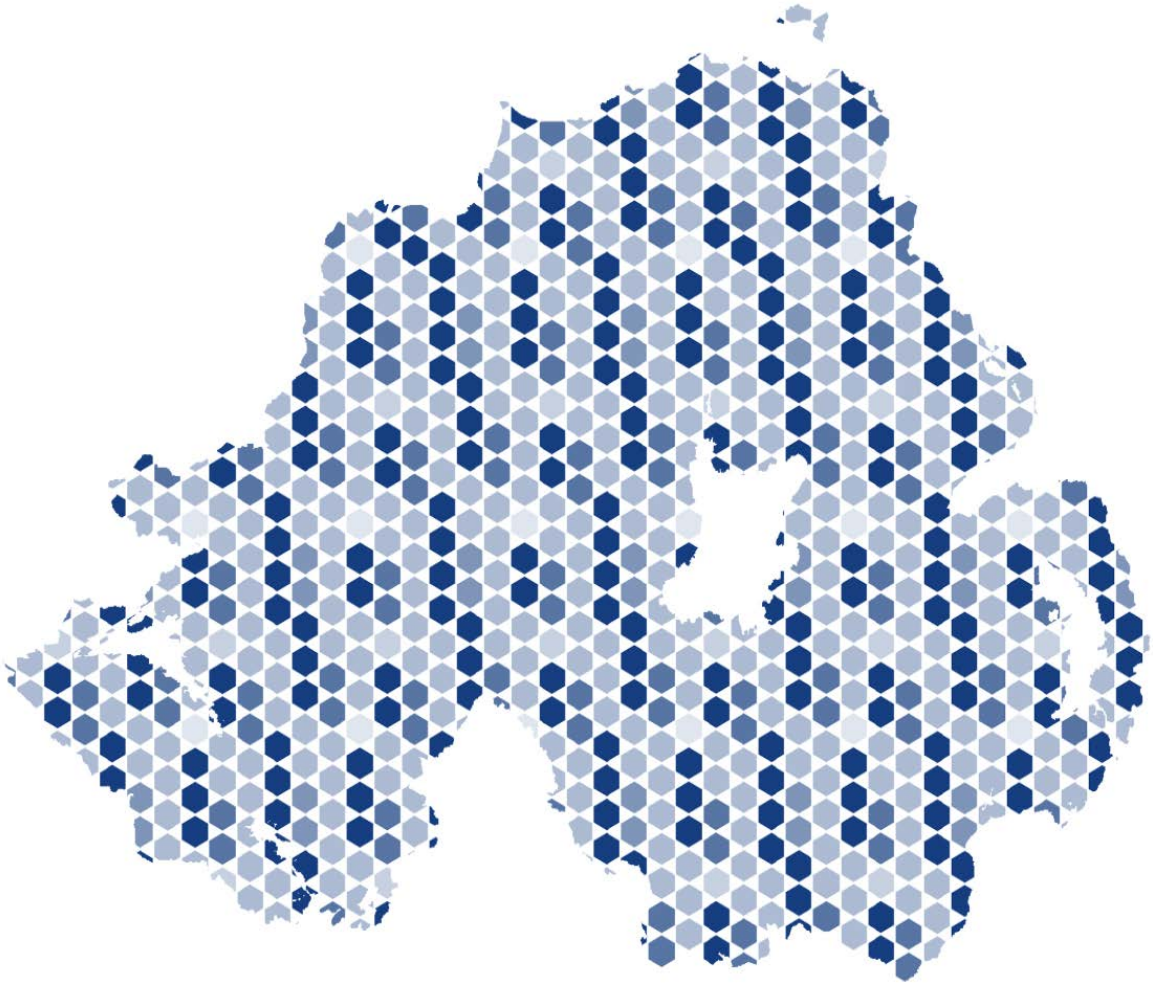
POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training Inspectorate

Strangford Integrated College

Grant maintained integrated, co-educational, 11-18, non-selective school

Report of an Inspection in April 2014

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.etini.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	455	18	3.9	7
Teachers	42	23	55	8
Support Staff	56	7	12.5	*

* fewer than 5

2. Context

Strangford Integrated College is situated on the outskirts of Carrowdore village. Over two-thirds of the pupils enter the school with the expected levels[1] in English and mathematics. The percentage of pupils gaining level 4 in English has remained steady over the three years from 2010/11 to 2012/13 at around 70%, but the percentage of pupils gaining a level 4 in mathematics has decreased significantly by almost ten percentage points. Over the past four years, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals has almost doubled to 20%. The school has identified almost 30% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning.

