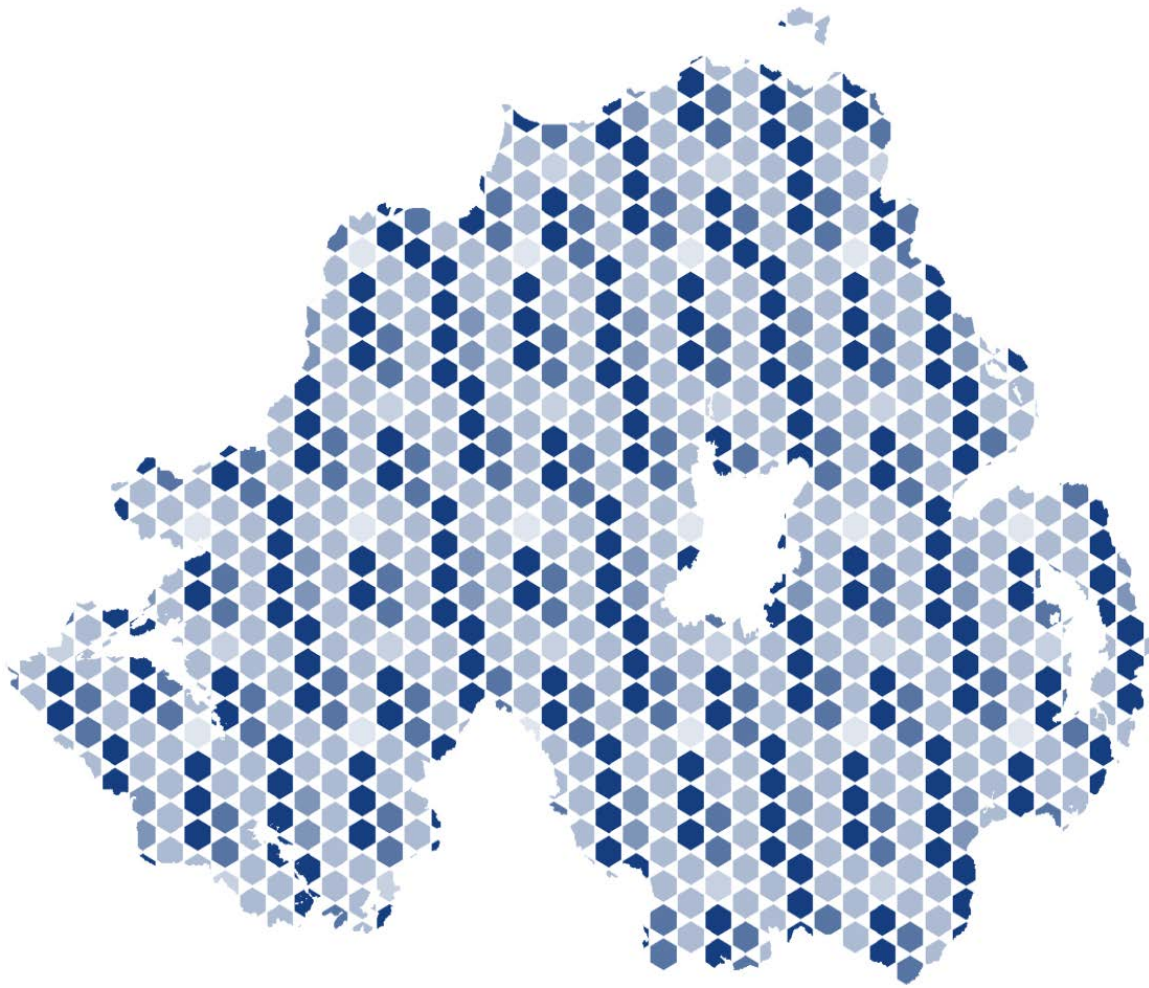


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colman's College, Newry

Voluntary boys' selective 11-18 grammar school

Report of an Inspection in
September 2014

eti

*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.etini.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.

Seventeen percent of parents (140) and 46% of all staff (42) responded to the questionnaires. Almost all of the parents and staff who responded expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The few concerns identified were discussed with the governors and senior leadership team, and where relevant, are addressed in this report.

2. Focus and purpose of the 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
- to inform the school's planning for improvement.

3. Context of the school

St Colman's College is situated close to the centre of Newry. Approximately one-fifth of the pupils are drawn from the city while the remainder come from a broad catchment across counties Down and Armagh.

