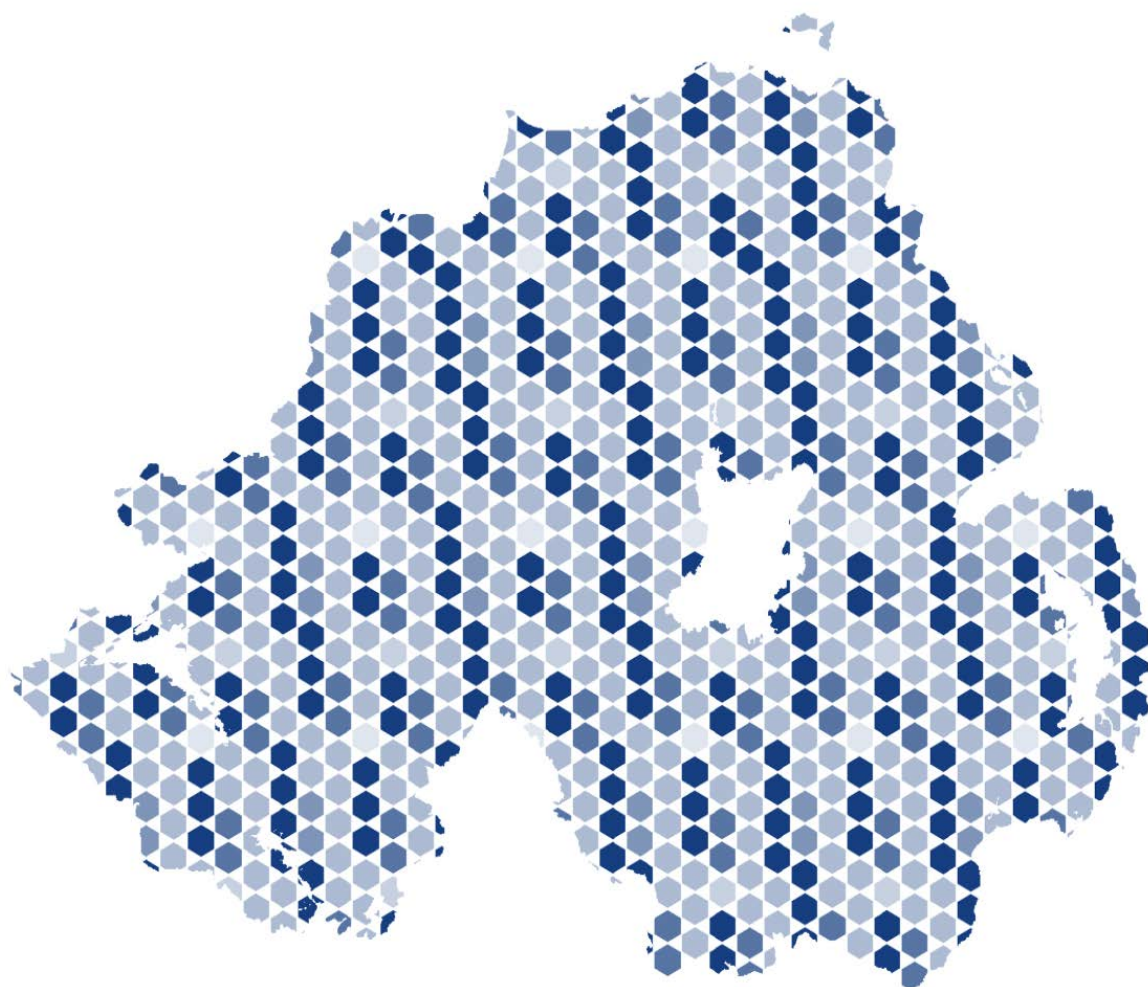


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballyclare Secondary School

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

Report of an Inspection
in January 2013



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CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

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 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>.