Strangford College	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	87	87	86	85
Enrolment	515	538	529	528
% Attendance (NI Average)	91.2 (92.6)	90.5 (93)	90.2 (92.9)	
FSME Percentage[2]	11.6	16.9	20	19.9

[1] 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

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

% of pupils on the SEN register	24.9	28.4	30.8	28.8
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	40	38	42	41
No. of newcomers	14	*	*	5
Intake:				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	10.3	8.1	4.7	3.5
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	12.6	13.8	8.1	4.7
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	67.8	72.4	68.6	48.2
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	72.4	68.9	59.3	48.2
Source: data as held by the school.				

* = 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	**Satisfactory**
Achievements and Standards	**Satisfactory**
Provision	**Satisfactory**
Leadership and Management	**Satisfactory**

5. Achievements and standards

- In a majority of lessons observed across a range of subjects, the wider skills, attitudes and dispositions of the pupils are developed well. The pupils employ good thinking and problem-solving skills and they have good opportunities to engage in: active listening; independent and group research; and a wide range of practical and creative tasks. The school needs to ensure that all of the pupils are provided with a greater range of opportunities to engage in leadership roles and decision-making across the wider life and work of the school in order to strengthen further their development as young adults.

- Over the past three years the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs (and equivalents) including English and mathematics at grades A* to C has increased by almost ten percentage points, and is just above the NI average for similar schools. Over the same period, the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving five or more GCSEs (and equivalents) including English and mathematics at grades A* to C has increased by almost twenty percentage points.

- In 2013, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in GCSE mathematics increased significantly by seventeen percentage points and is now more than ten percentage points above the NI average for similar schools .

- Standards in GCSE English have varied over the past three years; the school's assessment of the attainment of the year 12 pupils indicates a significantly improving trend which is close to the average for non-selective schools. There are good standards of the pupils' work in English literature, which have been steady over the past two years.

- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils at post -16 achieving two or more GCE A levels (and equivalents) has increased, and is line with the NI average for similar schools.

- Those pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning make satisfactory progress in KS4 examinations in relation to their ability.

6. Provision

- The senior leadership places a high priority on raising standards of teaching and learning across the school. The quality of planning, teaching, learning and assessment observed in most of the lessons was good or better, with almost one half being very good and a small number outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers: demonstrated good subject knowledge; set appropriately high expectations; used effective questioning to develop the pupils' thinking skills; and assessed the pupils' work regularly to gauge the extent of their learning. In approximately one fifth of the lessons observed, there was less effective classroom management and planning which resulted in pupils becoming disengaged from the learning and making insufficient progress.

- The recently-introduced 'teaching for learning' policy and the Strangford College 'learning cycle' should be monitored and evaluated to ensure they are effecting improvement in learning experiences for all of the pupils. In addition, realistic and manageable targets also need to be set and agreed within departments and used to monitor classroom practice and the value-added improvement in learning for all of the pupils.

- The majority of pupils engage positively in learning mathematics and are able to participate well in class discussion and group activities and to talk confidently about their mathematical learning with their peers. The head of the mathematics department demonstrates a strong commitment to the improvement agenda and gives a high priority to raising attainment. In order to sustain standards and improve further the pupils' learning experiences, it will be important for all members of the mathematics department to engage in meaningful self-evaluation, share their good practice and monitor the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

- The senior leadership team supports fully, and is proactive in, raising numeracy standards across the school. There is a knowledgeable approach to the development of mathematical skills through meaningful tasks with appropriate policies and action plans in place to develop the pupils' numeracy skills across subject areas. This improvement planning needs to be monitored closely by the numeracy co-ordinator to ensure that numeracy standards are raised across the school.

