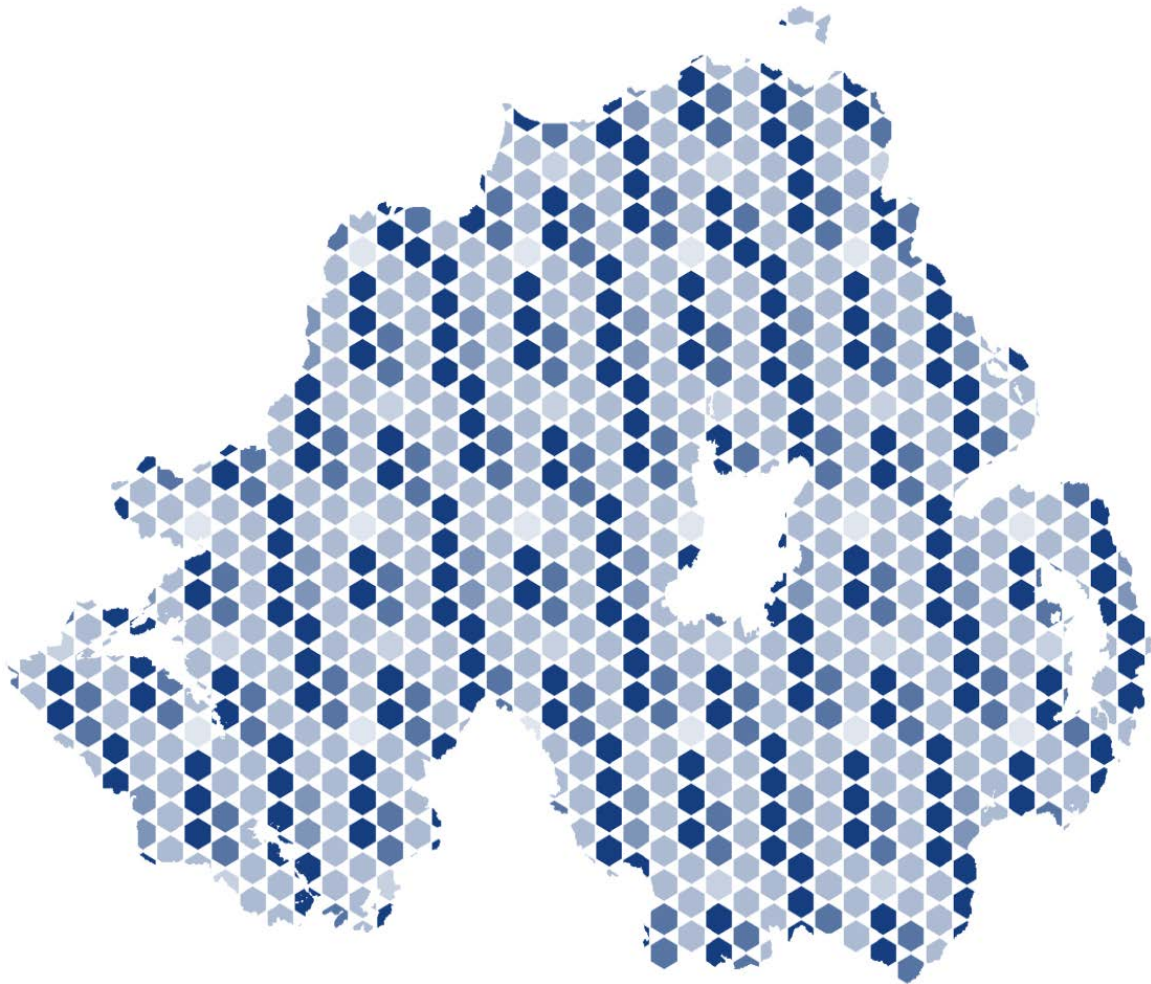


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's, Limavady

Maintained, co-educational, 11-18, non-selective school

Report of an Inspection
in February 2013



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CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

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 Inspectorate's 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 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 from years 8, 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	142	52	37	19
Teachers	47	34	72	22
Support Staff	18	15	83	6
Non-indicated		14		9

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 (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is located in the rural town of Limavady, drawing all of its pupils from the town and surrounding area. Enrolment in the school has decreased over the last three years in line with falling trends in the local area and currently stands at 682. The percentage of the pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is just under one-third of the school population. While the majority of the pupils on entry to the school have reached the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics, there is a wide range of ability in the intake.

