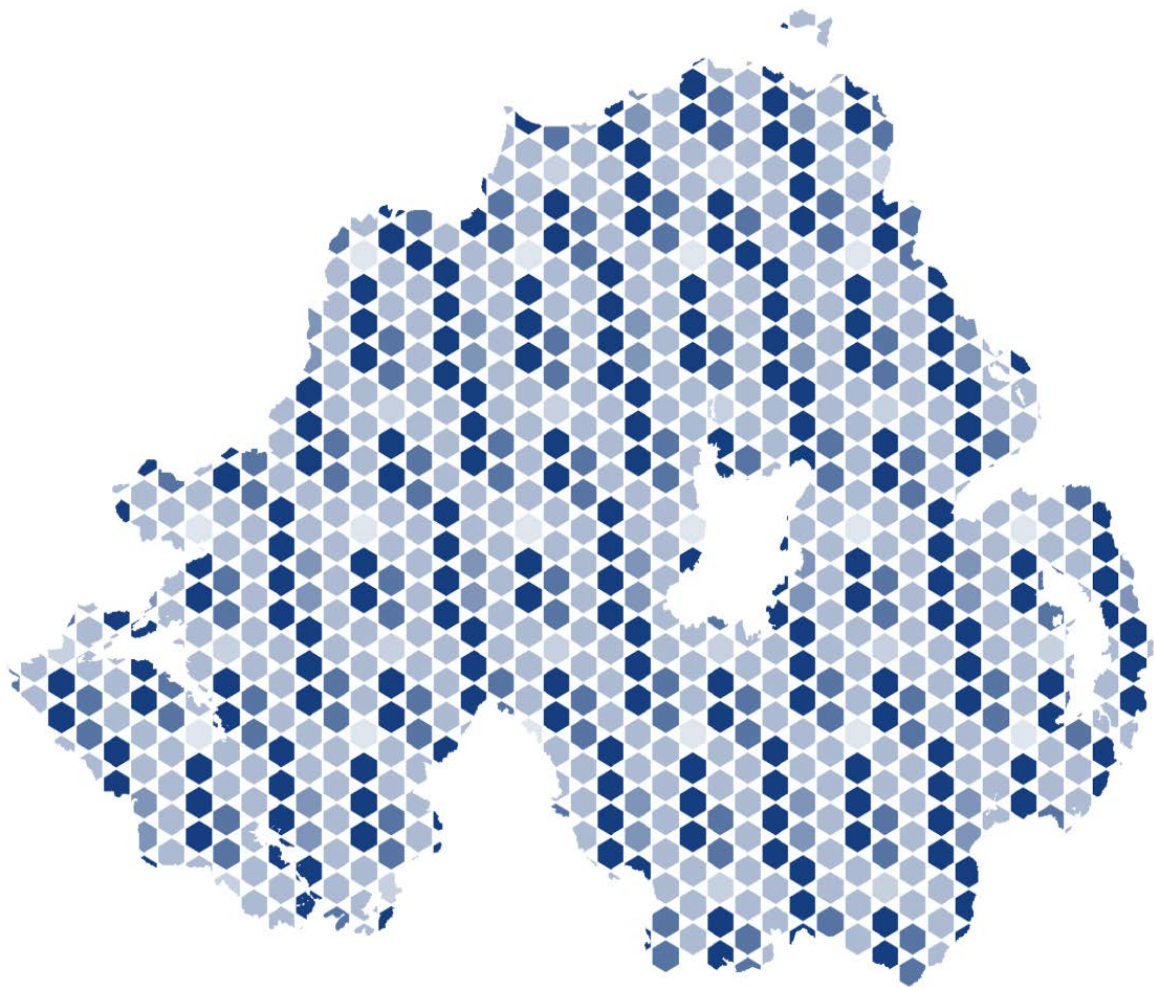


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

The Royal Belfast Academical  
Institution

All-boys 11-18 voluntary 'B' selective school

Report of an Inspection in  
April 2014



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 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<sup>1</sup> 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	925	120	13%	79
Teachers	61	48	79%	27
Support Staff	31	15	50%	8

## 2. Context

The Royal Belfast Academical Institution is a voluntary 'B'<sup>2</sup> grammar school for boys which recently celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The pupils come from a wide geographical area with the current intake from over 160 contributory primary schools. On entry to year 8, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level at key stage 2 is just below the average in three of the last four years. The percentage of pupils identified as having difficulties with aspects of their learning, and of pupils holding statements of educational need, has risen in recent years. While the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals remains low, the proportion of pupils benefiting from relief of fees has almost doubled in the last three years.