The school is regularly oversubscribed. The enrolment has decreased over the past four years due to a reduction in the numbers of pupils in the sixth form. However, the percentage of pupils who stay on from year 13 to year 14 is in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average over the same period. Almost all the school leavers enter further education, employment or training.

The available data for two of the last three years shows that almost all year 8 pupils have achieved the expected levels in English and mathematics on entry to the school. There has been a steady increase in the number of those pupils identified with special educational needs who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The school attendance figures are in line with the average for selective schools.

The school is an active partner in the Newry and Mourne Area Learning Community (ALC) for the purpose of broadening its curriculum, and is committed fully to enabling the pupils' career aspirations through collaborative arrangements with other local schools and the further education college.

Through the effective links established within the ALC, the pupils engage purposefully with those from other schools and organisations to encourage shared education.

Over the past four years, there have been significant changes in leadership and management with: the appointment of the current principal; a widening of the membership of the senior leadership team (SLT); and the distribution of certain roles and responsibilities to middle-management level.

The staff avail of well-planned professional development opportunities, especially through their participation in an innovative programme to provide digital devices to all KS3 pupils to promote e-learning, enhance pupil motivation, and encourage independent learning.

The school has undergone a series of major refurbishments including the development of state-of-the-art sporting facilities which are shared extensively with the local and wider community.

St Colman's College	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Year 8 Intake	127	131	129	127
Enrolment	942	920	900	905
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.9% (95.7%)	94.5% (95.3%)	95.3% (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage ¹	7.6	8.9	9.2	12.8
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	2.7% (25)	3.3% (30)	5% (45)	5.8% (52)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	15	13	12	15
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0
Intake ² :				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	59.8	50.4	26.4	6.3
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	81.9	74.1	57.4	16.5
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	98.4	97	98.5	26.8
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	98.4	97.7	100	27.6
Source: data as held by the school.				

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals

² 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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	Very good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

5. Quality of achievement and standards

- The pupils are confident and articulate, engaging respectfully and maturely with the teachers and their peers.
- They have highly-developed personal and social skills, including team-working, leadership, mentoring and performance skills. High levels of participation in an extensive range of academic, cultural, artistic and sporting activities prepare them well to contribute responsibly in the community and to the local and wider economy.
- When provided with well-planned and varied learning opportunities, as they more often are, the pupils work well independently and in groups to research and evaluate information, think critically and creatively, critique each others' efforts and take responsibility for their work.
- In English, the pupils develop thinking and analytical skills through well-focused, whole-class and group discussion, and write with increasing fluency and sophistication as they progress through the school. They attain consistently high standards in GCSE and A level qualifications.
- In mathematics, the pupils understand key concepts, use specific mathematical language and apply mental strategies confidently across the curriculum. In mathematics examinations, the standards attained are more variable, although, in the past two years, there has been a notable improvement in the percentage attaining GCSE grades A*-B in both English and mathematics.
- The pupils attain very well in public examinations; the school has made excellent progress in raising attainment, particularly at GCSE level, reflecting the high expectations of the staff, the highly-motivated pupils and the appropriateness of the curriculum. The percentage of pupils achieving 7 or more grades at A*-B including English and maths has increased steadily and significantly over several years to above the NI average for selective schools in the same FSME category, with almost all pupils achieving at this level.
- At GCSE level, standards in the majority of individual subjects are above the corresponding NI averages for boys in selective schools at grades A*-B, and over one-fifth are well above. Almost all pupils who chose level 2 vocational subjects also achieve well. At A level, the percentage of pupils achieving 3 or more grades at A*-C has increased to above average, with almost one-third of the subjects significantly above average.

- Most pupils requiring support with aspects of their learning attain well at GCSE and A level; and, while the attainment of the small number of pupils entitled to free school meals has fluctuated in two of the last three years, most achieved at the expected level.
- The proportion of pupils progressing to higher education is commensurate with that in selective schools.

