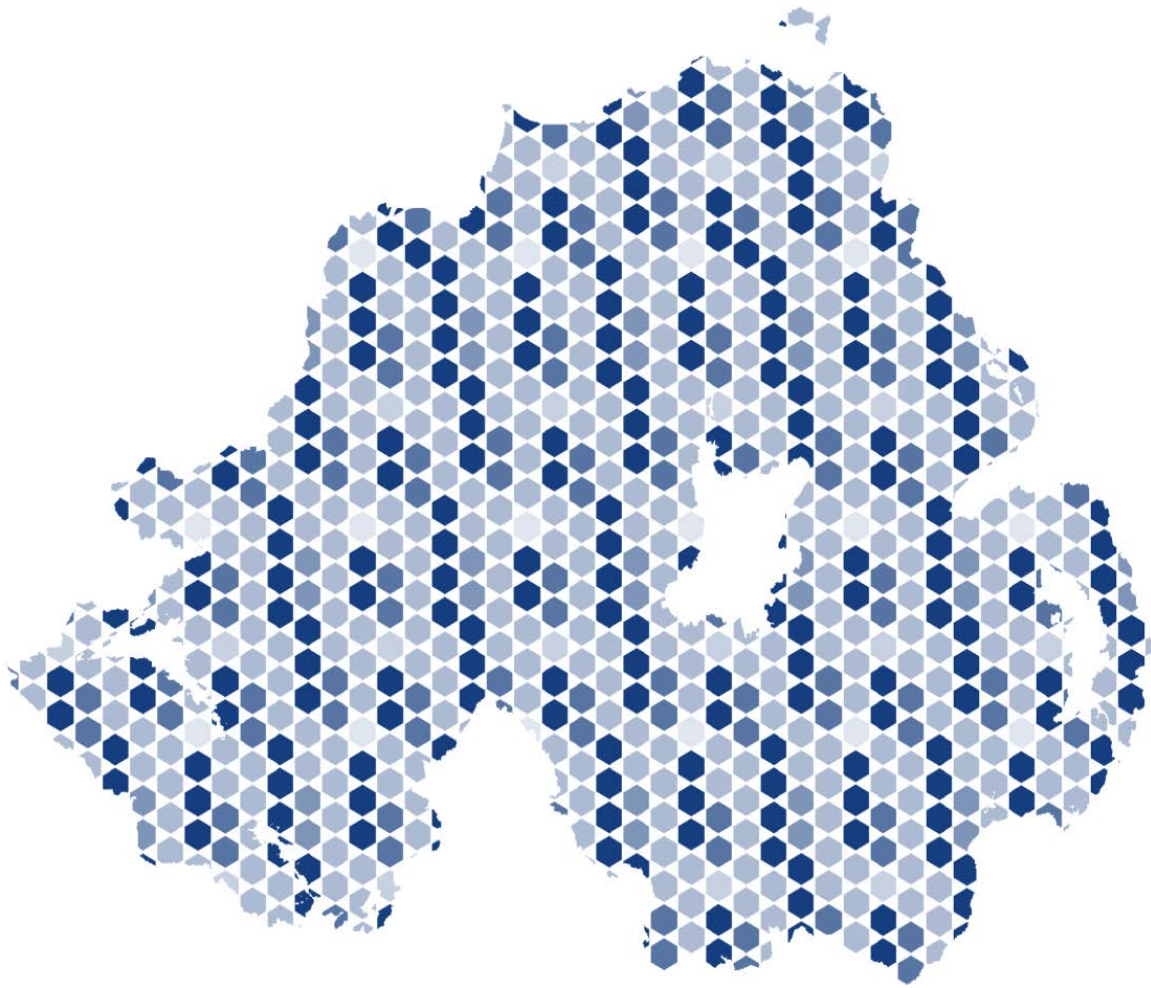


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Portadown College

14-18, controlled, selective school

Report of an Inspection in  
February 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



## 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

# Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	2
4. Overall finding	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Conclusion	5
Appendices	

## 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	715	46	6.5 <sup>1</sup>	30
Teachers	51	28	55	6
Support Staff	12	*	*	0

\* fewer than 5

## 2. Context

The pupils enrol in Portadown College, which is fully subscribed each year, as a result of selective transfer from the contributory junior high schools in Portadown, (Clounagh and Killicomaine) and in Tandragee. Based on levels of attainment at key stage (KS) 3, the ability level on intake is high; the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals and with special educational needs are both low. The progress of pupils to advanced study, post-16, is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools.

