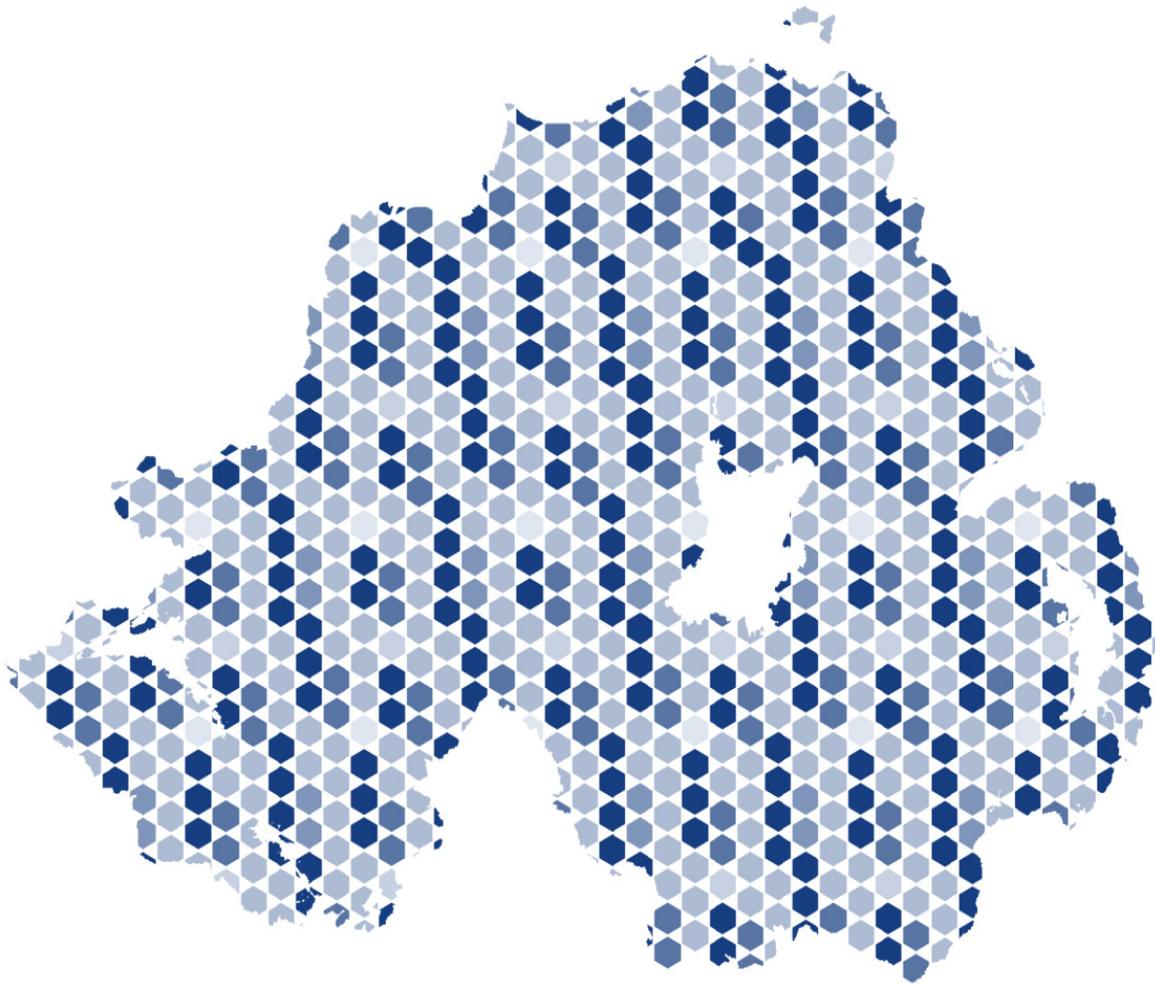


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Banbridge Academy

Controlled, co-educational grammar school

Report of an Inspection
in March 2012

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. CONTEXT	1
2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION	1
3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	1
4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING	2
5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	4
6. CONCLUSION	5
APPENDICES	
APPENDICES 1 and 2	Statistical Information
APPENDIX 3	Summary of Main Findings from the areas under focus: English, History and Modern Languages
APPENDIX 4	Scope and Method of Inspection

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.

