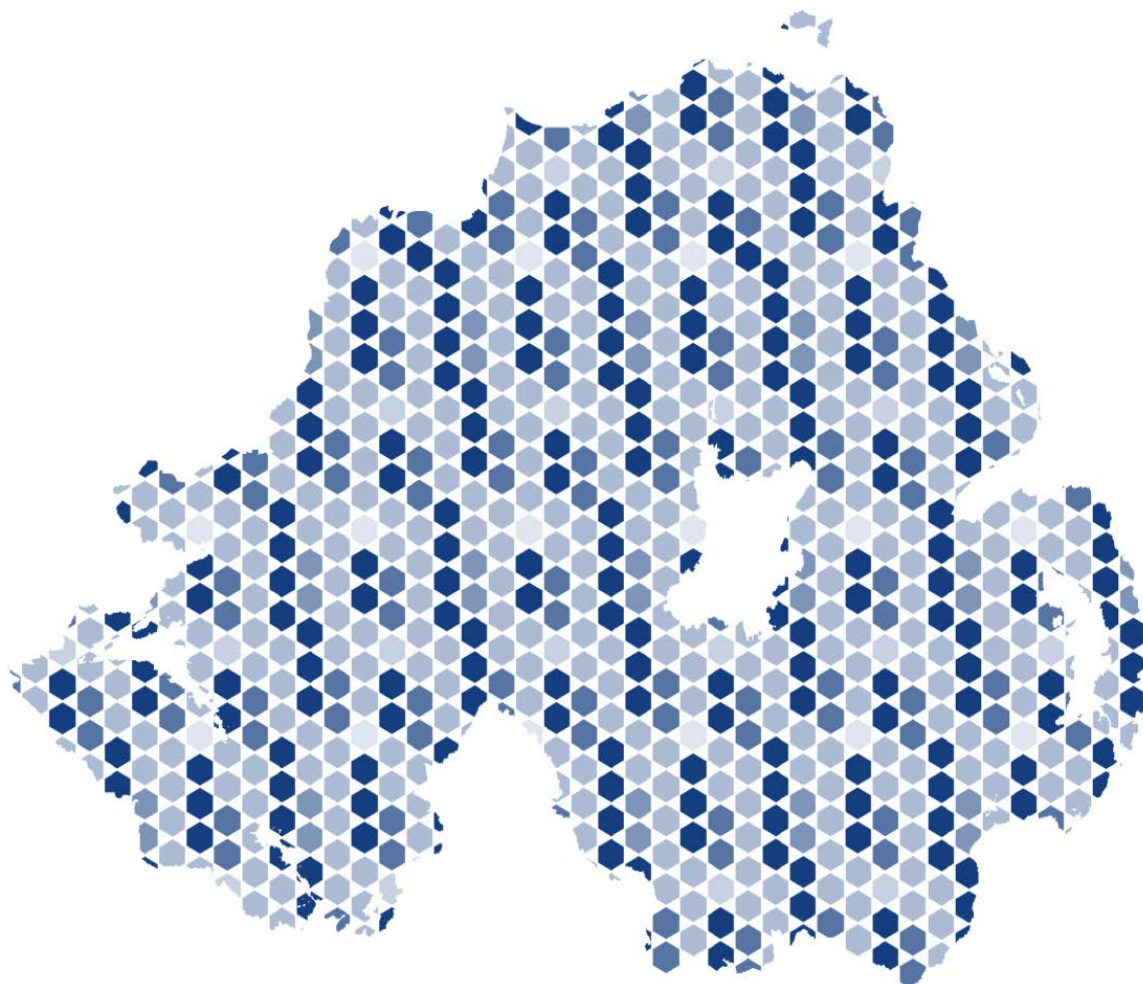


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

## Banbridge High School

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

Report of an Inspection  
in March 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, 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	136	46	33.8%	25
Teachers	47	23	48.9%	12
Support Staff	30	8	26.7%	*

\* fewer than 5

## 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

Banbridge High School draws its pupils from the town of Banbridge and the wider rural area. Intake has decreased over the past four years and the proportion of the pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs has remained steady. The Southern Education and Library Board assesses and places pupils with specific learning needs from throughout the Board area in the school's Learning Support Centre (LSC); there are presently 51 pupils in the centre. There are 68 pupils in the sixth form.

