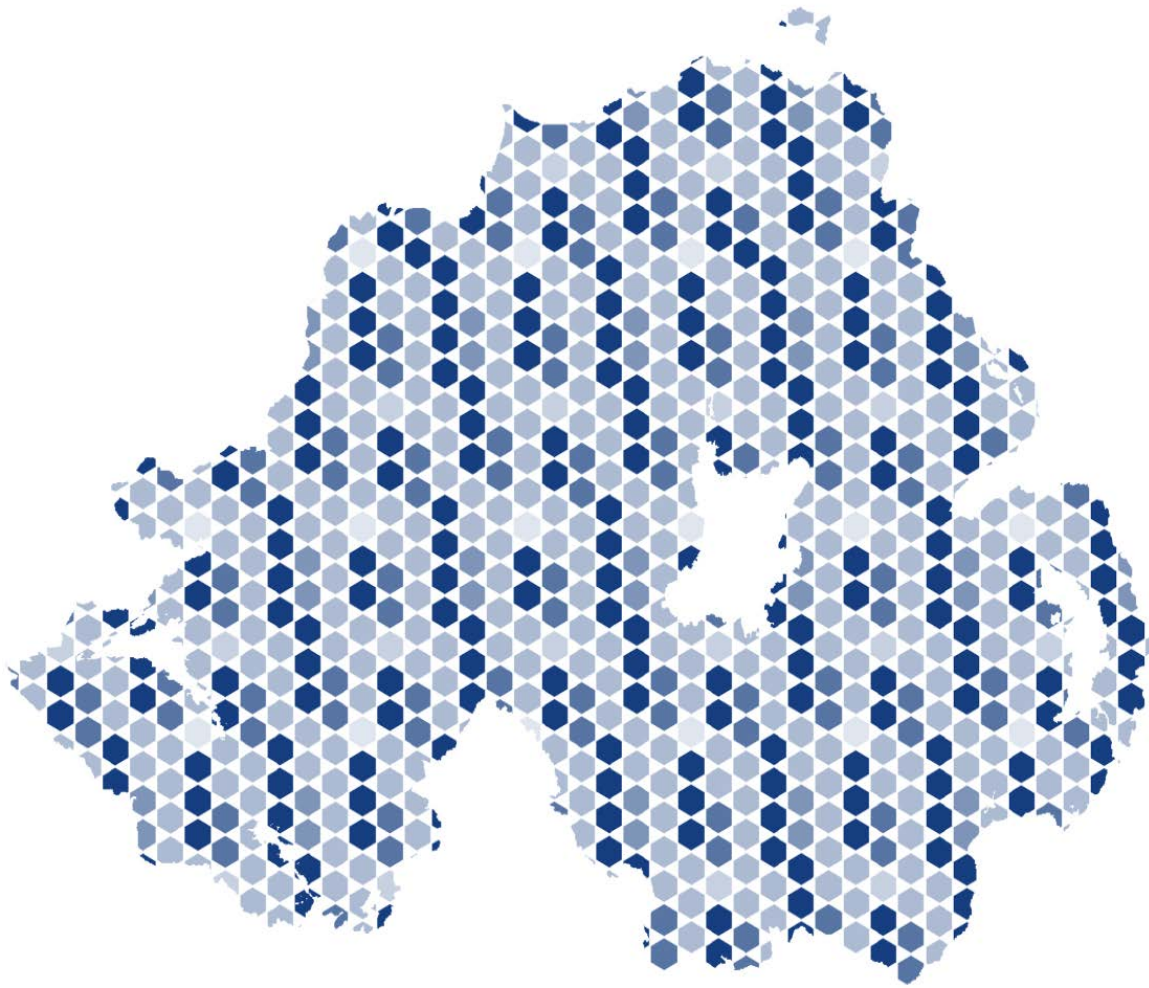


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Little Flower Girls' School,
Belfast

Maintained, non-selective, 11-18, girls' school

Report of an Inspection
in October 2013

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>. Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the returns on questionnaires sent in advance of the inspection to parents and school staff is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	48	13	27% ¹	7
Teachers	50	39	73%	19
Support Staff	*	*	*	0

* fewer than 5

2. Context

Little Flower Girls' School is situated on the Somerton Road and serves the community in wider North Belfast.