BALC	Banbridge Area Learning Community
CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
DE	Department of Education
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EF	Entitlement Framework
FSM	Free School Meals
GCE A	General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KS	Key stage
NI	Northern Ireland
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Banbridge Academy draws its pupils from the town and wider rural areas. The current enrolment is 1324 pupils with approximately 28% of the pupils in the sixth form; the enrolment has remained steady over the last three years and the school is regularly oversubscribed. Very small proportions of the pupils are entitled to free school meals or are identified with special needs. At the time of the inspection, a major refurbishment and new build programme had just been completed.

Banbridge Academy	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	1323	1312	1325	1324
FSM (Band 1) Percentage	1.75%	2.90%	3.47%	4.85%
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	1.21% (16)	0.99% (13)	1.36% (18)	1.79% (17)
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	6	6	6	5
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	0	*	*	0
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	67.89%	71.89%	68.95%	76.47%
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	94.21%	96.22%	87.37%	91.98%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	96.32%	99.46%	94.74%	100.00%
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	96.32%	100.00%	94.21%	100.00%

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; it has demonstrated the capacity for sustained self improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 Overall the standards achieved by the pupils are very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are well motivated and demonstrate a very positive disposition to learning. They settle quickly to their work and interact confidently with their peers, teachers, and other school staff. In most of the lessons observed, the pupils are confident in their learning and make very good progress across the curriculum.

The results in GCSE examinations are very good in two of the past three years; while there was a slight drop in 2010, they remained slightly above the NI average. Almost two-thirds of the results in individual GCSE subjects are five percentage points or more above the corresponding NI averages, at grades A*-B, over the past three years.¹

Over the past three years, 90% of the pupils attained grade A*-B in English and 89% attained grade A*-B in mathematics, both of which are well above the NI average for similar schools.

¹ See Annex 2

Most of the pupils in receipt of SEN support make very good progress and achieve good success in GCSE and GCE A level examinations.

The pupils benefit from innovative and effective use of ICT to aid their learning, inside and outside of school, through the school's online learning environment.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 1	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	97.68	96.76	100
Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools	Above average	In line with the average	Above average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	95.19	91.89	96.74
Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools	Above average	In line with the average	Above average

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

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 1	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	79.17	82.68	79.14
Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools	Well above average	Well above average	Above average

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

The percentage of pupils obtaining grades A to C in three or more subjects at A Level over the past three years is above the NI average for similar schools; just over one-half of the individual subjects at grades A-C are five percentage points or more above the corresponding NI averages².

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The provision in English is outstanding, in modern languages it is very good, and in history it is good.

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory with four-fifths of lessons evaluated as good or better. Over half of the lessons seen were very good or outstanding.

² See Annex 2

In the more effective practice, pupils developed a range of skills that supported their independent learning. Teaching built effectively on previous learning and the pupils, including those who need additional support with their learning, participated in well-planned, active and enjoyable learning experiences; in the majority of the lessons, ICT enhanced effectively the pupils' learning.

Less effectively, in one-fifth of the lessons observed, the work was over-directed by the teacher, leaving the pupils with fewer opportunities to interact with each other and develop their thinking.

The pupils with SEN learn alongside their peers, receive good quality well-focused support and use resources that enable them to overcome barriers to learning. Those pupils who are at risk of marginalisation are well supported; effective systems promote their inclusion in all aspects of school life. The SENCO and the Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care work effectively together to plan and implement strategies to support individual pupils.

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

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are very well cared for through an holistic approach to their educational, social and emotional development. They respond positively to the supportive and inclusive ethos evident in almost all of the classrooms.

The Year 8 pupils settle well as a result of the effective induction programme, the support received from key staff and form prefects and the effective links with the local primary schools. In KS4 and at post-16, the pupils benefit from the wide-range of opportunities available to them to take responsibility and to participate in extra-curricular and the House system activities; all of which are designed to meet specific interests.