Inspectors 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 from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	207	67	33	35
Teachers	72	63	88	18
Support Staff	25	15	60	6

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 (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Ballyclare Secondary School draws its pupils from the town and the wider area. Enrolment in the school has increased over the last three years and the school is currently oversubscribed. The percentage of the pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs (SEN) has doubled over that period and is currently just under one-quarter of the school population. On entry to the school, the majority of the pupils have reached the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics and this proportion is rising. The sixth form enrolment has also increased and currently stands at 155 pupils. At the time of the inspection, work had begun to improve the accommodation for careers, science and SEN provision.

Ballyclare Secondary School	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	183	183	182	172
Enrolment	1016	1009	1030	1034
% Attendance (NI Average)	92 (91)	92 (91)	93 (91)	-
FSME Percentage	9	10	11	11
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	12	15	23	24
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	23	27	28	27
No. of newcomers	-	-	*	*
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	4	3	3	8
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	10	8	10	9
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	74	62	71	79
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	70	61	72	82

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Ballyclare Secondary School focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, history and science provision, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas; a summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on: the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); and the progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision for Learning	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The overall standards achieved by the pupils are satisfactory¹.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils benefit from the many opportunities which support well their learning, achievements and the development of their wider skills and dispositions. The pupils are thoughtful, respectful and articulate. They are enthusiastic learners who respond well when the teachers' expectations are realistically high. The pupils work well independently and when given the opportunity, work very effectively in pairs.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	99	100	99
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	51	61	47
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	32	43	30
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	87	90	85
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	*	*	*

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks²

*= fewer than 5 pupils

The GCSE results had been slowly increasing over the past five years until 2012 when the headline figures fell. The pupils' attainments over the last three years in the majority of individual subjects at grades A* to C and in almost all of the individual subjects at grades A* to E are in line with, or above, the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland average.³ Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more subjects at GCSE grades A* to C including equivalents, and the proportion of pupils achieving five or more subjects at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, has fluctuated, and is below the average for similar schools.

¹ For additional performance data in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendix 1

² DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

³ See Appendix 1 for details.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early and make good progress as a result of the support they receive. Over the last three years, all of the pupils who were entered for a vocational qualification achieved good outcomes.

The senior leadership team (SLT) has identified appropriately that the attainment of pupils entitled to FSM needs to improve and has put in place appropriate measures including the homework club to address this issue. The outcomes for pupils in a minority of subjects at GCSE level require immediate improvement to enable the pupils to access appropriate pathways for the next stage of their learning.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	94	96	94
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	56	42	48
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100	100

Source: Data as held and verified by the school.

At General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level, the percentage of pupils obtaining three grades A* to C in two out of the last three years was above the average for similar schools; all pupils who were entered for A level obtained at least two subjects at grades A* to E, which is well above the average.

The SLT has put in place well-planned and systematic processes to raise further the standards by identifying and addressing underperformance and broadening the curriculum to include more vocational options.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is good.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is good.

The provision in English is satisfactory, in history and in science, it is good⁴.

The teachers are highly committed and very supportive of the school's work in developing further the provision to meet more effectively the needs of all the pupils. They prepare well for lessons and create a very positive learning environment.

Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better. The most effective teaching, in almost one-third of lessons seen, was characterised by: the teachers' high expectations of what the pupils could do; learning activities which engaged the pupils in high-quality thinking; the use of effective questioning to develop the pupils' responses and assess their understanding; the creative use of ICT to support learning; and opportunities for the pupils to develop their literacy skills. In these lessons the pupils achieved very good learning outcomes.

⁴ For detailed findings of the provision in English, history and science see Appendix 2.

The less effective practice, in one-fifth of lessons seen, was characterised by over-direction by the teacher, over-emphasis on low-level tasks, and activities which were not matched sufficiently to the differing needs of the pupils; in these lessons the pupils were unduly passive and under-challenged.

The use of assessment for learning strategies across the school is variable; they are not being used consistently to help the pupils to improve the quality of their work. The school has reviewed its teaching, learning and assessment policies and has identified appropriately the need to improve further the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

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

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the pastoral care is very good.

