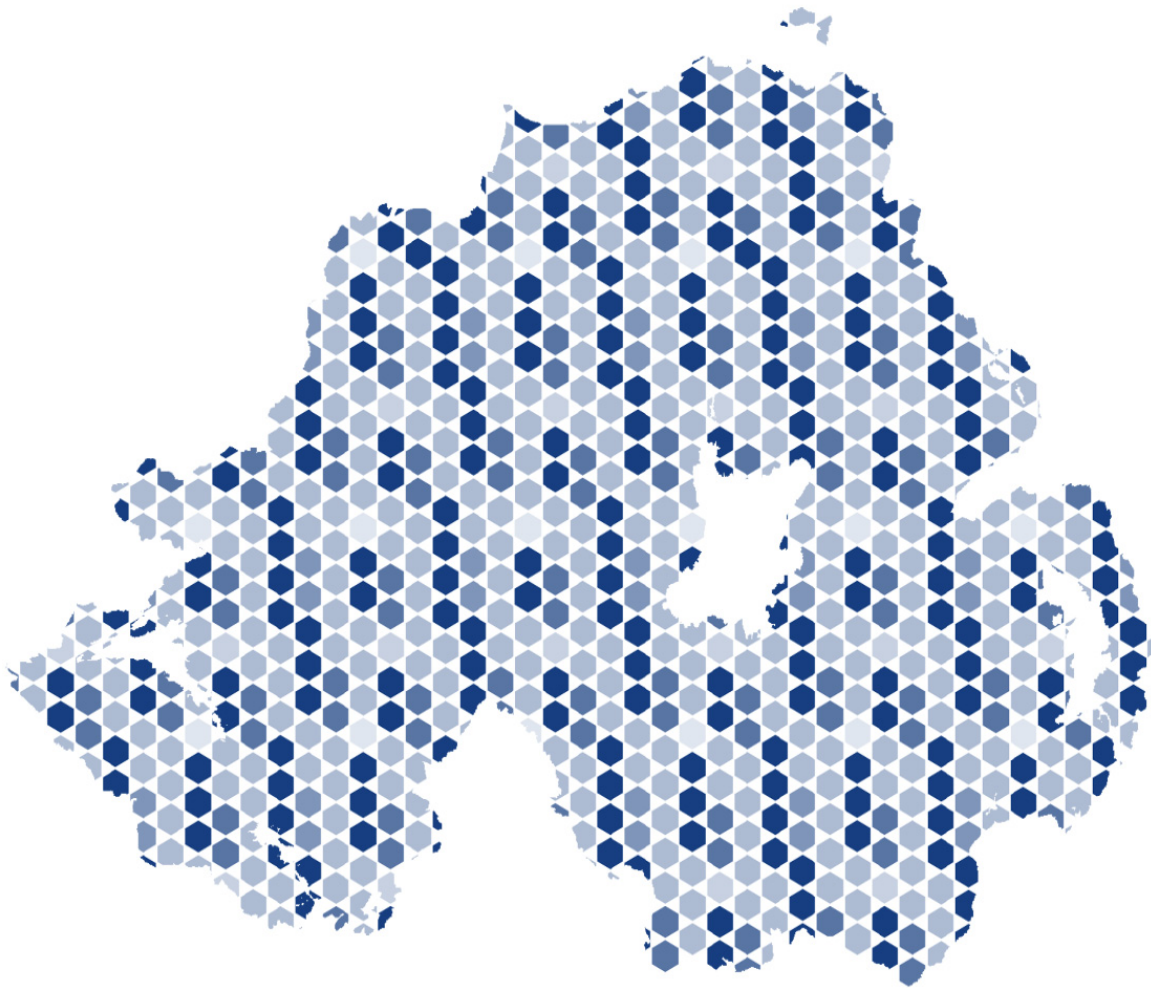


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballycastle High School

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

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

The term '*similar schools*' refers to schools in the same free school meal category as defined by DE, whether they are selective or non-selective.

