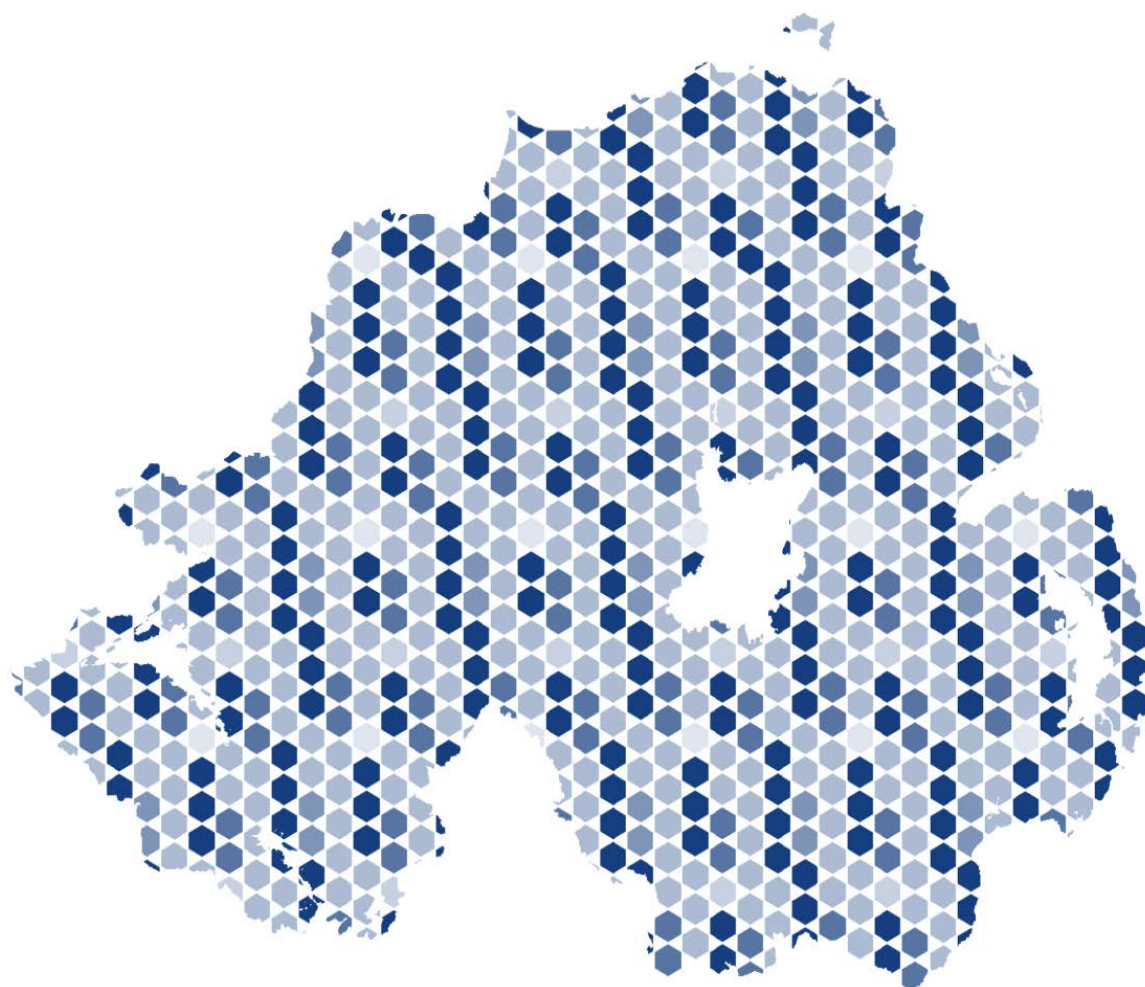


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Markethill High School,
Co Armagh

Controlled, non-selective, 11-16, co-educational school

Report of an Inspection
in October 2013



*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.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 | 131 | 58 | 44.5 ¹ | 27 |
| Teachers | 33 | 27 | 82 | 8 |
| Support Staff | * | * | 100 | 0 |

* fewer than 5

The 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. Context

Markethill High School serves the community in the town of Markethill, County Armagh and the surrounding rural area.

