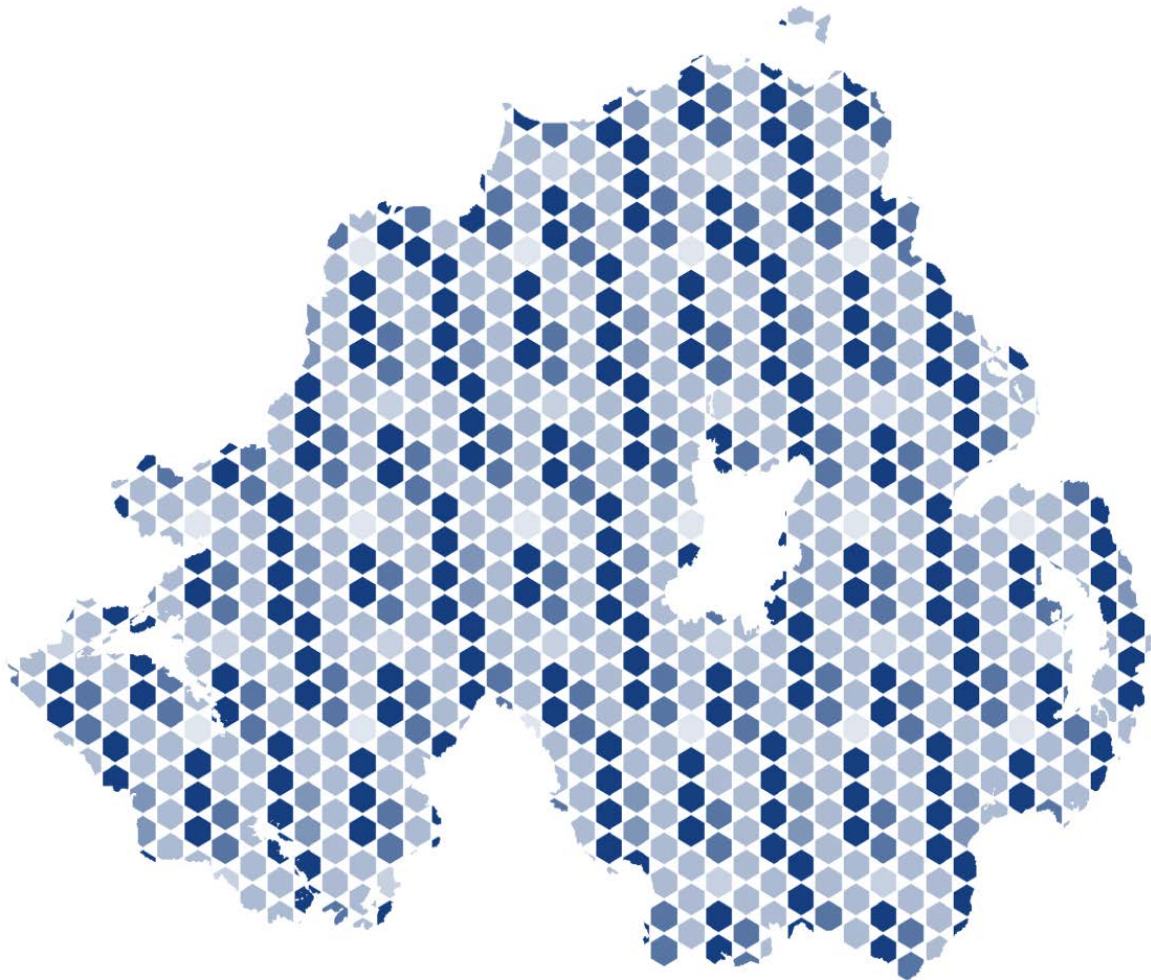


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Boys' High School,
Newry

11-16, boys', maintained, non-selective school,
including a Learning Support Centre

Report of an Inspection
in November 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:

Performance Level
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.

Ten percent of parents (21) and 62% of staff (45) responded to the questionnaires. The parents commented very positively on their child's experiences in the school, with most parents making specific reference to the very supportive and friendly staff, and the effective leadership and management of the school. All of the staff commented positively on the caring, inclusive ethos in the school, the appropriate development opportunities available to them and their involvement in self-evaluation and school development planning. The very few, minor issues raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the governors and senior leaders.

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.

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.

3. Context of the school

St Joseph's Boys' High School draws almost all of its pupils from the local area. One-half of the pupils have free school meals entitlement, and 41% have been identified as having special educational needs. On average, just over one-half of the pupils enter the school having attained the expected level in English and mathematics; this figure is lower than average for non-selective schools. Approximately 12% of the pupils are newcomers, and a small percentage of pupils are from the traveller community. The school's provision includes a Learning Support Centre (LSC) for 29 pupils, aged between 11 and 18. On entry to the school, all pupils participate in a funded programme of music tuition.