- In English classes, the pupils develop their language skills well and, in addition, are learning how to manage and review their own learning effectively. With visitors, in unfamiliar contexts, some pupils are less confident in expressing themselves. There is a range of important strengths in the provision for English, including approaches to teaching, learning and assessment which are largely effective and exemplify well the school's priority on 'teaching for learning'. The forward-looking leadership of taught English programmes is evident in the planning and development of appropriate programmes of study. The lack of a post-16 English curriculum option has been identified by the school as a development need.

- The planning, provision and co-ordination of literacy across the curriculum is a strength of the school. A fortnightly literacy theme enables a consistent focus on the development of the pupils' language skills. The thematic approach can, beneficially, be developed further by making use of assessment information to respond to specific needs. In the majority of the teaching, the pupils develop their language and literacy skills well, but their opportunity to use these skills is inconsistent across the whole school.

- The school is a member of the North Down and Ards Area Learning Community; pupils have access to a number of courses through the South Eastern Regional College and in collaboration with other schools in the area. The pupils are provided with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum at KS3. At KS4 and post-16, the curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework. However, the option choices are not matched as well as they should be to the pupils' interests, abilities and aspirations and as a result, while about half of the pupils taking KS4 examinations are successful in achieving five or more GCSEs (and their equivalents) at grades A* to C, this is, however, below average. At post-16, outcomes have fluctuated, and, for example, the three year average for pupils achieving three or more GCE A levels (and their equivalents) is below average for non-selective schools. Nevertheless, the progression of pupils to further education is well above the NI average.

- The school has already identified the need to review its curriculum provision and the range of subjects available at KS4 and post-16 in order to meet better the needs and career aspirations of individual pupils and fulfil the post-16 requirements of the Entitlement Framework. While the school took interim steps to improve provision during the course of the current school year, it has an appropriate revised curriculum plan in place for 2014-15 which addresses the need identified.

- The school has appropriately begun to review the careers education information advice and guidance curriculum to provide improved coherence in the programme. At KS4, the pupils are not sufficiently well informed to enable them to make appropriate careers decisions and to have a good understanding of the options open to them. Good links have been developed with outside agencies and local employers; a wide range of events have been organised for the pupils including a careers convention and an interview skills day. The senior management recognise the need to develop further the strategic planning of the careers provision in order to inform the curriculum options and to put in place a dedicated team to deliver careers education information advice and guidance for all pupils.

- There are appropriate courses and career pathways available for pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The pupils are included in all aspects of school life, and are supported well by the learning support teachers and the well-trained teaching assistants to enable them to work effectively alongside their peers. The special educational needs co-ordinator maintains careful records of the pupils' progress in the well-planned and effective withdrawal support classes. The individual education plans (IEPs) contain effective strategies that inform the teachers planning and teaching but lack focused targets based on the needs of pupils. The school needs to review the process for IEPs to provide opportunities for teachers to be more involved in reviewing and sharing the most effective practice. The school data indicates that the reading partnership programme has been effective and has benefitted the majority of pupils involved. There is a need to implement a whole school focus on supporting pupils with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia).

- The school needs to put in place arrangements to monitor the pastoral care and educational provision for those pupils currently in alternative education provision offsite, by visiting them on a regular basis each term.

- The majority of the pupils are polite, courteous, well-behaved and eager to learn. They benefit from the caring support of the dedicated pastoral staff aided by the strong sense of collegiality of the staff. When the quality of the learning and teaching is of high quality, the pupils develop well their personal and social skills. The use of the tracking system is leading to a more explicit development of positive attitudes and dispositions towards learning. During discussions with inspectors, some pupils spoke confidently about the aspects of the life and work of the school they enjoy and value, yet senior pupils evaluated critically those aspects which need to improve, including the curriculum on offer, the facilities, the need for consistency in high quality learning experiences, the standards of behaviour and the quality of interaction in classes. While recent improvement is evident, there are inconsistencies in the outworking of the school's ethos, positive behaviour policy and the effectiveness of the provision for Learning for Life and Work to ensure appropriate progression in the wider skills and achievements of all of the pupils. These issues have been discussed with the leadership and management of the school; the school development plan has prioritised the need to improve the overall quality of the provision for pastoral care, including rigorous monitoring and evaluation, targeted staff development, regular timetabled meetings for pastoral staff and an integral role for the pupils through the school council.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils 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. The school needs to review the code of conduct with staff, ensure that parents are fully informed about the recently-reviewed child protection policy and provide governors with an annual report on issues relating to child protection.