The pastoral work of the school is given high priority by the SLT and the pupils benefit from the caring and supportive ethos that is evident throughout the school. The quality of the working relationships between the staff and the pupils is mostly very good. The head of pastoral care is committed to meeting the needs of the pupils and is supported effectively by key members of staff and a well-developed pastoral support structure which is valued by the pupils. The pupils reported that they are well looked after and supported, and they spoke positively about the school and the very effective work of the student forum. The staff's very good work with parents, the local community and external agencies benefits well the pupils' learning and development. There is currently an inconsistent approach to promoting positive behaviour and the school has identified appropriately the need to develop the current reward and merit systems and link the developments in promoting positive behaviour to learning and teaching.

The overall quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

The pupils with SEN are integrated well into school life, achieve positions of responsibility within the school, and value highly the additional support which they receive to support their learning. The school identifies early those pupils who need additional support through a range of diagnostic tests and the in-class and withdrawal interventions provided effectively address the pupils' learning requirements. The learning support assistants have a very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils and support them well. Through effective self-evaluation, the SLT has set key priorities to develop further the SEN provision throughout the school, including improving the quality of the pupils' individual education plans.

The quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is very good.

Across the key stages, the pupils have very good opportunities to develop their employability skills and awareness of the career options open to them, in order to prepare them effectively for the next stage of their education or training. The pupils become well-informed through the effective taught programme, the wide range of speakers and visits, the access to impartial advice and the very good links with learning for life and work. The SLT has made the development of CEIAG at whole-school level a priority. This development work is led

effectively by the CEIAG team, and includes the active promotion of CEIAG across the subject departments and through the work of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics working group. The head of department has a clear strategic vision for future development through the school development planning process, which is informed well by rigorous self-evaluation.

3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The curriculum at key stage (KS) 3 is suitably broad and balanced.

At KS4, the school exceeds the Entitlement Framework target and is on course to meet the requirement for post-16 pupils. The school has recently extended its curriculum to include a range of applied and vocational courses that are relevant to the needs, interests and career aspirations of the pupils; the school's monitoring of the pupils' progress on these courses shows that they are achieving well.

The school is working purposefully to develop the provision further through its links with another post-primary school and two local colleges within the area learning community; currently about 13 % of the pupils at post-16 access a small range of courses in these centres. The school has broadened the range of vocational courses offered, including the introduction of an accredited soccer coaching course. It is appropriate that the SLT has prioritised the need to develop further the range of vocational options at post-16.

Throughout the school, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and events which develop well the pupils' personal and inter-personal skills and promotes their sense of social responsibility and respect for others.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The overall quality of the leadership and the management is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The school has experienced significant changes to its senior leadership and middle management in the last three years, including the appointments of the principal, two vice-principals, an acting vice-principal and eight heads of department.

The Principal provides highly effective strategic leadership. She has built a strong core SLT who, together with the staff, are highly committed to raising standards and developing the provision in the best interests of all the pupils. The Principal leads by example and is an excellent role model, fostering positive relationships and promoting high expectations of, and for, the pupils. She values highly the work of the staff and the contributions of the pupils, parents and carers and has led the school most ably in developing a collegial approach to school improvement. She has put in place systematic processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision.

In the relatively short time that they have been in place, the vice-principals have implemented very good strategic actions to effect improvement such as the development of the KS4 strategy for assessing, tracking and mentoring pupils, the further development of the pastoral provision and the broadening of the curriculum. These actions are resulting in

improvement. The senior leaders are supported well by the wider staff and the parents and carers. The very effective communication, excellent working relationships and strong sense of collegiality across the school have facilitated well the development of a culture of self-evaluation and improvement.

The subject leaders and co-ordinators are developing well their capacity for self-evaluation and provide good leadership and management of their areas of responsibility. They now need to identify, share and embed the most effective classroom practice in their areas in order to enhance further the pupils learning experiences, deepen the pupils' understanding, and improve the outcomes they achieve, particularly in the minority of subjects where there is under-performance.

