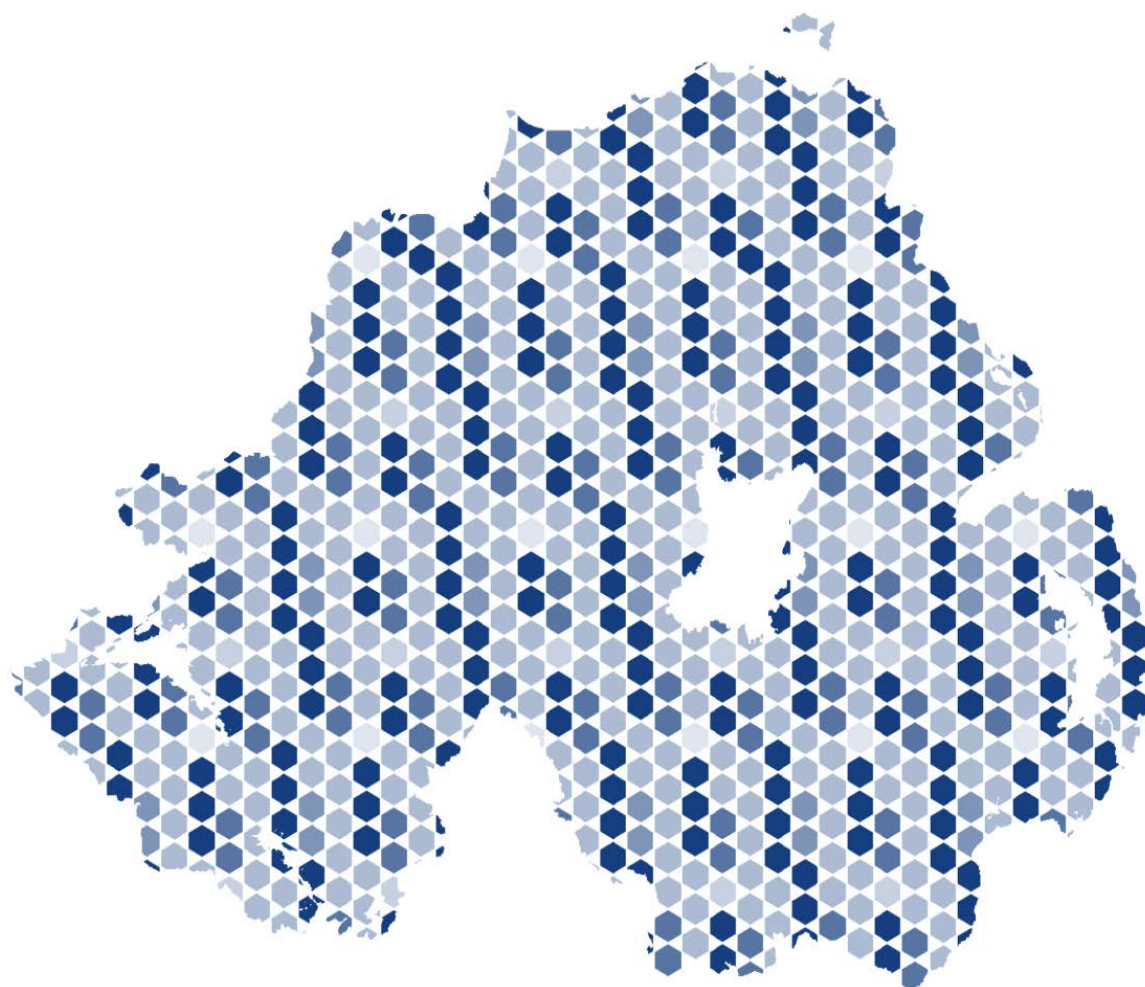


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Pius X College, Magherafelt
Co Londonderry

Maintained, co-educational, 11-18, non-selective school

Report of an Inspection in
January 2014



*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.eti.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	850	21	(3) ¹	15
Teachers	60	48	80	*
Support Staff	34	26	76	*

* fewer than 5

2. Context

St Pius X College is situated on the outskirts of Magherafelt. One-third of the pupils are drawn from the town while the remainder come from the surrounding rural areas. The sixth form numbers have grown steadily in recent years and currently stand at 170; the percentage of pupils who stay on from year 13 into year 14 is 99%, almost 20 percentage points higher than the Northern Ireland (NI) average. The school's attendance figures are above the NI average and the school is regularly oversubscribed.