On entry to the school approximately 70% of the pupils have attained the expected level in English and mathematics at key stage (KS) 2. The quantitative data collated by the school indicates that across KS3 and KS4, most of the classes are composed of pupils across the full range of ability.

Banbridge High School	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	143	120	97	95
Enrolment	660	676	679	646
% Attendance (NI Average)	90 (91)	90 (91)	91 (91)	91 (91)
FSME Percentage	16.8	18.5	18.9	19.0
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	16.7 (110)	15.7 (106)	15.5 (105)	15.2 (98)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	80	71	74	71
No. of newcomers	7	9	*	*
<b>Intake</b>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	4.9	1.7	6.2	10.5
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	11.9	12.5	10.3	14.7
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	63.6	67.5	58.8	68.4
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	62.2	68.3	57.7	70.5

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

### 1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Banbridge High 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, mathematics and geography 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 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 progress towards the Entitlement Framework.

### 1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate.

#### KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are courteous and their behaviour is very good. In a significant minority of the classes observed by inspectors they demonstrated good thinking and communication skills. In a similar proportion of classes, the pupils had too few opportunities to think both critically and creatively, to contribute to classroom discussions and to reflect purposefully on their own learning. Consequently, the pupils' ability to learn independently, to collaborate with their peers, and to communicate and justify their thinking is underdeveloped across the whole school.

The pupils in the LSC are very well settled in school, have a purposeful disposition to learning, and are developing their social and communication skills well. They respond well to the many opportunities provided to integrate with the other pupils and teachers in the school. Over the last four years, most have achieved very good standards in a range of accredited qualifications which have allowed them to progress to appropriate post-16 provision in further education and/or training.

Approximately 15% of the pupils in the mainstream classes in the school have a range of complex social, emotional and learning needs; this proportion has remained steady over the past four years. The majority of the pupils, identified as requiring additional support with their learning, achieve standards in line with their abilities.

#### Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	93.5	97.72	94.7
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	47	46	55
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Significantly below average</i>	<i>Significantly below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	30	31	31
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Significantly below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>

*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	67	72	79
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	0	12	10

**Source:** Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks<sup>1</sup>

The results at KS3 in English and mathematics, for those pupils progressing to year 10, reflect broadly their expected progression, based on their standards of entry in year 8.

Over the past three years, almost all of the pupils have been entered for five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics, has remained static over the last 3 years and is still below the average for similar schools. While there has been an improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C, the standards achieved also remain below average. The performance across the individual subjects at GCSE is equally balanced: almost one-half of the individual subjects at grades A\* to C is below the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland average, with French and Learning for Life and Work well below the average; attainment in just over one-half of subjects is above the same average.

Overall, the GCSE standards at grades A\*-C are improving, but at a slow pace which needs to be increased urgently. The action taken by the principal since his appointment in November 2009 has resulted in the current improvements. For example, with the accompanying and effective leadership and support of his board of governors, he set a policy that all KS4 pupils take GCSE-accredited and GCSE-equivalent courses. The appropriate priority in the school development plan (SDP) is for all teachers to raise further the standards the pupils attain at GCSE and at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level.

A minority of the pupils at KS4 and post-16 are entered for an increasing range of applied GCSE-equivalent courses which are matched closely to their aptitudes and career aspirations. Over the past three years almost all of these pupils achieved a qualification which enables appropriate progression to further courses and career pathways.