The comprehensive School Development Plan (SDP) sets out clearly the school's current achievements and identifies appropriately the priorities for future development. The SDP is informed well by a whole school self-evaluation process, which includes the rigorous analysis of performance data. The process underpins well the realisation of the school's philosophy and aims, which promote a child-centred approach. There is a range of good action plans to support the implementation of the SDP; it will be appropriate to review and refine them further in light of the findings of this inspection. The SDP meets the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations NI (2010).

The Principal and the staff enjoy a strong level of support from the governors who are well-informed about the work and life of the school and committed to meeting the needs of all the pupils. The governors are effective in their challenge function.

The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the many very positive responses and the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires.

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

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 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.

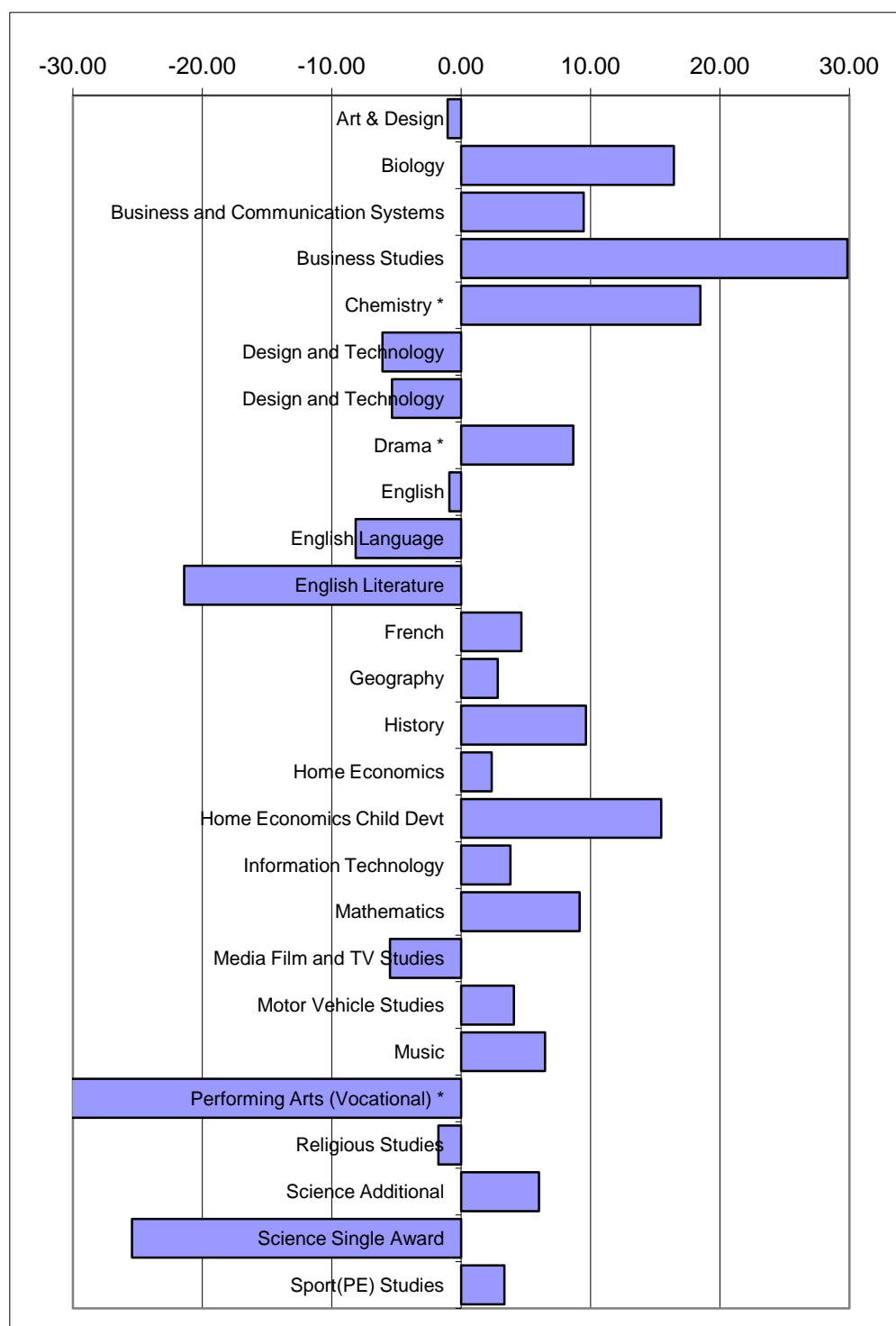
The main area for improvement, which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address, is the need to:

- improve the consistency of the quality of learning and teaching in order to raise the standards the pupils attain.