Over the past four years, on entry to the school, approximately two-thirds of the pupils have achieved at the expected level in English and mathematics and a significant minority are identified as having special educational needs. The pupils' attendance has remained consistently in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

¹¹ ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

Little Flower Girls' School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	107	106	111	95
Enrolment	687	690	692	686
% Attendance (NI Average)	92.8	92.3	93	94
FSME Percentage ²	30.3%	31.9%	33.7%	33.5%
Pupils on the SEN register	258	382	387	360
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	10	11	17	17
No. of newcomers	*	*	5	9
<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English ³	2.80%	2.83%	4.50%	1.1%
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	5.61%	3.77%	2.70%	2.2%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	63.55%	60.38%	58.56%	47.1%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	68.22%	61.32%	57.66%	41.57%
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

3. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all learners, the purpose of the post-primary inspection is, through an effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the learners;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- to inform the school's planning for improvement.

4 Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision for Learning	Good
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

² The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

³ From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years.

5. Achievements and standards

- When, in the most effective instances, the teachers' expectations are appropriately high and levels of challenge are matched to the needs of all the pupils, the pupils demonstrate a positive disposition towards learning and develop good social skills. When opportunities such as role play, hot-seating, drama and participation in the school council, arise, the pupils express themselves fluently and maturely. They make good progress in being able to interact confidently with their teachers, peers and visitors.
- All of the pupils are entered for GCSE qualifications. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in any five or more GCSE subjects has improved over the past 3 years and is currently just above the NI average for similar non-selective schools. However, almost half the subjects at grades A*-C are more than 10 percentage points below the NI average over three years. There has been an improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C when English and mathematics are included, from 20% in 2011 to 31% in 2013, which is just below the NI average for similar schools. At grades A*-E most of the subjects are within 5 percentage points of the NI average. The percentage of FSME pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more GCSE subjects including English and mathematics has decreased from 55% in 2011 to 23% in 2013 and needs to be addressed urgently.
- The percentage of pupils achieving 3 A levels at grades A*-C is just above the NI average, however, there are very small numbers of pupils taking more than half of these subjects.
- The effective outworking of the whole-school approach to raising the pupils' literacy skills has led to improvements in the standards in English. In addition, the school tracks the progress of the pupils and can demonstrate improvements made in the development of their literacy skills.
- Those pupils who require additional support with their learning develop well their social and personal skills; the school's internal data indicates that most make very good progress, including in their attainment at grades A*-C in GCSE subjects.
- Progression of the pupils to further education is almost in line with the respective NI average and the percentage of those progressing to higher education is above average.

6. Provision

- Planning, assessment, learning and teaching in most of the lessons observed was good or better; one third was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, teachers display very high expectations of and for the pupils; effective questioning promotes the pupils' talking and thinking and there are excellent opportunities for peer-assessment. In the less effective lessons, over-direction by teachers, slow pace and insufficient challenge recurs, which is preventing the pupils from making the progress of which they are capable.

- The promotion of the pupils' literacy skills is informed well by the analysis of relevant data to set targets and identify those pupils requiring additional literacy support. The quality of English is good. The school has designed a very effective programme of learning opportunities across the curriculum to assess communication at key stage (KS) 3. The quality of mathematics is inadequate, with departmental planning insufficiently detailed to ensure appropriate progression in learning for all of the pupils. In the year before the inspection, a whole-school numeracy initiative focused on improving the pupils' mental mathematics. There is a need for a broader, cross-curricular approach through which each subject can focus on the numeracy skills which are specific to the learning in each subject. The quality of modern languages is good, with an improving trend of outcomes at GCSE.
- The quality and level of skills that all pupils with special needs develop to overcome barriers in their learning is very good. The classroom assistants contribute very effectively to the pupils' learning experiences and to the good progress made.
- The inclusion and good welfare of all of the pupils is provided for effectively. A strong sense of school community and effective home-school links has secured important partnerships with parents in supporting the pupils' learning. Both pupils and parents express strong appreciation for the time, care and support given by the staff to the pupils' all-round development.
- In order to enhance the pastoral provision further, the pastoral team need to formally review and evaluate the extensive range of programmes currently being undertaken to ensure a more cohesive approach to developing aptitudes and attitudes appropriate to the ages and stages of the pupils.
- On the basis of evidence available at the time of inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance of the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.
- There is an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum at KS3. The school is active within the North Belfast Learning Partnership and is making satisfactory progress in offering courses collaboratively at post-16, where additional applied courses reflect appropriately the pupils' needs, interests and abilities. In contrast, the range of core subjects at KS4 is overly prescriptive and restricts the extent to which pupils are able to select subjects which reflect their career aspirations and abilities or, importantly, enable them to explore broader, more diverse progression pathways. While the school is on target to meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, the senior leadership team needs to undertake a strategic review of the KS4 curriculum.

