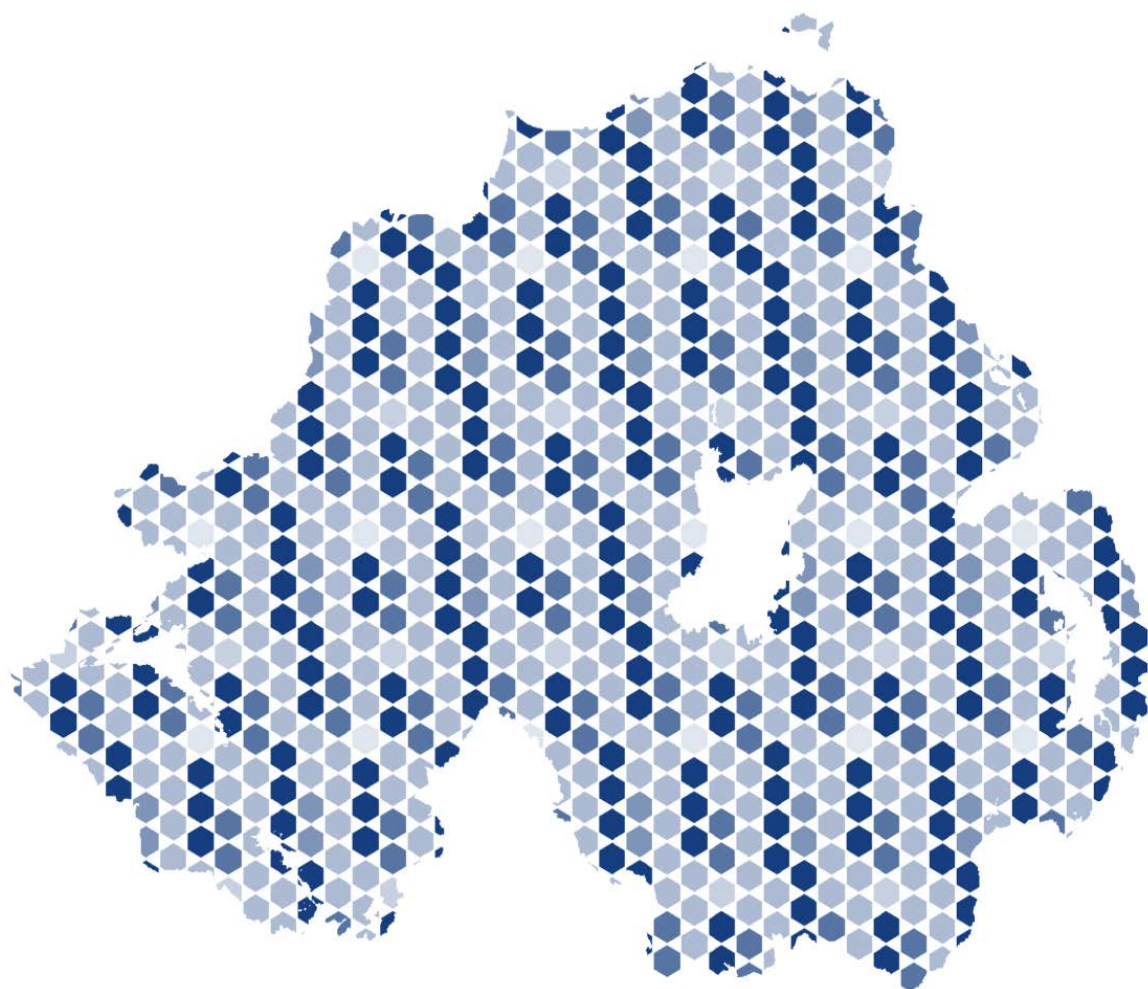


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph's High School,
Crossmaglen

11-19, co-educational, maintained, non-selective

Report of an Inspection in
October 2014

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, 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.

A small number of parents (11) and 65% of staff responded to the questionnaires. Almost all of the teaching and non-teaching staff commented positively on the support provided by the leadership team and on the pupil-centred ethos in the school. The small number of parents who responded to the questionnaires were highly affirmative of the effective pastoral care and the support provided by the teachers for pupils. No significant issues were raised.

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 Joseph's High School, which has recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, draws its pupils from the town of Crossmaglen and the surrounding rural area. The school serves an area with significant social needs, with almost one-half of the pupils entitled to free school meals (FSME). Eighteen percent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register and 13 pupils are enrolled in a learning support centre.