Over the past four years, on entry to the school, approximately four-fifths of the pupils have achieved at the expected level in English and mathematics and a significant minority are identified as having special educational needs. The pupils' attendance has remained consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

A small number of students share access to appropriate courses across the Armagh Learning Community.

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.

| Markethill High School | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Year 8 Intake | 102 | 91 | 90 | 99 |
| Enrolment | 483 | 490 | 491 | 488 |
| % Attendance (NI Average) | 95 (92) | 94 (93) | 94 (n/a) | N/A |
| FSME Percentage ² | 8 | 9 | 12 | 11 |
| % (No.) of pupils on the SEN register | 17 (84) | 19 (95) | 22 (107) | 16 (62) |
| No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school | 20 | 24 | 30 | 36 |
| No. of newcomers | 0 | 0 | * | * |
| <i>Intake:</i> | | | | |
| % of Y8 pupils with L5 English ³ | 22 | 31 | 19 | 3 |
| % of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics | 36 | 34 | 21 | 9 |
| % of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English | 81 | 82 | 73 | 68 |
| % of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics | 84 | 85 | 78 | 67 |
| <i>Source: data as held by the school.</i> | | | | |

3. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all learners, 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 learners;
- 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 findings

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

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

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.

5. Achievements and Standards

All of the pupils are well-disposed towards learning, displaying high levels of confidence and maturity. Almost all manage their own learning well, set targets for themselves and are developing as independent learners. They engage well in the learning opportunities presented to them and talk about their work with enthusiasm; they respond with high levels of engagement, enjoyment and deep learning. The pupils are proud of their school, very welcoming to visitors, confident and courteous; their behaviour both in and out of class is exemplary.

The overall standards achieved by the pupils are very good; the standard achieved in public examinations is a significant strength of the school. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE examinations at grades A* to C, is consistently well above the average for similar non-selective schools. When English and mathematics are included, the standards for two of the previous three years were significantly above the average for schools with a similar FSME. The outcomes in most GCSE subjects, at grades A* to C, are in line with or well above, the three-year NI average; at grades A* to E, the standard in almost all GCSE subjects is very good, with nearly all year 12 pupils attaining five or more GCSEs in all of the corresponding three years. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining at the expected levels at GCSE is above average for two out of the past three years.

The school tracks closely the progress of the pupils and can demonstrate important improvements made in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

Those pupils who require additional support for their learning make very good progress and most attain standards at GCSE or equivalent in line with their ability or above expectation.

Progression of the pupils to further education is well above the NI average and highlights the benefits of the strong and effective links which exists between careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG), the curriculum and the high quality of the school's overall provision.

6. Provision

Planning, teaching, learning and assessment in most of the lessons observed was good or better; three-fifths were very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers have very high expectations of, and for, the pupils. The pupils' understanding is developed through problem-based activities, collaborative approaches and effective questioning and, when appropriate, peer-to-peer support. In the small number of lessons which were less effective there was over direction by the teacher and the activities were not sufficiently challenging limiting the progress which the pupils may make in line with their abilities.

Literacy is prominent in school development planning. Consequently, the promotion of the pupils' literacy skills is informed well by the analysis of relevant data to set targets and identify any pupil requiring additional support. Senior leaders have invested effectively in initiatives, resources and staffing to improve further literacy skills across the school. The outcomes in mathematics examinations are very good and the school is building appropriately on this very good work through well-planned opportunities for the pupils to extend their numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

The teachers' have appropriately high expectations for those pupils who have difficulty with aspects of their learning. The detailed individual education plans, guide effectively the support for these pupils, particularly by the well-informed classroom assistants.