- Good provision of careers education, information and guidance helps the year 14 pupils use relevant careers information during taught sessions to inform their individual career planning and to have a sound knowledge of potential career pathways. Furthermore, year 12 and 13 pupils benefit from participation in a week of work experience which contributes well to their understanding of the world of work and informs their career aspirations. The pupils in the two key transition years 10 and 12 would benefit further by having access to discrete timetabled careers lessons. The school needs to develop a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for Citizenship and Employability at KS3.
- The extensive extra-curricular programme, with a range of sporting and non-sporting activities, helps develop the individual talents, skills and self-esteem of the pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan (SDP)⁴ and appropriate action plans inform and guide well the approaches taken to realising the school's improvement agenda. However, the process of development planning is not sufficiently underpinned by rigorous, critical self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels and requires a sharper focus on learning and teaching to improve further the standards.
- As identified in the SDP, the school is making, recently, a more effective use of internal and external performance data to identify underperformance, effect intervention in learning and track the progress of the pupils. While this good work corresponds with a three year period of improvement in public examination outcomes, the improvements are not consistently evident across all departments.
- The SLT are fully committed to the well-being and advancement of all the pupils, yet their efforts are not sufficiently coherent and cohesive to improve standards further. The school needs to revise and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the members of the SLT.
- There is also a need to develop in a more consistent manner the capacity of middle managers to evaluate the impact on the pupils' learning of the school's wide range of academic and pastoral initiatives. Governance needs to be informed further by the life and work of the school, to review the school development plan more closely in order to support the Principal and teachers and enhance their challenge to senior and middle management.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively.

⁴ The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

The main areas for improvement are the need for the:

- SLT to work in a more coherent and cohesive way to help improve further the standards;
- SLT to undertake a strategic review of the KS4 curriculum; and
- the quality of the provision in mathematics to be improved.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will follow-up on and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over an 18-24 month period.

Performance & statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving 5 or more GCSEs (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subjects, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category⁵.

<i>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</i>	2011	2012	2013
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	55	60.4	67.7
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁶</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>64 (2012 statistic)</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	20	25	31
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>36 (2012 statistic)</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	96	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	55	27	23