ETI will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

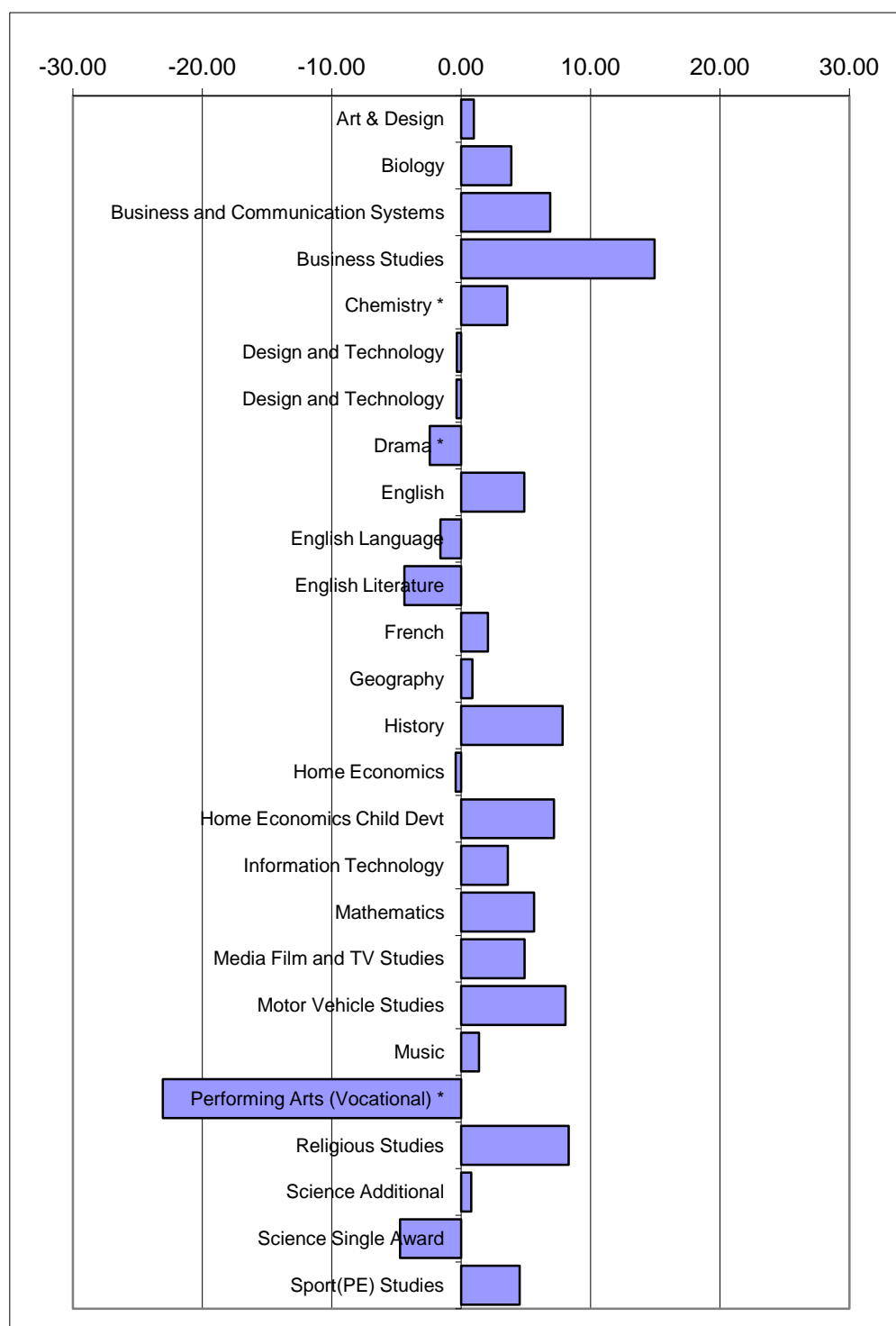
Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- C from 2009-10 to 2011-12



