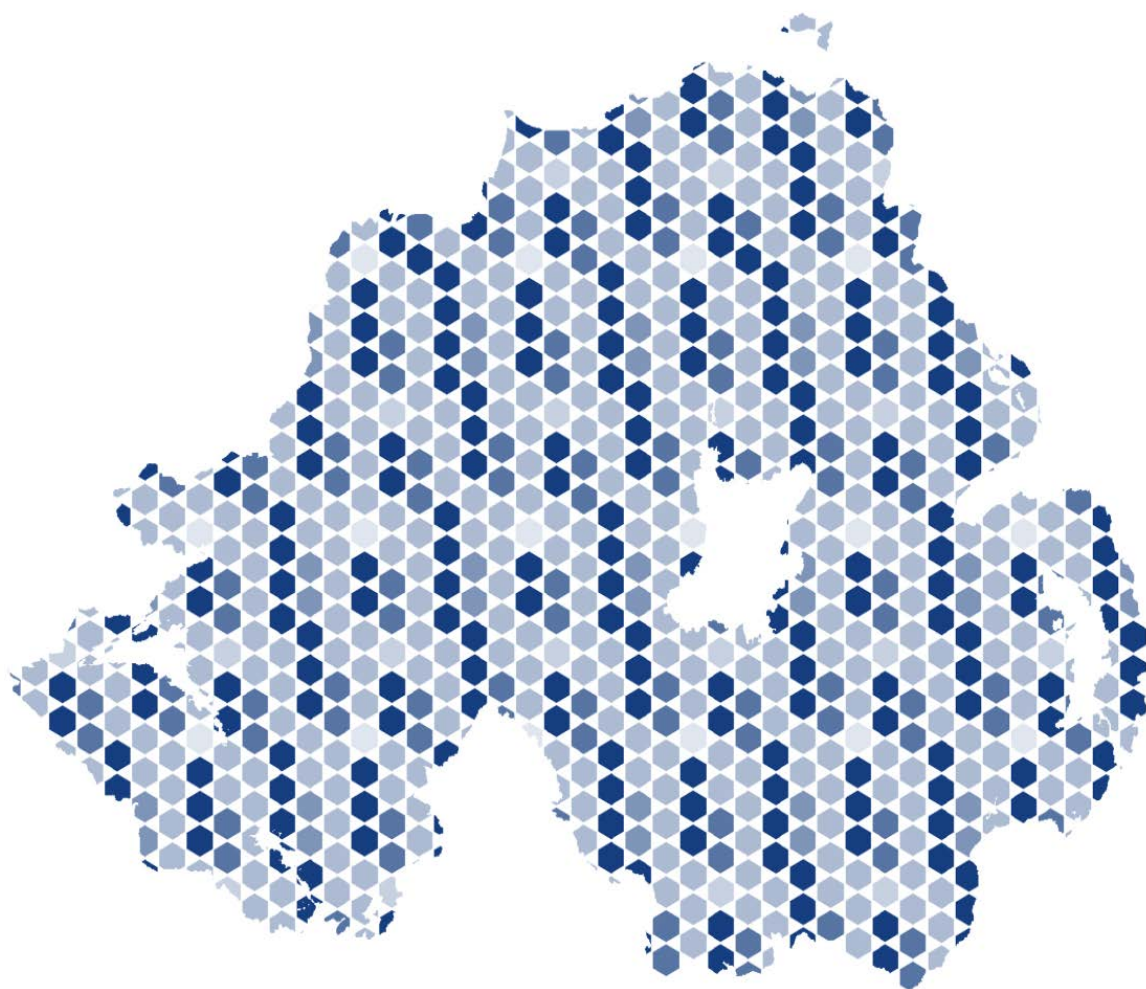


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Abbey Christian Brothers'
Grammar School, Newry

All Boys' Selective 11-18 School

Report of an Inspection
in October 2013

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	749	76	10 ⁽¹⁾	34
Teachers	57	37	65	*
Support Staff	41	16	39	*

* fewer than 5

2. Context

Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar moved in January 2010 to a new building on a green-field site in Ashgrove Road, Newry. The pupils who attend come from a wide geographical area across South Down, South Armagh and Newry city. The school is regularly over-subscribed.

Name of School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	127	130	133	134
Enrolment	887	894	907	900
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.1 (92.3)	95.5 (92.6)	94.5	NA
FSME Percentage ²	9.9	9.5	9.6	9.7
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	4.1 (36)	4.3(38)	3.8(35)	3.7(33)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	17	14	15	18

¹ 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.

