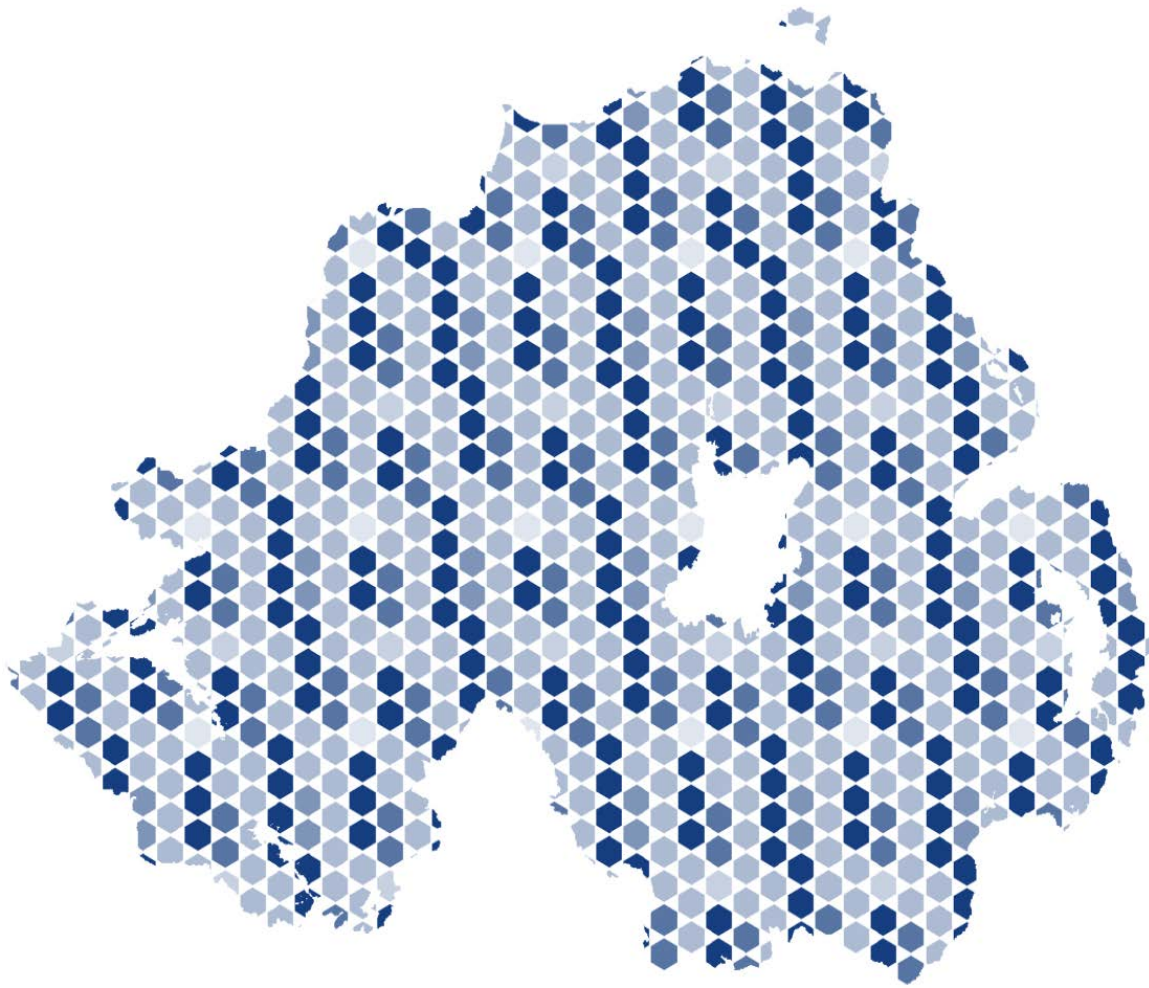


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Grammar School,
Downpatrick

Voluntary, all-boys grammar school, with a co-educational
sixth form

Report of an Inspection in
February 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

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



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	657	107	16.3	46
Teachers	56	46	82	37
Support Staff	27	20	74	5

* fewer than 5

2. Context

St Patrick's Grammar School, although a voluntary grammar school for boys, has a co-educational sixth form of 234 pupils, 49 of whom are girls. Over one-quarter of the sixth form pupils come from other post-primary schools in the area. The pupils enter year 8 from over 40 feeder primary schools, dispersed over a wide geographical area, and have a high level of ability on entry.