*total number of entries fewer than 30

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

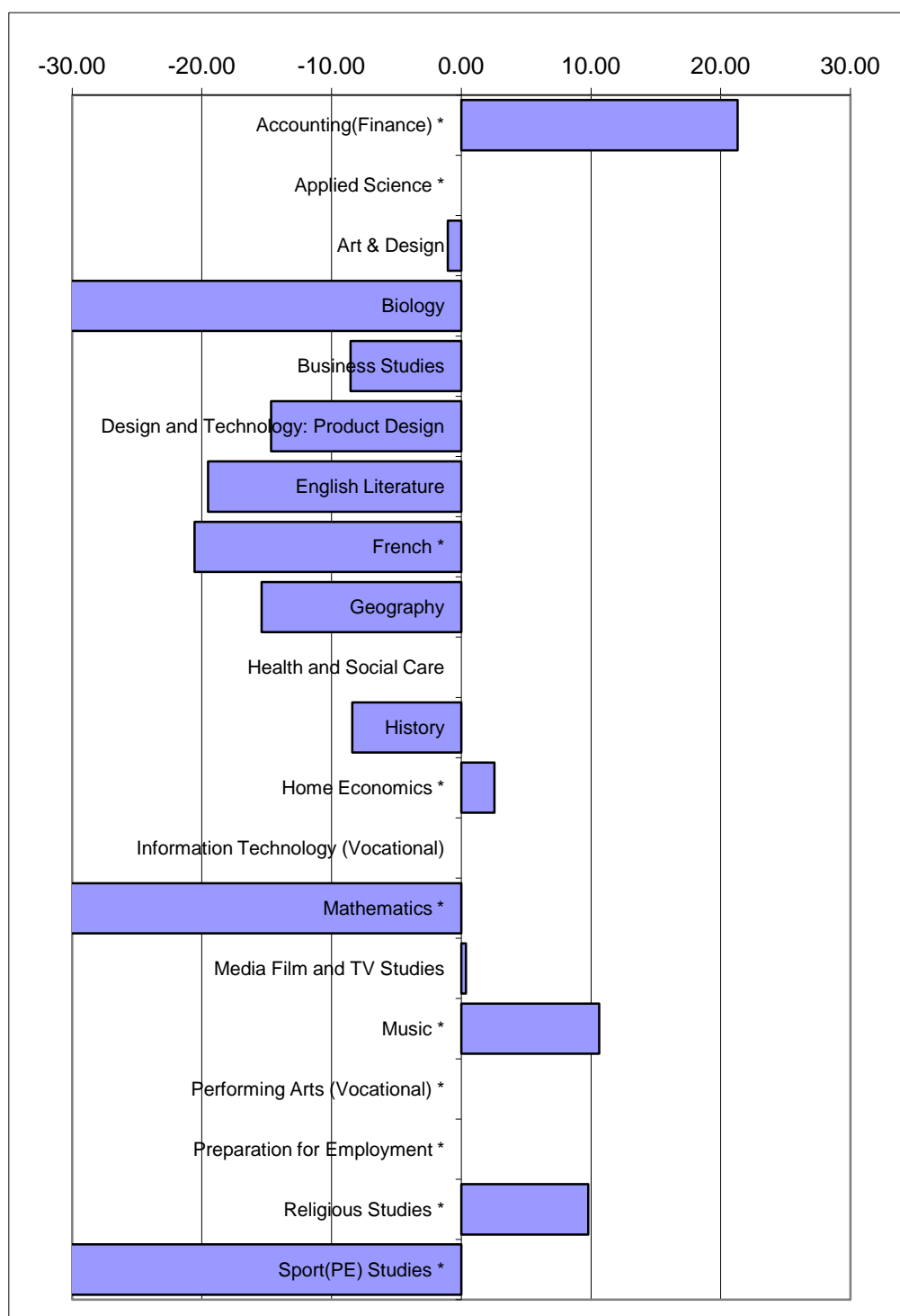
Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- E from 2009-10 to 2011-12