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

No. of newcomers	8	9	9	*
<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	55.9	50.8	58.7	30.6
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	88.2	79.2	75.9	50.7
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	99.2	96.9	95.5	98.5
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	100	98.5	96.2	98.5 ³
<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	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils develop an excellent range of personal, social skills and dispositions as a result of the high quality teaching, care and guidance provided by the staff. The pupils are self-confident, open-minded, empathetic, responsible and exceptionally well prepared to contribute meaningfully to their community and to move to the next stage of their education.

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.

- In GCSE, at grades A*-B⁴, most of the subjects are in line with or above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools, including for those pupils entitled to free school meals. In GCE A level, at grades A*-C nearly all of the subjects are above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools, with almost half the subjects significantly above the average. The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning attain very well at GCSE and A level.
- The excellent results reflect the high expectations of staff and the pupils' very positive attitude to learning.

6. Provision

- Almost all of the teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding; three-fifths of which was very good or outstanding. The teachers plan very effectively for learning and have excellent subject knowledge. They set appropriately high expectations and use well-focused and effective questions to engage the pupils fully in their learning and ensure they become increasingly confident and independent learners. The pupils can analyse, process and present information and show a deep and competent understanding of subject content. They work purposefully in pairs and group situations engaging critically and constructively with each other to extend their thinking and learning.
- There is a clear strategic approach to the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills across the school. The oral skills of the boys are a particular strength; they respond to questioning in an articulate and mature manner.
- The whole-school approach to the holistic development of the pupils is reflected in the learner-centred provision for careers, special educational needs and pastoral care, which complements and enhances the pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- The pupils who require additional support with their learning are integrated well and involved fully in all aspects of school life. The individual education plans set out clearly the pupil's strengths and needs, with appropriate targets to guide effectively the work of the teachers and classroom assistants, thus enabling these pupils to progress very well in their learning and achieve very positive outcomes.
- The high quality pastoral provision in the school is underpinned by mutual respect and pride in the school; a key strength is its close integration with teaching and learning. Working relationships are excellent at all levels and the staff are highly committed to the care and well-being of the pupils. The pupils are very welcoming, confident and courteous; their behaviour both in and out of class is exemplary. The older pupils have an enhanced sense of responsibility and take opportunities to display leadership in their various roles as mentors, prefects and members of the Student Council. In addition, there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities that enriches the educational and social experiences of most of the pupils. The pupils feel safe and secure in the school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

⁴ See Appendix for data: note that when averages are compared, they are with the average for selective or non-selective schools, as appropriate, with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- The excellent careers provision is flexible, proactive and responsive to the individual needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils. Regular and effective monitoring of the provision ensures the pupils have access to up-to-date information and can make informed decisions in relation to subject choices and long-term career goals. The well-structured, taught careers programme, combined with high quality learning experiences within and beyond the curriculum, develops successfully the pupils' self-awareness and skills, including team work, self management, communication, problem-solving, leadership and resilience.
- As a result of the close curricular arrangements with a local post-primary school and the local College of Further Education, the pupils experience a curriculum which meets fully their needs, abilities and future career choices. The formal curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and is meeting fully the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

7. Leadership and management

- The highly effective and transformational leadership evident throughout the school is underpinned by a clear vision and distinct pupil-centred ethos which accords to the Edmund Rice Schools Trust charter and is lived out on a daily basis. Through the inspirational leadership of the headmaster, leaders at all levels are supported fully and challenged appropriately to develop their leadership skills in order to meet effectively the needs, interests and aspirations of all the pupils within the school community.
- There is culture of open communication and professional respect amongst staff, which provides a firm foundation for the rigorous self-evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. The self-evaluation process, which is underpinned by the effective analysis of relevant quantitative and qualitative information, informs reliably the development planning process and is instrumental in the continuous improvement of the school's provision. The school development plan⁵ which is central to the work of the school is supported by a systematic process of high quality action planning which ensures the continuous monitoring of the progress made towards the implementation of the school's strategic objectives. A key feature of the plan is the innovative approaches used by the school to support the professional development of the staff.
- The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of all the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are extremely well informed about the work of the school and play an integral and appropriately challenging role in most aspects of school life.
- On the basis of evidence available at the time of inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance of the Department of Education.