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<sup>1</sup>The 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.

<sup>2</sup> Voluntary 'B' grammar schools fund their own capital and building projects. The annual fees paid by the pupils constitute an important source of funding.

Royal Belfast Academical Institution	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	154	153	152	156
Enrolment	1041	1050	1045	1035
% Attendance (NI Average)	96.5 (92.3)	95.6 (95.7)	95.8 ( 95.7 )	
FSME Percentage <sup>3</sup>	2.9%	3.9%	3.3%	3.5%
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	17.4% (181)	7% (72)	11.29% (118)	17.5% (181)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	8	11	11	17
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	*
<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	40.91	36.60	27.63	17.95 <sup>4</sup>
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	68.18	60.78	50.0	25.64
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	98.05	97.39	92.76	71.79
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	100.0	100.0	95.39	69.23
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

\* fewer than 5

### 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

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Very good</b>

<sup>3</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

<sup>4</sup> 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 develop as fully-rounded, mature individuals through their interactions with the staff and with their peers and, notably, through the extensive extra-curricular programme which enables them to work well in teams, take on appropriate responsibilities and acquire highly effective social and interpersonal skills. They are highly motivated and positively disposed toward their learning.
- The pupils have well-honed speaking and listening skills. While the standard of their written work is variable across the school, in particular at KS3, a particularly strong example of the cross-curricular focus on literacy is the 'Hippocampus' newsletter, produced by pupils in the science department, which won the 2014 Institute of Chemistry writing competition. The English department works closely with the librarian and, as a result of this purposeful collaboration, the boys' reading skills are monitored and developed effectively. The pupils at all stages have a sound understanding of mathematical theory and strategies which enables them to apply confidently their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Overall, the pupils attain good standards in general and applied examinations, with the more able pupils attaining well at grades A\* to A at both GCSE and A-level. The percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE examinations at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, while close to the NI average for similar schools for two of the past three years, was below average in 2013. Over the last three years, almost all year 12 pupils attained a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics. In a majority of subjects, there is an improving trend in GCSE results over a sustained period. The school has a well-conceived strategic plan in place to raise standards further, particularly by addressing the inconsistency in outcomes in a minority of subjects, and by providing more personalised programmes of study for all of the pupils.
- The school's internal data reveals that the ability of the Year 8 intake is below the average when compared with similar schools. The dip in the GCSE outcomes in 2010, replicated in the GCE A level outcomes in 2012, reflects particularly the diversity in the ability level of the 2005 Year 8 intake, which was uncharacteristically low for a selective school. These outcomes need to be interpreted against the school's internal data that demonstrates improvement and, consequently, the attainment of the pupils in public examinations reflects broadly the attainment of the pupils on entry.
- Although the percentage of pupils attaining three or more A levels at grades A\* to C is below the average for similar schools, in one half of the subjects with a larger uptake, the percentage of pupils attaining A\* to C is above the average. The school has introduced a range of appropriate strategies to raise further these standards, including changes to the entry requirements for sixth form study, more regular and robust assessment of attainment throughout the year and additional support for those pupils identified as underachieving.
- Pupils who have difficulties with aspects of their learning, and those pupils who are entitled to free school meals, attain good standards.

## 6. Provision

- The quality of the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. Most of the teaching was good or better, with two-fifths being very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the pupils benefit from well-structured lessons in which the intended learning is made clear and plenary sessions help consolidate their understanding. These lessons are paced appropriately, the level of challenge remains constantly high and the teachers use skilful questioning to encourage the pupils to extend their thinking and articulate clearly their views. In a significant minority of classes, marking for improvement is effective and enables the pupils to correct and improve the quality of their work.
- In the one-fifth of the lessons where the practice is less effective, the work is insufficiently matched to the varying needs and abilities of the pupils and the narrow range of strategies employed does not engage the boys well enough in the learning. Consequently, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school is developing its self-evaluation arrangements well to help identify and disseminate more effectively the existing good practice in learning, teaching and assessment; given that one-fifth of the lessons still require improvement, the inspection confirms that this is appropriately a key priority for improvement.
- For those pupils identified as having difficulties with aspects of their learning, the school provides effective targeted support, including withdrawal sessions, to meet their varied learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs. The classroom assistants work flexibly with the pupils and provide high levels of care and support within and beyond the classroom, including lunchtime sessions in reading, writing and handwriting. The school makes effective use of a wide range of external agencies to support the pupils' needs. The pupils are involved in setting and reviewing the targets in their individual education plans (IEPs) and in identifying specific strategies which enable them to make progress. While the subject teachers are involved in setting targets for individual pupils, in the majority of lessons they take insufficient cognisance of the information provided in the IEPs to provide suitably differentiated work.
- The staff provide high-quality pastoral care for all of the pupils which is underpinned by a highly effective collegial whole-school approach. It is timely that the work of the senior house masters is being supported by other key pastoral staff with a focus on linking more closely the pupils' personal, social and academic progress. The excellent range of extra-curricular programmes extends well beyond the traditional sporting activities and enriches the learning experiences of the pupils. The mutual respect between the pupils and the teachers is evident; in and out of class, the behaviour of the pupils is exemplary. The sixth-form pupils are very loyal to their school and provide positive role models for the younger pupils. The pupils report that they feel safe and secure in the school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