¹ 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.

St Pius X College	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	153	150	147	154
Enrolment	909	927	939	930
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.8 (92.6)	94.2 (93)	94 (92.9)	-
FSME Percentage ²	21.3	19.2	19.6	18
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	13 (121)	17.9 (166)	16 (154)	12.4 (137)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	52	59	56	60
No. of newcomers	0	16	24	25
<i>Intake:</i> ³				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	12%	9%	22%	8%
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	13%	12%	23%	14%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	87%	91%	76%	92%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	86%	87%	99%	86%
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

3. Focus of 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

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

² The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

³ From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years.

5. Achievements and standards

The pupils are confident, highly motivated and have a very positive disposition to learning. They are proud of their school and are very welcoming to visitors. They engage easily with their teachers, other adults and their peers. When given the opportunities, they demonstrate very good critical and creative thinking skills. Through participation in a wide range of activities, they develop very effective personal and social skills, including teamwork, leadership and mentoring, which prepare them well for the next stage of their education and adult life, in line with the vision of the school.

In public examinations the pupils attainments are very good and reflect the high expectations of the staff and the pupil-centred provision. In GCSE, at grades A* to C, all of the subjects are above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools and almost one-half are significantly above average. In two of the last three years approximately one-third of the pupils entitled to free school meals attained at the expected level, which is above the average. The school has identified appropriately the need to improve further the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in English and mathematics. In GCE A level, at grades A* to C⁴, over two-thirds of the subjects are in line with or above the NI average for similar schools. The standards the pupils achieve in applied subjects are excellent. The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning attain very well at GCSE and A level.

6. Provision

There is a coherent, whole-school approach to the arrangements for planning, teaching and assessment. The teacher's planning, particularly at KS3, is comprehensive and takes good account of the pupils' interests and needs. Planning identifies appropriate opportunities to develop the pupils' skills by helping pupils to make connections across the curriculum.

The learning and teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Most of the lessons were good or better; almost one-half were very good. In the most effective practice, the pupils benefit from well-structured lessons which build well on their prior knowledge; the tasks set are realistic, challenging and achievable. Teaching is well-paced with very good opportunities for the pupils to work and learn together and the teachers monitor the pupils' work thoroughly through regular assessments. ICT is also used creatively to support learning. Where the teaching is less effective, in just under one-fifth of the lessons, it is over-directed by the teachers, the level of the pupils' engagement in the learning is too low and a limited range of strategies does not meet fully the learning needs of all the pupils.

It is appropriate that the school have identified the need to review and standardise assessments to ensure that better use is made of the information to inform interventions and support for individuals where needed.

There is an effective, strategic approach taken to the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the school. In English, the pupils make contributions in a mature and extended manner, both orally and in writing. The experience for those pupils taking English at GCSE is varied appropriately, stimulating and enriching. In mathematics, when given opportunities, the pupils consolidate and extend their mathematical understanding by engaging with others in pairs, small groups and whole class discussion; however these opportunities are, at times, too limited and there is a need to plan for more consistent, collaborative learning. The pupils use their mathematics well to support their learning in other subjects. The senior leadership has identified correctly the need to increase, as appropriate, the number of pupils entered for

⁴ See Appendix for data: note that when averages are compared, they are with the average for non-selective schools, as appropriate, with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

GCSE English and GCSE mathematics and is monitoring closely the pupils' standards and learning experiences.