The personal development and Form class programmes are suitably varied; they feature well-targeted activities which encourage and support the pupils to explore personal and social issues. The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary; those interviewed say that they feel safe and secure in school and are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care provides highly effective leadership and is very well supported by a dedicated, intuitive and hard-working pastoral team.

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

The curricular provision for the pupils at KS3 and KS4 is good. The curricular provision for the pupils in the sixth form is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

At KS4, the school offers seven applied courses and is working towards meeting the requirements of the EF. It aims to provide additional applied courses which will meet the needs and aspirations of all of the pupils. The school is meeting the requirements of the EF through the post-16 courses on offer, and, in conjunction with the local college of further education, has developed a good range of general and applied courses. Although currently none of the pupils attend courses in other schools, the Academy remains committed to the BALC and there are effective links and clustering arrangements with pupils from other local schools taking courses taught at the Academy.

Most of the pupils engage in a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, including sporting, enterprise and arts activities, which meets their needs and interests very effectively.

The quality of the provision for CEIAG is good.

The pupils benefit from a range of work-related learning experiences, including enterprise activities, work-shadowing and interview skills training, which help them to develop their self-awareness and their employability skills. They have access to high-quality ICT-based careers resources and facilities, and up-to-date information which assists them in decision-making and personal career planning, and raises their awareness of the education, training and employment pathways available to them. The employability and careers lessons are well-planned and well-structured, and the pupils engage enthusiastically in the learning.

The careers department has identified appropriate areas for further development through effective monitoring and evaluation of the provision; these include, the need for continuity and progression in developing the pupils' knowledge and skills at KS3 and KS4, and the embedding of CEIAG within the specialist subjects to support the taught employability and careers programmes.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and the management are good.

KEY FINDINGS

The Principal provides very good leadership; he is highly effective and adopts a pragmatic approach to leading the school, which is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the pupils and staff. His clear strategic direction for the school and commitment to the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils have gained him the respect of the governors, teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community. Since taking up his appointment 16 years ago, the Principal has worked with the school community with great energy and dedication to develop the school's distinctive pupil-centred ethos, its strong sense of collegiality among the staff and the continuous improvement of the educational provision within the school. More recently he has overseen successfully the challenges of a major renovation and new school building programme which was completed in September 2011.

The Principal is supported by the SMT comprising three Vice-principals and four senior teachers who hold a wide range of operational, whole school responsibilities. The SMT are dedicated and hard-working, demonstrate a strong sense of collegial responsibility and work together in the best interests of the pupils. There is a clear and appropriate commitment by the Principal to develop further the strategic leadership role and professional capacity of the whole SMT in order to improve the school's processes of monitoring and evaluation.

Overall the quality of middle management is good. The subject leaders and co-ordinators have begun to implement effective strategies to improve the quality of learning and teaching, such as the collation and tracking of pupil performance data to identify systematically, key areas for school improvement including the focus on classroom practice and formative assessment to identify and address potential under-achievement.

There are appropriate and well-developed policies for literacy and numeracy; it is timely that the SMT are reviewing how to build further the leadership capacity for leading the continuing implementation, monitoring and development of cross-curricular skills.

At the time of the inspection the SDP was being reviewed in line with The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010, through good consultation with staff, pupils and governors to identify priorities for school improvement. In addition, the SMT has conducted a thorough review of the school's provision with the use of the development planning indicators from DE's policy, *Every School a Good School*, and other quality indicators to focus consistently on development planning. As a result of this good work, the SMT identified variation in attainment, and, over the past two years, has begun to make use of the wide range of internal and external performance data collated by subject departments in order to set baselines and track the pupils' progress. This information is not yet being used by leaders at all levels to plan and evaluate classroom practice and measure improvements in the pupils' learning in order to raise the standards being achieved.

The school has very good, comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

The governors are well informed about the life and work of the school; they work effectively with the Principal to ensure that the school is well-managed and provide challenge where needed.

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

The school's accommodation is excellent and contributes well to the attractive and inclusive learning environment throughout the school.