6. Quality of Provision

- There is a coherent structure and approach to planning across the school, although the quality of the planning for learning at all levels across the subjects is variable, with limited reference to the teaching strategies to be used and developed in some subjects. In these areas the teachers and subject leaders need to identify and broaden the range of strategies adopted to meet the needs of all of the pupils.
- Most lessons evaluated during the inspection promoted learning effectively; one-half, which were very good or better, were very effective and were characterised by: purposeful pupil engagement through appropriate teaching strategies and relevant stimulus material; good pace and challenge in the learning; creative and intuitive use of digital technology by the pupils; effective questioning by teachers which generated thoughtful and extended responses; and valuable feedback provided by the teachers, orally, in written work and in online discussions, which helped the pupils to improve the quality of their own work. In just under 20% of the lessons evaluated, however, improvement is required through teachers sharing and learning from the more effective practice.
- In the best practice, assessment information is used well to track the performance of all the pupils and inform a range of appropriate and effective interventions.
- The pupils demonstrate well the ability to use their literacy and numeracy skills to support and extend their learning across subject areas. Effective strategies provide well-targeted support for those pupils who are identified as underachieving in literacy and numeracy. The effectiveness of the programmes is robustly monitored and evaluated by the co-ordinators.
- The features of the outstanding pastoral care in the school include: exemplary behaviour and a strong sense of pride in the school; a strong sense of community, underpinned by a caring, supportive and inclusive ethos; a holistic approach to meeting effectively the needs of all pupils; and a positive reward system which encourages the pupils to develop their talents and self-esteem. The strong and coherent links that have been established between the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), the support for those with additional learning needs and the wider pastoral care provision develop well the pupils' confidence, resilience and independence.
- The pupils receiving additional support for their learning benefit from it. Individual education plans are based on a rigorous assessment and tracking of pupil progress. An increasing consistency over time is evident across all subjects in the quality and effectiveness of this important, and effectively-led, aspect of special needs support.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is responsive to the interests, career aspirations and needs of the pupils³. The range of courses offered has an appropriate focus on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics which have been carefully selected to ensure that they enable progression to further and higher education and employment.
- The pupils have an excellent understanding of the career pathways available to them through highly effective careers teaching, an extensive programme of guest speakers, industrial visits and work experience, and high quality individual careers advice and guidance. The school tracks comprehensively the leavers' destinations to inform future careers guidance and curriculum provision.

7. Quality of leadership and management

- School development and improvement planning⁴ is informed well by extensive consultation with all stakeholders. The key priorities identified, including those related to learning and teaching, which the inspection confirms are appropriate, guide explicitly the development work at all levels throughout the school.
- The SLT promotes a strategic and realistic vision for the school, focused clearly on furthering the personal and social development of the pupils. Improvements introduced in recent years, through restructured leadership arrangements and reforming the curriculum provision, have improved significantly the quality of the pupils' experiences and raised standards at GCSE and A level.
- The successful, strategic actions taken by the SLT, underpinned by firm decisions made by the governors, have included: re-structuring the leadership team to distribute leadership and widen accountability; introducing a systematic process to monitor performance at individual, group and cohort level to target appropriate support effectively where needed; and supporting staff in implementing the e-learning initiative to all pupils in KS3. The digital tablet-based e-learning initiative has proved to be a catalyst for the dissemination of good practice and on-going staff development. Significantly, in taking forward these actions, the leadership and management have been strongly supported by the parents and the staff as evidenced by the positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires.
- Middle managers are working well to develop a culture of self-evaluation across all subjects. Senior leaders continue to develop further the leadership skills of the subject leaders to ensure that self-evaluation leads to consistently high-quality learning experiences. The year heads, in particular, play a significant role in helping the pupils to raise standards by monitoring the academic progress of all the pupils in their year groups and identifying and supporting their pastoral and personal needs. The year heads work closely with the form teachers to create personal action plans, where appropriate; there is evidence that this important work is helping pupils to fulfil their potential.

³ The school currently meets the requirements of the entitlement framework at KS4 and post-16.

⁴ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- The governors are very well informed about the school's place within the local and wider community. They have a well-developed strategic overview of the school and provide high levels of both challenge and support to the work of the SLT. Based on evidence at the time of inspection, there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- 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.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good.

The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement. It is able to continue to bring consistency to the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in order to maintain and improve standards.

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 St. Colman's achieving 7 or more GCSEs (A* to C) and equivalent subjects with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁵. It also shows the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs including English and mathematics (A* to C).