#### **Data on Year 14 (A2) performance:**

<b>GCE A Level or equivalent</b>	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	90.9	91.6	74.2
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	0	27	19
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	91	94

**Source:** Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks<sup>2</sup>.

At GCE A level, over the last three years, the standards attained by the pupils have been well below the average and require urgent improvement. Of the pupils who complete three Advanced Subsidiary (AS) levels in year 13, too few complete three A2 levels. Conversely, almost all the pupils who were entered for applied and vocational courses in 2012 achieved very good outcomes. The school is presently reviewing the balance of A level courses it offers; the inspection endorses this review as an important priority.

<sup>1</sup> DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

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

### **3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

#### **3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

##### **KEY FINDINGS**

##### **3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is satisfactory.**

The provision in English and geography is satisfactory, and in mathematics it is good.

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from very good to satisfactory; while a significant minority of the lessons was evaluated as very good, a similar proportion require improvement.

In the most effective practice: the pupils had frequent opportunities to exercise initiative and independence, and to give extended oral and written responses to well-conceived questions posed by the teacher. The lessons were well-paced, well-managed and pitched at an appropriate level to support and challenge the pupils, who achieve good outcomes as a result. In particular, the skills and knowledge developed and acquired were consolidated effectively through skilfully-planned plenary sessions.

In the less effective practice: the level of the pupils' engagement in learning was too low, owing to whole-class teaching in which the work was directed excessively by the teacher, ineffective questioning, and a lack of challenge in the standard of the work expected. The learning was not matched to the wide range of needs and abilities of the pupils and, as a consequence, the pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. The school is developing its self-evaluation arrangements to help identify and disseminate more effectively the existing good teaching practice to all of the teachers; the inspection confirms that this is not only appropriate, but a pressing priority.

The effective use of assessment to support learning is developing well in a majority of subjects. In the best practice, it is informing well the teachers' planning for progression and is helping the pupils to learn. However, the impact of this practice is not yet reflected sufficiently in the overall standards which the pupils achieve.

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

##### **KEY FINDINGS**

##### **The quality of the pastoral care is satisfactory.**

The staff work well together within the existing pastoral structures in the school. During the inspection there were very good relationships observed between the pupils and their teachers, and very good behaviour by the pupils in class and as they moved about the school. There are good working partnerships between the school and parents, and a range of other agencies and professionals who give good support to vulnerable pupils to help reduce barriers to learning.

Links with primary schools result in a comprehensive induction process which eases the transition of the pupils into the school.



The recently-formed school council provides frequent and comprehensive opportunities for the pupils to contribute to decision-making about aspects of school life. The pupils speak very highly of the level of pastoral support they receive for their care and well-being from all the staff, and strongly endorse the benefits of the active involvement of a significant number of their peers in the school council. To improve the existing satisfactory level of the effectiveness of the pastoral programme, the following aspects require attention: the various pastoral roles and responsibilities need more clearly defined; staff with pastoral duties require more detailed guidance and structure for their work, including any teaching duties associated with the pastoral programme; and, a more effective use of form time to support learning, and the pastoral programme in general, is needed. The review should include the taught personal development programme and the Learning for Life and Work course, and should set out clearly the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the expected impact of the pastoral programme on improving the standards that the pupils reach in all aspects of their learning.

The pupils indicated that they felt safe and secure in school, and reported that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

**The quality of provision for pupils in the Learning Support Centre is very good.**

The pupils from the LSC integrate well into mainstream classes for science, technology, art, home economics and physical education, and attend the centre for all other subjects. Within the LSC, the teachers and classroom assistants provide the pupils with a strongly inclusive, supportive and caring learning environment. The learning and teaching is planned carefully and effectively around the individual academic and emotional needs of each pupil, and is matched well to their interests and abilities. The quality of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources available within the centre is excellent, and ICT is used effectively to support and develop the pupils' learning.

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

There are effective arrangements in place to identify pupils in the main classes in the school who require additional support with their learning. For those pupils whose reading age is below the expected level, there is an effective Reading Partnership programme which is managed well by the literacy coordinator, and delivered to a high standard by trained classroom assistants and sixth form pupils. The targets within the individual education plans are appropriate and detailed, but are not used sufficiently by a significant minority of teachers to inform their planning and classroom practice. The special educational needs coordinator has identified appropriately a number of areas for development which include the need to: strengthen the links with the English and mathematics teachers; support all teachers in using subject-specific strategies to meet the individual needs of the pupils; work more closely with the classroom assistants to maximise their contribution to the pupils' learning; and, monitor and evaluate the standards achieved by the pupils with special needs.