St Mary's	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	111	128	104	97
Enrolment	727	725	717	682
% Attendance (NI Average)	92	92	92	-
FSME Percentage	31	31	29	34
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	24	19	21	31
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	21	27	28	35
No. of newcomers	-	-	-	-
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	7	6	9	9
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	14	16	15	18
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	61	59	66	61
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	61	61	66	58

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of St Mary's focused on: the pupils' achievements and standards; the quality of the learning and teaching and the curriculum provision; and on the quality of the leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science provision, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas; a summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on the quality of: the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); and the progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The overall standards achieved by the pupils are good ¹

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils respond with enthusiasm to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. They enjoy learning with others and show respect for different viewpoints. The older pupils present their ideas thoughtfully and in a considered manner to their peers and teachers. The pupils in KS3 have more limited opportunities to promote and develop their oral skills and many lack the confidence to contribute fully in class and to begin to take responsibility for their own learning.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010	2011	2012
*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	68.7	59.7	59.9
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	39.7	44.2	46.2
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86.96	82.95	84.09
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	33.3	14.2	33.3

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks²

¹ For additional performance data in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendix 1

² DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

The pupils' attainment at GCSE is very good. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more subjects at grades A* to C including GCSE English and Mathematics has improved steadily over the past three years and is well above the average for similar schools. In most of the individual GCSE subjects, the pupils' outcomes at grades A* to C are in line with, or above, the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland average, and in approximately one-third of the subjects, they are well above the average.³

A significant minority of the pupils at KS4 are entered for applied level 2 qualifications which are matched more closely to their aptitudes and career aspirations. Over the past three years almost all of the pupils achieved a qualification which provides appropriate progression pathways, with about two-fifths achieving a GCSE-equivalent qualification.

Many of the pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in external examinations with almost half of last year's group achieving a level 2 qualification in English.

The attainment of approximately one-third of the pupils who are entitled to FSM has varied over the last three years. It is appropriate that the school has put in place strategies to address this variation and in particular to focus on improving the attainment of boys in this cohort.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	39	29	42
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	51.16	30.3	25
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	100	93.9	95.5

Source: Data as held and verified by the school.

At post-16 the number of pupils entered for three subjects at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level and equivalents has fluctuated over the past three years. While almost all obtained at least two passes at grades A-E, the percentage obtaining three grades at grades A-C over the same period has halved and is well below the NI average for non-selective schools. The senior leadership team (SLT) needs urgently to take a strategic approach to reviewing the provision and addressing the decreasing outcomes.

Most of the pupils who return to school follow a range of courses offered at GCE A level or equivalent and approximately one-quarter return to follow new GCSE equivalent courses and resit GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Almost all the pupils who were entered for applied and vocational courses achieved good outcomes. The school needs to review the nature of the courses provided for these pupils and the extent to which they succeed in providing the pupils with appropriate progression routes into employment or further study.

³ See Appendix 1 for details.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is good.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is good.

The provision in English is very good, in mathematics is good and in science, it is satisfactory⁴.

A majority of the learning and teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection was good or better. The characteristics of the very good practice observed in almost one-third of lessons included: effective short-term planning which ensured a brisk and purposeful pace; the promotion of positive learning behaviours including active listening skills; skilful questioning by the teacher which engaged the pupils in extended and thoughtful responses; and the use of relevant and up-to-date materials to stimulate and interest the pupils. In these lessons the pupils engaged and responded well.

In the less effective practice observed in one-quarter of lessons, there was: over-direction by the teachers; reliance on the completion of low-level tasks; poor teacher questioning leading to limited pupil responses; and a lack of pace and challenge in the learning activities which were not matched closely enough to the needs and abilities of all the pupils. In these lessons the children were too passive and at times a minority became disengaged.

The teachers have made a good start to using more regular and formalised assessments and performance data to track pupils' progress and to set targets for improvement. There is a variation in the teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies and in the effectiveness of marking and feedback to help the pupils identify key targets for improvement.

3.1.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the pastoral care is good.

The pupils have a strong sense of belonging to their school community which reflects well the school's inclusive ethos. They participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and events which enhance their learning experiences. They speak highly of the work of the school council, which helps to improve many aspects of school life.