St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	101	99	98	99
Enrolment	684	686	716	722
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.9 (92.6)	97.4 (93)	95.9 (92.9)	NA
FSME Percentage ¹	6.72	6.85	8.65	7.2
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	12.9 (88)	13.7 (94)	13.8 (99)	14.5 (105)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	12	12	13	15
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*
<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	60.4	69.7	57.1	19.1 ²
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	92.1	89.9	75.5	44.4 ²
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	100	100	99.0	98.9 ²
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	100	100	100	100 ²
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

* fewer than 5

3. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, 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 pupils;
- 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	Very good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Very good

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

² From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression in Communication and Using Mathematics and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils possess excellent inter-personal and communication skills and have very positive attitudes and dispositions to their learning. The Lasallian educational ethos of empathy and service is alive in promoting pupil action to redress social injustice, with pupils benefiting from an extensive range of opportunities to support the less privileged locally, nationally and globally; this active participation enables the pupils to develop as caring, responsible and independent individuals.
- The pupils develop as reflective and critical thinkers in an atmosphere of enquiry and intellectual challenge, allowing them to engage maturely with contemporary, moral and ethical issues. The pupils in sixth form are given excellent leadership opportunities as part of an extensive enrichment programme, which encourages the pupils to develop their individual interests and skills through, for example, the provision of extended volunteering opportunities in a range of community-based settings.
- Across the curriculum, the pupils' high standards in literacy are evident in their ability to manage information and to voice their opinions with confidence: consequently, the quality of the pupils' talking and listening skills is a significant strength, as are their outcomes in public examinations in English literature. The pupils have an excellent disposition towards, and participate actively in, learning mathematics and numeracy. They discuss regularly their mathematical thinking and strategies with their peers.
- Overall, the pupils attain very good standards in general and applied examinations, attaining outstanding examination outcomes at GCSE level. The percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE examinations at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is significantly above the NI average for similar schools. In 2013, all year 12 pupils attained a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics and almost all attained a similar grade in GCSE English. Although outcomes at GCE A level are good, the school has recognised that they could be improved further and have introduced appropriate strategies, including changes to the curriculum and the provision of mentors to support teaching and learning. Pupils who have special educational needs, and those who are entitled to free school meals, attain very good standards.

6. Provision

- The teachers prepare well and lessons are well structured. Almost all of the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, and three-quarters were good or very good, in equal measure. The quality of the learning and teaching at key stage 4 is a particular strength of the work of the school, with three-quarters of the lessons observed being very good or outstanding. In the more effective lessons: information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively by both the pupils and the teachers to enhance the pupils' learning; the pupils engaged in well-structured, meaningful group work; and, the pupils consolidated their learning well, independently and collaboratively.

