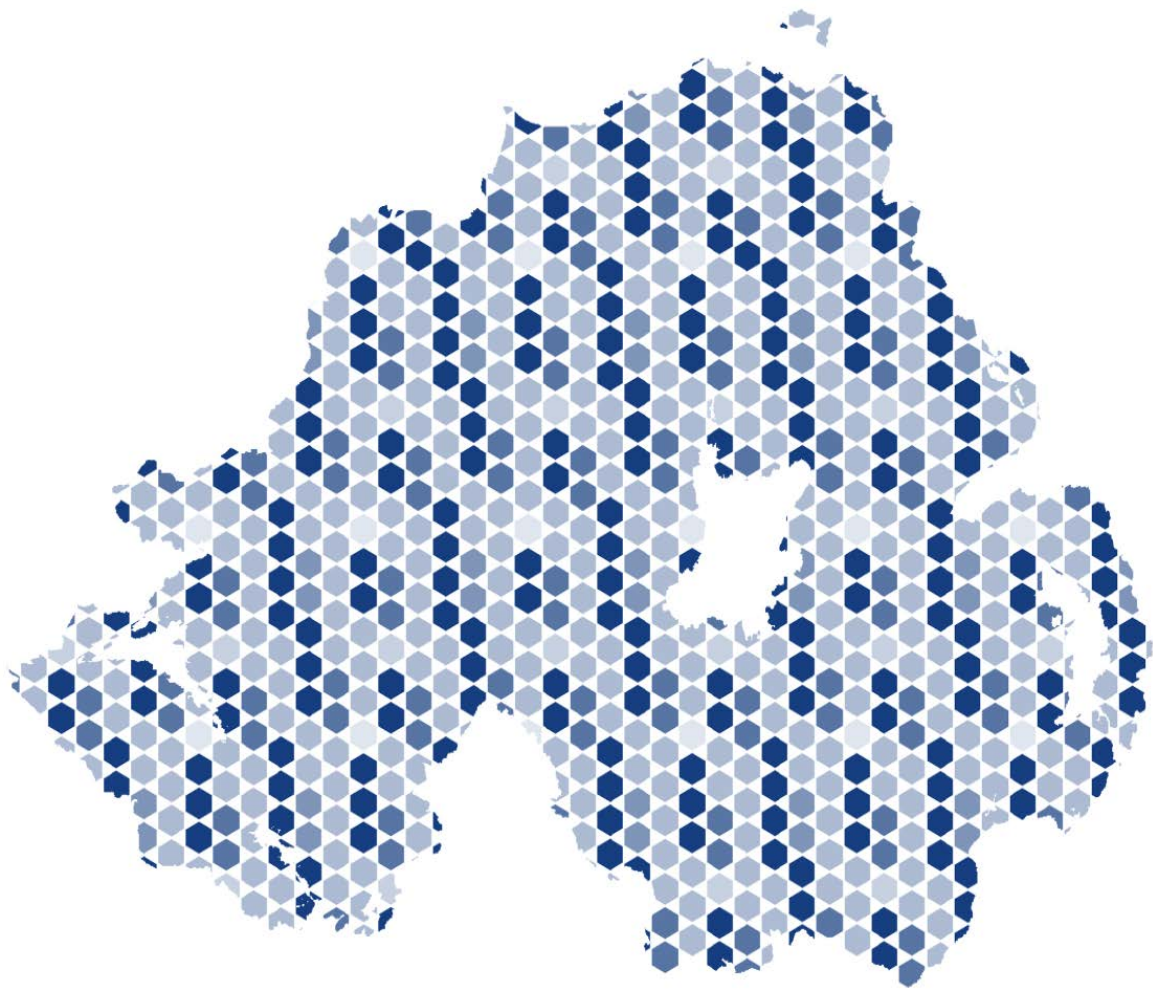


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Columb's College, Derry

Voluntary, selective, boys', 11-18

Report of an Inspection in
October 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
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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 the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire. 7% of parents (95) and 35% of all staff (59) responded to the questionnaires. Most parents who responded were positive in their support for the school and appreciation for the work of the teachers; many staff responses acknowledged the focus on school improvement. A few issues raised by a small number of parents and staff were discussed with both the principal and the board of governors.