The pastoral care within the school is of a very high quality. There is a very strong sense of community and of mutually respectful relationships between pupils and staff. As the pupils progress through the school, their learning benefits from the extensive range of extra-curricular activities which encourages them to develop their talents as well as raising their confidence and self-esteem.

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

Effective home-school links have secured important partnerships with parents in supporting their children's learning. Both pupils and parents express strong appreciation for the time, care and support given by the staff to their holistic development.

The quality of CEIAG is outstanding. The pupils make excellent use of a wide range of up-to-date, well-organised and relevant resources, including ICT-based careers information materials. The school is supported well by local business and industry and collaborates effectively with other learning providers to enable the pupils to make effective career decisions. The senior management team have a clearly defined strategic vision for CEIAG and provide excellent career learning opportunities to meet the needs of pupils and support individual career planning.

There is a clear vision and a very strong commitment to the effective implementation of the Entitlement Framework, which is integral to the school's pupil-centred ethos. As a strategic priority, the school collaborates effectively with other education providers. A high degree of commitment, flexibility and creativity in the design of a suitably broad and balanced curriculum which meets the ability and career aspirations of all of the pupils is an important feature of the provision at all key stages.

7 Leadership and Management

The school development plan (SDP)⁴ and associated action plans inform and guide the highly effective approaches to the school's improvement agenda.

A new senior management team (SMT) has developed over the last two years. In this period of transition, a clear direction for the school, focused appropriately on an understanding of the pupils' needs, interests and abilities of the pupils has emerged.

The principal is leading strategically, and very well, an important phase of the school's continuing improvement journey. Members of the SMT, and the principal, provide diligent strategic leadership, effecting improvement across their areas of responsibility. Their work is characterised by a sharp and rigorous analysis of performance data, a focus on high-quality learning and teaching and on the continuing professional development of all staff. Similarly, the governors are very well informed and play an integral and appropriately challenging part in all stages of the school's improvement processes. The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of both leadership and governance.

⁴ The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

The capacity of the middle managers to evaluate the impact of their work continues to develop, supported well by the SMT through a particular focus on well-conceived staff development opportunities linked to meeting effectively the overall priorities identified in the SDP.

The school reaches out to and plays an important role in community life. Parents and other members of the wider community make very good use of the school's facilities for a variety of educational and recreational activities.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and 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 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, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category⁶.