St Joseph's Boys' High School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Year 8 Intake	66	77	71	70
Enrolment	416	394	384	382
% Attendance (NI Average)	92.0 (91.4)	91.9 (91.3)	93.0 (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage ¹	42	40	40	50
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	40 (167)	45 (177)	41 (157)	41 (158)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	58	59	63	60
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the Learning Support Centre	19	24	23	29
No. of newcomers	40	41	38	47
<i>Intake²:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	*	*	*	N/A
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	7	5	*	N/A
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	44	51	54	N/A
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	56	51	59	N/A
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				
<i>* = less than five</i>				

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievement and Standards

- The pupils are confident and courteous; they have high levels of self-esteem and are very proud of their school. They show respect for the needs of others and engage in learning with enthusiasm, independence and resilience. They benefit from taking on roles and responsibilities which develop their leadership and social skills.
- The pupils achieve very good standards in ICT and numeracy, and good standards in literacy, within and across the curriculum, and can apply their learning in a range of contexts.

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 and, in 2014, only some of this data has been made available to the school from the contributory primary schools.

- Overall standards in mathematics are very good. The pupils are motivated and enjoy learning mathematics. They are able to work independently and can summarise effectively, and with confidence, their learning. Almost all of the pupils make expected or better progress across key stage (KS) 3. At KS 4, the pupils attain well in GCSE mathematics. During the inspection, when appropriate, there was evidence of the pupils using mathematics accurately and effectively in other subjects to support and extend their learning.
- Most of the pupils are developing effective oral and written communication skills in English. They work well together in pairs and groups and develop good inter-personal skills. Over the last three years, approximately one-half of the pupils have been entered for GCSE English and they have attained in line with or above the NI average for similar schools. Of those pupils who are not entered for GCSE English, a majority have attained a Level 2 skills qualification in literacy. The English department has reviewed appropriately this entry policy in order to now enter most of the pupils for GCSE English.
- In public examinations, just under three-quarters of the pupils attain five or more examinations at GCSE or equivalent level at grades A* to C; this is in line with the average for similar schools in the same free school meal category and is more than ten percentage points above the average for the attainment of all boys in similar schools. Over the last three years, when GCSE English and mathematics are included, attainment is consistently in line with or above average.
- For those pupils entitled to free school meals, attainment at five or more GCSE examinations at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has improved over the last two years, and is now three percentage points above the average and eight percentage points above the average for all boys in all non-selective schools irrespective of the level of free school meals entitlement.
- While recognising this improvement, the school has prioritised appropriately the raising of standards further for this cohort and are currently providing very good additional support for year 10 and KS 4 pupils who have significant literacy needs.
- Attainment in vocational courses offered by the school and in collaboration with the local regional college is excellent. There is variation in pupil attainment in a small number of general courses offered; attainment in mathematics and most of the creative and expressive subjects is, however, particularly strong.
- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning attain very well at GCSE level or at a level commensurate with their ability.

6. Quality of Provision

- In approximately two-thirds of the lessons observed, the quality of planning, teaching and assessment ranged from good to outstanding; in these lessons, learning was promoted effectively.

- In the most effective lessons: the teachers' medium and short-term planning identifies a suitable range of learning activities which incorporates well the pupils' interests and appetite for enquiry; the teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are appropriately high; there is a good structure and pace to the lesson; the learning is managed well with appropriate cognisance of the wide range of learning, cultural and social needs of the pupils. The teachers use open-ended questioning effectively to develop the pupils' responses and understanding. In these lessons, the pupils engaged positively, made active contributions and enjoyed their learning.
- In the less effective practice: there is a lack of clarity about the intended learning and the pace is too slow; the lesson is over-directed and the work is set at too low a level to challenge the pupils sufficiently. There is an over-emphasis on transcription and limited opportunities for the pupils to respond to and engage in their own learning.
- The school has begun to monitor and evaluate more robustly the quality of learning and teaching and to share best practice to improve the consistency of the high quality learning experiences for the pupils and to raise standards further across the curriculum.
- The provision for mathematics is a key strength in the work of the school. The teachers hold high expectations of what the pupils can achieve in mathematics; the standard and level of work is appropriately high. Mathematics lessons have a suitable structure with good quality reviews of previous learning and effective in-class assessment of knowledge and understanding; in a minority of lessons observed, this informed well the future planning for learning. Homework is marked regularly and supportively, and provides the pupils with meaningful feedback which helps them to improve.
- To support the development of the literacy skills of the pupils, the school has developed a range of effective and innovative resources and initiatives, particularly for use in KS 3. In the best practice, these literacy skills were being consolidated and developed well in other areas of the curriculum.
- The strengths of the high quality pastoral provision include: the strong sense of community that exists in the school, underpinned by a distinctive, inclusive and caring ethos; the very positive, mutually respectful relationships between the staff and pupils; the dedicated staffing arrangements for student support and for newcomer pupils; the commitment of all of the staff to the care and well being of the pupils; the highly effective links with the parents; and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities which enhance the educational and social experiences of the pupils.
- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning interact confidently with their peers. The teachers support well pupils who present with specific needs and help them overcome barriers to learning. Appropriate intervention strategies are employed, both during and after school, to help the pupils make progress. In the most effective practice, the classroom assistants work well with the pupils and provide good care and support within and beyond the classroom. Suitably, the school has identified the need to set more specific targets to measure more regularly the progress being made by the pupils.