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; it has demonstrated the capacity for sustained self improvement.

STATISTICAL

- 1.1 i. School: **Banbridge Academy** v. Date of Inspection: **W/C 05/03/12**
 ii. School Reference Number: **541-0013** vi. Area of Study: **Standard Inspection**
 iii. Age Range: **11-18**
 iv. Status: **Controlled Grammar**

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	184	190	185	190	187
Total enrolment	1311	1323	1312	1325	1324

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	97.7	95.7	96.6	95.2	96.7	95.2	92.9	96	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 84.48 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.794
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 15.732 Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study: 28 (Focused only)

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	97	98	93	96	85	103	76	648
Enrolment: Girls	90	94	98	100	97	89	108	676
Enrolment: Total	187	192	191	196	182	192	184	1324
PTR								

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

Year 13	92.4	NI Av Year 13	93.9
Year 14	81.9	NI Av Year 14	86.9

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	23		182	
Another School	17%	30.7	0%	1.7
Employment	0%	3	0%	3.6
Full-time Further Education	39%	54.1	2%	10.2
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	94%	80.6
Full-time Training	4%	6.5	0%	0.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	0.7	0%	1.3
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant		4.9	4%	2

TABLE 1 outlines the school's GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS - HEADLINE STANDARDS

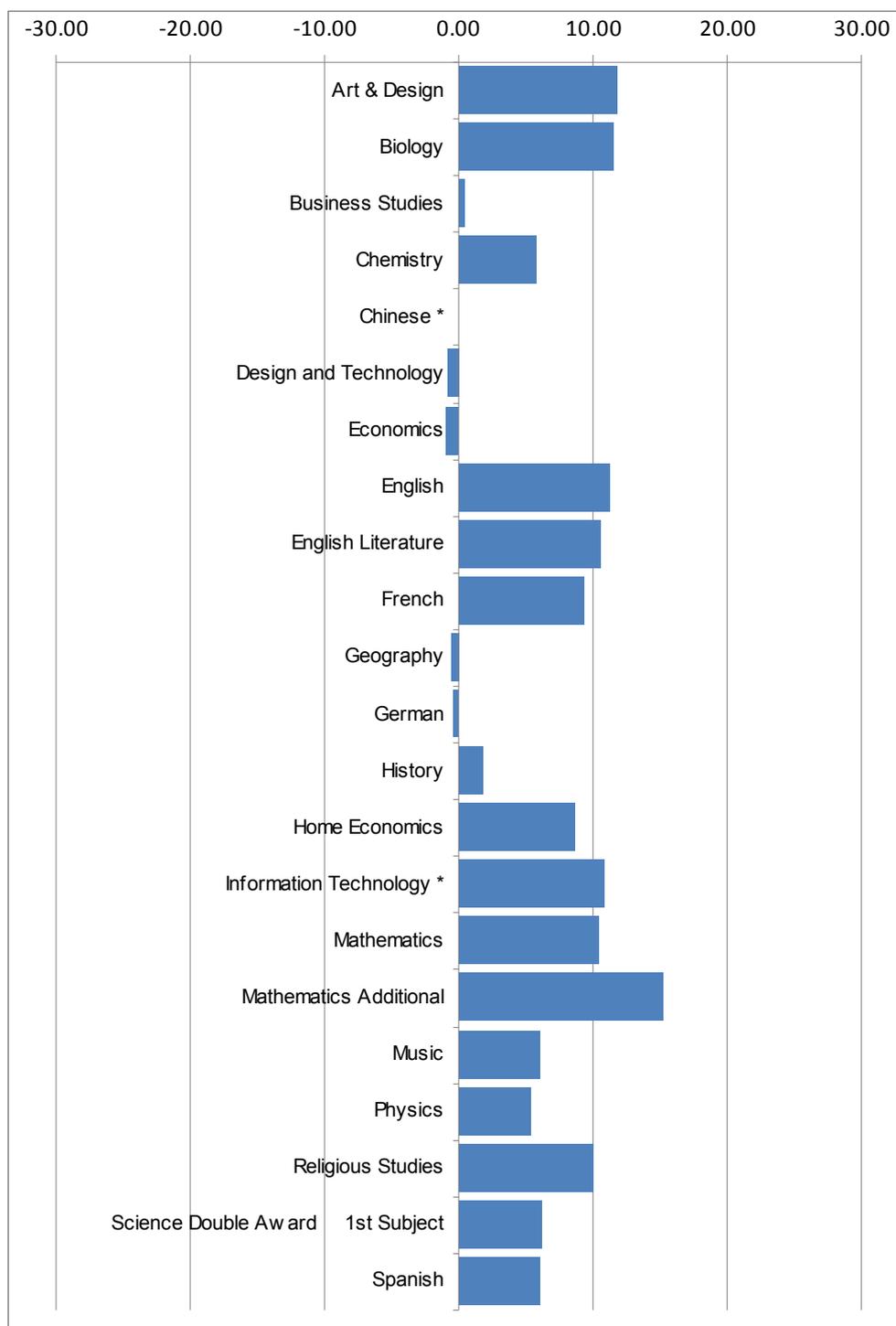
NB: The NI average for all selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics in 2011 is 90.4%