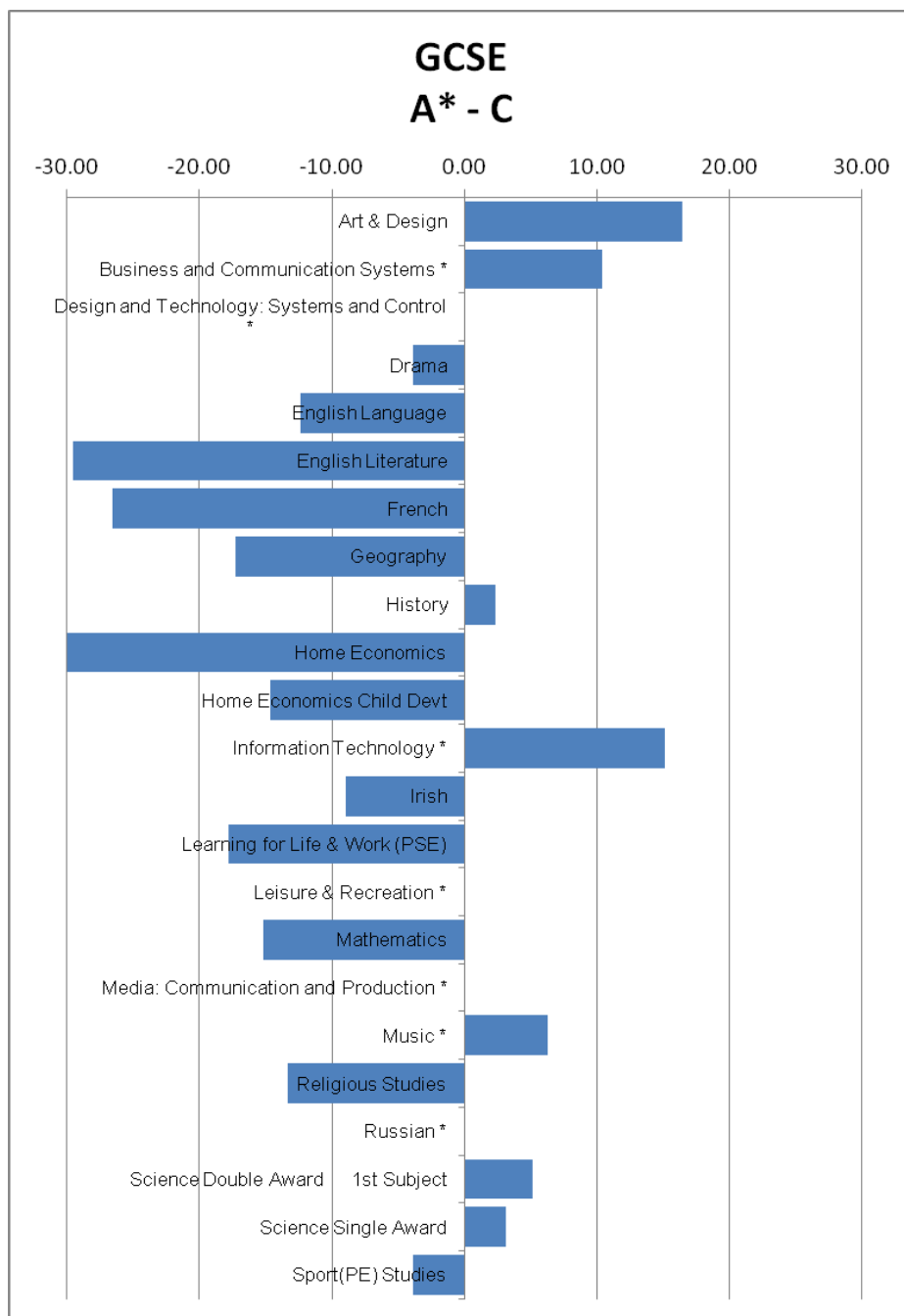
⁵ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