- At KS 3, the learning support centre (LSC) provides a nurturing learning environment. There are clear pathways of progression for the pupils in the LSC and, at KS 4, the more able pupils can access a majority of the academic programme studied by the pupils in the mainstream classes. There are strong links with key external support agencies to enhance pupils' learning and progression. The pupils from the LSC engage very effectively with their peers in the extra-curricular life of the school.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum at KS 3. The aspirations and self-confidence of the pupils are raised by a very good range of enhancement opportunities. However, while the curriculum offer at KS 4 is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and is shaped by the pupils' interests and career aspirations, the curriculum uptake for a minority of pupils lacks suitable breadth and balance; this has an adverse effect on maintaining an appropriate range of relevant progression pathways for the pupils. The school participates in the Newry and Mourne Learning Community, collaborating well with the local regional college for vocational and occupational studies courses.
- The taught programmes for careers education, information, advice and guidance and learning for life and work provide coherent and progressive opportunities for the pupils to learn about the world of work. In addition, the pupils have good opportunities to engage in work-related learning through well-planned work experience at KS 4. The school has established effective links with the local regional college and industry. All pupils have access to individual, impartial careers advice, particularly at key transition stages.

7. Leadership and management

- Through effective consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors, the school development plan³ has been contributed to at all levels and is supported by a suitable action planning process. The key priorities identified in the school development plan are appropriate and there are regular opportunities for staff to evaluate the school's progress in effecting improvement.
- Currently, the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the learning experiences of the pupils are underdeveloped; it is important for senior leaders, including governors, to require and enable all teachers and middle managers to monitor and evaluate more robustly the quality of the learning experiences of the pupils in their respective areas of responsibility. To ensure this work is supported and challenged sufficiently, senior leadership, with the involvement of the governors, will need to review their own roles and responsibilities.
- The school has undergone transformation over the period of the leadership of the principal, with very significant improvement in attainment in public examinations and standards. The senior leadership inspire confidence and respect among the staff and pupils, and value the contribution of all members of the school community. There is a clearly articulated and mutually agreed ethos and vision which sets out very explicitly high expectations of staff, pupils and parents.

³ With a minor addition, the school development plan will meet the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- At middle management level, in the best practice, innovative and highly effective strategies have been used to improve provision and to meet the pastoral and learning needs of the pupils. Staff development opportunities are well-planned and support well the key strategic priorities of the school.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors play an active role in the life and work of the school through their participation in many community events. They have a good knowledge of the standards the pupils attain and have high aspirations for the pupils. They have a wide set of skills which enables them to carry out their roles effectively. In partnership with senior and middle leaders, the governors need to develop more robust mechanisms to promote more effectively high quality learning and teaching across the school.
- 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 pupils report that they feel safe in school and that their concerns are dealt with promptly. They are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or 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 identified areas for improvement to address the undue variation in the quality of the learning and teaching and the underachievement in a minority of subjects which include the need for:

- teachers to disseminate more effectively the very good and outstanding practice in planning, teaching and assessment which exists in the school; and,
- senior leaders, including governors, to require and enable all teachers and middle managers to monitor and evaluate more robustly the quality of the learning experiences of the pupils.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing 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 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 category⁴.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2012	2013	2014
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	97	100	98
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	64	71	71
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁵</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	33	33	35
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>N/A</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	87	90	87
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)	16	20	27