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2012	2013	2014
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalent in at least 7 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	91.5	96.3	97.7
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	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	86.1	94.8	96.9
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	91.3	92.8	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	96.9	98.5	97.7
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)	57.1	90	75

Other examination results at key stage 4 from 2011-12 to 2013-14

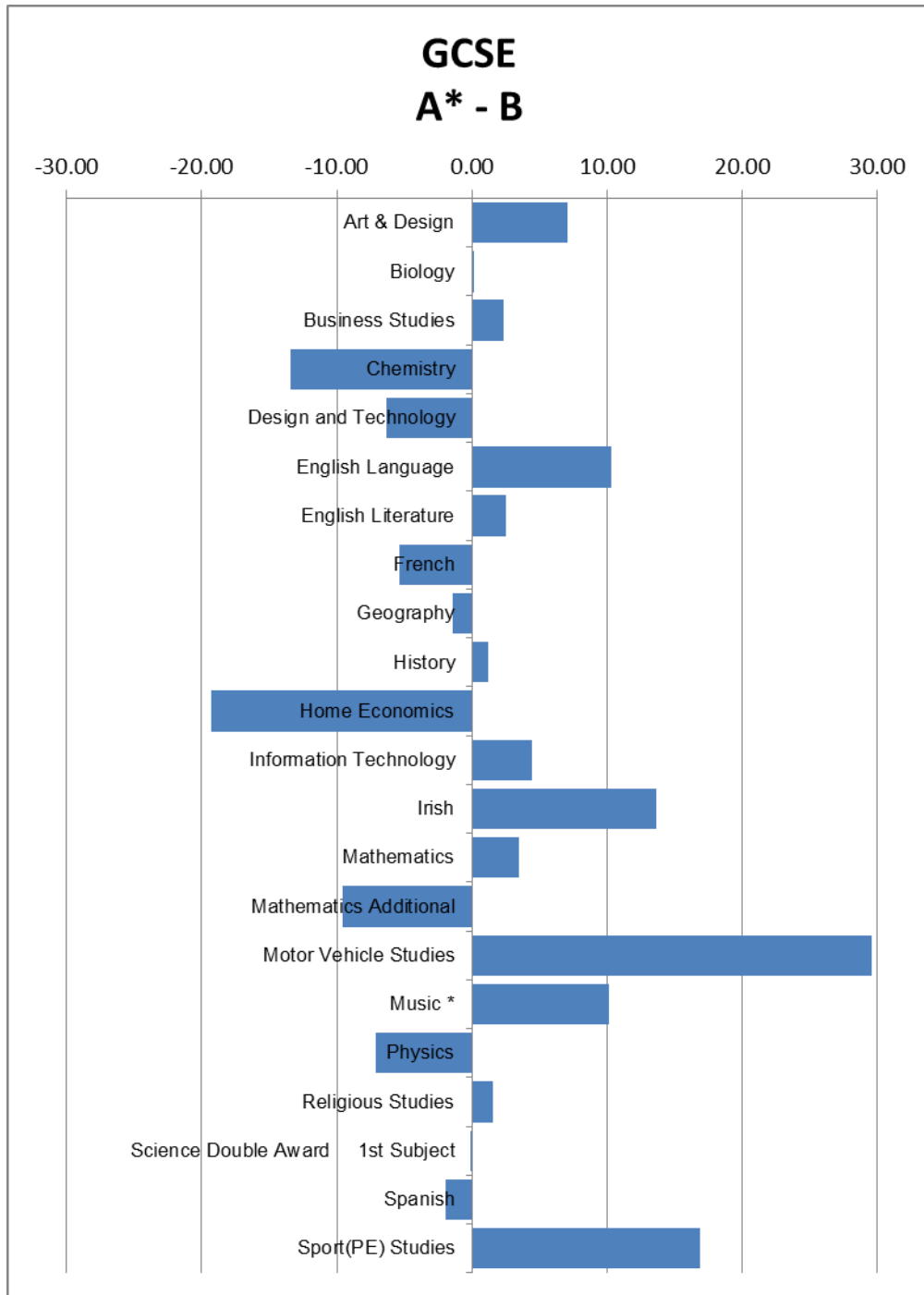
The table below shows the percentage of year 12 pupils in St. Colman's achieving pass grades in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

Level 2	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Double Award BTEC Engineering	100	100	100	107
Double Award BTEC Media	80	90	100	20

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 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 boys 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

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 St Colman's 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 category⁶.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2013	2013	2014
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	97	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	75.2	71.8	80.6
The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category	75.2	72.9	N/A

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	
Moving Image Arts	89	100	100	19