- The pupils have very good access to ICT across the curriculum and the school is planning well to extend its provision for ICT by developing further the innovative use of iPads by teachers and pupils.
- Across the school a high priority is given to setting relevant and appropriate homework which is marked regularly; in the best practice, the teachers provide helpful direction on what the pupil needs to do to improve. The pupils peer- and self-assess their work effectively. Importantly, by year 12, the pupils reflect on and annotate their own work meaningfully to extend their learning. A broad range of available assessment data is used systematically at subject level and whole-school level to set targets, monitor progress and identify pupils who need additional support.
- The early identification of pupils who require additional support with their learning enables the school to provide targeted interventions, including withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy, to meet the pupils' varied needs, thus enabling them to progress very well and achieve positive outcomes. The classroom assistants provide purposeful, practical support in all aspects of the pupils' development. In the most effective practice, the individual education plans (IEPs) inform well the learning and teaching activities, enabling the pupils to work at a pace appropriate to their ability. In a few lessons, the learning needs of a small number of pupils were not met fully due to the teacher taking insufficient cognisance of the information provided in the IEPs. It is important that the learning experiences of these pupils are monitored more robustly, that the appropriateness of the strategies identified on the IEPs is evaluated more rigorously, and that the teachers know how to use the IEPs most effectively to inform their practice to meet the needs of all the pupils.
- The pupils are involved fully in the pastoral care systems across the school, providing care for one another; in particular, the prefects, mentors and mediators are excellent role models to younger pupils and give high levels of support to teachers. The active junior and upper school councils empower pupils of all ages to make decisions which have a positive impact on the school community. The 'Investors in Pupils' award recognises the pupil-centred pastoral provision throughout the school. The induction programme for year 8 and 9 pupils and the programme for induction of the year 13 pupils are well conceived and help build new friendships. The pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, which enhance their personal and social development.
- There is a progressive taught programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and all of the pupils engage well in the career planning process. Through the taught programme, special events and appropriate social networking, pupils and parents have access to up-to-date, relevant labour market information which helps them make choices at transition points. A significant minority of the departments are addressing effectively the element of employability in their subject; the CEIAG action plan identifies appropriately the need for a more consistent whole-school approach to promoting CEIAG across the curriculum.

- At all key stages, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and is matched well to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Based on the sound knowledge of labour market information and the views of pupils and parents, the curriculum is subject to regular review. The school is committed to, and plays an active role in, the Lecale area learning community. Through collaboration with the other post-primary schools in the town, the curriculum exceeds the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and provides a wide range of general and applied subjects, particularly at sixth form.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan³ provides clarity and coherence to the school improvement work and sets appropriately challenging targets in the pursuit of excellence. The priorities for improvement have been identified appropriately and have been agreed with staff and pupils through extensive consultation; all of the teaching staff reported in the questionnaire that they are involved fully in the development planning process.
- Strategic senior leadership is outstanding; the members of the senior leadership team complement and support each other well to realise fully the school's strategic curricular and pastoral objectives. Staff development opportunities are aligned well to the school development plan and are focused appropriately on improving learning and teaching through the effective sharing of best practice. In the best practice, the middle managers monitor and evaluate robustly the quality of the learning experiences of the pupils and the standards they attain. To improve the consistency of the quality of the leadership at this level, all of the middle managers need to develop equally rigorous processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and to ensure that the actions taken to effect improvement are implemented consistently throughout the school. The principal has managed well the new school build; he and the vice principal inspire a high level of respect among the staff and pupils, with the individual needs of pupils being given paramount consideration. Overall, the quality of leadership and management at all levels is very good.
- The governors have established clear and open communication with the staff and pupils and are very well informed about all aspects of the life and work of the school. They provide excellent support, and appropriate challenge, to improve the overall quality of the learning experiences for all of the pupils and particularly, as the Lasallian ethos guides, for those pupils who have barriers to their learning. The parents, staff and school community can, therefore, have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of both leadership and governance.
- On the basis of the evidence at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

³ The school development plan meets fully the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Performance and 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 7 or more GCSEs (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subject with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁴.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance:

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects</i>	100	100	100
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects</i>	93	98	98
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	94.9	93.7	
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	91	98	97
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	93.7	91.3	
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects</i>	98	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)	88.9	100	92.3

⁴ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

Other examination results at key stage 4 from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving grades A* to C and A* to E in vocational and/or applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison due to the small size of the cohort.