<b>Portadown College</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Year 11 Intake	200	208	203	200
Enrolment	788	780	778	797
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.1 (92.6)	94.9 (93)	94.1 (92.9)	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>2</sup>	4.4	4	4.4	5
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	0.7 (6)	0.5 (5)	1.5 (12)	2.1 (17)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	*	*	7	6

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals

<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y11 pupils with L6 and above in English	83.8	91.6	80.3	n/a <sup>3</sup>
% of Y11 pupils with L6 and above in mathematics	92.3	93.1	78.3	n/a
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

\* fewer than 5

### 3. Focus of the 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

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Very Good</b>

### 5. Achievements and standards

- Mutually respectful relationships, and highly effective approaches in the pupil-centred and integrated provision for careers education, special educational needs (SEN) and pastoral care all support the development of the pupils as mature, self-confident, polite, courteous and articulate young people who are keen to learn. Their behaviour both in and out of class is exemplary.
- There is a considerable maturity of development evident in the language and literacy of the pupils across the school which, through high quality reading, writing, discussion and questioning skills, benefits their deeper understanding, their flexible and creative thinking and their ability to grow as independent learners. The standards in literacy are also reflected in the high quality of teaching, assessment, learning and standards attained in English classes.
- The pupils have an excellent disposition towards learning mathematics, can work independently and offer answers willingly and confidently. Effective strategies are used to engage them in purposeful numeracy activities in a range of subjects observed during the inspection, with a high level of expectation and challenge. At a whole-school level, the development of numeracy and literacy within individual subjects is planned to be promoted further as set out in the school development plan (SDP).

<sup>3</sup> For reasons beyond the control of the school, the data for 2013-14 is incomplete

- The pupils, including those with special educational needs, benefit well from engagement in an extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which helps them to develop their talents, skills, dispositions, capabilities and resilience, as well as raising their confidence and self-esteem. Many of the pupils achieve notable success in music, sport, public speaking, public examinations and other events in the local and wider community.
- In GCSE examinations, at grades A\*-B<sup>4</sup>, half of the subjects are in line with or above the NI average for similar schools, including for those pupils entitled to free school meals. In GCE A level, at grades A\*-C most of the subjects are above the NI average for similar schools, with almost one-third of the subjects significantly above the average. There is an upward trend in attainment in GCSE English, mathematics and additional mathematics and the pupils achieve high standards at GCE A level English, mathematics and further mathematics. Those pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress and attain very well at GCSE and A level.