- The school is promoting more effective links with parents, other schools, the wider community and a range of agencies to support the pupils in their learning. Consequently the number of first preferences for entry to year 8 in September 2014 has increased significantly and the Department of Education has increased the school's intake numbers appropriately.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has been in post for 10 months. He inherited a range of educational and pastoral issues and limited relevant information. Some essential policies and practices, including an appropriate school development plan (SDP) and process, were not fully in place. In addition, the previous SDP and the associated action plans had not, previously, been evaluated rigorously and the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team (SLT) needed to be clarified. In his relatively short time in post, the principal has conducted a well-planned, whole-school audit, which was widely consulted upon, to determine the key priorities and performance measures for the current SDP[3] which has now been put in place. He has clarified the roles and responsibilities of the SLT and has gained the support of the staff and the SLT to evaluate and identify those aspects of the school's curricular and pastoral provision, achievements and standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be improved. Initial improvements in important aspects of teaching and learning are already evident and Strangford College is leading an initiative to promote effective teaching and learning within a partnership cluster of selective schools.

- The senior leaders need to continue to prioritise and refine the identified areas for improvement, implement fully the agreed policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the planned actions. The middle managers and co-ordinators need to evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and how it contributes to sustained improvements in classroom practice, in the pupils' learning experiences and in their achievements.

- The governors, while sufficiently aware of the life and work of the school, need to focus their expertise more closely on the curricular provision, teaching and learning, school ethos, and the outcomes for the pupils in order to support the principal and teachers and to enhance their challenge to senior and middle management. The parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

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

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.

The main areas for improvement are the need to:

- continue to develop a shared responsibility and accountability for leaders and co-ordinators at all levels to improve the pupils' learning experiences;
- improve the outcomes the pupils achieve in public examinations;
- improve the quality and effectiveness of pastoral care; and
- revise the curriculum provision and the associated careers education information advice and guidance to improve choice and to provide more appropriate progression pathways for all of the pupils.

ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over the next 18-24 months.

APPENDIX

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 5 or more GCSEs (A* to C and A* to E) and equivalent subjects with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category[4].

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	***2011***	***2012***	***2013***
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	97.53	93.24
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	53.1	56.8	50
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	*68.8*	*69.7*	*57.8*
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	24.7	25.9	33.8
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	*39.5*	*45.4*	*31.8*
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	93.8	88.9	87.8
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)	25	27.7	45.5

[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.

GCSE Subject	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Journalism	57.1	85.7	58.3	100	n/a	n/a	26