Just over two-thirds of the pupils enter year 8 having attained the expected levels in literacy and numeracy. This proportion has risen over the last three years. Attendance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

Over the last four years the intake to year 8 has fluctuated in line with local demographic trends. The number enrolled to post-16 provision has increased significantly over the last four years, from 96 in 2011-12 to 129 in the current sixth form. The percentage of pupils staying on from year 12 to year 13 is above the NI average; retention from year 13 to year 14 is well above the average.

The principal, a vice-principal and two of the senior teachers are recently appointed. Accordingly, the senior leadership team (SLT) has been re-structured, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. There is currently no head of mathematics; in the interim, members of the SLT are overseeing the work of that department.

St Joseph's High School has established, and is developing further, its provision for shared education through links with a local controlled post-primary school and other educational organisations within the area learning community. The pupils' understanding of diversity is further enhanced through well-planned lessons in community relations, equality and diversity, and by visits from relevant outside agencies.

In June 2014, the Department of Education announced that St Joseph's High School will be included in a new capital programme.

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.

St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Year 8 Intake	98	81	109	84
Enrolment	630	613	618	610
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.1 (91.4)	94.0 (91.3)	94.4 (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage ¹	39.2	41.1	39.2	46.9
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	21.2 (134)	19 (118)	21.8 (127)	18 (110)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	42	38	35	40
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the Learning Support Centre	17	13	12	13
No. of newcomers	5	6	5	*
<i>Intake²:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	5.10	7.41	0.92	N/A ³
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	12.24	9.88	4.59	N/A
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	57.14	66.67	68.81	N/A
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	58.16	69.14	68.81	N/A
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

* fewer than 5 pupils

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

³ Due to industrial action, data from end-of-key-stage 2 assessments in 2014 was not made available to St Joseph's by the contributory primary schools

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievement and Standards

- The pupils are confident, highly motivated learners who co-operate effectively in groups, listening respectfully to each other. They respond readily to their teachers and engage maturely with adults. They work well independently; they apply critical and creative thinking to solve problems. Their behaviour is exemplary.
- The pupils' oral and written communication is well developed. The successful outworking of a recent focus on shared and guided reading was evident in lessons observed in the course of the inspection. The effective focus on literacy across all subjects is reflected in the recent upward trend in the standards in GCSE English. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C over the last three years is more than 10 percentage points above the NI average.
- While the pupils attain good standards in GCSE mathematics, numeracy across the curriculum is underdeveloped. Appropriately, the school has identified the need to develop the pupils' numeracy skills and raise further the standards they attain in mathematics.
- Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs or equivalents at grades A* to C has been more than ten percentage points above the average for similar schools in the same free school meals category. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is consistently above the average.
- In two out of the last three years, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been above the NI average.
- At GCSE, the performance of almost all of the subjects is above the NI average, with the majority being more than ten percentage points above. One-quarter of the subjects achieve outcomes more than 20 percentage points above the average
- At GCSE and GCE A level, the pupils achieve consistently well in vocational and applied subjects.

- Over the last three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three grades A* to C at A level has been in line with or above the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils progressing to higher education is significantly higher than the NI average.
- Almost all of the pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning achieve standards in line with, or above, expectation and progress to appropriate courses at post-16.

6. Quality of Provision

- Four-fifths of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective (very good or better) in promoting learning through skilful planning, teaching and assessment. Approximately one-half of them were very effective. In these lessons, the teachers display enthusiasm for, and a sound knowledge of, their subject and enjoy excellent working relationships with the pupils. The very good planning for differentiation, through which the needs of individual pupils are being addressed effectively, enables all of the pupils to engage well in their learning.
- In the less effective practice, the work is insufficiently matched to the varying needs and abilities of the pupils. Consequently, they may not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The pastoral care of the pupils is outstanding. The inclusive, caring and supportive ethos throughout the school community is underpinned by mutual respect and excellent working relationships. The pupils report that they feel safe in school and that their concerns are dealt with promptly and supportively. They are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.
- The pupils and staff express a strong sense of pride in, and identification with, the school. The effective whole-school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour raises the pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The extensive extra-curricular provision enriches the learning experiences for the pupils.
- The banding of the pupils on entry to the school in year 8 was reviewed in consultation with the staff, and a pilot of mixed-ability year 8 classes was carried out during 2013-14. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered internally by the school demonstrates that the initiative has improved the quality of the teaching, the learning experiences and the standards attained by the pupils of all abilities.
- The collation, analysis and the use made of a wide range of assessment data at KS 4 are outstanding. The teachers are regularly informed of the performance of the pupils in their own subject, and in all others. The progress of the pupils is rigorously monitored, underachievement is identified at a very early stage, individual improvement targets are set and the pupils are supported effectively to learn.
- The extension of these processes into KS 3 has been identified appropriately, in school development planning, to raise further and sustain the standards attained by the pupils across the whole school.

