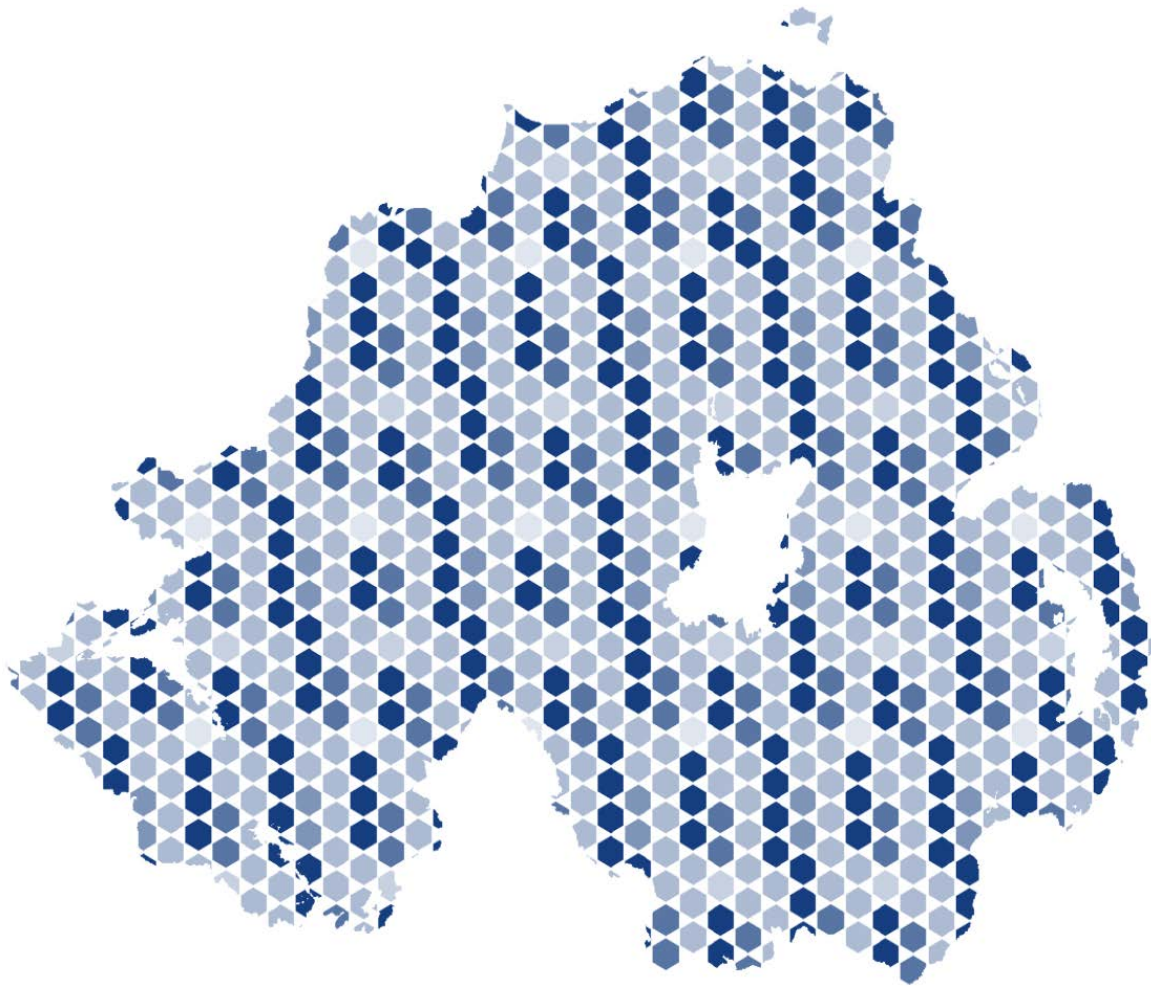


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Bloomfield Collegiate School,  
Belfast

Controlled, all girls', selective, 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2015

### 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, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities. The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire. ETI discussed issues arising with the principal and the governors.