The staff provide high quality care, guidance and support to all the pupils. A major strength is the child-centred approach to pastoral care, special educational needs, careers education and curriculum provision. The school's mission statement, of promoting partnership, developing talents and encouraging participation is evident throughout the life and work of the school. The high quality pastoral provision is characterised by excellent working relationships and mutual respect between pupils and staff. The pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and appropriate intervention strategies are employed. The pupils interact confidently with their peers and are involved fully in all aspects of school life. The guidance provided to teachers on how to best modify teaching to support the pupils with special education needs is, at times, not specific enough. It needs to be more precise, with suitable strategies identified clearly to guide the teachers. A key strength of the school is the early intervention for those pupils at risk of underachievement and the range of support available to help them reach their full potential.

The pupils have access to a coherent, comprehensive careers education information and guidance programme which is highly effective in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world of work. There is a very good focus on the development of employability skills for all the pupils through a wide range of careers events, including STEM⁵ activities and well-planned work experience matched to the interests, abilities and employment aspirations of the pupils. The pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the employment, training and education opportunities available.

The curriculum at key stage (KS)3 and KS4 is broad and balanced and is responsive to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The school has a strong commitment to the Magherafelt Learning Partnership: at post-16 the pupils have access to an appropriate range of general and applied subjects that meets the current requirements of the entitlement framework and offers them a choice of suitable curricular pathways. The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities, both in-school and through the local learning partnership, supports well the pupils' physical, personal and social development, fosters good community relations, and prepares the pupils for success in life and work. Significantly the percentage of pupils progressing to higher education is more than twice the average for similar schools.

7. Leadership and management

School improvement planning is informed by extensive consultation with all stakeholders and has a strong focus on self-evaluation. The resulting comprehensive school development plan and associated action plans inform and guide well the school's improvement agenda and are central to the work of the school.

The senior leadership team (SLT) are highly committed to the academic and pastoral well-being of all the pupils; they provide very good leadership effecting improvement across their areas of responsibility. They have a collegial approach to whole-school improvement focused sharply on raising further the very good standards already being achieved by the pupils. A range of appropriate strategies are being taken forward, which include: the more

⁵ Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

effective use of performance data to inform how the collective and individual needs of all the pupils are addressed; the continuous professional development of the teaching and non-teaching staff and a focus on ensuring a consistently high quality of learning and teaching. The SLT are led by an inspirational principal who provides outstanding leadership and articulates a clear strategic vision for the school.

There are some examples of excellent leadership at middle management level within the school; appropriately, the dissemination of this practice is a continuing priority. The SLT have identified correctly the need for more distributed leadership roles across the school which builds further the capacity of the middle managers and so ensures a more consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision within each area.

The governors are very well- informed about important aspects of the life and work of the school. They play an active role in the schools development and are effective in holding leaders to account. The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of all aspects of governance evaluated.

On the basis of evidence available at the time of inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance of the Department of Education.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected the quality of the education provided by this school is very good; the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

APPENDIX 1

Performance and statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2010-11 to 2012-13

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 with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category⁶.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2011	2012	2013
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	86%	94%	90%
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	78%	70%	77%
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁷</i>	60.0%	63.9%	-
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	57%	50%	46%
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	33.6%	36.2%	-
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	91%	93%	92%
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)	33%	8%	32%