CALP	Coleraine Area Learning Partnership
CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
DE	Department of Education
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FSM	Free School Meals
GCE 'A'	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KS	Key Stage
LLW	Learning for Life and Work
NI	Northern Ireland
NRC	Northern Regional College
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SMT	Senior Management Team

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Ballycastle High School maintains its enrolment well, within a trend of declining post-primary pupil numbers in the wider area. There are currently 63 pupils in the sixth form. The school has excellent curricular and pastoral links with the neighbouring Cross and Passion College and the joint post-14 provision allows the pupils from both Ballycastle schools to enjoy good community relations that underpin the shared lessons on both sites.

Ballycastle High School	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	338	345	365	360
FSM (Band 2) Percentage	19.65	22.61	22.47	20
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	7% (22)	7% (25)	9% (32)	14% (52)
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	13	11	13	11
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	*	*	*	*
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	10	15	13	13
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	10	20	23	26
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	81	83	77	74
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	76	82	77	81

Source: Data as held by the school. * = fewer than 5

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

2.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision, and in particular the sixth-form provision in order to assess the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are very good¹.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are respectful, courteous and friendly. They take great pride in their school and engage fully with the learning process, responding confidently to the high expectations of their teachers.

¹ For detailed results in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendices 1 and 2.

Comparisons based on FSM equivalence	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98	94.6	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	46	46.4	55.4
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	56	62.5	64.3
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	In line with the average	Above average	Well above average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86	89.3	91

Source: Data on Year 12 (KS4) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

Over the past three years, outcomes at GCSE level have risen steadily; the standards attained by the pupils in over half of the subjects exceeded the NI average at GCSE level by 5% or more.

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	53.8	68.7	46.4
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well above average	Significantly above average	Above average
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100	100
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools	Well above average	Well above average	Well above average

Source: Data on Year 14 (A2) performance as held by the school, with DE benchmarks.

While the pupils' attainment at GCE 'A' level grades A*-C dipped in 2011, the outcomes still remained above the Northern Ireland average. The pupils, who choose courses from a broad range of applied and vocational subjects, also achieve well. Nearly 70% of the year 14 pupils leaving in 2010 progressed to higher education, which is significantly above the average for similar non-selective schools. The school has recognised appropriately, the need to improve outcomes in a small number of subjects at GCSE and GCE 'A' level².

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The provision in mathematics is very good, in modern languages it is good and in science it is outstanding³.

The quality of the teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Four-fifths of all lessons observed were good or very good, in almost equal measure; a small number of lessons were outstanding.

² See Appendix 2, tables 2 and 4.

³ See Appendix 3.

In the very good and outstanding lessons there were high levels of pupil engagement, the learning was structured clearly, paced briskly and consolidated well through effective end-of-lesson reviews. The pupils benefitted from creative and thoughtful teaching which was set in meaningful contexts, and planned carefully to promote pupils' thinking skills and extend their responses and enjoyment. Around one-eighth of the lessons observed, while satisfactory, were over-directed by the teachers and did not match sufficiently the needs, interests and abilities of all of the pupils.

The quality of provision for SEN is good.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through the effective use of baseline testing and good individual support is provided by the teachers and the classroom assistants. The pupils benefit by achieving good outcomes through the school's focus on literacy and numeracy, including the reading partnerships programme and additional numeracy sessions. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the IEPs to include more meaningful strategies and targets which support the pupils individually.

The school is strongly committed to supporting pupils who are at risk of marginalisation and, through, effective strategies, ensures their inclusion and retention in school.

4.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils respond well to the caring, and inclusive ethos, which is focused clearly on learning, achievement and mutual respect. There are very good working relationships between the pupils and the staff and the pupils' behaviour in the classes observed was always excellent. The staff ensures, through the well-planned induction programme, that all new pupils are welcomed into the school community and are given good support.

The school gives appropriate priority to developing the pupils' leadership skills and in involving them in decision-making. Through the collaboration with Cross and Passion College, and in particular, the joint senior student council, the pupils are able to initiate changes which provide wider community benefit, such as the plans to establish a pedestrian crossing between the two schools. The pupils from both schools work well together and demonstrate high levels of mutual understanding and respect.

The pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

4.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is outstanding.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils benefit from an extensive range of formal and informal educational, social and cultural experiences. At KS3, the curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and meets well the needs of the pupils. At KS4, and at post-16, the school has extended its curricular offer to include a wide range of applied and vocational courses which meet the pupils' abilities, interests and career aspirations, thereby underpinning the pupil-centred ethos of the school. The school currently meets the EF requirement of 24 subjects at KS4, and is close to meeting the requirement at post-16. Importantly, the range of courses is informed by

well-conceived consultation between the two Ballycastle post-primary schools and with local employers. Over half of the pupils at KS4 and post-16 benefit from shared lessons at Cross and Passion College and the continuing commitment of both schools to improving this arrangement demonstrates a willingness to make the curriculum and the timetable serve the needs of all the pupils in the town.

The school is a committed member of the CALP, accesses a small number of courses through the NRC and is committed to broadening its provision further through the CALP.

The provision for CEIAG is very good.

There is effective progression in the planning and provision for CEIAG across KS3, where careers education is delivered through the LLW programme. At KS4 the school has introduced an effectively taught careers programme. Additionally, the pupils benefit from a range of visits, speakers, and training in interview skills which develops their employability skills and enables them to make informed decisions about future career pathways.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The quality of the leadership and the management is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The recently-appointed Principal and Vice-principal provide highly effective and strategic leadership and have drawn confidence and respect from the pupils, staff and Governors. They are well-informed about, and responsive to, the needs of the pupils and the local community and possess complementary leadership skills which promote school improvement. They are supported by the other members of the SMT, who manage well their respective areas of responsibility.

The quality of the middle management is very good. The heads of department and co-ordinators have responded very positively to the findings of previous inspection visits and are implementing well-informed strategies to enable the best possible educational and pastoral outcomes for the pupils.

The Governors are supportive of the school and are committed fully to the school's wider collaborations and the benefits these arrangements bring to the pupils.

The SDP is in its final year of the current 3-year cycle and the school is working towards a more fully consultative, evaluative and compliant plan in order to meet all of the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

The school has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children, which reflect the guidance issued by the DE.

The school is held in high regard by the community and its important, collaborative arrangements with Cross and Passion College reveal admirable and highly effective leadership at all levels, including by the Principal, the Principal of Cross and Passion College and other key personnel in the High School and the College. The pupils, parents and wider community benefit from the positive community relations and the good levels of participation in a variety of shared educational and sporting activities.

Given the findings of the inspection, the school meets the needs and expectations of the school and the wider community very effectively.

6. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Ballycastle High
 ii. School Reference Number: 321-0124
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Controlled
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 30/01/12
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	62	62	60	61	53
Total enrolment	337	338	345	365	360

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	93.6	93.1	90.1	88.1	94	92	91.8	92	91
% Attendance young people on Special Educational Needs Register	93.7	78.9	84.2	82.1	93.7	44.9	97.8	86	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 26.4 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.749
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 13.674 Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study: (Focused only) 10

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	29	32	21	27	33	18	8	168
Enrolment: Girls	24	30	40	36	25	23	14	192
Enrolment: Total	53	62	61	63	58	41	22	360
PTR	13.039	15.253	15.083	13.824	12.613	12.721	12.449	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2009/10) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	62.7	NI Av Year 13	47.4
Year 14	60.9	NI Av Year 14	34.5

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	35		19	
Another School	14%	14.8	5%	2.4
Employment	11%	5.2	0%	12.3
Full-time Further Education	23%	23	21%	28
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	68%	42.5
Full-time Training	43%	25.1	0%	5.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	6%	2	5%	5.8
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	3%	1	0%	3.9

TABLE 1 outlines the school's GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