This inspection piloted the role of the principal acting as a 'representative' in the inspection. This involved the principal participating in all inspection team moderation meetings.

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 Columb's College enrolls pupils from rural and urban areas, including two large, disadvantaged Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected levels in literacy and numeracy on entry to the school in year 8 is well below the average for a selective school. Recently, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSME) has increased to one in four, which is one of the highest proportions of FSME pupils attending a selective school in Northern Ireland (NI). Fifteen percent of pupils are on the special education register, which is double the average for selective schools. In this context, meeting the specific needs of all pupils and providing a broad, appropriately-matched curriculum is a high priority for the school. As a consequence, the senior management and the governors have a strong commitment to, and are active members of, the Foyle Learning Community to ensure that post-16 pupils have greater access to a wide range of academic and vocational subjects.

The principal, vice-principal (pastoral care) and head of mathematics (who is acting numeracy coordinator) are all recently appointed; there is an acting head of English; and a significant reorganisation is already planned in management structures and posts.

St Columb's College is developing its provision for shared education. Through a range of sporting and curricular programmes, delivered in partnership with other organisations, the pupils engage in learning experiences which enhance their understanding of diversity.

The school, with parental support, is facilitating the provision of digital tablets for all pupils, beginning with year 8. As a consequence, teachers are creating e-books to support teaching and learning for year 8 subject areas.

St Columb's College	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Year 8 Intake	225	223	227	223
Enrolment	1523	1539	1514	1541
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.4 (95.7%)	94 (95.3%)	94.3 (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage ¹	17.01	17.74	17.11	24.85
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	12.15% (185)	14.10% (217)	16.64% (252)	14.15% (218)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	24	26	27	28
No. of newcomers	5	8	*	*
Intake ² :				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	44.00%	43.50%	37.00%	7.62%
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	68.00%	66.37%	57.27%	14.35%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	97.78%	94.62%	96.48%	24.66%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	97.33%	95.96%	97.80%	25.11%
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

5. Achievement and Standards

- The pupils are motivated, reflective and keen to respond orally in lessons in a mature manner; throughout the school there is a clear sense of calm and order.

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. At the start of the 2014-15 school year only the primary schools of 56 year 8 pupils supplied KS 2 data.

- In year 8, there is an effective induction programme, enabling pupils from a large number of contributory primary schools to work together and form friendships.
- At post-16 level, the pupils are able to share their knowledge and understanding with peers and teachers; they respond well to challenge and questioning and challenge and question, in turn, in a controlled and sensitive manner.
- As a result, they have well-developed thinking skills, a curiosity which manifests itself in a very positive disposition towards learning, are able to set meaningful personal learning targets and follow through with effective self-management skills. They learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect with post-16 pupils from other schools who attend classes.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving seven or more GCSEs at grades A*-C has varied between the average and below the average for similar selective schools in the FSME category.
- In two out of the last three years, the proportion of pupils entitled to FSM achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics was in line with, or above, the average. At grades A*-B, the variation in the performance in a number of subjects is too wide.
- Pupils with statements of special education needs achieve very well at GCSE and GCE A level. For example, in 2014, eight of ten pupils with statements of educational needs achieved three or more grades A*-C at GCE A level; and all pupils achieved seven or more grades A*-C at GCSE level.
- Many pupils attain well in public examinations in English and mathematics; however, in mathematics and numeracy, a small number do not make the expected progress by the end of year 12. In literacy and communication, the pupils make significant progress in their learning across KS3 and KS4.
- Approximately two-thirds of the GCE A level subjects are within five percent or above the NI average for similar selective schools in the same FSME category; there is an upward trend in the proportion of pupils achieving three or more A levels at grades A*-C.
- The school's internal assessment data is used effectively to set targets and monitor progress; it demonstrates that, on the whole, the pupils make expected progress across all key stages.
- Importantly, senior management has identified appropriately the subject areas that are underperforming and have begun to implement strategic actions to raise achievement. The inspection findings confirm that this remains an appropriate priority for improvement as identified within the school's development plan (SDP); there remains a need to raise overall levels of attainment in public examinations and bring about greater consistency in performance across subjects.
- Almost all of the pupils progress to further or higher education.