## 6. Provision

- Planning at the level of subject departments and of lessons informs teaching effectively. It is well founded on reflection based on appropriate assessment evidence, including the views of the pupils, takes cognisance of the learning needs of individuals and their different learning styles and reflects the intentions set out in the SDP. Consistency across departments is reflected in a very strong profile of effective teaching; lessons observed during the inspection were good, with most very good or outstanding. The teachers use creative and innovative approaches to engage and enthuse the pupils in learning which is both challenging and enjoyable. The pupils consider and discuss their learning with each other and with their teachers, with a confidence in their own capabilities and a maturity of thought, expression and mutual respect. There is less consistency across the whole school in how the pupils' written work is marked for improvement as a common practice.
- The teachers make good use of a variety of ICT resource to enrich their explanations and presentations, and as a specialist tool. Development of resources for the pupils to use for online study is at early stage.
- The school benefits from a highly collegiate teaching and non-teaching staff, including the temporary and part-time teachers, which are mutually supportive. As a consequence, the school is able to focus effectively on a very few areas where learning and teaching is not having the desired effect.
- There is a systematic approach towards the use of assessment data at subject and whole-school level; it is used to set targets and to monitor progress and identify those pupils who need support. The collation and use of qualitative and quantitative assessment information is reviewed appropriately and is to be developed further by, for example, extending the use of monitoring and assessment tests at post-16, to broaden the information available to track the progress of each pupil and ensure that they reach their best potential.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix for data: note that when averages are compared, they are with the averages for selective 11-18 schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- There are strong links across the school between staff responsible for SEN, pastoral and guidance issues. As a result, the classroom assistants support the pupils well in an age-appropriate manner. The pupils with special need benefit from the effective provision of information, advice and resources and the very good school links with a range of supportive external agencies and services. The teachers make good use of the support and show a strong commitment to helping the pupils develop their full potential.
- The curriculum sets out to provide a broad and balanced range of courses, to meet the needs and interests of all of the pupils<sup>5</sup>. Annually, through the design of the timetable, the courses and course combinations are organised to enable all of the pupils to follow their chosen career pathways, informed by highly effective careers guidance. The school is a member of the Craigavon Area Learning Community and pupils have access to a number of courses through the Southern Regional College and in collaboration with other schools in the area.
- There is good progression in careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) experiences, skills and qualities. By the end of year 14, the pupils have a very good understanding of the world of work and the education and employment opportunities that are available to them, which helps them make appropriate and informed choices. Planning for the careers provision is detailed and the careers team has thoroughly reviewed the overall provision in the school and has collaborated effectively with colleagues in the Southern Education and Library Board to further improve the quality.
- The pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety, care and well-being and they report that they feel well cared for. There is a very good emphasis placed on e-safety.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The SDP<sup>6</sup> and associated action plans reflect a coherent, systematic and highly effective approach to the school's improvement agenda. While relatively new in terms of its membership, and with one post unfilled at the time of the inspection, the senior leadership team (SLT) has a cogent and insightful approach to integrating curriculum, teaching and learning, care, guidance, and support, holistically, to enable the pupils to develop and achieve to the best of their abilities.
- Based on a realistic, open-minded approach to self-evaluation, which includes rigorous focused surveys into the work and outcomes of individual subject departments, action planning is tailored appropriately to address the well-understood needs of the pupils.

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<sup>5</sup> The curriculum meets fully the statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework at KS4 and post-16

<sup>6</sup> The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010

- The roles and responsibilities of heads of department are being developed systematically, based upon the effective evaluative and improvement processes in the SDP. Notably, through mentoring support for newly-appointed heads of department, the establishment of a forum of heads and a planned approach to professional development, the strategic view which heads of department have for their subjects, is being broadened to encompass a whole-school perspective. The current priority for middle leaders is, appropriately, to enable an even more effective understanding and use of data analysis to help sustain and raise standards further in each subject.
- The governors are very well informed and are strategically and actively engaged in the life and work of the school; they work in an effective and challenging way with the principal to ensure that the school is well directed and managed and meets the needs of the pupils and the community. They have been particularly effective in developing the pupil voice within the school.
- The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of both leadership and governance.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.
- The values evident throughout the provision made by the school, the leadership at all levels, the high quality of the teaching and of the learning experiences of the pupils all reflect fully the school's motto, *Fortiter et Humaniter*.

## **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.



## 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 with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>7</sup>.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance:

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	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	94.47	92.75	98.48
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>93.1</i>	<i>94.1</i>	<i>94.2</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	91.46	88.89	95.96
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>91.6</i>	<i>93.0</i>	<i>92.6</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	100	98.55	100
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)	83.33	81.82	100