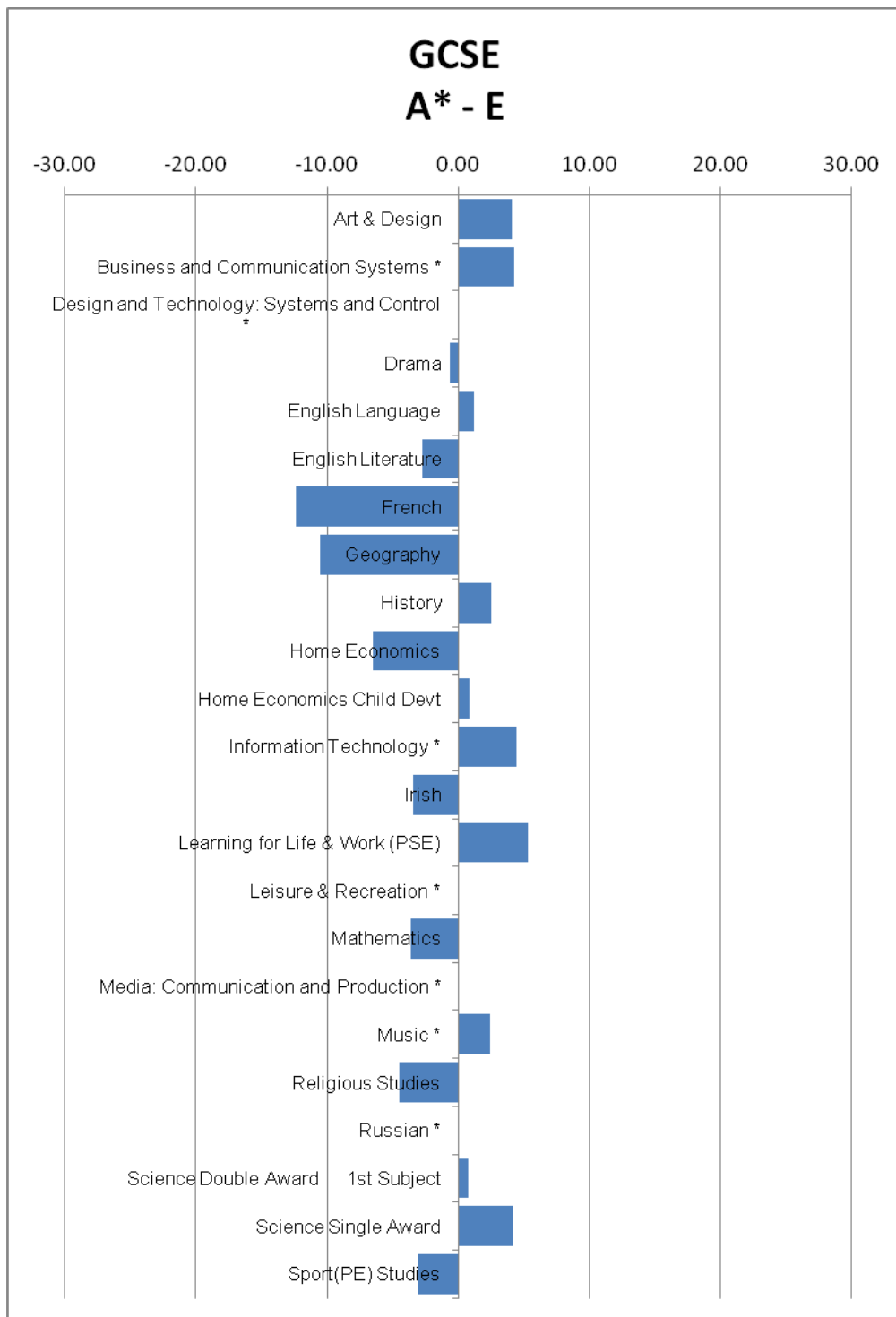
Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average.

The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons should be treated with caution.



Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to E from 2010-11 to 2012-13



GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A* to E. The table compares the percentage achieving three or more GCEs (A* to C) with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category⁷.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A levels & equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98	96	96
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	32	49.9	47
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A levels	96.23	98.18	100

Other Examinations Results: Post-16

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the tables below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving grades A* to C and A* to E in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison due to the small size of the cohort.

Other [level 3] courses taken in the last three years

GCE Subject	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Health & Social Care	43	94	49	100	66	100	145
ICT	66	100	76	100	100	100	34
Travel & Tourism	37	96	76	100	64	100	66
Moving Image Arts	100	100	100	100	100	100	23
Science (Single)	54	92	25	60	67	100	41
Science (Double)	100	100	100	100	100	100	12

Level 3	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
COPE	100	100	100	44
BTEC H & S	100	100	100	48
BTEC Hospitality	100	100	100	47

⁷ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

Staying on rate

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at this school from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for all schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

Year 13	96.1	NI Av. Year 13	52.3
Year 14	52.5	NI Av. Year 14	79.9

Leavers' Destinations

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from this school who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	School	NI
Total Number of Leavers	96	13024
Employment	8.3%	7.9%
Further Education	43.8%	46.0%
Higher Education	31.3%	20.1%
Training	15.6%	18.2%
Unemployed	1.0%	4.4%
Unknown	0.0%	3.4%

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