6. Quality of Provision

- Three-quarters of lessons evaluated during the inspection were good to outstanding in promoting learning through effective teaching, however, in KS3, this proportion drops to just over three-fifths where the practice is least varied and rich. In the most effective practice, and as a result of recent staff development, there are examples of effective planning for differentiation, through which the needs of individual pupils are being identified and addressed more explicitly and effectively.
- When exposition and questioning is skilfully used, the learning is brisk, engaging and challenging. Such lessons reflect well the learning intentions, match the interest levels of the pupils and use ICT resources effectively to support both teaching and learning.
- In the least effective planning for learning, the opportunity for the pupils to develop their thinking skills through talking and listening is unduly constrained. In the most effective planning, teachers enable the pupils to make explicit links with their learning in other subjects.
- In order to improve the less effective practice, where the lessons are over-directed the teacher, with excessive teacher talk and are not sufficiently challenging, especially in KS3, there is a clear need to share and disseminate the features of best practice in order to promote continued improvement in planning, teaching and learning.
- The departmental development plans identify appropriate priorities, with associated actions and a clear focus on setting targets. It will be important that this work is monitored and evaluated regularly. There is a need for all departments to focus on KS3 provision to ensure that planning for skills, knowledge and understanding is progressive, coherent, challenging and current.
- Promoting literacy skills across the curriculum is a strategically-led whole school priority and is promoted well through instances of connected learning involving, for example, art, English, history, music and religious education. While there is effective planning for teaching and learning in English the practice is inconsistent elsewhere. In the most effective practice, teaching and learning is challenging, draws upon a good, stimulating range of strategies and uses talking and listening to promote thinking and to consolidate and deepen the learning. In KS3, planning for assessment, particularly for reading, is not sufficiently demanding and does not provide for adequate progression.
- Promoting numeracy within individual subjects is coordinated monitored and evaluated effectively. The pupils use their mathematics well to support their learning in other subjects. They consolidate and extend their mathematical understanding by engaging positively with others in pairs, small groups and whole class discussion and offer answers willingly and confidently in class. Such opportunities are, at times, too limited and there is a need for mathematics teachers to develop further the effective teaching strategies they use to engage the boys more actively in their learning.

- The quality of the pastoral care is very good and there are good working relationships throughout. An exemplary feature is the well-conceived student council, through which the pupils make decisions which benefit the whole school community.
- The younger pupils benefit from academic and personal support through a mentoring programme with year 13 pupils. The reward system helps to promote positive behaviour and is valued by the pupils.
- There is an extensive range of extra-curricular programmes which supports well the pupils' personal, social and academic development. Many visiting speakers are brought into the school to address a range of contemporary issues.
- In discussions, the pupils report that they are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their care and well-being.
- The identification of pupils who require additional support with literacy, the support provided and the associated improvement in standards are all strengths of the provision for special educational needs. This effective practice needs to become widespread across all subjects. A learning support centre provides a nurturing learning environment for the pupils. To improve consistency further across the school, targets in individual educational plans (IEPs) need to be more consistent and measureable; the pupils would benefit from reviewing their own IEP strategies and targets.
- The careers education programme is well planned and co-ordinated and, as a consequence of the appointment of a new team, has been reviewed comprehensively over the past two years.
- The pupils have access to up-to-date information which assists them in making appropriate careers decisions. They demonstrate a good understanding of the options open to them, including opportunities provided through vocational pathways. They have the opportunity to engage in a very good range of events related to career pathways, including those related to STEM³ careers. Work-related learning opportunities are provided for pupils in year 13; similar provision should be provided earlier for targeted pupils who may leave the school at the end of year 12.
- Closer liaison between the pastoral teams, the work experience co-ordinator and the careers team would allow, however, for more coherent provision and for the impact of this to be monitored more effectively.
- Pupils at KS4 have access to a broad and balanced curriculum⁴. Most follow a core programme of 9 subjects and have the option to choose two additional subjects. A very small number follow a more restricted programme but are entered for at least 8 GCSE examinations.
- There is a need for the pupils to consider more carefully the subjects they are choosing to follow at AS and GCE A level. In particular, boys following three subjects at AS level need to select all of their subjects more carefully, as too many do not do well enough in at least one of their subjects.

³ Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

⁴ The curriculum at KS4 and at post-16 meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework

- The number of boys achieving good grades in all of the subjects for which they are entered is too variable, which indicates a need for the senior management of the school to keep the examination entry policy and the curriculum offered to the pupils under review to ensure that the programmes meet the learning needs of the pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- After a period of evaluation and consultation, an agreed three-year school development plan⁵ (SDP) has been established. The inspection findings reflect and confirm all of the priorities identified within, including the need to progress with the intended reorganisation of aspects of senior leadership.
- In the short period of time since the principal took up post a significant amount of strategic work has been undertaken to establish widespread recognition of the need for change leading to improvement in teaching and learning and external examination results.
- As a result of the outstanding leadership provided by the principal and the two vice-principals, high expectations are set and a culture of encouragement, challenge and change is evident in the work undertaken.
- The need for accountability within leadership and management and between all staff has been identified and is taking hold well at middle management level. Some departments have embraced change fully, and improvement is evident; elsewhere, departments which are underperforming have been identified, and the vice-principals are working closely and strategically to effect the improvement which remains necessary.
- The governors know the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision, which is a result of their effective involvement in, and their robust challenge to, the development and implementation of the SDP. They have taken decisive action to help address underachievement and are resolutely prepared to take further steps. Based on the 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 the pupils, which reflect the Department of Education's guidance.

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 identified areas for improvement in the further development of management and leadership arrangements to bring about a more whole-school approach to improving teaching and learning, and strengthen the post-16 curriculum in order to raise achievements and standards.

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

The school has demonstrated the capacity to effect continued improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

Examination performance and other statistical data

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

Based on data held by the school, and verified with ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving 7 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 selective schools in the same free school meals category⁶.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	99	100	98.6
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	87.9	94.2	86.5
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>94.9</i>	<i>94.9</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	81.3	92.2	85.1
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>89.9</i>	<i>91.8</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	95.8	97.6	93
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)	82.1	97.1	75.7

⁶ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' for post-primary schools.