Twenty-two percent of parents (138) and almost all the staff responded. Most of the parental responses were very supportive of the work of the school and commented positively on their child's experiences and, in particular on the care and support provided. A minority identified concerns, including those relating to communications. Most of the staff responded positively, acknowledging the strong pastoral support for the pupils. A minority of staff responses, raised concerns about internal communications, and the consistent application of policies.

## **2. Focus and purpose of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of a 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
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

## **3. Context of the school**

Bloomfield Collegiate School is situated just off the Newtownards Road in East Belfast. The pupils come from a wide surrounding geographical area, including Belfast and North Down. The school is regularly oversubscribed and the available data for two of the last three years shows that almost all year eight pupils achieved the expected levels in English and mathematics on entry to the school. Approximately 8% of the pupils are identified with special educational needs and require additional support with aspects of their learning. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals increased to just over 12% in the last year. The school attendance figures are in line with the average for selective schools.

The school is an active partner in the East Belfast Area Learning Community (ALC) and is committed to supporting the pupils' career aspirations, through collaborating effectively with a number of other schools to broaden the curriculum at post-16.

Within the past year, the school transferred from voluntary to controlled status which resulted in a significant and challenging change to its governance and general management arrangements including: a change in the employing authority; a substantial reorganisation of the support services; and a reconstituted board of governors.

<b>Bloomfield Collegiate School</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Year 8 Intake	101	100	100	101
Enrolment	712	719	709	696
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.5% (95.7)	94.6% (95.3)	95.3% (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	5.7	6.6	7.5	12.2
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	33.2% (239)	5.5% (39)	7.2% (50)	7.9% (55)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	*	*	*	*
<i>Intake<sup>2</sup>:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	61	41	25	8 <sup>3</sup>
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	77	50	28	9
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	100	100	95	34
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	100	98	94	33
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Good</b>

#### 5. Quality of achievement and standards

- The pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and well-developed learning behaviours. When given the opportunity, in the best practice observed, they worked independently, engaged maturely with others in productive discussions, and contributed well-reasoned and insightful responses and reflections. The school has identified correctly the need to develop further the pupils' thinking skills and personal capabilities more effectively across the curriculum.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> Due to industrial action, not all data from end-of-key-stage 2 assessments in 2014 was made available to the school by the contributory primary schools

- The pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility, empathy and respect for others reflecting strongly the school's core values. A noteworthy feature is the range of varied and well-planned community placements undertaken by a significant number of senior pupils, which develop well their leadership, team-working and wider employability skills.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils achieving at least seven GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including GCSE English and mathematics is in line with the average for selective schools in the same FSME category: almost all pupils achieve at this level. Over the same period, however, the attainment at the higher benchmark of grades A\* to B in almost all of the individual subjects is too low, with over one-half of subjects being well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for girls in selective schools. The school has identified appropriately that raising further the standards in examinations, especially at GCSE grades A\* to B is a key priority.
- At GCE A level, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more grades at A\* to C has increased over the past three years, from below to above the NI average for similar schools. Attainment in most subjects is in line with, or above, the corresponding NI averages.
- The attainment in GCSE English Language at grades A\* to C is in line with the NI average. While the school's performance at grades A\* to B was well below the NI average for girls in selective schools, there has been a discernible improvement in the past year. The standards in GCE A level English Literature over the past three years are in line with the NI average.
- In mathematics, there is an improving trend in standards for both GCSE and GCE A level, and both are above the NI average at grades A\* to C.
- The pupils requiring support with aspects of their learning attain well at GCSE and GCE A level, and progress to appropriate courses. The standards achieved by the pupils entitled to free school meals are generally in line with those in their year group.
- The percentage of pupils who stay on from year 13 to year 14 is just below the NI average. Almost all the school leavers enter further and higher education; over three-fifths of those going to further education make the expected progression to level 4 courses.

## **6. Quality of Provision**

- While, there is a coherent structure to the short and medium-term planning across the school, the quality of the departmental planning for learning across the subjects is too variable. In a minority of subjects, the planners do not identify, or set out specifically enough, the range of learning and teaching strategies to be used to meet the needs of all the learners.