The pastoral team reflects on aspects of the provision, and consults regularly with the pupils, parents and staff to inform areas which require improvement. While the school has a positive behavior policy, its implementation is inconsistent. More effective classroom strategies are required to manage the challenging behaviours of a small number of the pupils.

The staff have developed a wide range of appropriate external links and partnerships with other schools and support agencies which they use well to enrich and support the individual needs of the pupils.

⁴ For detailed findings of the provision in English, mathematics and science see Appendix 2.

The pupils state that they feel safe in school and are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. Almost all of the parents who completed the confidential questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school and commented, in particular, on the approachable and supportive teachers.

The overall quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

The pupils who need additional support with their learning are provided with a variety of strategies to help them improve their reading skills. The early focus placed on improving their reading skills in year 8, particularly with regard to the range of support provided through, for example, paired reading, working with classroom assistants and other teachers at lunchtime, has had a significant impact on their reading. In the most effective practice, the class teachers made good use of the education plans in their planning for learning and teaching. This good practice is not widespread however; in too many classes the individual education plans were not used effectively and consistently to ensure that all of the pupils' learning needs were met appropriately.

The quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is satisfactory.

The pupils across the school are provided with a relevant programme of CEIAG within employability at KS3, and as discrete, timetabled careers education classes for pupils at KS4 and post-16. They benefit from enrichment activities such as the Young Enterprise and Sentinus programmes, visits from guest speakers, opportunities to attend careers events and, at post-16, a short period of work-related learning.

While the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the education, training and employment opportunities open to them, a number of the pupils at KS3 were unsure about the process for choosing their GCSE subjects at KS4. The pupils, at KS4 and post-16, need more opportunities to undertake independent learning, and to take greater personal responsibility for their own career planning.

The careers co-ordinator plays a key role in developing a common approach to the delivery of CEIAG within the Roe Valley Area Learning Community (RVLC). There is, however, a lack of strategic monitoring and evaluation, by SLT, of the impact of the CEIAG provision on the development of the pupils as they progress through the school.

3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The curriculum at key stage (KS) 3 is suitably broad and balanced; the SLT has identified the need to review the carousel arrangement for a number of practical subjects in order to provide more appropriate progression for GCSE. The school is strongly committed to the success of the RVLC and collaborates well with the other schools and colleges, including the special school, to meet the Entitlement Framework targets at KS4 and post-16 and provide enhanced learning opportunities. As a result, the pupils have access to a broad range of courses which meets well their interests, needs and career aspirations. Just over one-third of the pupils at post-16 access a course in another centre.

The current provision for science subjects at post-16 is unsuitable and needs to be reviewed, in particular, the provision for pupils taking GCE A level biology is unsustainable in its current form. It is appropriate that the SLT have identified, through the RVLC the need to broaden further the range of applied and vocational courses available to align with key economic priorities and employment opportunities.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities, and of enrichment programmes enable the pupils to develop their personal and social skills, and the opportunities for the pupils to share classes with those from neighbouring schools promotes mutual understanding and inclusion.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The overall quality of the leadership and the management is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The recently-appointed Principal provides good strategic leadership and has focused sharply on improving further the very good GCSE outcomes. She is fully committed to developing the school's pastoral and education provision in the best interests of the pupils in the school and the wider learning community.

Since being appointed, the Principal has re-structured the SLT and responsibilities have been reorganised to meet more closely the requirements of the school. There needs to be a greater sense of equity with regard to the strategic roles and responsibilities allocated within the SLT. The SLT have identified and begun to implement effective strategic actions to promote school improvement. These include the introduction of a more systematic approach to assessment and tracking of pupils' progress; the increased collaboration with other schools to broaden the curricular provision for the pupils and the promotion of self-evaluation across the school. It is important that the outcomes of the school's internal procedures for monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the curricular and pastoral provision are used more effectively to inform future planning and actions.

The overall quality of the middle management is good. Many of the subject leaders and co-ordinators are developing well their capacity for self-evaluation which is informed by helpful analysis of pupil performance data to identify actions for improvement. The effectiveness of the planning for learning at departmental level is variable; in many cases, there is insufficient detail to inform the teaching and learning strategies to be used in order to meet the needs of all of the pupils.