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

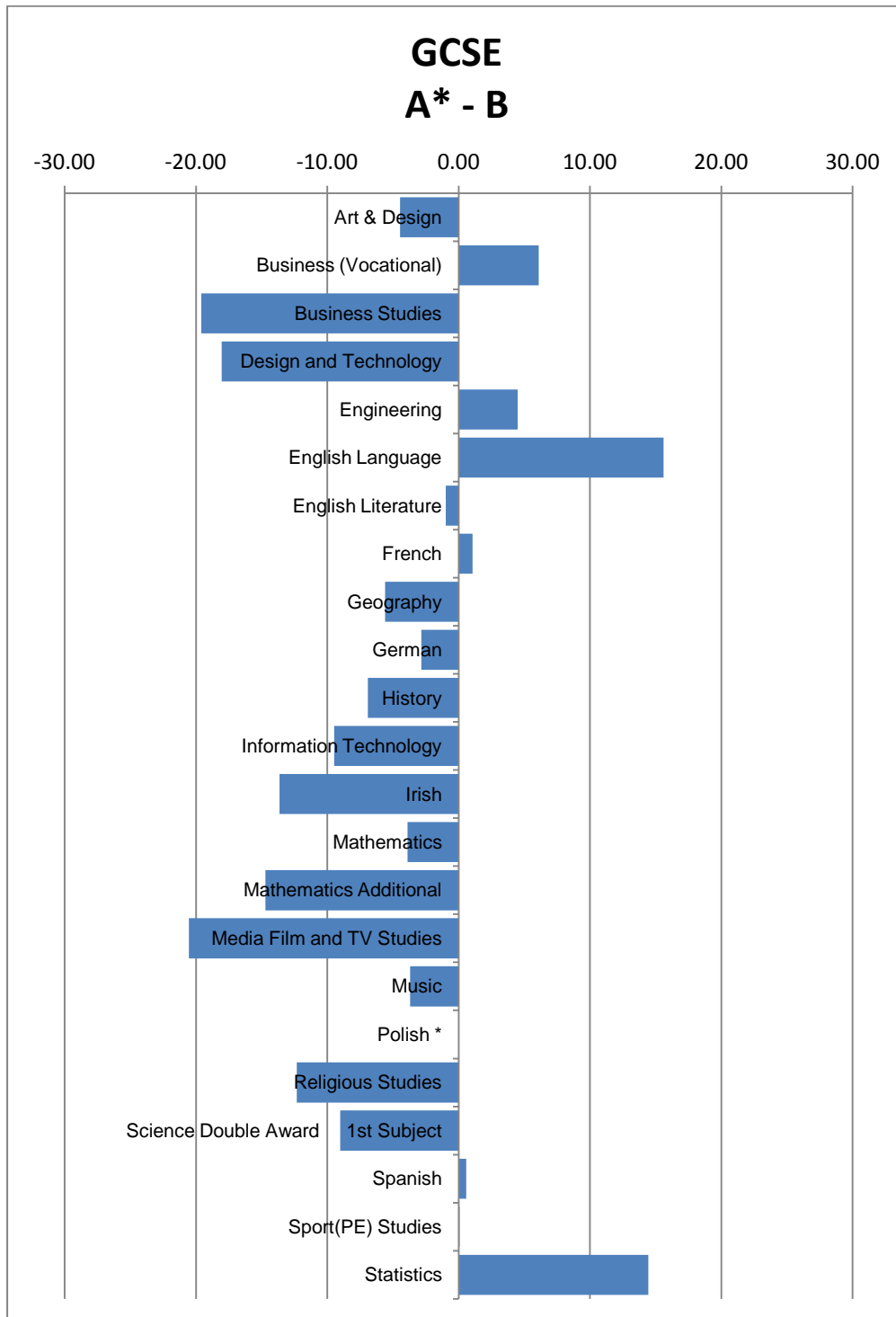
Based on data held by the school and verified with ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving grades A* to B and pass grades in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

GCSE Subject	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-B	% A*-B	% A*-B	
Polish	-	100	100	2

Level 2	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC Electronics	100	100	100	18
Certificate of Personal Effectiveness	100	100	-	14
Occupational Studies	100	-	-	1

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 year

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

Based on data held by the school and verified with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A* to E. 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 category⁷.