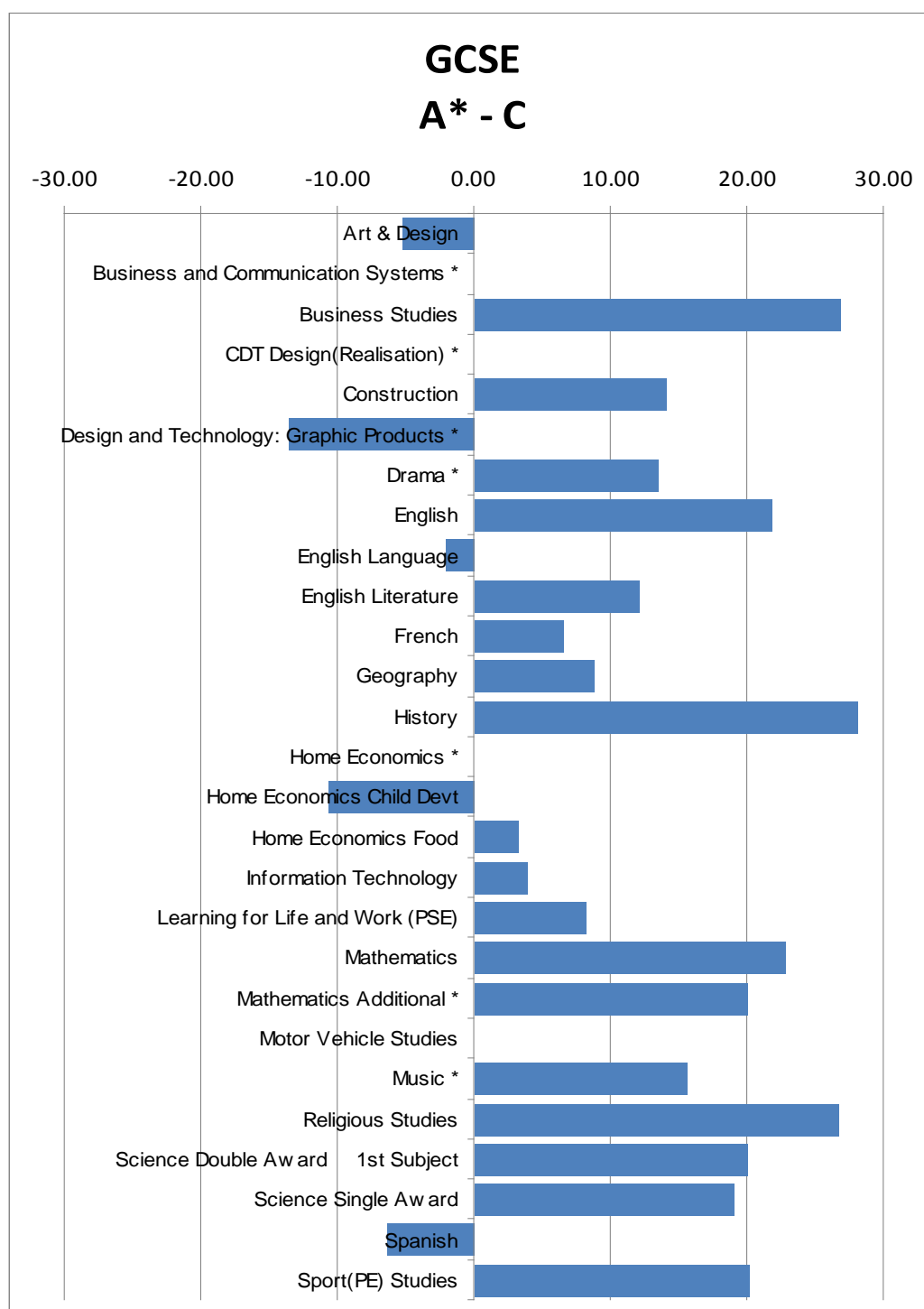
| <i>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</i> | <i>2011</i> | <i>2012</i> | <i>2013</i> |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| *Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects | 97.7 | 100 | 100 |
| *Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects | 73.56 | 89.01 | 76.77 |
| <i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁵</i> | <i>68.8</i> | <i>69.7</i> | <i>69.7 (2012 statistic)</i> |
| *Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics | 54.02 | 50.55 | 40.4 |
| <i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i> | <i>39.5</i> | <i>45.4</i> | <i>45.4 (2012 statistic)</i> |
| *Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects | 94.25 | 96.7 | 97.98 |
| 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) | 33.33 | 28.57 | 9.09 |

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 GCSE level at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