- A well-planned, progressive employability curriculum has been established to good effect across KS 3. Progress is being made in ensuring the pupils at KS 4 and post-16 have access to regular CEIAG, although some gaps in the provision remain, such as adequate work-based learning opportunities and experiences which can inform the pupils' decisions about curriculum pathways and careers. The need to improve further the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is, appropriately, a high priority in the school development plan.
- Curriculum planning is coherent, pupil-centred and effectively led. For example, an increase of STEM-related⁴ subjects provides a better balanced and more relevant curriculum choice at KS 4 and post-16⁵. Furthermore, as an active member of the area learning community the school works innovatively to minimise the curriculum planning limitations arising from its remote, rural location. The pupils benefit from the good collaborative links with local schools and the further education college which enable them to access appropriate applied and vocational courses.
- A small number of post-16 pupils follow an alternative level 3 vocational pathway, which also enables them to improve their GCSE grades in English and mathematics. While there is a sound rationale for this provision, the range of subjects and qualifications is restrictive. The school needs to revisit the curriculum offer for these pupils.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is highly effective. Well-constructed individual education plans provide appropriate, practical strategies that guide effectively the learning and teaching. The subject teachers, working closely with the classroom assistants and special educational needs staff, monitor effectively and support the pupils' progress against the targets through a comprehensive tracking system.
- Skilful and dedicated staff in the learning support centre are sensitive to the learning, behavioural and emotional needs of the pupils. They maintain a safe and challenging learning environment which enables the pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan (SDP)⁶ identifies broadly appropriate priorities for school improvement which, along with associated action plans, will require some adjustment in the light of inspection findings, including a more explicit focus on the development of numeracy.
- While the majority of the action plans are purposeful, a minority lack systematic processes for monitoring and evaluating the progress made against realistic, measurable targets.

⁴ STEM: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

⁵ The curriculum at KS4 meets fully the requirement for the Entitlement Framework. At post-16, the school is making good progress towards meeting the requirements.

⁶ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- The members of the SLT have complementary strengths and are effectively led. They embrace innovation and provide a clear strategic direction for curricular and pastoral development, and the raising of standards. They ensure the very sound pastoral framework underpins the pupils' strong academic achievement.
- The middle leaders have recently, and appropriately, begun to work more collegially, with a view to sharing expertise and developing a more consistent approach to self-evaluation and action-planning across the school.
- The governors are well informed about the school's strengths and priorities for development. They have dealt sensitively with some challenging issues. Based on the evidence at the time of the inspection, there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. In order to support the improvement more effectively, the governors need to monitor and evaluate progress in realising the objectives in the SDP.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has very good 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; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Examination performance and other statistical data

GCSE and equivalent 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 category⁷.