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

The pupils make use of a broad range of careers information during the taught sessions to inform their individual career planning, and have a sound knowledge of potential career pathways. The pupils benefit from their participation in a week of work experience, in each of years 12 and 13, which contributes very well to their understanding of the world of work and informs well their career aspirations. The careers teacher who oversees the programme

is leading the further development of the careers provision well by identifying appropriate areas for improvement. These include the need for more meaningful reflection by the pupils on the advice and information which they receive and for closer links with the Personal Development and Learning for Life and Work programmes, focused on how these elements can play a fuller part in the careers provision.

### **3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is satisfactory.**

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils at KS3. At KS4, the pupils have access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses through collaboration with neighbouring schools and the Southern Regional College. The school is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The post-16 curriculum has been extended in recent years through shared courses and while the pupils have access to an increasing range of subjects, the sixth form is presently too small to be viable.

The extensive extra-curricular programme, with a good range of sporting and non-sporting activities available during lunch and after-school, helps develop the individual talents, confidence and self-esteem of the pupils.

## **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 The quality of the leadership and the management is satisfactory.**

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

Following his appointment in 2009, the principal reviewed and amended the school's examination entry policy and set higher expectations for the teachers to improve teaching, learning and outcomes. As a result, the pupils now have a much greater degree of access to accredited qualifications; for example, almost all of the pupils are now entered for GCSE English and mathematics: all will be entered in 2013-2014. The GCSE examination results for any five subjects at grades A\* - C have improved.

Under the principal's leadership, and with the leadership and support of the governors, the school has completed a protracted but necessary period of review and reorganisation of its priorities. This has included defining appropriately the roles and responsibilities within the senior leadership team and of the middle managers; these roles are now better focused on bringing about improvement.

All staff now accept that meeting the academic aspirations of the pupils and their parents and carers is their key priority; this is reflected in the SDP. The indications are that while the teachers and leaders are working more collaboratively to stem the decline in GCSE results, there is still a great deal of work to do to reverse the trend decisively, when the school's results are compared to examination benchmarks for similar schools.

Most subject leaders and co-ordinators, challenged and supported where necessary by the principal and members of the senior leadership team, are developing their capacity for self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is informed by helpful analysis of pupil performance data to identify actions for improvement. In a minority of cases, the departmental plans contain insufficient detail on the range of teaching and learning approaches needed to meet effectively the varying needs of all of the pupils.

The SDP meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2005, with clear and realistic targets for improvement, including examination results. The SDP includes sharply-focused arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which these targets are met, including those for under-achieving subjects. A few departmental action plans, including for pastoral care, do not identify sufficiently the range of mechanisms necessary to monitor and evaluate the success of their improvement strategies, particularly the effectiveness of any adjustments to teaching and learning that are made as part of the improvement process.

Overall, the school has suitable processes to address the areas for improvement identified in the SDP and is demonstrating the capacity to address the common areas for improvement.

The governors have a good awareness of whole-school performance in public examinations and the need to raise the standards attained by the pupils. They understand and exercise well their role in providing an effective leadership, challenge and support function.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding which reflect fully 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 satisfactory;** the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all of the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over the next 18 -24 months.