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years

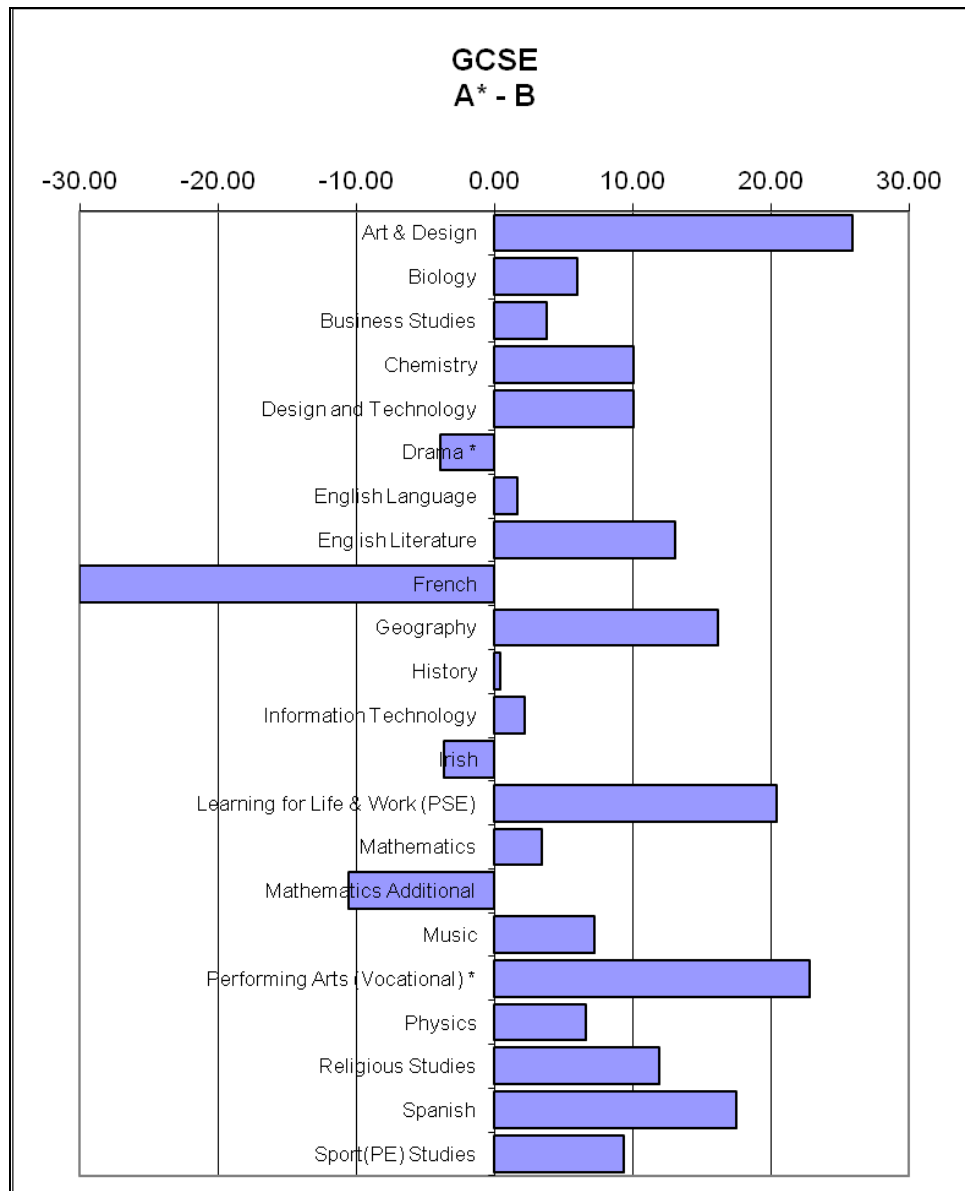
GCSE Subject	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Media: Communication and Production	84	95	100	100	n/a	n/a	46

Level 2	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
<i>BTEC Engineering</i>	100	100	100	33
<i>BTEC ICT</i>	100	100	100	16

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to B 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 B 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 between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

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 of achieving three or more GCEs (A* to C) with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁵.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance:

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010-11 (94 Pupils)	2011-12 (78 Pupils)	2012-13 (91 Pupils)
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	80	65	68
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	78	75.2	75.2

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

Other examination results: post-16

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 grades A* to C in vocational and/or applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