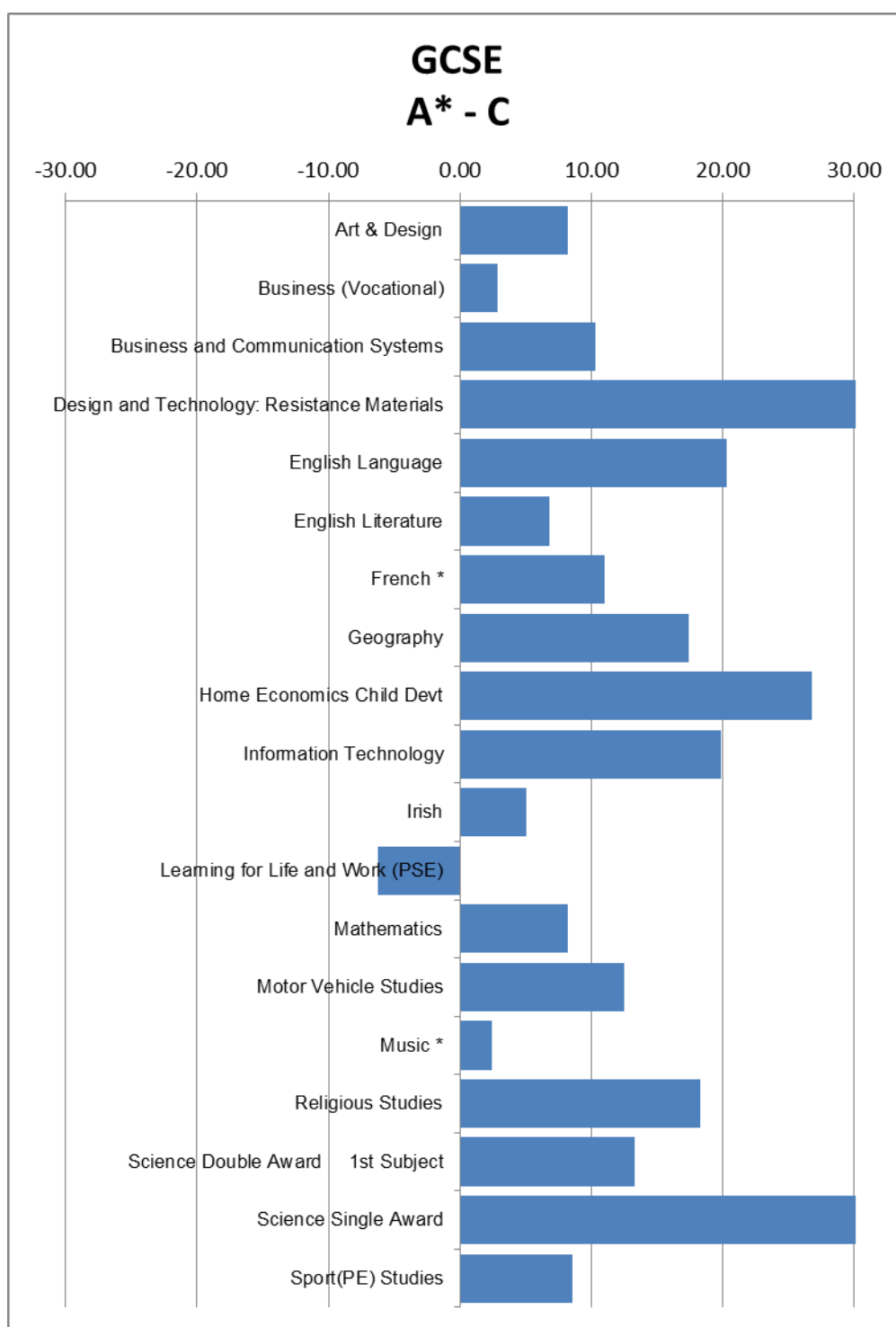
<i>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</i>	2012	2013	2014
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	97	93
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	88	91	81
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁸</i>	68.8	74.4	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	38	36	42
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	33.5	33.3	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	98	94	91
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)	29	21	38

⁷ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting' for post-primary schools.

⁸ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level 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 pupils 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

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

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the tables below show the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving grades A* to C, grades A* to E and pass grades 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.

GCSE Subject	2012		2013		2014		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Engineering	90	90	100	100	100	100	52
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Media	100	100	100	100	N/A		21
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Child Care	100	100	100	100	100	100	6
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Hospitality	N/A		75	75	100	100	5
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care	N/A		100	100	100	100	10
BTEC Level 2 Extended Certificate in Sports	N/A		100	100	100	100	9

Level 2	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication	92	85	100	68
Certificate in Essential Skills - Application of Number	85	80	100	62

Level 1	2012	2013	2014	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication	100	100		*
Certificate in Essential Skills - Application of Number	100	100%		*

*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

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 the 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.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2012	2013	2014
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	74	61	78
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	50	43	50
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	89	100