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 1	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	97.68	96.76	100
<i>Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	95.19	91.89	96.74
<i>Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Above average</i>

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

Comparison of the school's 3 year average for GCSE A*-B with the NI average



GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS

HEADLINE STANDARDS

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

NB: The NI average for all selective schools of pupils entered for A2 level or equivalent: who achieve:

3 or more grades A*-C = 76.5%

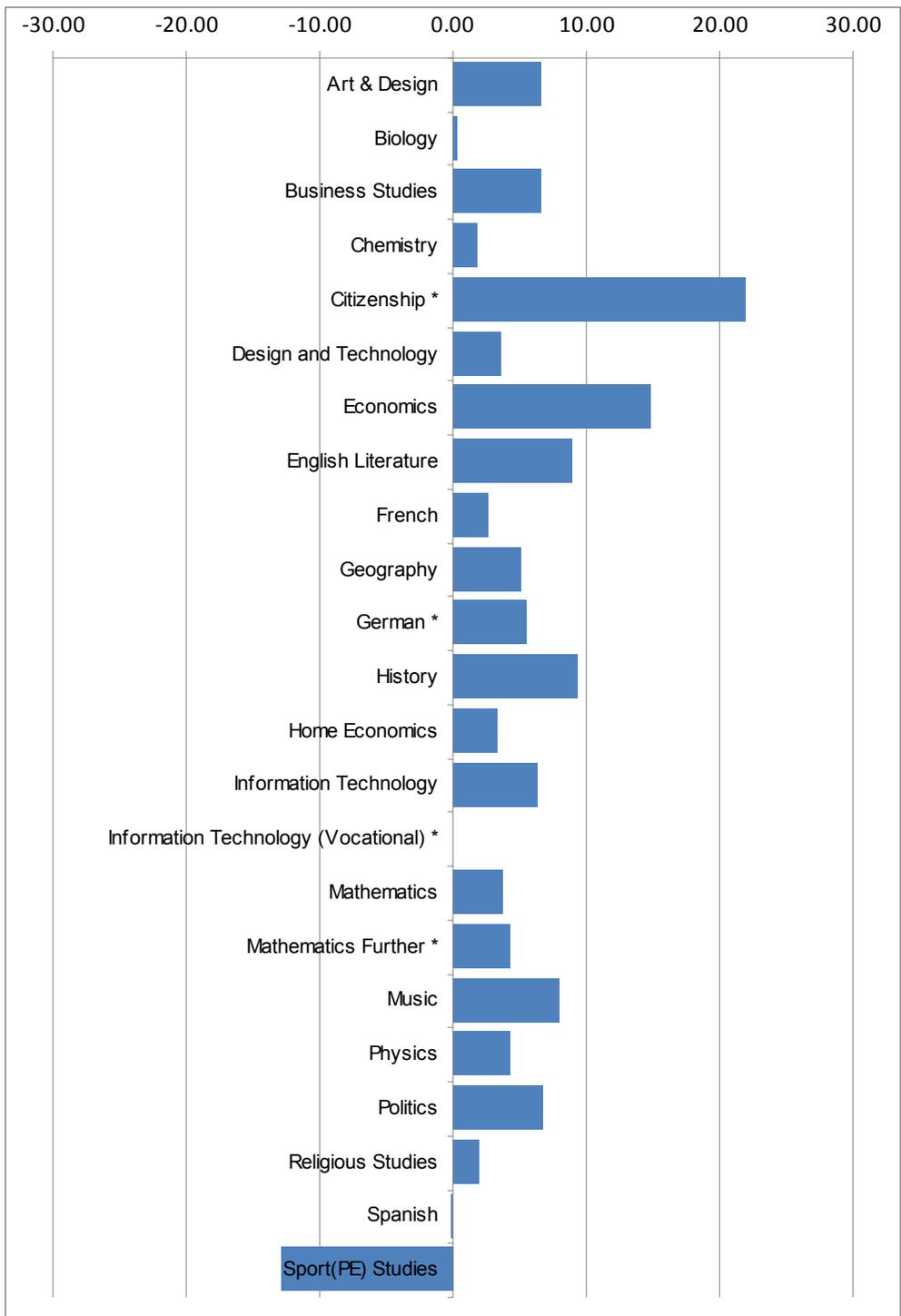
2 or more grades A*-E = 99.3%

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on FSM Band 1	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	79.17	82.68	79.14
<i>Comparison with the NI benchmarking for similar schools</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>

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

Comparison of the school's 3 year average for A level A-C with the NI average



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision in English is outstanding.

The strengths include:

- the results achieved in external exams at GCSE and A level, which are consistently above the NI average;
- the excellent personal and social skills of the pupils and the high quality working relationships established in all classes;
- the highly effective use made of self-evaluation to inform future development work within the department;
- the quality of the teaching observed, which was mostly very good or better;
- the outstanding leadership provided by the Head of English; and
- the hard working teachers who plan and prepare for their lessons in a most effective and thorough way.

History

The quality of the provision in history is good.

The strengths include:

- the very good working relationships between the teachers and pupils;
- the well-motivated pupils who display enthusiasm for the subject;
- the high standards attained by the pupils in examinations at KS4 and at post-16;
- the quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was good or better, with half being very good or outstanding;
- the use of the locality, contemporary politics, special events and educational visits to make history real and relevant for the pupils; and
- the effective teamwork of the Head of Department and staff in order to bring about improvement.