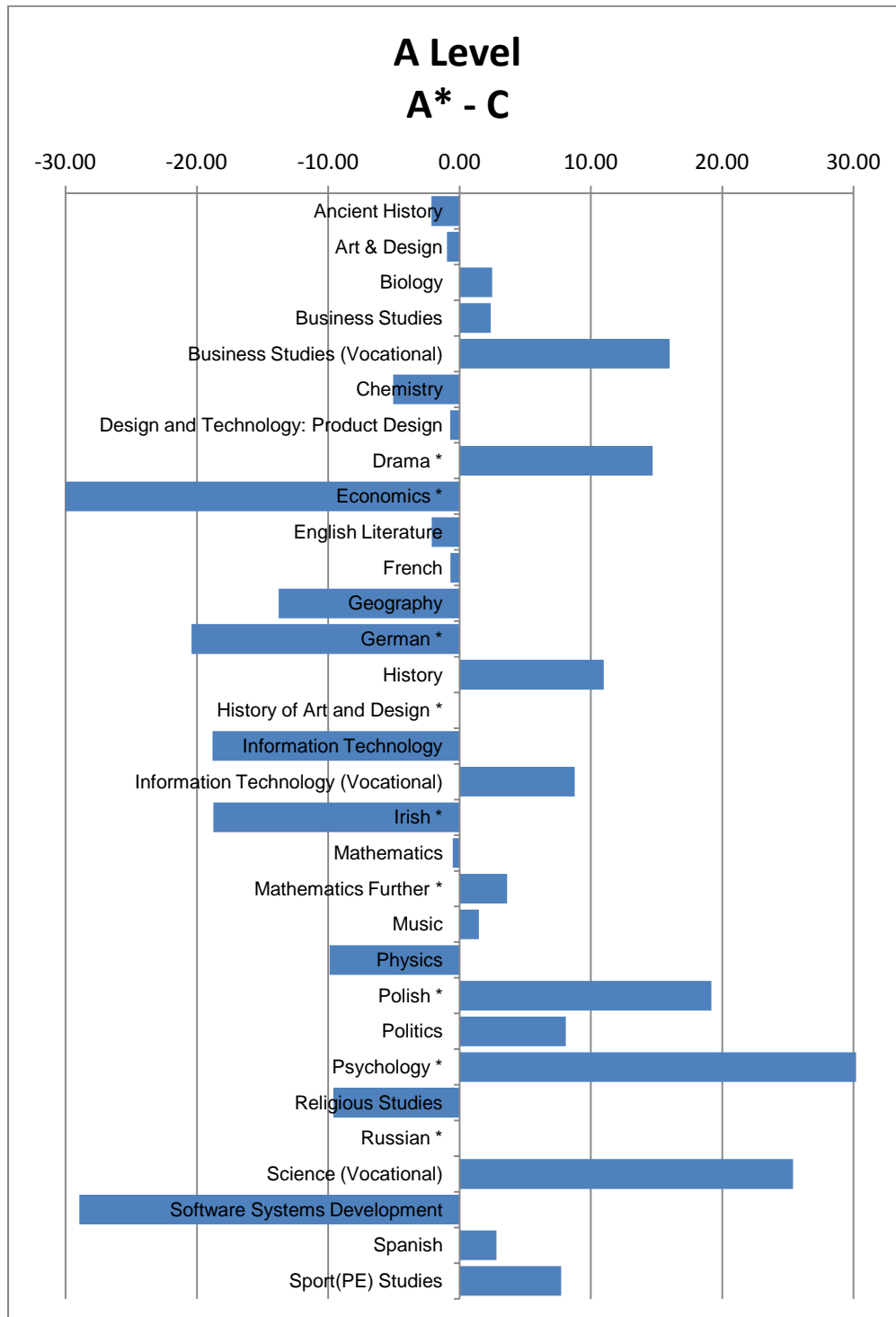
GCE A Level or equivalent	2012	2013	2014
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	98	97.1	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	57.1	60.4	65.5
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	83.8	82.2	N/A

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

⁷ 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

Other examination results: post-16

Based on data held by the school in and verified with ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 14 pupils achieving grades A* to C and pass grades in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

GCE Subject	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
Moving Image Arts	76.9	100	90	33
Drama*	-	100	-	1
Economics	50	-	-	8
Psychology	100	-	-	3

Level 3	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC Level 3 in Engineering	-	88.9	100	17
BTEC in Construction Level 3	50*	100*	71.4	18
BTEC in Hospitality Level 3*	100*	-	-	1

*Taught in another Foyle Learning Community school

Staying on rate

Based on data 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	95.7	78.8
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.3	87.8

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.

Almost all of the pupils progress to further or higher education.

	School	NI	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 3+ (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	256	9503			
Employment	2.7%	3.4%			
Further Education	29.7%	21.2%	8	11	57
Higher Education	63.3%	72.0%			162
Training	3.1%	1.2%			
Unemployed	0.0%	1.2%			
Unknown	1.2%	1.1%			

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