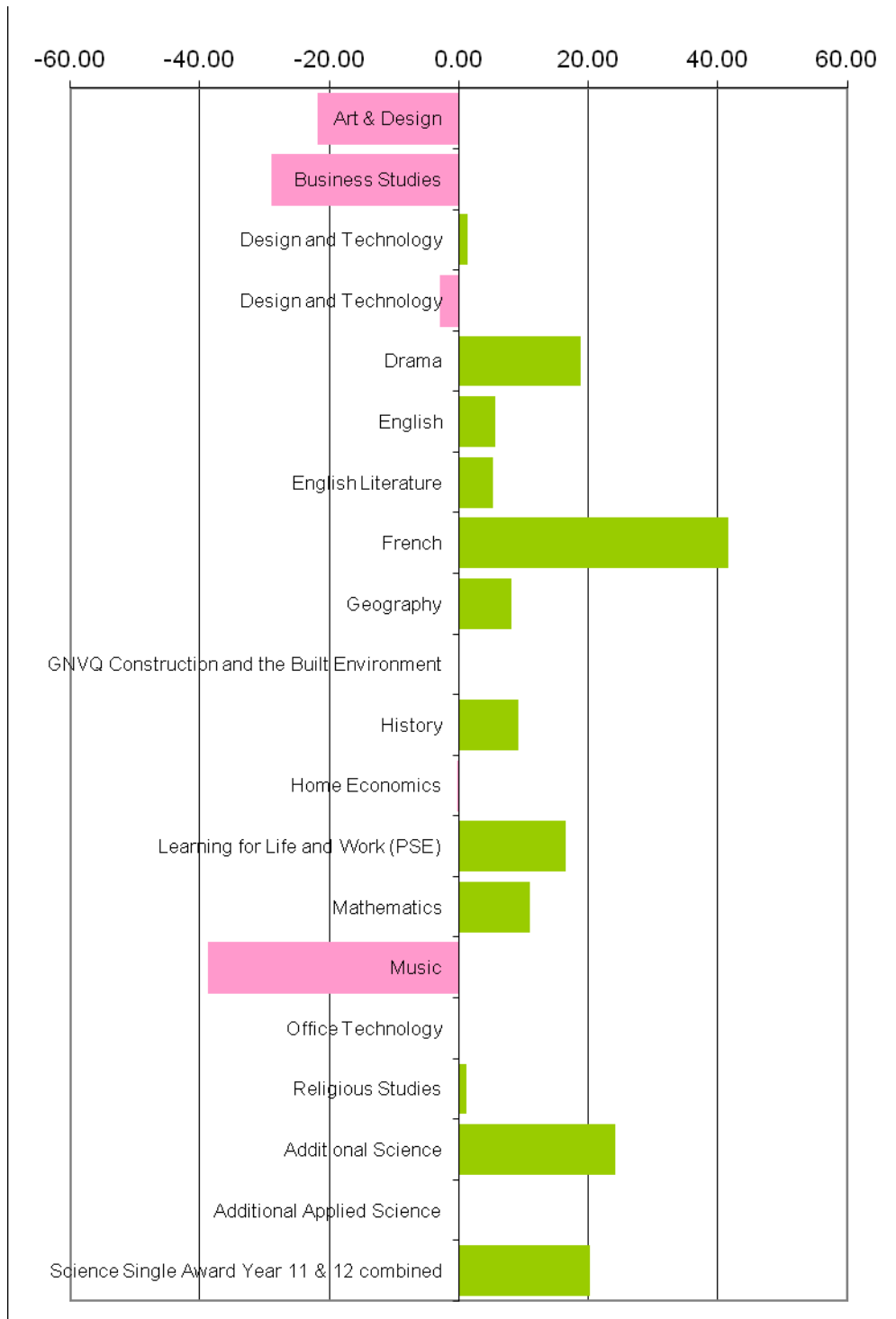
NB: The NI average for all non-selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics in 2010 is 34.9%

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	98	94.6	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	46	46.4	55.4
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	56	62.5	64.3
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86	89.3	91

Source: Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

TABLE 2 shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCSE Grades A*-C**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011: Design and Technology, Drama, French and Music.