There is effective consultation with staff, pupils, parents and governors to establish the key priorities for school improvement. The SDP meets most of the requirements of the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland 2010). The targets need to be linked more closely to the priorities and focus more on the specific actions which will enhance further the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has developed purposeful and innovative links with its feeder primary schools to support the development of the children's ICT and literacy skills. These opportunities prepare them well for their transition to St Mary's. The children's primary school work is valued highly and celebrated widely.

The ETI reported to the principal and representatives of the governors the many positive responses emerging from the questionnaire responses and the few areas of concerns emerging from a minority of the comments; where appropriate these have been commented upon within the report.

The governors are well-informed about the work and life of the school and are proactive in supporting the leadership and management. The governors are effective in exercising their challenge function to promote improvement for the pupils.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

The staff make good use of the available accommodation to meet the needs of the pupils. The quality of the care and maintenance of the school buildings is of a very high standard.

5. **CONCLUSION**

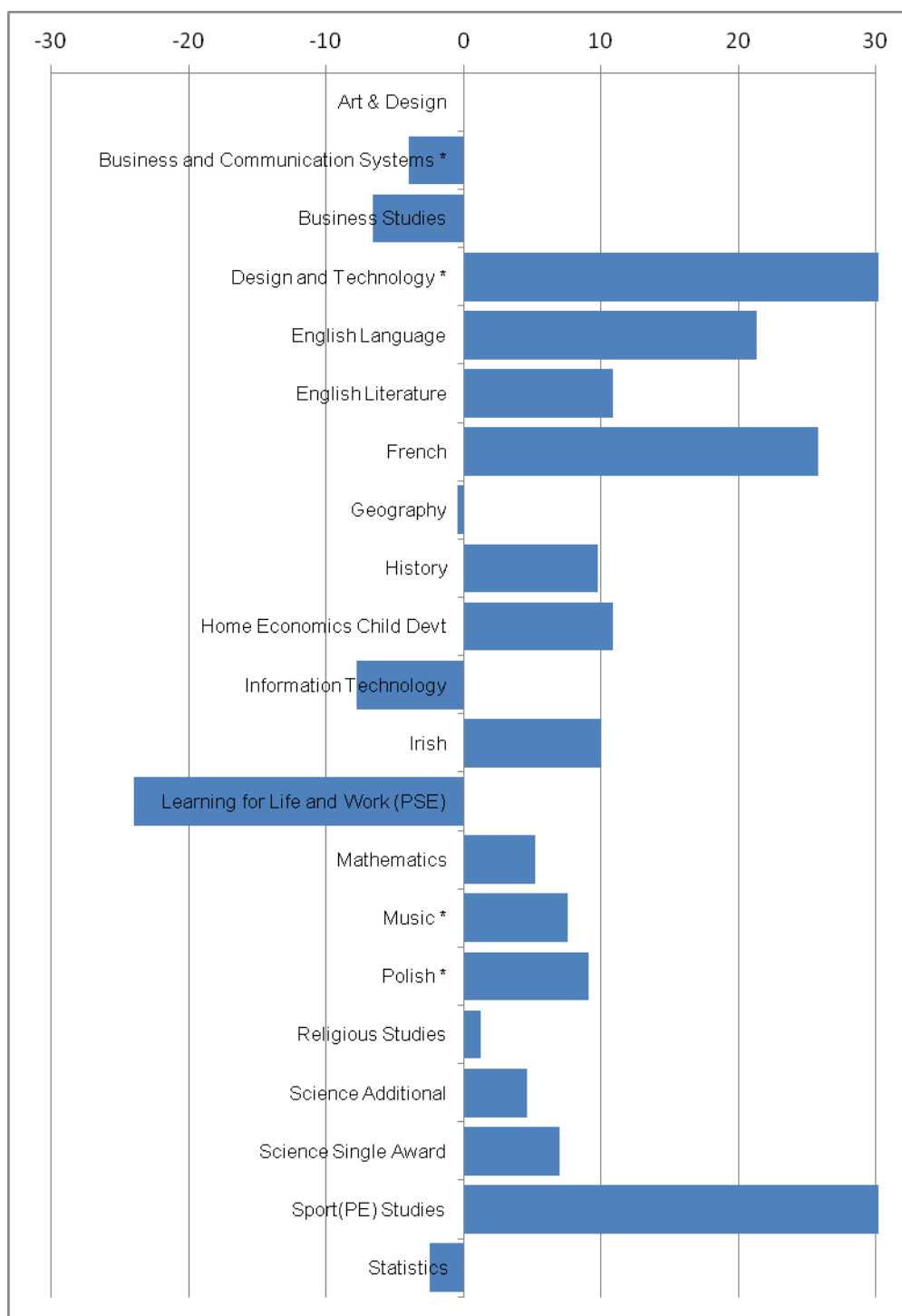
5.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