- The KS3 curriculum is broad and balanced to meet the needs of the pupils. The provision at KS4 and post-16 meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. There are effective collaborative links with other schools in the South Belfast Area Learning Community to widen the post-16 provision. The current sixth form curriculum has been strengthened in recent years with the introduction of applied subjects as a result of a more systematic and ongoing review of both the provision at KS 4 and in the sixth form to ensure that the needs of all of the pupils are being met most effectively.
- There are important strengths in the provision for careers education, information and guidance (CEIAG). There is a well-resourced careers room and the pupils have access to a range of relevant, up-to-date written careers information. A comprehensive range of guest speakers and external agencies informs their career decision-making. Work experience is well established for post-16 pupils and has been introduced recently, along with additional guidance, for KS4 pupils who may pursue their post-16 careers elsewhere. The pupils' knowledge of the various career pathways open to them and the associated qualifications, skills and attributes they will need is too variable. Accordingly, to improve the careers provision further, the school needs to integrate the taught programmes for Learning for Life and Work and for Personal Development with a timetabled CEIAG programme, ensuring that all of the pupils have a more coherent record of their career planning on which to reflect at key transition points.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The school development plan<sup>5</sup> is well conceived and guides effectively the improvement work of the school. The priorities are appropriate and identified through the analysis and use of performance data, with a sharp focus on raising further the standards attained by the pupils. There are suitable arrangements for consultation with the parents, the staff and the board of governors. The pupils' views are sought, but not used sufficiently, to inform this aspect of decision-making. Most of the action plans used to effect improvement are purposeful and include robust processes for monitoring and evaluation.
- The principal and senior leadership team (SLT) have fostered a culture of self-evaluation across the school and increased the use of a range of first-hand evidence to make needed adjustments to the teaching and learning. The members of the SLT have complementary strengths and provide clear strategic direction for curricular development, with a consistent focus on raising standards. The establishment of an extended management team, with wider membership and clear roles and responsibilities, has supported action across the whole school and helped distribute leadership effectively. The SLT has forged strong links with the local community and other schools (for which they attained the International Schools Award) with parents and alumni.

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<sup>5</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010



- While most of the middle managers provide clear curricular leadership and generally plan well for improvement within their areas of responsibility, it will be important for the school to build the capacity of all middle managers to monitor, evaluate and review robustly the provision in order to disseminate more effectively the best practice and raise the standards further within their areas of responsibility. The most effective action plans have clear targets and measurable success criteria, but the quality of action planning across the subject departments is variable.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high level of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The highly-committed governors are informed well about the priorities in the school development plan. They support, and challenge when appropriate, the SLT and play an active role in school improvement.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## **8. Conclusion**

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in curriculum planning and in monitoring, evaluation and review which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The ETI will monitor, through district inspector activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

## Performance and statistical data

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

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving 7 or more GCSEs (A\* to B) and equivalent subjects with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>6</sup>.