⁵ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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 the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving 7 or more GCSEs (A* to C) including equivalent subjects and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁶.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2011	2012	2013
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	96.09	90.4	94.89
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>94.9</i>	<i>93.7</i>	<i>93.7</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	94.53	89.6	93.4
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>93.7</i>	<i>91.3</i>	<i>91.3</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	100	95.2	98.54
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)	100	69	88

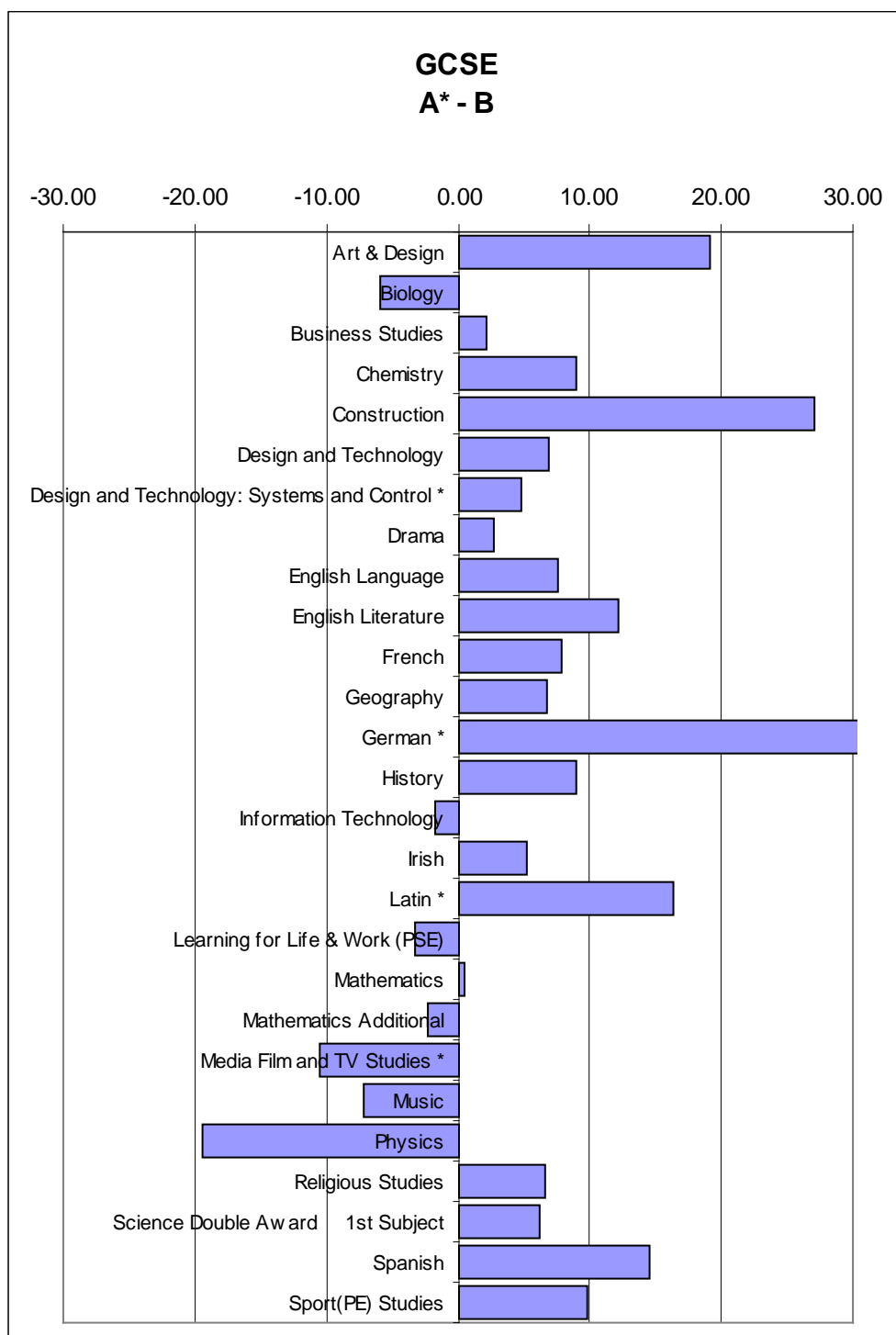
Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

⁶ 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 B from 2010-11 to 2012-13

The table below is based on the data held by the school and verified by the ETI to show attainment in individual subjects A*-B over the last three years compared to the NI average for all boys in selective schools. The values to the left of the centre line are below the average, the values to the right are above the average.



*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 the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving 3 or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁷.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98.1	98.2	98.3
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	84.55	86.11	81.36
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>78.0</i>	<i>75.2</i>	<i>75.2</i>

Other examination results: post-16

The table below shows other examinations at level 3 (equivalent to A levels) achieved by the pupils; there is currently no benchmarking data for these examinations.