The area for improvement is:

- the need for more rigorous monitoring and evaluation at all levels to identify the very good practice and ensure that it is promoted consistently across all classes.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

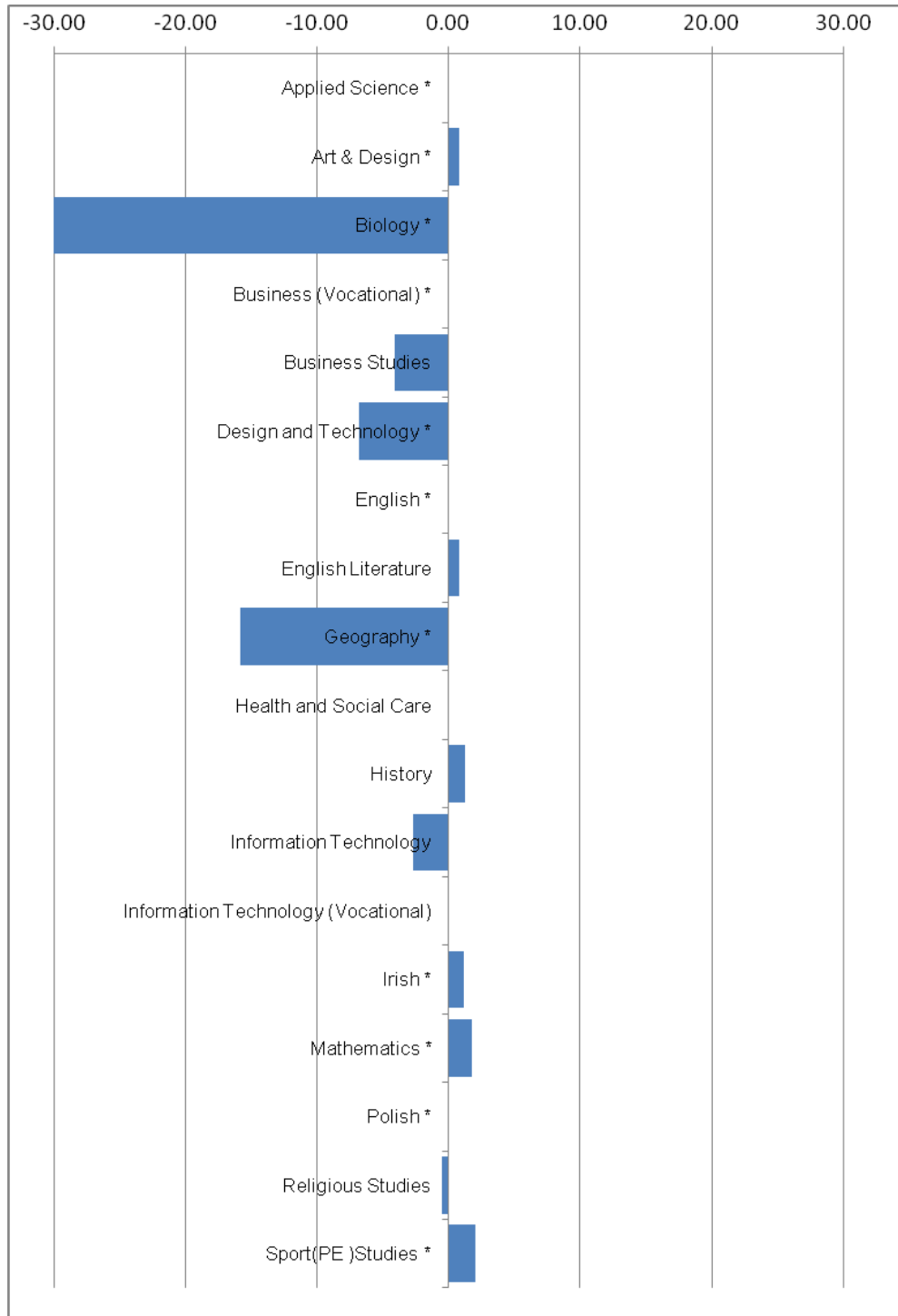
Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- C from 2009/10 to 2011/12



*total number of entries fewer than 30

GCE RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*-E from 2009/10 to 2011/12



* total number of entries fewer than 20

1.2 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: Key Stage 4

Other courses taken over the last three years.