- Most of the lessons evaluated during the inspection were good or better. The very effective practice, in approximately one-third of the lessons observed, was characterised by: purposeful group-work activities; well-paced and appropriately challenging activities; skilful questioning to develop deeper understanding; the deployment of a range of assessment strategies; and, the use of ICT to promote independent learning. In these lessons, the pupils were enthusiastic, contributed confidently, with very good oral skills, and made very good progress in their learning.
- In approximately one-fifth of the lessons, the teaching was less effective at promoting learning, with lessons overly directed by the teachers, the activities not challenging enough to meet the varying needs of the pupils, and missed opportunities to extend and consolidate the learning. It will be important to identify, share and spread more effectively the best practice already existing in planning, teaching, learning and assessment to ensure consistently high quality learning experiences.
- Where literacy was promoted most effectively through English and across the school, the pupils develop their talking and listening skills well and utilise them effectively to support their reading and writing. In taking this work forward, the teachers across all the subjects need to develop further opportunities for high quality talking and listening. A reading culture is established within the school, supported well by the use of the Accelerated Reading programme, and by the Project 500 initiative which enthuses the pupils about science and about reading. To improve further the quality and range of writing across the school, the teachers need to provide more informative feedback on the pupils' work that identifies clearly how they can improve.
- In mathematics, strategies to promote the pupils' use of mathematical language and build their confidence are well embedded. In the more effective practice, the teachers use assessment strategies well to evaluate the pupils' level of understanding and to extend their mathematical thinking. The department has recognised that more effective use of plenary sessions is needed to provide opportunities for the teachers and pupils to assess and consolidate learning.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The senior pupils are excellent role models, contributing effectively by supporting younger pupils very well through academic and pastoral mentoring. The pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular programmes, which supports well their personal, social and academic development. They develop a clear sense of collegiality through active participation in the house system and school council. They value greatly belonging to a caring community, enjoying very good relationships with one another and their teachers.
- The pupils who require additional support with their learning are involved fully, developing effective interpersonal skills, confidence and self-esteem through an inclusive ethos and with the sensitive support of teachers and peers. The individual education plans set out clearly the pupils' strengths and needs, although how well they are used varies. In the most effective practice, the work is matched closely to needs; this approach should be disseminated to ensure that the teachers' support is consistent across all of the classes.

- The pupils benefit from a structured programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), which focuses appropriately on key transition points. The taught provision is complemented and enhanced by a varied programme including guest speakers, work experience, mock interviews and careers visits. The pupils have access to a wide range of resources to research career pathways and learn about the world of work. Appropriate priorities are identified to develop the provision further, including evaluating the extent and effectiveness of the contribution of individual subjects to the CEIAG provision, and the introduction of work-related learning experiences at KS4.
- The curriculum at key stage (KS) 3 is broad and balanced. Recently the school has reviewed the curriculum offer at KS4 to take better account of the pupils' interests and abilities, to ensure progression in their learning, and, to provide them with more individually suitably flexible pathways. At KS4 and post-16 the school is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. It is appropriate that the school is considering the introduction of more vocational subjects as it continues to review and monitor the curriculum.

## **7. Quality of leadership and management**

- The school development plan<sup>4</sup> sets out appropriate priorities for guiding improvement. Priorities are identified well, as a result of appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders, and the analysis and use of performance data. One of the key priorities, endorsed by the inspection findings, is to raise GCSE grades A\*-B within the individual subject departments. Other appropriate priorities are set out, including disseminating the best classroom practice and making more effective use of data to set individual progress targets for pupils
- The senior leadership team (SLT) have taken appropriate strategic actions over the past few years which have impacted positively on the provision, including: the creation of a learning centre and improved arrangements for study; the effective development of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school, evidenced through the extensive use of an on-line learning platform by the pupils, especially at post-16, to support their independent learning; the broadening of the curriculum; and, the use of performance and other pastoral information to identify and support pupils with barriers to their learning.
- The principal and SLT, supported strongly and effectively by the governors, faced and dealt with significant challenges in the past four years, particularly reducing a very significant budget deficit. These challenges required their urgent and immediate attention and are still being addressed, with the effective support of the Belfast Education and Library Board. The redefinition of roles and responsibilities within the SLT helped distribute leadership effectively, and supports appropriate actions for improvement across the whole school, particularly the effective accountability and linkage between the work of the SLT, all staff and the newly-formed teaching teams.