*total number of entries fewer than 30

GCE RESULTS

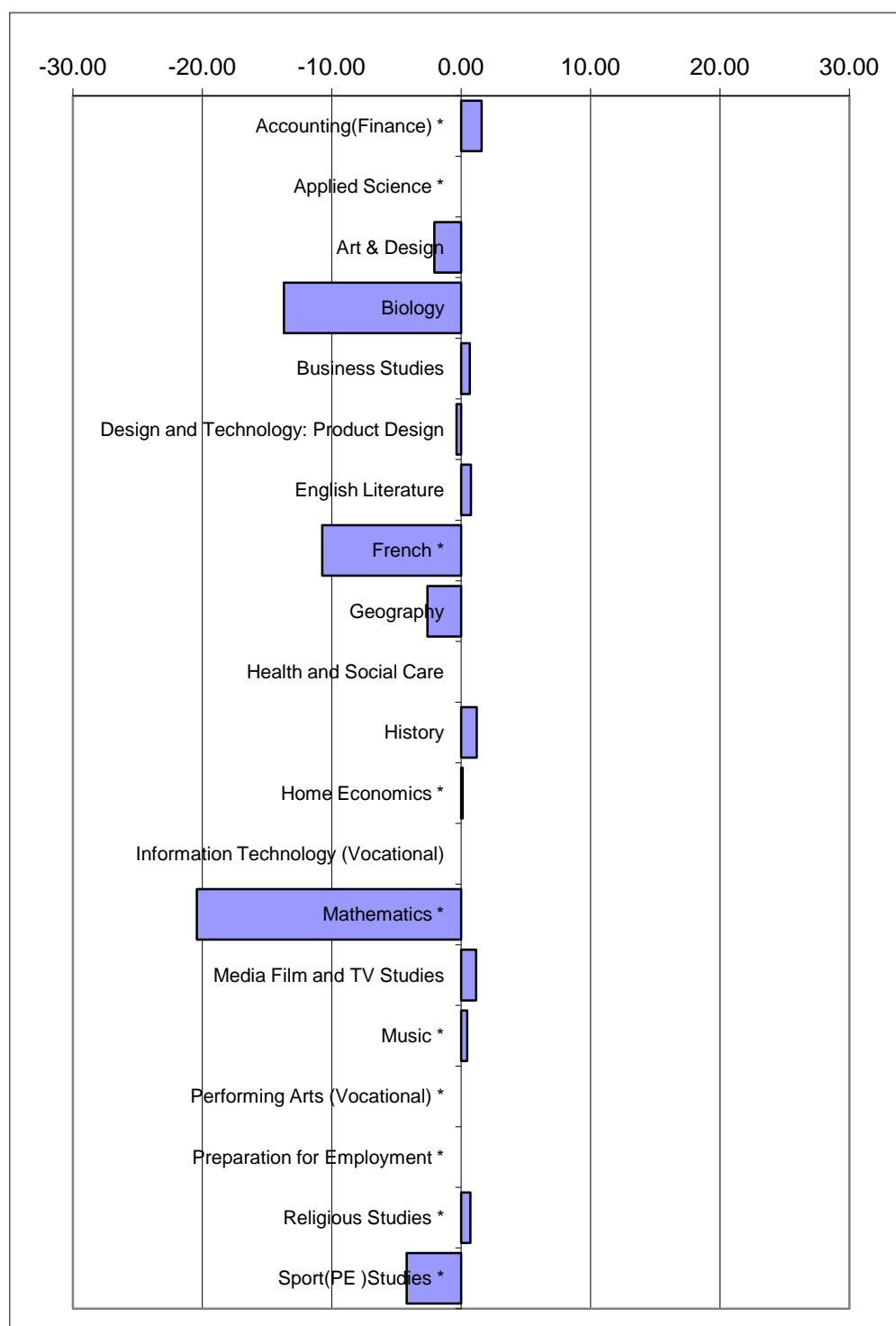
Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- C from 2009-10 to 2011-12