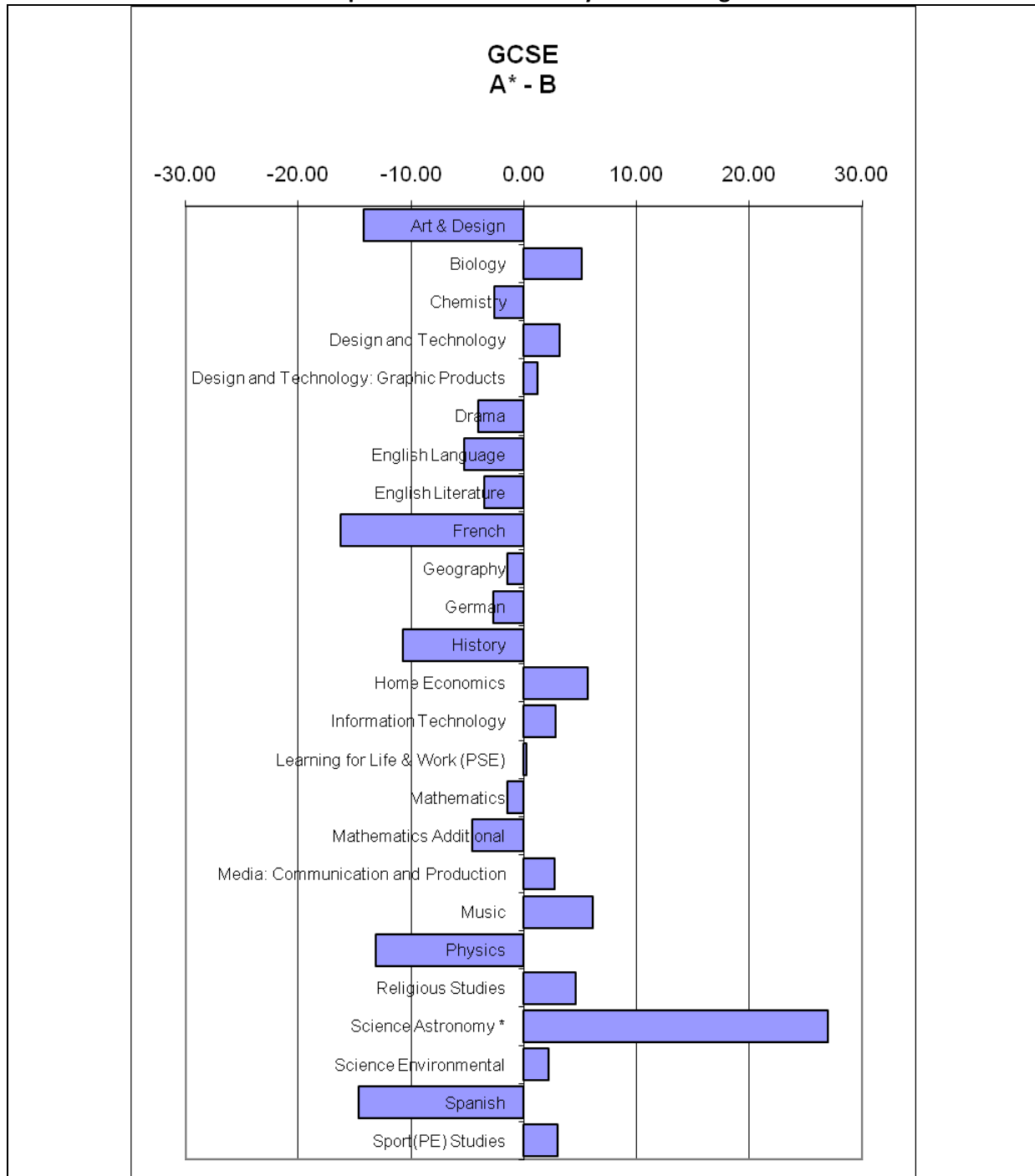
Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

<sup>7</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 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 pupils 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. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.

Comparison with the three-year NI 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 with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>8</sup>.

### *Data on Year 14 (A2) performance:*

<b>GCE A Level or equivalent</b>	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98.3	97.86	99.4
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	81.36	83.96	75.8
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>78.9</i>	<i>77.5</i>	<i>75.5</i>