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<sup>4</sup> The School Development Plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning, 2010

- Most subject leaders and co-ordinators, challenged and supported where necessary by the SLT, are developing effectively their capacity for self-evaluation, which supports well the school's improvement agenda. Most of the departmental development plans include appropriate processes for monitoring and evaluation, though they need to be informed by the use of a greater range of first-hand evidence, especially to ensure that performance targets for pupils remain robust and challenging.
- The governors have the appropriate skills needed to meet the exceptional development priorities of the school. They have a keen awareness of performance in public examinations and the need to raise further the standards attained. They understand and exercise well their role in providing effective leadership, challenge and support for both the principal and a range of post-holders who report to them. There can be full confidence in the aspects of governance inspected.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive safeguarding arrangements which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions, the pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their care and well-being.

## **8. Conclusion**

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 confirmed areas for improvement, one of which the school has identified in its school development plan and has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are to:

- disseminate the best practice in planning, teaching and learning; and
- use data and other available information to ensure that targets set for pupils are sufficiently robust in order to raise standards further, particularly at GCSE grades A\*-B.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress, through district and specialist inspector activity, on the areas for improvement.

## APPENDIX

### Examination performance and other statistical data

#### GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2011-12 to 2013-14

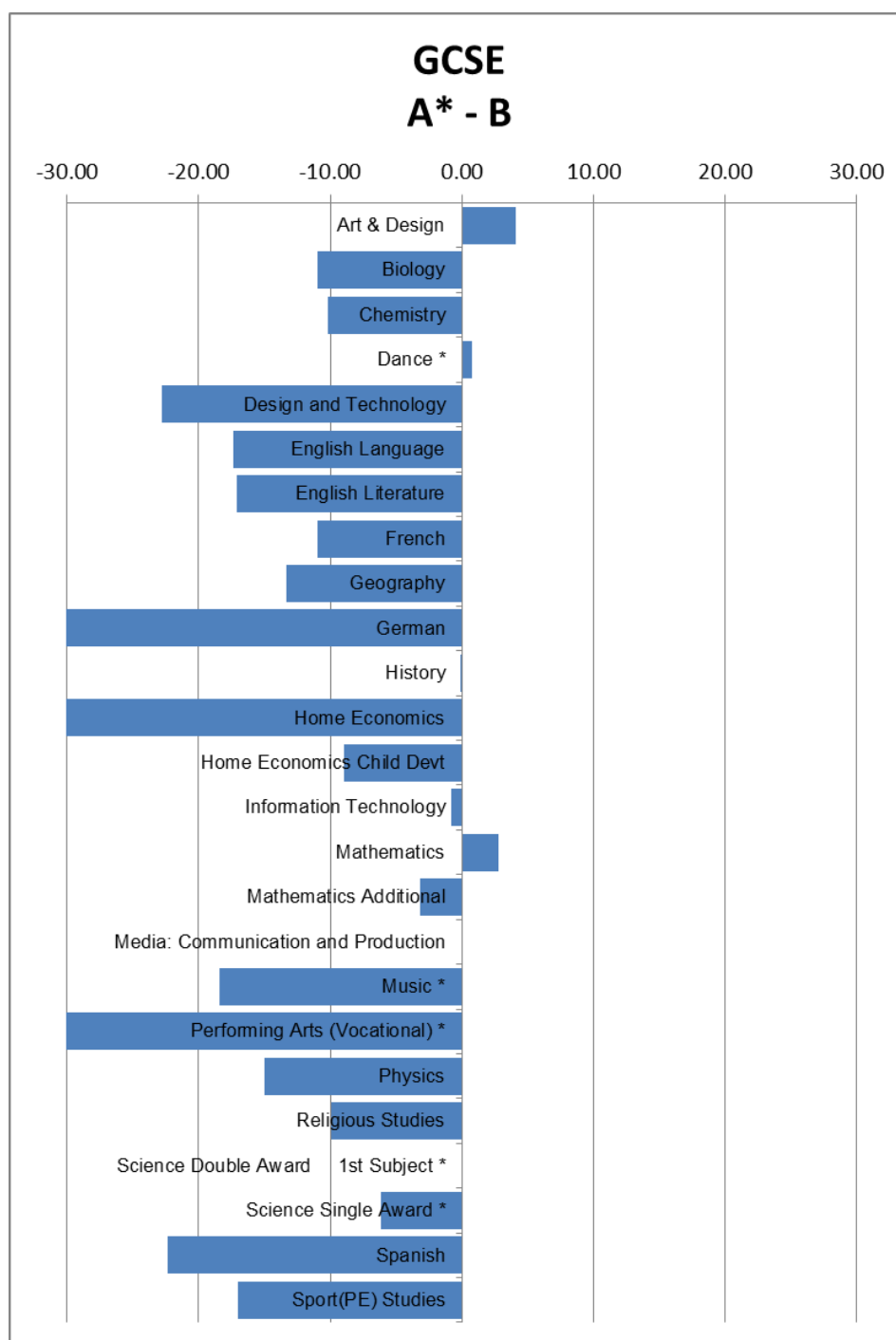
The table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Bloomfield Collegiate achieving 7 or more GCSEs (A\* to C) with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>5</sup>. It also shows the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs including English and mathematics (A\* to C).