Other [level 3] courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

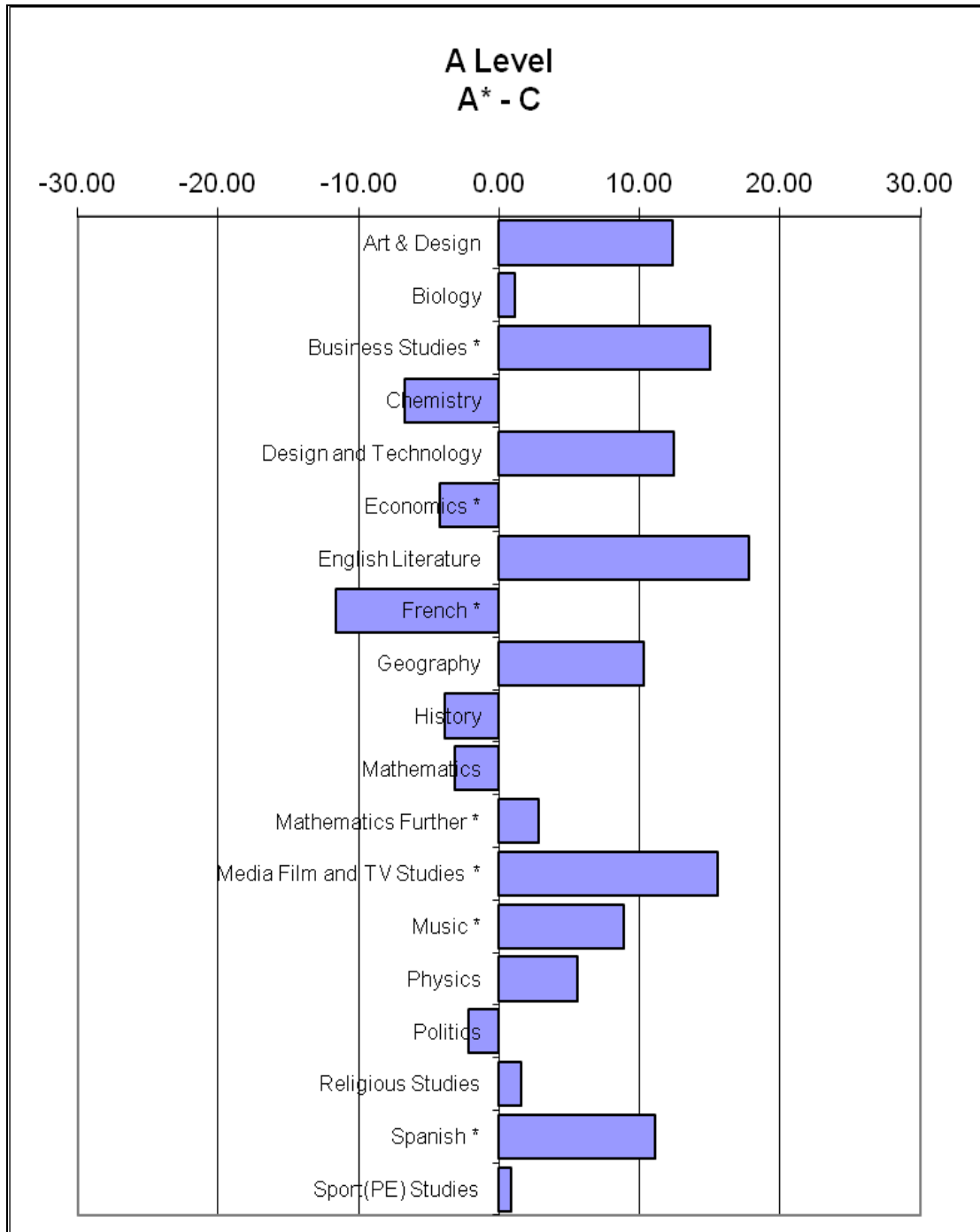
GCE Subject	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
Applied Business Studies	96	95	100	57
Applied Health and Social Care	n/a	75	100	17
Applied ICT	81	88	100	74
Engineering	n/a	n/a	20	5
Media: Communication and Production	100	0	50	8

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

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A 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 GCE 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 between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

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.

	NI Average	School
% Year 12 staying on to Year 13	95.0	85.2
% Year 13 staying on to Year 14	94.9	82.4

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 selective schools.

	Year 2013/14	School %	NI %
Total number of leavers	91		
Employment	3	3.3	3.8
Full-Time Further Education	13	14.3	19
Full-Time Higher Education	74	81.3	72.7
Full-Time Training	1	1.1	1.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0	0	1.6
Unknown/Long-Term Sick/Pregnant	0	0	1.4

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