* total number of entries fewer than 20

GCE RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- E from 2009-10 to 2011-12



* total number of entries fewer than 20

1.1 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: Key Stage 4

Other courses taken over the last three years

Entry Level Business Studies	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 3	-	-	16	100	11	100

Entry Level English	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 2	-	-	17	6	-	-
Level 3				94		

Entry Level French	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 3	26	81	15	100	20	100

Entry Level History	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 1	-	-	*	-	*	50
Level 2				100		50

Entry Level ICT	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 1	-	-	10	30	13	85
Level 2				60		-
Level 3				10		-

Entry Level RE	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 1	-	-	43	7	13	22
Level 2				19		26
Level 3				70		19

Entry Level Spanish	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 2	22	0	51	31	47	34
Level 3		0		33		36

Occupational Studies	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Level 1	26	-	18	11	13	31
Level 2		100		44		69

Functional/key skills	2010		2011		2012	
	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass	Number of pupils	% Pass
Application of Number	8	100	8	100	*	100
Communication	14	100	11	100	12	100

*= fewer than 5 pupils

1.2 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: Post-16

Other courses taken over the last three years

Level 2	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
Certificate in Business Studies	100	100	100	34

1.3 STAYING ON RATE 2011/2012 (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	60.0	NI Av. Year 13	47.85
Year 14	28.2	NI Av. Year 14	36.5

1.4 LEAVERS DESTINATIONS

2010/11

	Year 12	NI %	Yr 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	95		70	
Another School	11%	15.8	3%	2.5
Employment	9%	4.4	17%	11.7
Full-time Further Education	52%	45	30%	31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	41%	38.5
Full-time Training	21%	28	1%	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	5%	3.5	4%	6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	2%	3.3	3%	3.1

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, HISTORY AND SCIENCE

English

The quality of the provision in English is satisfactory.

The strengths of the provision include the:

- pupils' positive dispositions to learning and the very good working relationships in all of the lessons observed;
- quality of the learning and teaching which was good or better in just under two-thirds of the lessons observed;
- improvements made to KS3 planning and in marking for improvement, which impacts positively on the pupils' experiences; and
- the more strategic development of the work of the department provided by the recently-appointed Head of English and her commitment to raise standards in the interests of the pupils.

The areas for improvement are to:

- raise the standards the pupils achieve in English and English Literature, particularly at GCSE; and
- improve the quality of the provision further through continuing to develop more engaging resources and teaching strategies to meet the needs and interests of all of the pupils.

History

The quality of the provision in history is good.

The strengths of the provision include the:

- very good standards attained by the pupils in GCSE history;
- very good or outstanding quality of the teaching in two-fifths of the lessons observed which engages the pupils in high-quality learning experiences;
- rigorous analysis of evidence by the pupils of a wide range of evidence in order to develop their critical thinking;
- effective development of the pupils' independent writing across the key stages through the common assessment tasks;
- ability of the pupils to apply their learning in relevant contexts in the majority of the lessons observed; and
- the effective strategic leadership of the recently-appointed head of department and the collegial approach of most of the staff in bringing about improvement.

The area for improvement is to:

- review the departmental planning at KS3, as a matter of urgency, in order to ensure that the pupils are provided with opportunities to meet the requirements of the Northern Ireland curriculum in history; and raise the standards they attain, through more effective differentiation.

Science

The quality of the provision in science is good.

The strengths of the provision include the:

- very good working relationships between the teachers and the pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- wide range of science enrichment activities and science courses offered to meet the needs, interests and career aspirations of the pupils;
- quality of the lessons observed, most of which were good or better;
- the effective use of resources, including ICT and high quality teaching resources, to support the learning; and
- the good, collegial leadership and management of the department; and the good start made to self-evaluation.

The area for improvement is to:

- raise the standards achieved by the pupils, particularly in Core Science, by developing the coherency of, and progression in, the pupils' scientific learning.

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