⁴ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

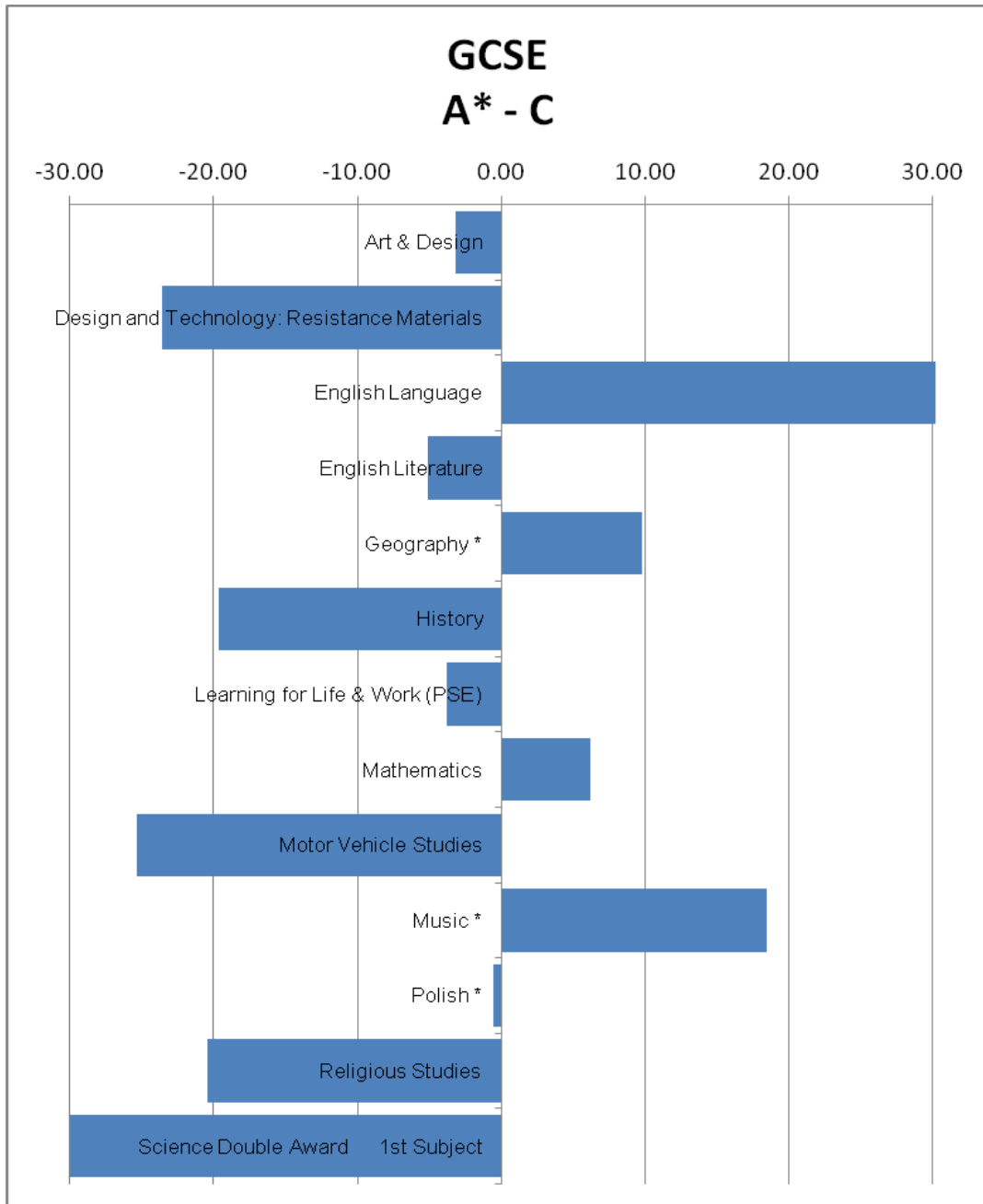
Other examination results at key stage 4 from 2011-12 to 2013-14

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 C in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

Level 2	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
BTEC Engineering	---	100	100	33
BTEC Media Studies	---	95	100	38
BTEC Science	79	81	95	82
BTEC IT	97	100	100	73
BTEC Sport	100	100	91	62
Edexcel Award in Digital Applications	87	85	78	111
BCS Certificate in IT User Skills (European Computer Driving Licence Extra)	88	90	90	132
Occupational Studies	74	75	77	95

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at 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 GCSE subject, in all exam boards, compared with the three-year average for boys in non-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

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 that leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	School % (No.)	NI	Level 2 % (No.)	Level 3 % (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	81	13498		
Employment	0	8.6%		
Further Education	70.4% (57)	43.7%	21% (24)	58% (33)
Higher Education	0	22.0%		
Training	29.6% (24)	18.4%	21% (24)	0% (0)
Unemployed	0	3.9%		
Unknown	0	3.4%		

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