The area for improvement includes the need:

- to raise the standards attained by the pupils at KS3 through effective planning for learning, teaching and assessment.

Modern Languages

The quality of the provision in modern languages is very good.

The strengths of the work observed include:

- the sustained use of the target language as a means of instruction by most of the teachers;
- the quality of the teaching, which was good or better in most of the lessons observed;
- the use of ICT by the pupils and the teachers to present new language and to promote their extended oral and written responses;
- the enthusiastic response of most of the pupils who develop good accuracy and fluency by year 14;
- the consistently good examination results which are at or above the NI average for similar schools; and
- the effective leadership characterised by good collaboration and communication across the various language departments.

The area for improvement includes the need:

- to provide more challenging opportunities for reading and writing across the languages.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Banbridge Academy 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 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>. 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 CEIAG, English, modern languages and history providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Detailed findings are reported in Annex 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 progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	272	119	43.8	62
Teachers	93	53	57	8
Support Staff	23	10	43.5	*

* = fewer than 5

The returns from questionnaires sent to the teachers and support staff was positive in almost all respects; in particular, they were highly affirmative of the leadership. While most parents were affirmative about most aspects of the schools work, a minority of parents registered their concerns about shortcomings in aspects of the quality of teaching and learning and in the CEIAG provision. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

The pupils with whom discussions were held, talked about the caring ethos of the school. In particular, they indicated how they had benefited from the commitment of nearly all of the staff in providing the best possible educational experience which included appropriate careers guidance and support.

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