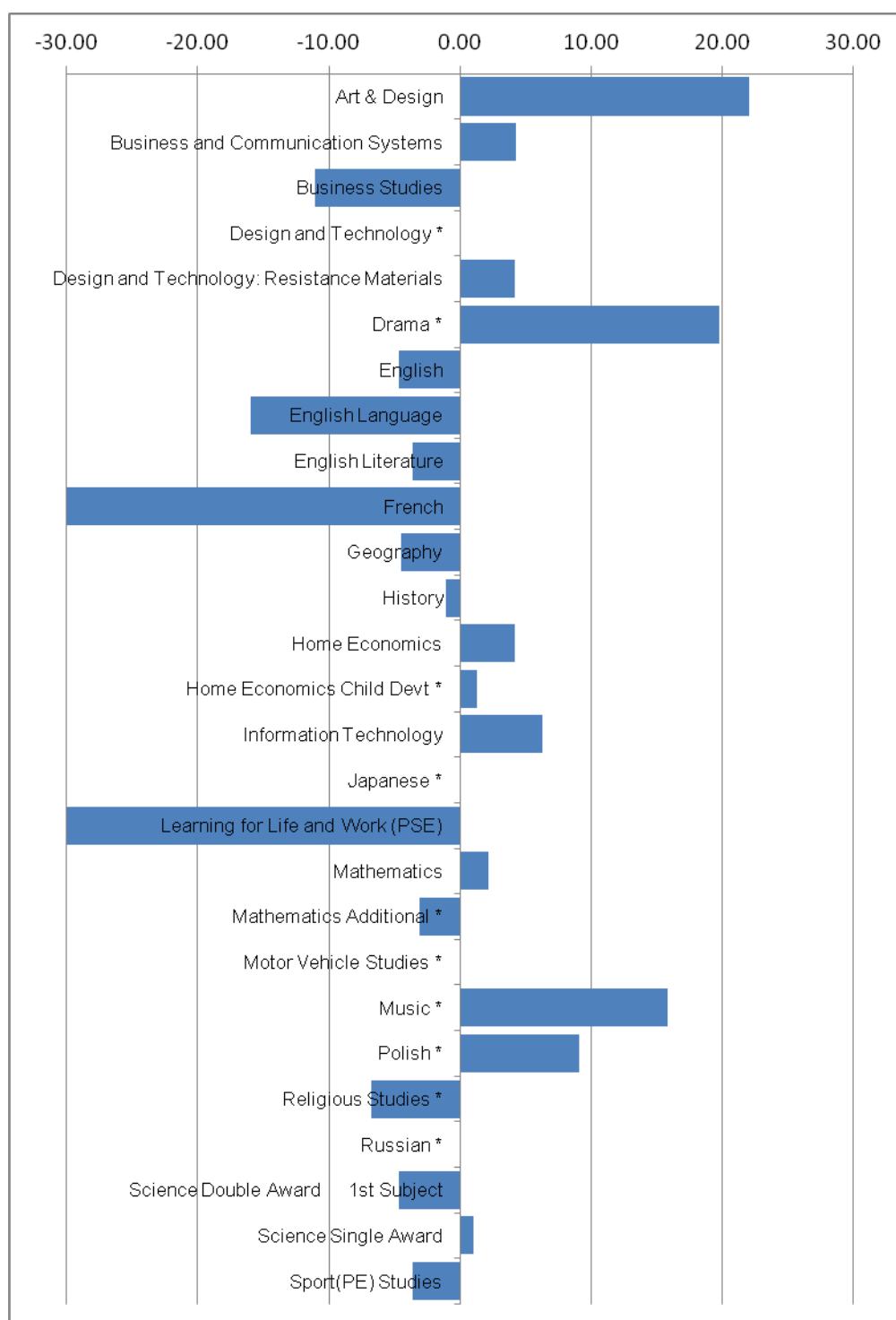
### **5.2 The main areas for improvement include the need to:**

- provide learning activities and programmes, and a greater degree of challenge in the teaching, to meet more effectively the needs of all the pupils;
- improve significantly the overall standards achieved in public examinations, including under-achievement in key subjects; and
- ensure that there is a significant increase in the pace of change, at all levels of leadership.