TABLE 3 outlines the school's GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

A-level results A*-C

NB: The NI averages in 2010 for all non-selective schools of pupils entered for A2 level or equivalent: who achieve:

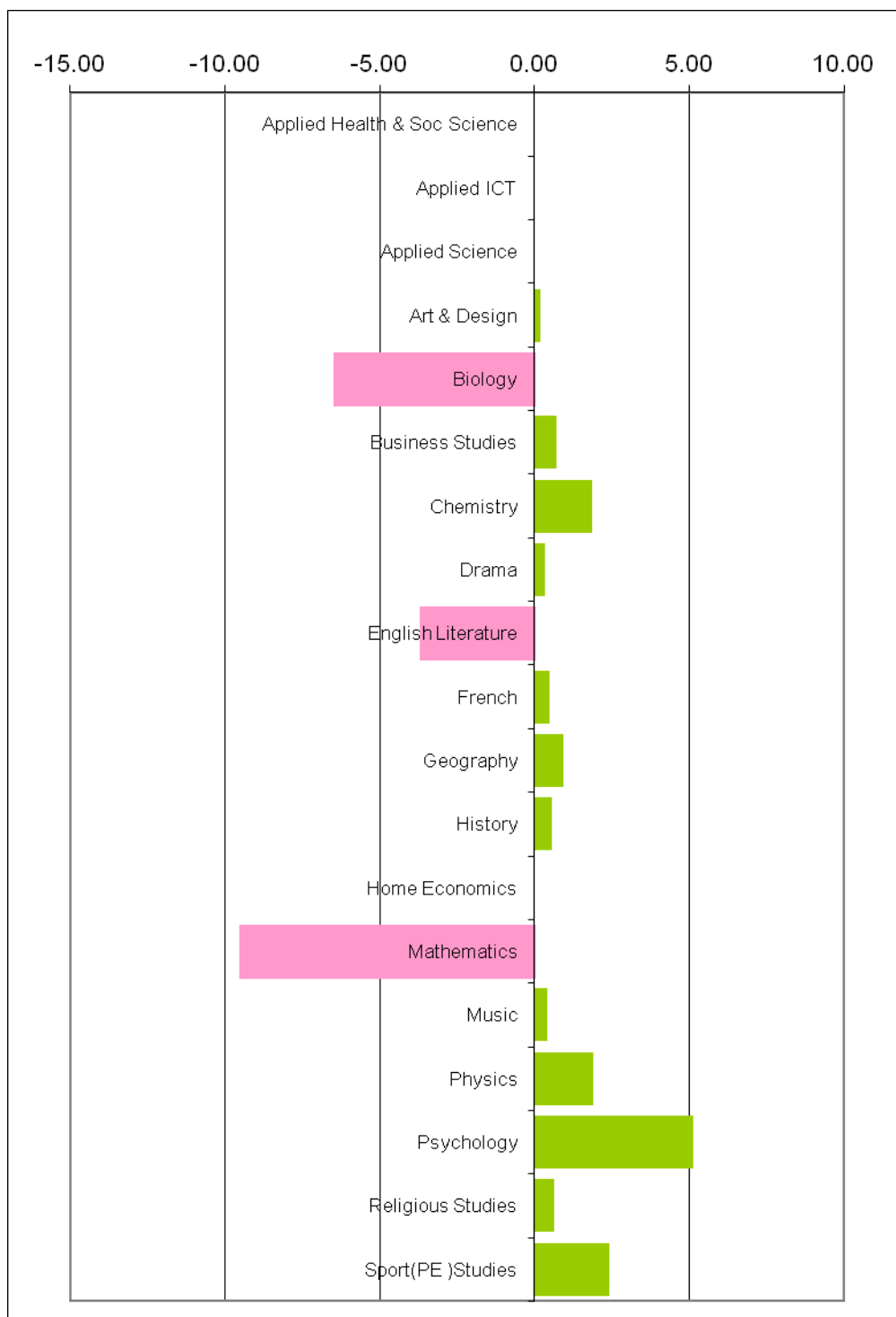
3 or more grades A*-C = 42.7%
 2 or more grades A*-E = 94.7%