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	2012	2013	2014
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	100	99	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	92.2	93.1	93.1
<a href="#">The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</a>	93.7	96.3	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	92.2	90.1	92.2
<a href="#">The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</a>	91.3	92.8	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	99	95	99
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)	100.0	100	83.3

<sup>5</sup> 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 GCSE level grades A\* to B from 2011-12 to 2013-14

The bar chart below illustrates, based on data held by the school and verified with ETI, the performance of each GCSE subject, in all exam boards, compared with the three-year average for girls in selective schools in Northern Ireland. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above average. As the number of entries to each subject may vary considerably, comparisons should be treated with caution.



*\*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years*  
*Science Single Award and Performing Arts taken in 2014 only*  
*Dance taken in 2013 only*  
*Media: Communication and Production (see below)*

## OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

The table below shows achievements by the pupils in a GCSE examination for which no benchmarking data available.

GCSE Subject	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-B	% A*-B	% A*-B	
Media: Communication and Production	52.6	91.3	85.7	56

## GCE A level examination results at grades A\* to C from 2011-12 to 2013-14

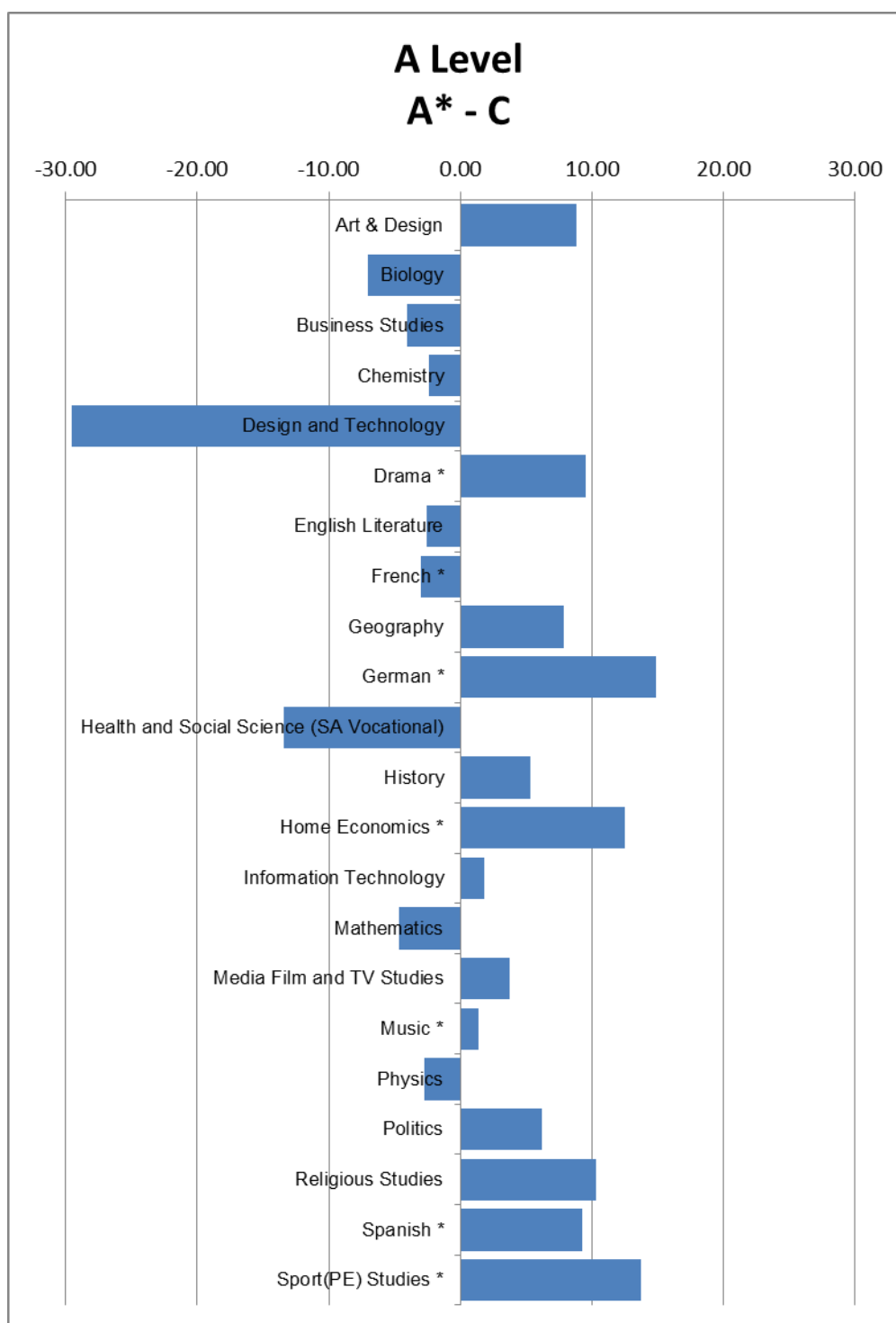
The table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in Bloomfield Collegiate achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A\* to C. The table compares the percentage of achieving three or more GCEs (A\* to C) with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>6</sup>.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2012	2013	2014