Occupational Studies	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 1	17	52	34	69	21	44
Level 2	11	33	14	31	26	54

Key Skills Communication	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total Entry over 3 Years
	% Pass	% Pass	% Pass	
Level 1	63	94	57	64
Level 2	25	6	43	

1.2 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: Post-16

Other courses taken over the last three years.

Awarding Body	OCR							
Course	Business				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012	
Number who gained the award	4	0	5	Distinction	0	0	1	
Total entered for the award	4	0	7	Merit	0	0	2	
Number of units				Pass	4	0	2	

Awarding Body	OCR							
Course	Health and Social Care				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012	
Number who gained the award	5	0	9	Distinction	0	0	2	
Total entered for the award	6	0	9	Merit	4	0	7	
Number of units				Pass	1	0		

Awarding Body	OCR							
Course	Sport				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012	
Number who gained the award	7	5	7	Distinction	3	3	3	
Total entered for the award	7	5	8	Merit	4	2	4	
Number of units				Pass	0	0	0	

Awarding Body	OCR							
Course	Travel and Tourism				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012	
Number who gained the award	9	0	10	Distinction	1	0	5	
Total entered for the award	9	0	10	Merit	6	0	4	
Number of units				Pass	2	0	1	

Awarding Body	OCR							
Course	Young Enterprise				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012		2010	2011	2012	
Number who gained the award	0	0	5	Pass	0	0	5	
Total entered for the award	0	0	5					
Number of units								

Level 3	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total Entry over 3 Years
	% Pass	% Pass	% Pass	
Communication	100	100	100	25

1.3 STAYING ON RATE 2011/2012 (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	58.8	NI Av. Year 13	47.85
Year 14	38.2	NI Av. Year 14	36.5

1.4 LEAVERS DESTINATIONS

	Year 12	NI %	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	58		54	
Another School	2%	15.8	0%	2.5
Employment	7%	4.4	7%	11.7
Full-time Further Education	60%	45	69%	31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	19%	38.5
Full-time Training	29%	28	4%	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	3.5	0%	6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	2%	3.3	2%	3.1

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

The quality of the provision for English is very good.

The main strengths are the:

- collegiality and teamwork within the department which is well led by the head of English;
- very good standards achieved by the pupils in GCSE English and in GCSE English Literature where the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-B is between five and ten percent above the NI average;
- quality of the teaching observed, one half of the lessons observed were very good or better; and
- behaviour, motivation and positive attitude of most of the pupils towards their learning.

Mathematics

The quality of the provision for mathematics is good.

The main strengths are the:

- good relationships between the teachers and the pupils in most of the lessons observed and the high levels of support provided to the individual pupils;
- quality of the teaching and learning which was good or better in the majority of the sessions visited;
- good results achieved by the pupils in GCSE Mathematics at grades A* to C; and
- good use of data by the head of department to track students' progress and achievements against internal and external benchmarks.

The areas for improvement are:

- to dissemination of the very good practice within the department to improve the overall consistency of the teaching and learning; and
- to raise the standards achieved by the pupils in GCE A level mathematics.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is satisfactory.

The main strengths are the:

- very good relationships between the pupils and the teachers in the majority of the lessons observed;
- quality of the teaching observed during the inspection which was always satisfactory and in two thirds of the lessons good or better;
- commitment of the teachers to ensuring the pupils achieve high standards in GCSE examinations; and
- the good results achieved by the pupils in GCSE science and additional science at grades A*-C.

The areas for improvement are:

- to review the planning for learning and teaching, particularly at KS3, in order to address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and to develop the pupils' note taking and note making skills and their independent learning skills in a progressive and coherent manner;
- to review the provision for pupils undertaking post-16 courses in science, in particular GCE A level biology, and improve the standards achieved by these pupils in external examinations; and
- to address the significant issues of the management of the science department.

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