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	2011	2012	2013
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE &amp; Equivalents in at least 7 subjects</i>	98.7	96.15	99.3
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects</i>	89.94	87.82	86.49
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	91.3	90.7	92.5
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	89.94	86.54	85.81
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	90.6	89.2	91.4
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects</i>	96.86	95.51	95.27
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)	100	87.5	50

<sup>6</sup> 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 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 B in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining board for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

#### OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

*Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.*

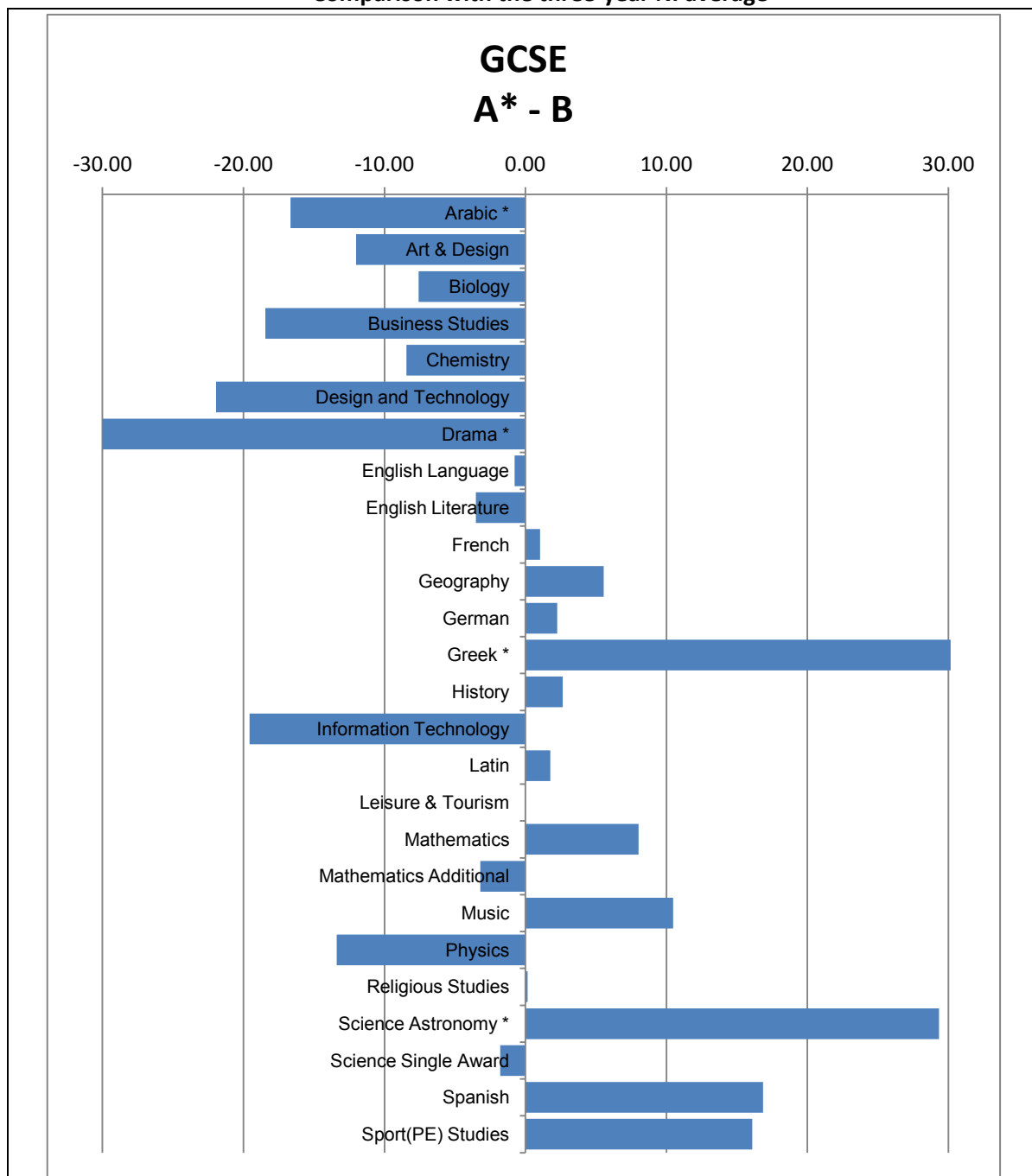
GCSE Subject	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-B	% A*-B	% A*-B	
Manufacturing	89	100	100	20
RE Short Course		71.1	63	252

## Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A\* to B 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 B 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 should be treated with caution.