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

Other examination results at key stage 4 from 2010-11 to 2012-13

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

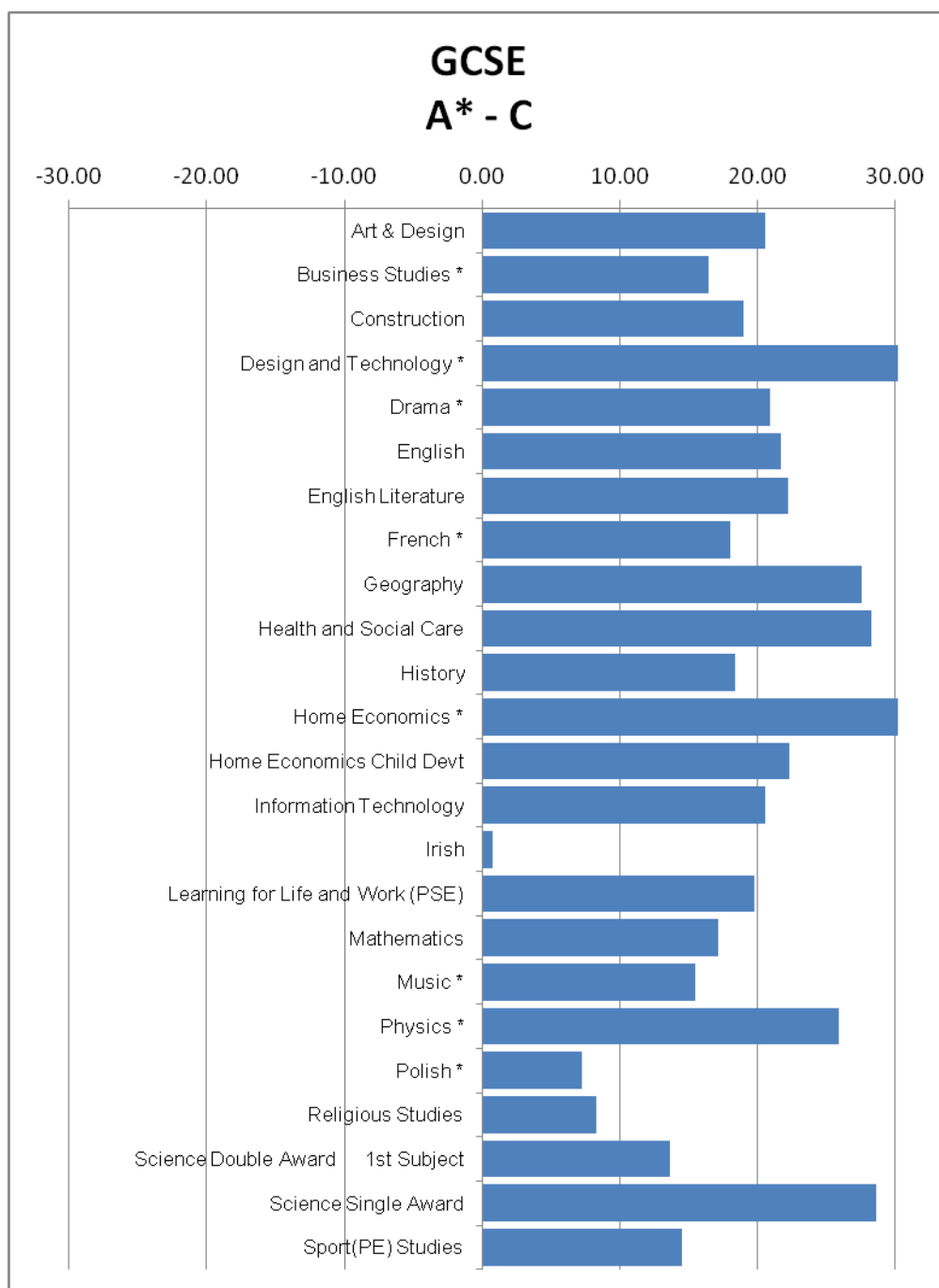
Subject	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Hospitality and Catering	100	100	100	100	78	100	42
Motor Vehicle Studies			80	100	0	100	17

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

⁷ 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 at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average. The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.



*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 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	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	84%	86%	85%
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	64%	70%	56%
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	97%	100%	99%