**5.3** The school needs to review the post-16 arrangements to evaluate the financial implications and the impact on the pupils' experiences. It will be important that the employing authority, school governors, and the staff plan for and manage issues related to the sustainability of the sixth form provision and the projected budget deficit in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

## 1.1 GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

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



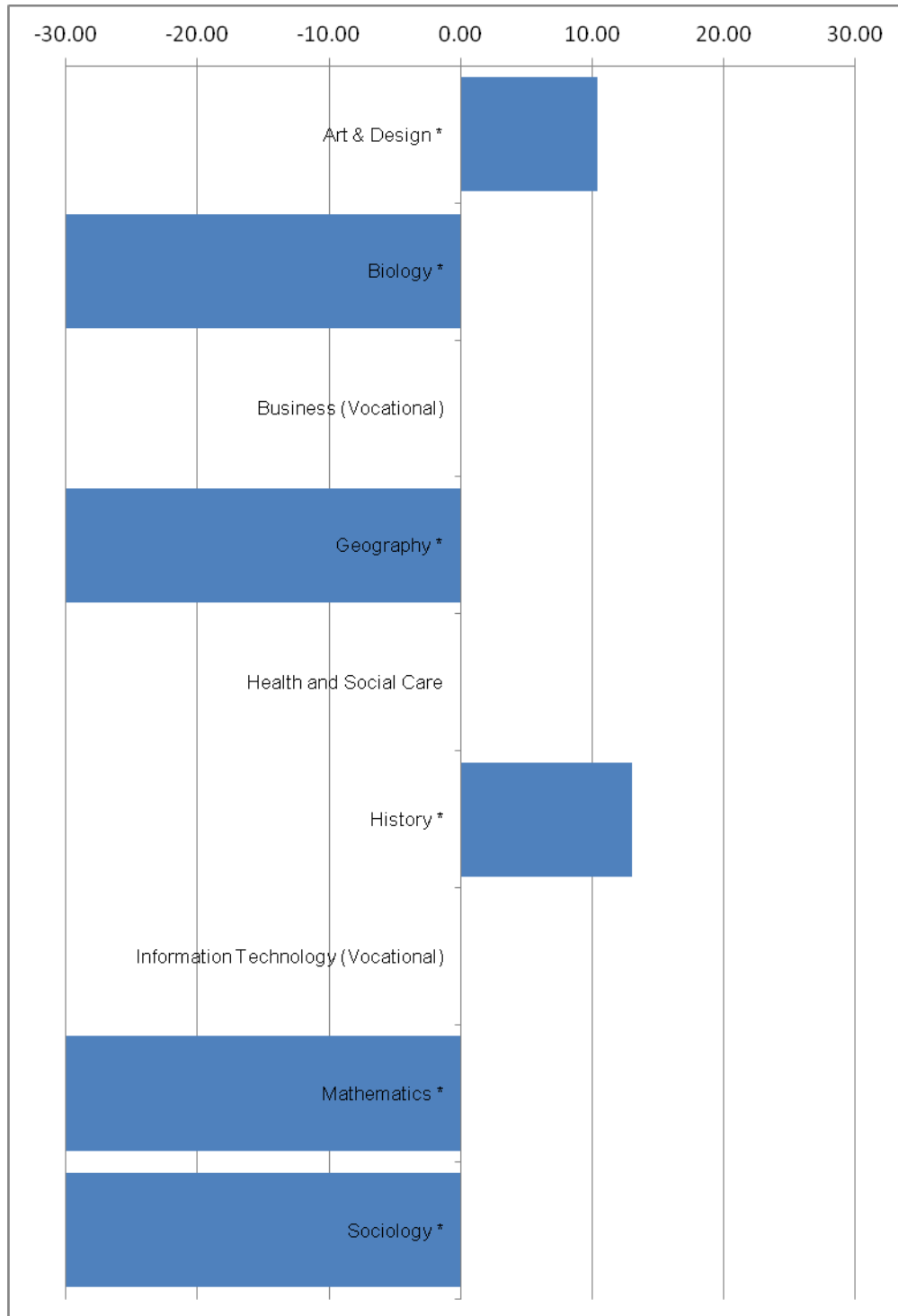
\* total number of entries fewer than 20