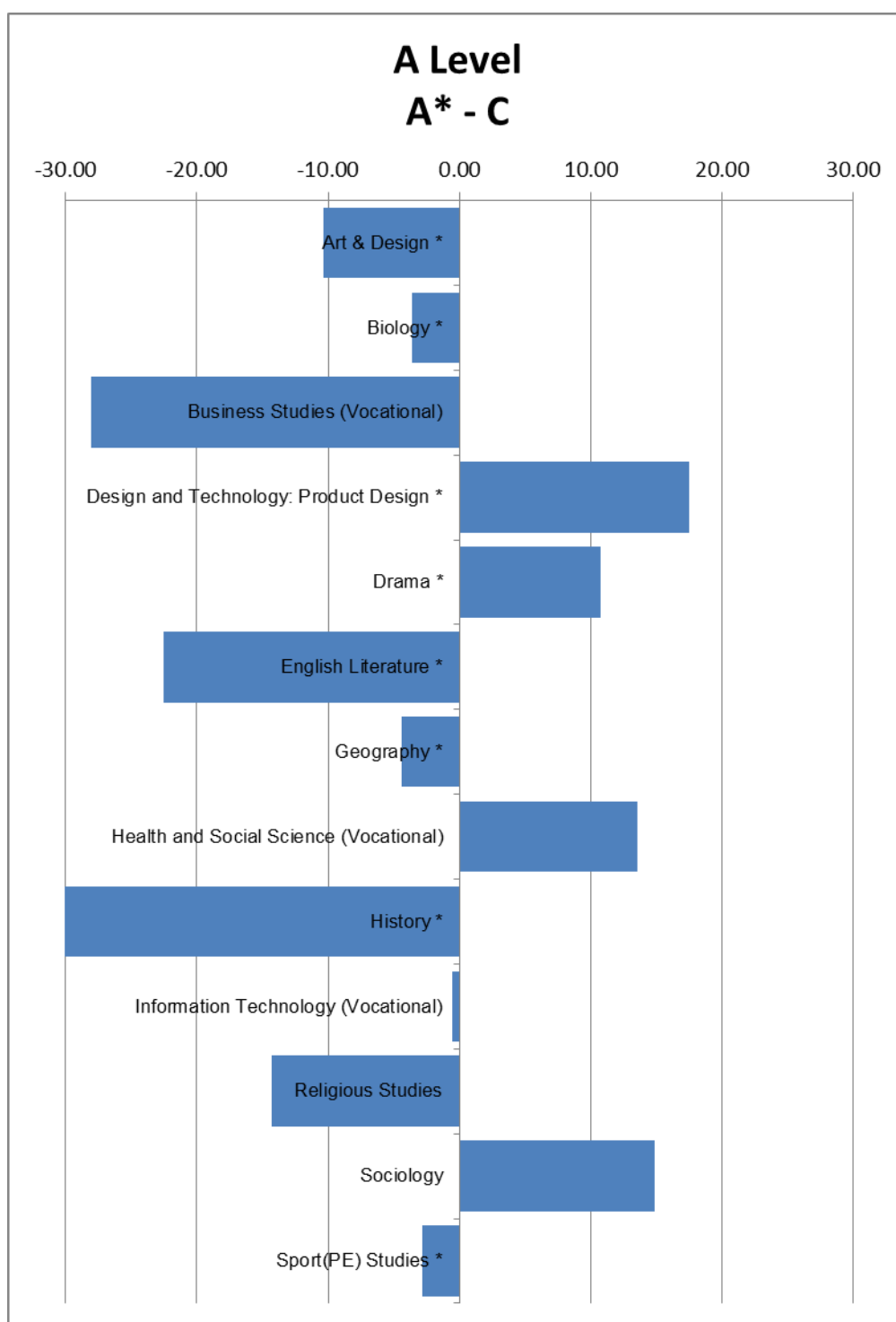
Other examination results: post-16

Based on data held by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in St Joseph's High School achieving grades A* to C and A* to E in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining board for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

GCE Subject	2012		2013		2014		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment	100	100	100	100	100	100	14

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A 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 GCE subject, in all exam boards, compared with the three-year average for pupils 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

Staying on rate

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 for non-selective schools from school census returns to DE for the most recent year for which data is available.

2013-14	NI Average	School
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% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	52.8	54.5
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	77.6	97.7

Leavers' destinations

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 non-selective schools, as appropriate.

2013-14	NI %	School No	School %	Level 2 (no.)	Level 3 (no.)	Level 3+ (no.)
Total Number of Leavers	13498	87	100.0			
Employment	8.6	13	14.9			
Further Education	43.7	27	31.0	16	4	7
Higher Education	22	28	32.2			28
Training	18.4	14	16.1			
Unemployed	3.9	5	5.7			
Unknown	3.4	0	0.0			

Health and safety

- There are no visibility panels in a significant number of the doors across the school.
- Although the school has conducted a risk assessment of the various access points to the school buildings, locking systems have not yet been installed.

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