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

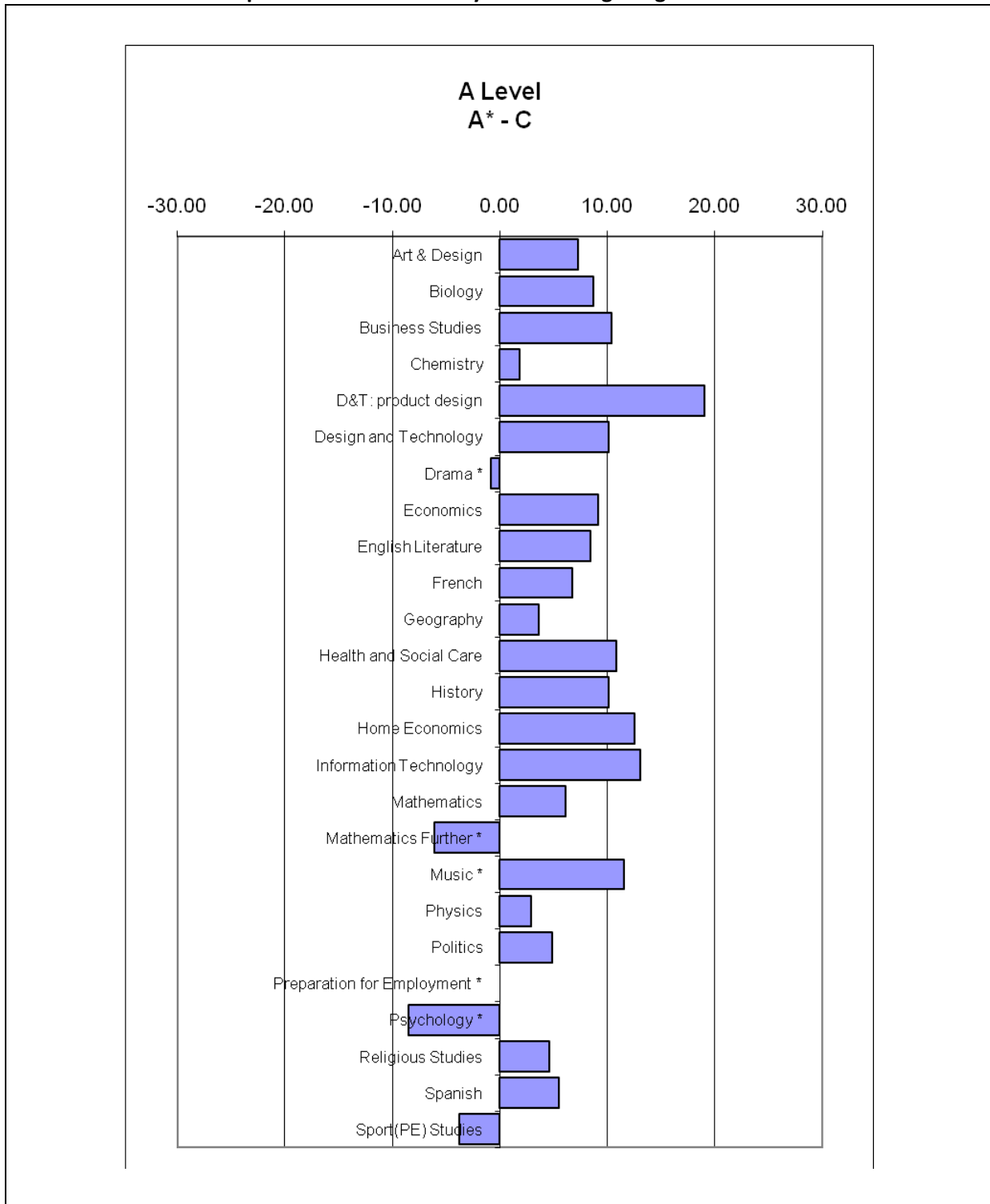
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<sup>8</sup> See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE 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 pupils 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. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.

**Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A\* to C**



\*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

### 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	95.0	97.1
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.9	93.4

### 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 selective schools.

	2011/12 NI %	2011/12 School %	2011/12 School Nos.
Total number of leavers			247
Employment	3.8%	3.6%	9
Further Education	19.0%	30.0%	74
Higher Education	72.7%	66.0%	163
Training	1.5%	0.4%	1
Unemployed	1.6%	0.0%	0
Unknown	1.4%	0.0%	0

**Health and safety**

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