^ no entries in 2012

# no entries in 2010

## 1.2 GCE EXAMINATION RESULTS

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



### 1.3 OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4 from 2009-10 to 2011-12

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Retail Double Award (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	14	4	nil	Grades A*-C		100%	67%	nil
Total entered for the award	14	6	nil					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Media (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	6	4	4	Grades A*-C		100%	100%	100%
Total entered for the award	6	4	4					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Engineering (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	15	6	10	Grades A*-C		100%	100%	100%
Total entered for the award	15	6	10					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Travel and Tourism (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	2	nil	4	Grades A*-C		100%	nil	100%
Total entered for the award	2	nil	4					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec ICT (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	3	1	7	Grades A*-C		100%	100%	100%
Total entered for the award	3	1	7					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Performing Arts (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	nil	4	nil	Grades A*-C		nil	100%	nil
Total entered for the award	nil	4	nil					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Countryside and Environment (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	nil	nil	4	Grades A*-C		nil	nil	100%
Total entered for the award	nil	nil	4					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Construction (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	nil	nil	5	Grades A*-C		nil	nil	100%
Total entered for the award	nil	nil	5					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	Edexcel							
Course	Btec Sport (DA)				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	nil	nil	13	Grades A*-C		nil	nil	100%
Total entered for the award	nil	nil	13					
Number of units								

Awarding Body	CCEA							
Course	Occupational Studies				Achievement			
	2010	2011	2012			2010	2011	2012
Number who gained the award	2	4	32	Grades A*-C		33%	67%	78%
Total entered for the award	6	6	41					
Number of units								

#### 1.4 LEAVERS DESTINATIONS 2010-11

	Year 12	NI %	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	80		22	
Another School	16%	15.8	5%	2.5
Employment	4%	4.4	14%	11.7
Full-time Further Education	46%	45	68%	31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	5%	38.5
Full-time Training	25%	28	5%	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	9%	3.5	5%	6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.3	0%	3.1



**SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND GEOGRAPHY**

**English**

**The quality of the provision for English is satisfactory.**

The strengths of the provision include the:

- very good working relationships in all of the classes;
- quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was good or very good;
- good quality of the written work in almost all of the classes, and the appropriately wide range of opportunities to write for different audiences and purposes;
- effective strategies to support the children who have additional needs in their reading; and
- team work and collegial ethos fostered by the head of department.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- develop the processes for monitoring and evaluation in order to inform teaching and meet more effectively the needs of all of the children; and
- disseminate the most effective practice in learning and teaching in order to raise further the standards attained by the pupils in public examinations.

**Mathematics**

**The provision for mathematics is good.**

The strengths of the provision include the:

- good outcomes at grades A\* - C in GCSE mathematics;
- good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers in the lessons observed;
- quality of the teaching and learning observed during the inspection which was almost always good or very good;
- very good range of extra-curricular activities and after school support provided for the pupils;
- strong collegiality of the departmental team, and their commitment to improving the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and the standards they achieve ; and
- very good pastoral and curricular leadership provided by the head of department.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- provide a wider range of differentiated learning activities, especially at KS3, to engage and challenge the pupils across the wide ability range evident in most classes; and
- raise further the standards attained by the pupils in GCE A level mathematics.

## **Geography**

**The quality of the provision for geography is satisfactory.**

The strengths of the provision include the:

- very good working relationships between the teachers and pupils
- quality teaching and learning observed which was good in a majority of the lessons;
- good use of ICT by the teachers to engage the pupils' interests and support their learning;
- effective leadership of the head of department and the commitment of the departmental team to raising standards and improving the provision; and
- good opportunities provided for the pupils to undertake investigative fieldwork activities, and to participate successfully in environmental events and competitions.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- use a wider range of teaching strategies, especially at KS3 to engage and challenge the pupils across the ability range more effectively and develop their independent learning skills; and
- raise the standards attained by the pupils in public examinations and review the provision for geography at post-16.

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