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	92	100	99
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	71.9	77.1	75.3
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	75.2	72.9	N/A

<sup>6</sup> 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 level grades A\* to C from 2011-12 to 2013-14

The bar chart below illustrates, based on data held by the school and verified with ETI, the performance of each GCE subject, in all exam boards, compared with the three-year average for girls in selective schools in Northern Ireland. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above average. As the number of entries to each subject may vary considerably, comparisons should be treated with caution.



*\*indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years  
Drama taken in 2013 only*

### Other examination results: post-16

The table below shows achievements by the pupils in a GCE A level examination for which benchmarking data for this examination is not available.

GCE Subject	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
Design and Technology	54.6	58.3	100	30

### Staying on rate

Based on data verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows that the percentage of the pupils who stay on at Bloomfield Collegiate 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 (2012/13).

	NI average %	School %
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	95.7	93.3
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.3	90.0

### 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 Bloomfield Collegiate who leave the school to enter further education, training, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment, compared with the average for selective schools.

	NI	School No	School %	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3+
Total Number of Leavers	9503	119	100			
Employment	3.4%	7	5.9			
Further Education	21.2%	42	35.3	0	16	26
Higher Education	72%	66	55.5			66
Training	1.2%	1	0.8			
Unemployed	1.2%	0	0.0			
Unknown	1.1%	3	2.5			

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