Comparison with the three-year NI average



\*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. The table compares the percentage achieving three or more GCEs (A\* to C) with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>7</sup>.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalent in at least 3 subjects	97.6	92.10	94.11
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	71.65	62	68.38
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>76.5</i>	<i>76.7</i>	<i>74.2</i>

### 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 Royal Belfast Academical Institution 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 boards for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

### Other level 3 courses taken in the last three years.

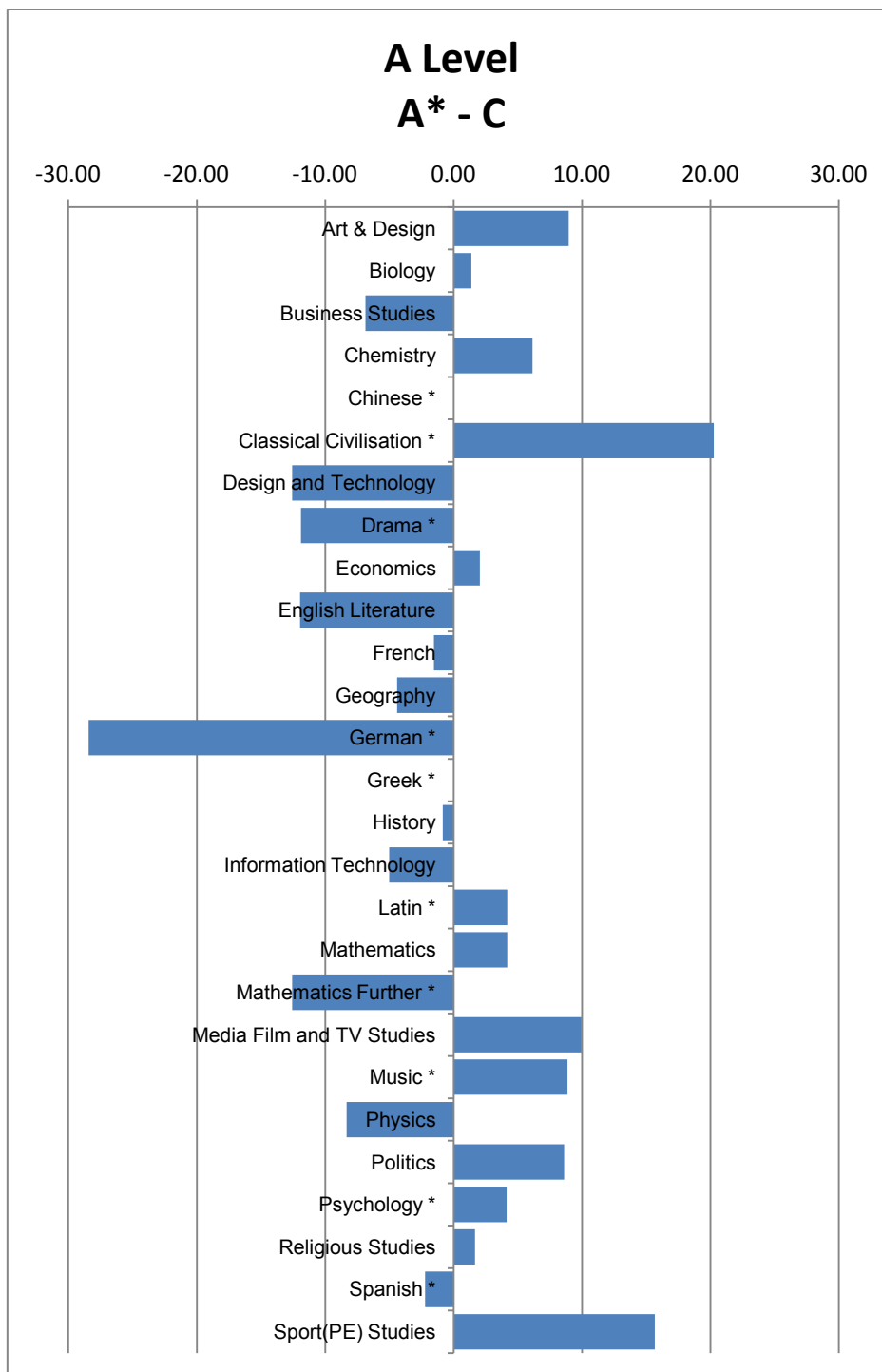
Level 3	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE)		100	100	8

<sup>7</sup> 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

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** (Percentage staying on from year 12 to 13 and from year 13 to 14)

Based on data held and verified by the school with the 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.

	<b>NI Average</b>	<b>School</b>
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	95.0	87.3
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.9	92.8

**Leavers' destinations**

Based on data held and verified by the school with the 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.

	2011/12 NI %	2011/12 School %	2011/12 School Nos.
Total number of leavers			116
Employment	3.8	2.6	3
Further Education	19.0	25.9	29
Higher Education	72.7	68.1	80
Training	1.5	0.9	1
Unemployed	1.6	2.6	3
Unknown	1.4	0.0	0

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