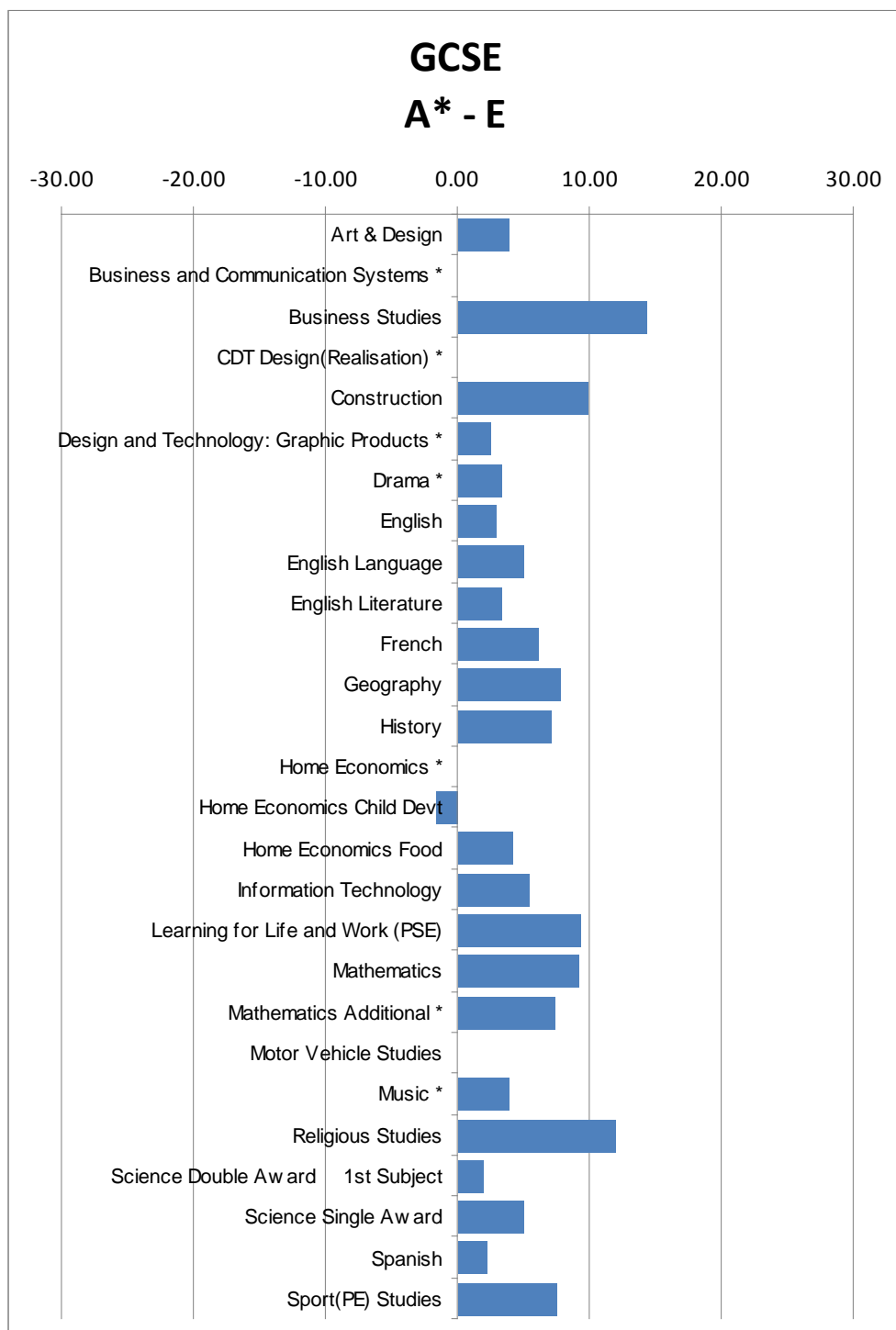
Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to C and A*-E in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average.

The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerable and therefore comparisons should be treated with caution.



GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average A* to E from 2010-11 to 2012-13



OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

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

| Level 2 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | Total entry over 3 years |
|---|------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| | % pass | % pass | % pass | |
| <i>Essential Skills Communication</i> | <i>n/a</i> | <i>20 pupils 40% at Level 2 60% at Level 1</i> | <i>26 pupils (mostly twilight sessions) 61.5% at Level 2 38.5% at Level 1</i> | |

LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS (2012)

| | Year 12 | Percent. | NI % |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------|------|
| TOTAL | 95 | | |
| Another School | 32 | 34 | n/a |
| Full-time Further Education | 62 | 65 | 46 |
| Full-time Training | 1 | 1% | 18.2 |

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