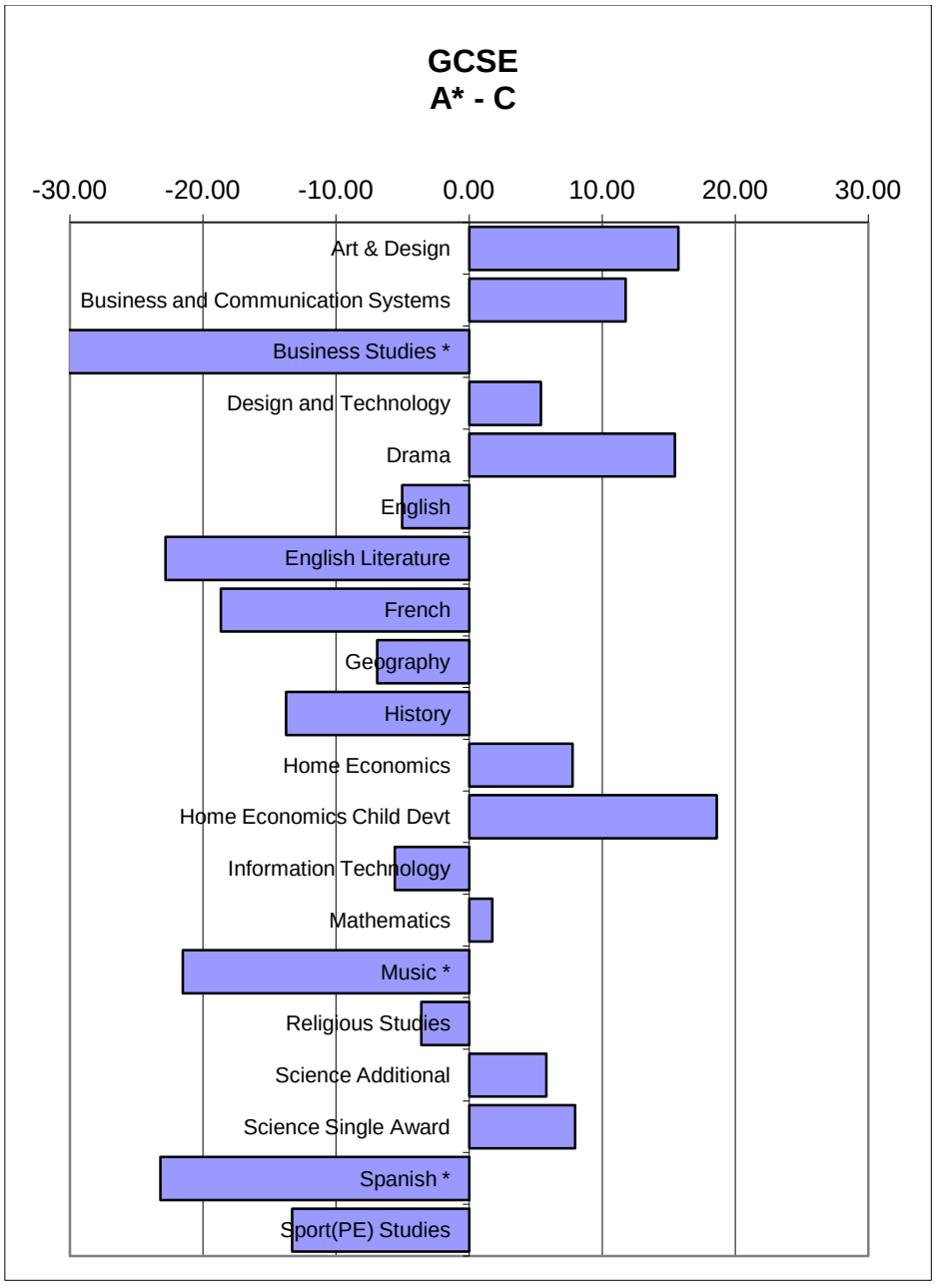
Level 2	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	*% pass*	*% pass*	
Occupational Studies	76.9	33.3	73.1	47
Essential Skills Communication	n/a	30	44	19

Level 1	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	*% pass*	*% pass*	
Essential Skills Application of Number	83	75	100	27

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.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