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 2	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	53.8	68.7	46.4
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100	100
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>

Source: Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

TABLE 4 shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCE 'A' Level Grades A-E**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



**All the 'A' level subjects listed had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011

Table 5 Other Results: Key Stage 4

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in the last three years

(All Level 2 qualifications)

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
DIDA (Diploma in Digital Applications)	67	67	95	96	95	95	54
Occupational Studies (COA)	-	91	-	88	83	100	31

Table 6 Other Results: Post-16

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in the last three years

(All Level 3, unless otherwise stated)

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
ICT	20	80	80	80	63	80	18
Health and Social Care Double Award	67	100	50	100	60	100	13
Health and Social Care Single Award	-	-	100	100	50	100	3
Applied Science	63	100	60	100	71	100	20
Leisure Studies	50	100	-	-	-	100	3
Btec Level 3 Construction National Award	100	100	-	-	100	100	4

Table 7 OTHER RESULTS: Post-16

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in the last three years

(All Level 3 qualifications, unless otherwise stated)

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	Merit	Distinction	Merit	Distinction	Merit	Distinction	
BTEC National Award in Construction (NRC)	1	1	0	0	0	2	4
BTEC National Award in Media Production (NRC)	0	0	0	0	2	2	4

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision in mathematics is **very good**.

The strengths of the work include the:

- motivated pupils who work well in pairs and groups and enjoy learning mathematics;
- very good standards, including the levels of attainment in GCSE and the associated upward trend;
- quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, most of which was good or very good;
- effective use of the available assessment data to inform target-setting and the monitoring of the progress of individual pupils;
- meaningful documentation, including policies and schemes, which guide effectively the work of the department; and
- the very good leadership provided by the head of department and the hard-working departmental team, who demonstrate a commitment to continuing improvement.

Modern Languages

The overall quality of the provision in modern languages is **good**.

The strengths of the work include the:

- positive response and the enjoyment of the pupils to language learning, reflected in the excellent relationships between the teachers and the pupils, and among the pupils themselves;
- good leadership of the Head of Department and the good departmental planning which tracks progression across the key stages;
- consistently good or very good quality of the teaching observed in well-sequenced lessons;
- wide range of appropriate teaching strategies and resources to meet the differing needs of the pupils;
- effective integration of ICT into the teaching and learning of languages; and
- the consistently good results in external examinations with a small cohort of pupils.

The areas for improvement are to:

- build further on extending the oral and written responses of the pupils; and
- increase the uptake in the study of languages at both KS4 and 'A' level.

Science

The overall quality of the provision in science is **outstanding**.

The strengths of the work include the:

- excellent working relationships established in all of the classes, and the motivation and enjoyment of the pupils in their learning;
- outstanding standards attained by the pupils at GCSE level, and the high level of participation in extra-curricular science activities;
- quality of the teaching observed which was always good and, in most of the lessons, was very good or outstanding;
- use of a wide range of creative learning and teaching activities to engage the pupils collaboratively in their learning;
- excellent use of self-evaluation which, in consultation with the pupils and with the informed use of data, identifies appropriate areas for future development; and
- the highly effective leadership provided by the acting head of department, the excellent team work that exists within the department, and the commitment of the team to continuous improvement.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Ballycastle High School focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's 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> The evaluation, based on the quality indicators, enabled ETI to make a judgement about the public value provided by the school.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities. Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to mathematics, modern languages and science, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Their findings are reported in Appendix 3.

The inspection also focused on the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life and on the school's progress towards the EF.

The arrangements for the inspection included:

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire to the inspection;
- meetings with representatives from the governors; and
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14 (including the School Council).

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	122	52	42.6	22
Teachers	27	24	88	8
Support Staff	12	8	66	

Source: Returns from questionnaires to Inspection Services Branch at DE * = fewer than 5

The returns from most of the questionnaires sent to the teachers, the support staff and the parents were very positive. A small number of parents reported some concerns regarding aspects of the provision, but the comments, in the main, praised the work of the school. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

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