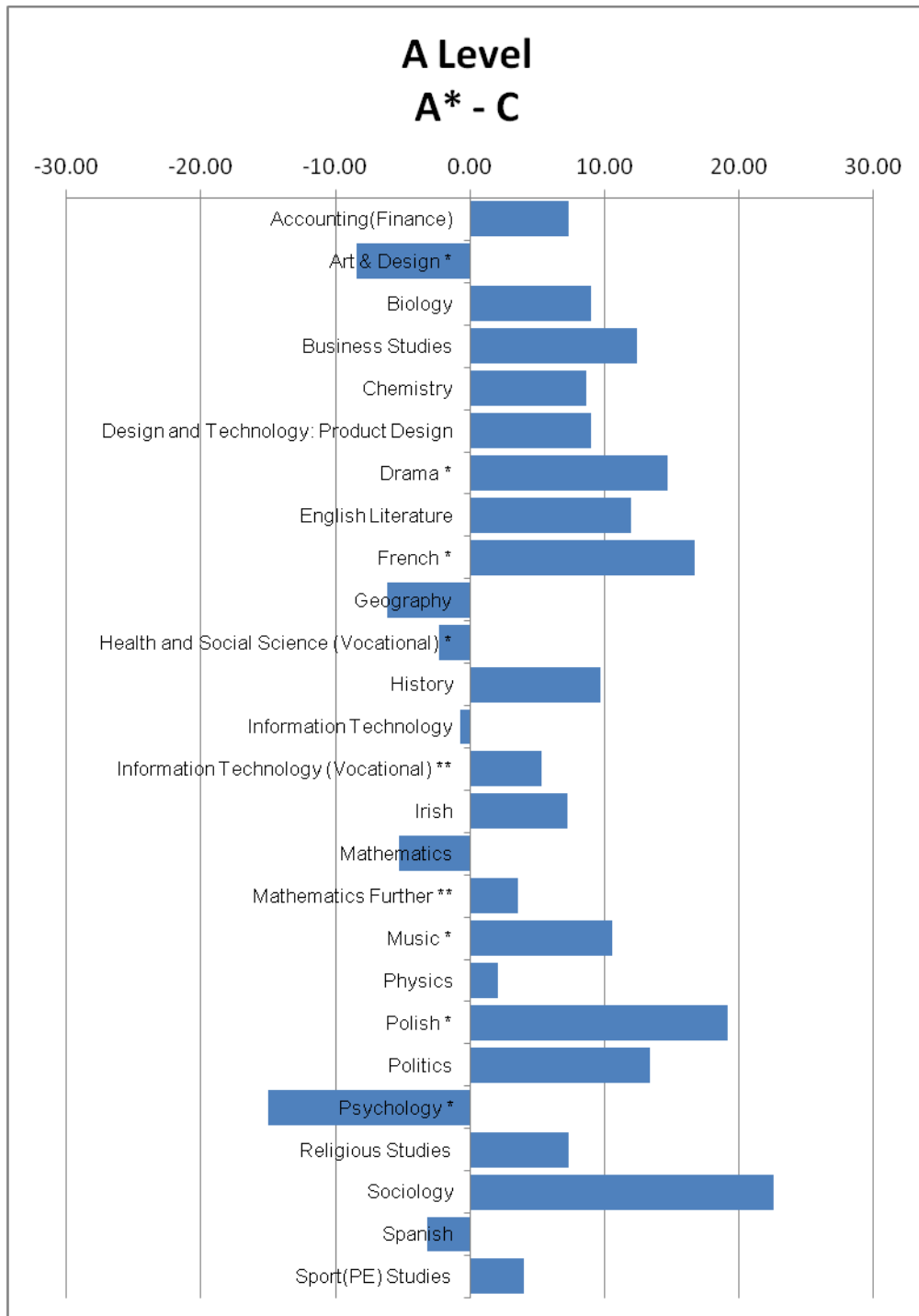
The table below show the percentage of year 14 pupils in St.Colman's achieving pass grades in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

Level 3	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Double Award BTEC Construction	100	100	100	62
Double Award BTEC Engineering	63.7	60	91.7	33

⁶ 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 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 boys 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

** indicates results for only one of the past three years

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 St. Colman's 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	100
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.3	92.1

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 St Colman's who leave school to enter further education, training, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment, compared with the average for selective schools.

	2012/13				
	School	NI	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 3+ (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	153				
Employment	4.6%	3.4%			
Further Education	15.0%	21.2%	3	26	
Higher Education	70.6%	72.0%			108
Training	9.2%	1.2%			
Unemployed	0.7%	1.2%			
Unknown	0.0%	1.1%			

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