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

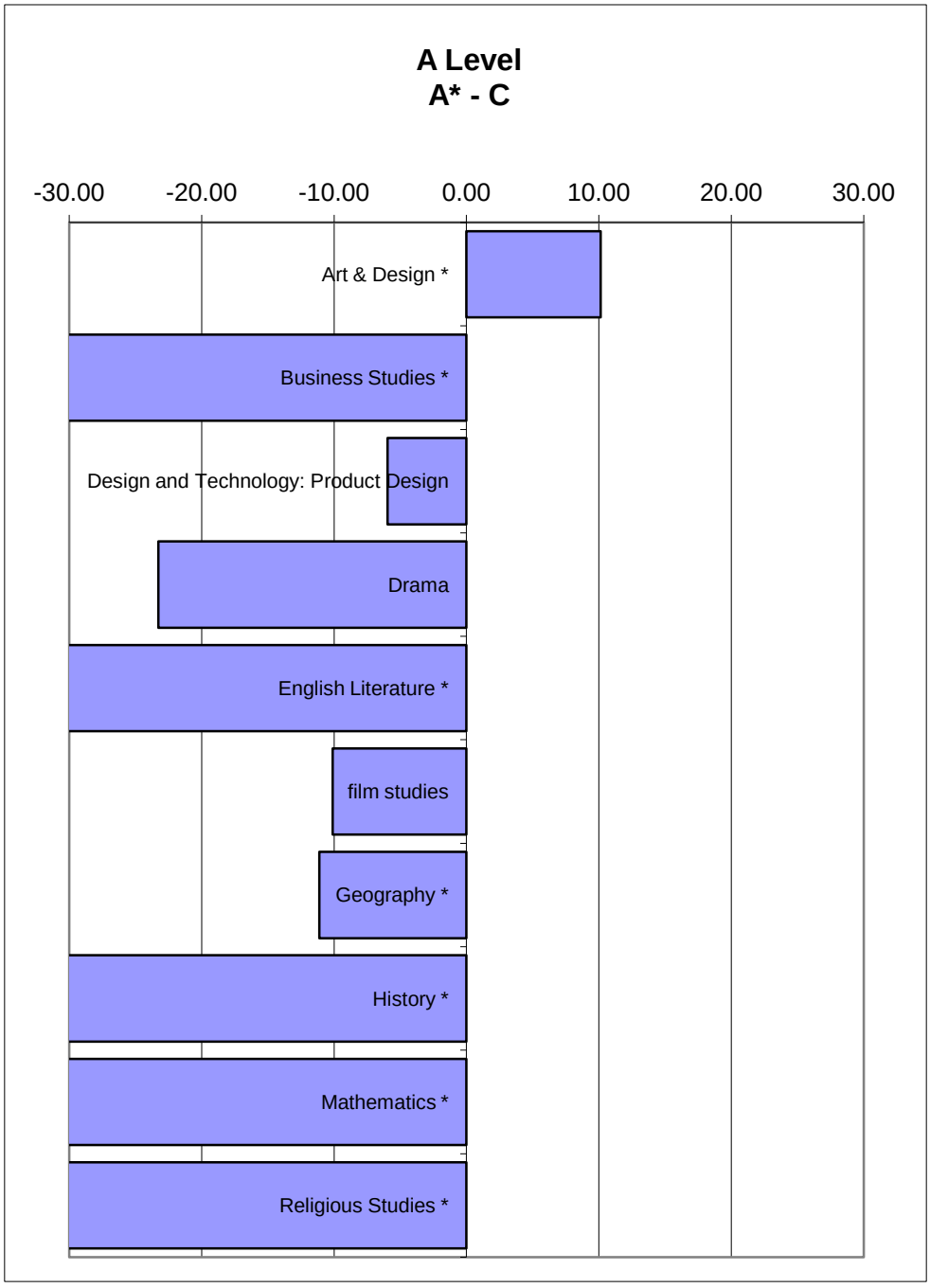
Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A* to E.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	79.4	68.8	76.3
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	44.1	21.2	36.8
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	94.1	84.9	97.4

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 in 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

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: POST-16

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

Level 3	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	*% pass*	*% pass*	
BTEC Sport	86	100	100	23 Students
BTEC Engineering	100	100	100	10 Students

Subject	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Applied Science	100	100	75	100	40	80	10
Business (Voc)	0	100	0	66.7	-	-	6
Health and Social Care	47.6	100	60	100	62.5	100	34
Information Technology	78.6	92.9	62.5	62.5	93.3	100	37
Travel and Tourism	-	-	33.3	100	0	0	4

STAYING ON RATE (Percentage staying on from year 12 to 13 and from year 13 to 14)

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**
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	52.3	47.8
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	79.9	76.5

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.

	2011/12 NI %	2011/12 School %	2011/12 School Nos.
Total number of leavers			89
Employment	7.9	6.7	6
Further Education	46.0	59.6	53
Higher Education	20.1	16.9	15
Training	18.2	11.2	10
Unemployed	4.4	3.4	3
Unknown	3.4	2.2	2

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