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

Other examination results: post-16

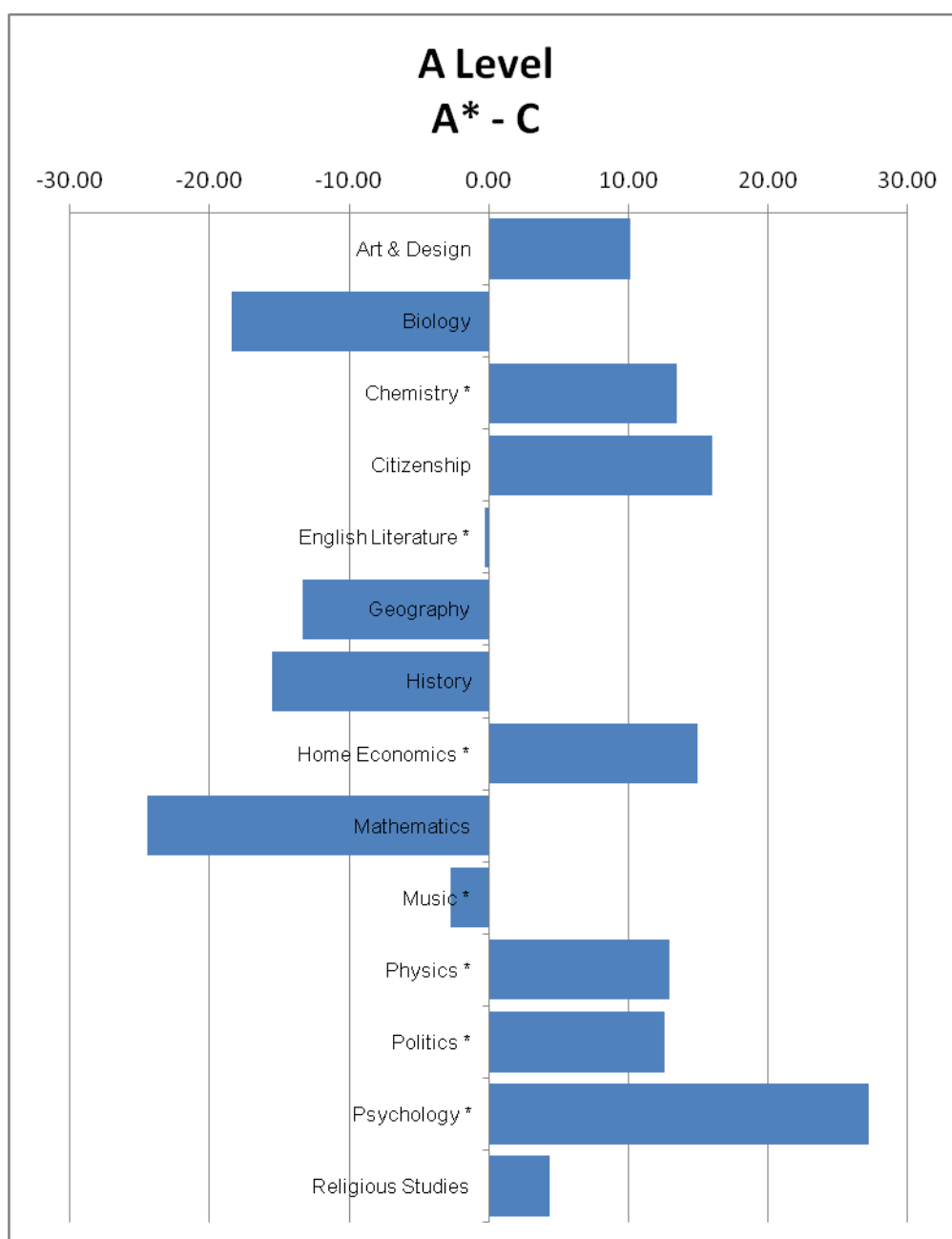
Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving grades A* to C and A* to E in vocational and/or applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in this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

Subject Level 3	2011		2012		2013		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business	100		100		96	100	61
Construction	100		100		100		37
COPE	100		100		100		78
Engineering	100		100		100		15
Health and Social Care	85	100	97	100	98	100	142
Information Technology	94	100	100		100		55
Sport	100		100		100		37

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average.

The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

Staying on rate

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.

Year 13	55.9	NI Av. Year 13	52.3
Year 14	98.9	NI Av. Year 14	79.9

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.

	2011/12	2011/12	2011/12
	NI %	School %	School Nos
Total Number of Leavers			135
Employment	7.9	*	6
Further Education	46.0	34.1	46
Higher Education	20.1	47.4	64
Training	18.2	9.6	13
Unemployed	*	*	*
Unknown	3.4	*	*

* Fewer than 5

Health and safety

- Some fire doors need to be replaced.

Accommodation

- General storage and PE storage facilities are both inadequate.
- There is limited accommodation for the expanding sixth form.

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