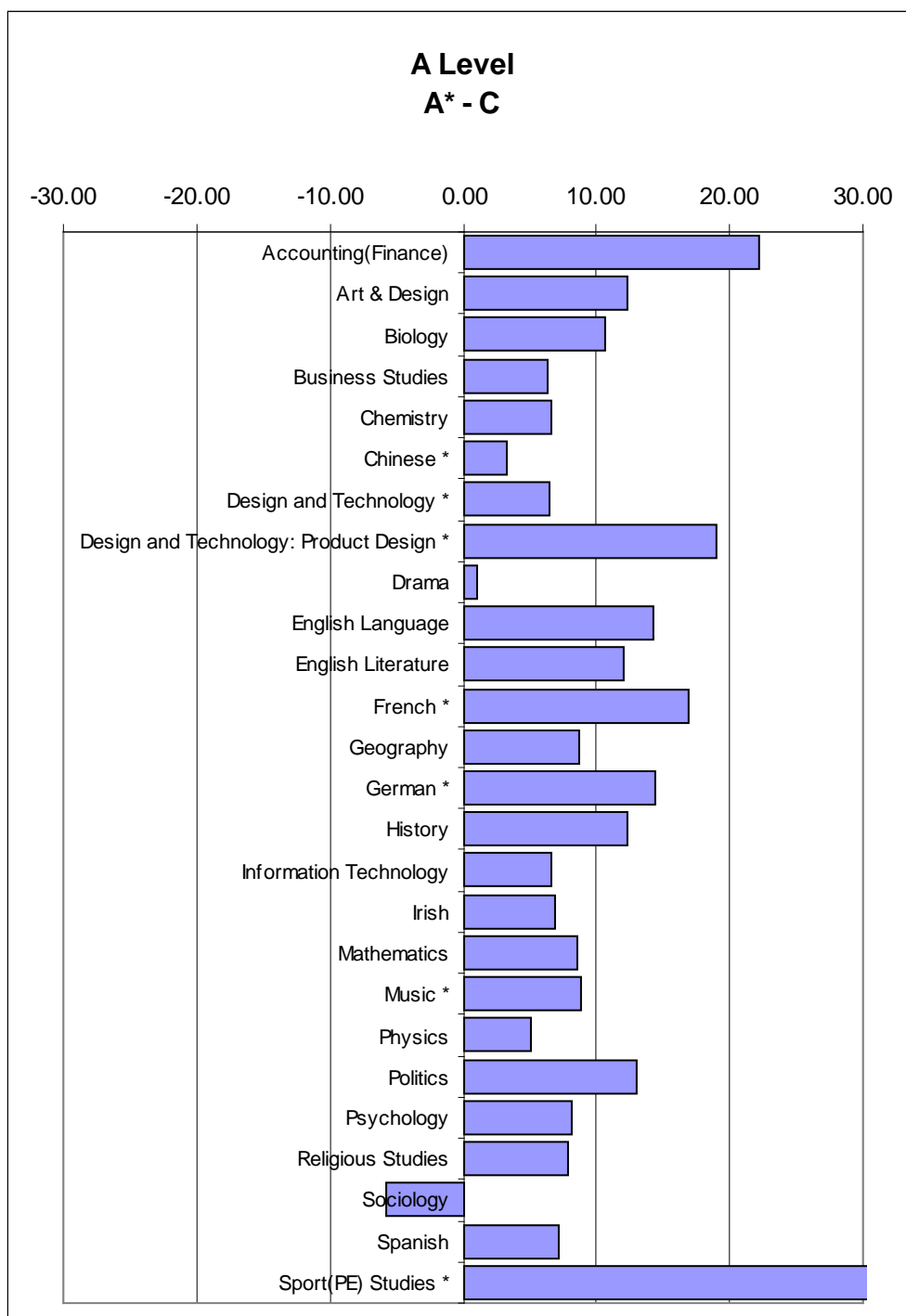
Level 3	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Construction	100%	100%	100%	72
Engineering			100%	8

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

GCE EXAMINATION RESULTS

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

The table below is based on the data held by the school and verified by the ETI to show attainment in individual subjects at A*-C over the last three years compared to the NI average for all boys in selective schools. The values to the left of the centre line are below the average, the values to the right are above the average.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

Staying on rate and leavers' destinations

The tables below for leavers' destinations and staying on rates are based on data held by the school and verified by ETI and are compared with the appropriate NI average for selective schools.

Staying on rate

Year 13	94.6	NI Av. Year 13	95.0
Year 14	96.0	NI Av. Year 14	94.9

Leavers' destinations

	Year 12	Percent.	NI %	Year 13/14	Percent.	NI%
TOTAL	16			128		
Another School	*	31.3		*	*	
Employment				*	*	3.8
Full-time Further Education	10	62.5		13	10.2	19.0
Full-time Higher Education				106	82.8	72.7
Full-time Training						
Seeking Employment/Unemployed						
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	*	6.3		*	*	1.4

* fewer than 5

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