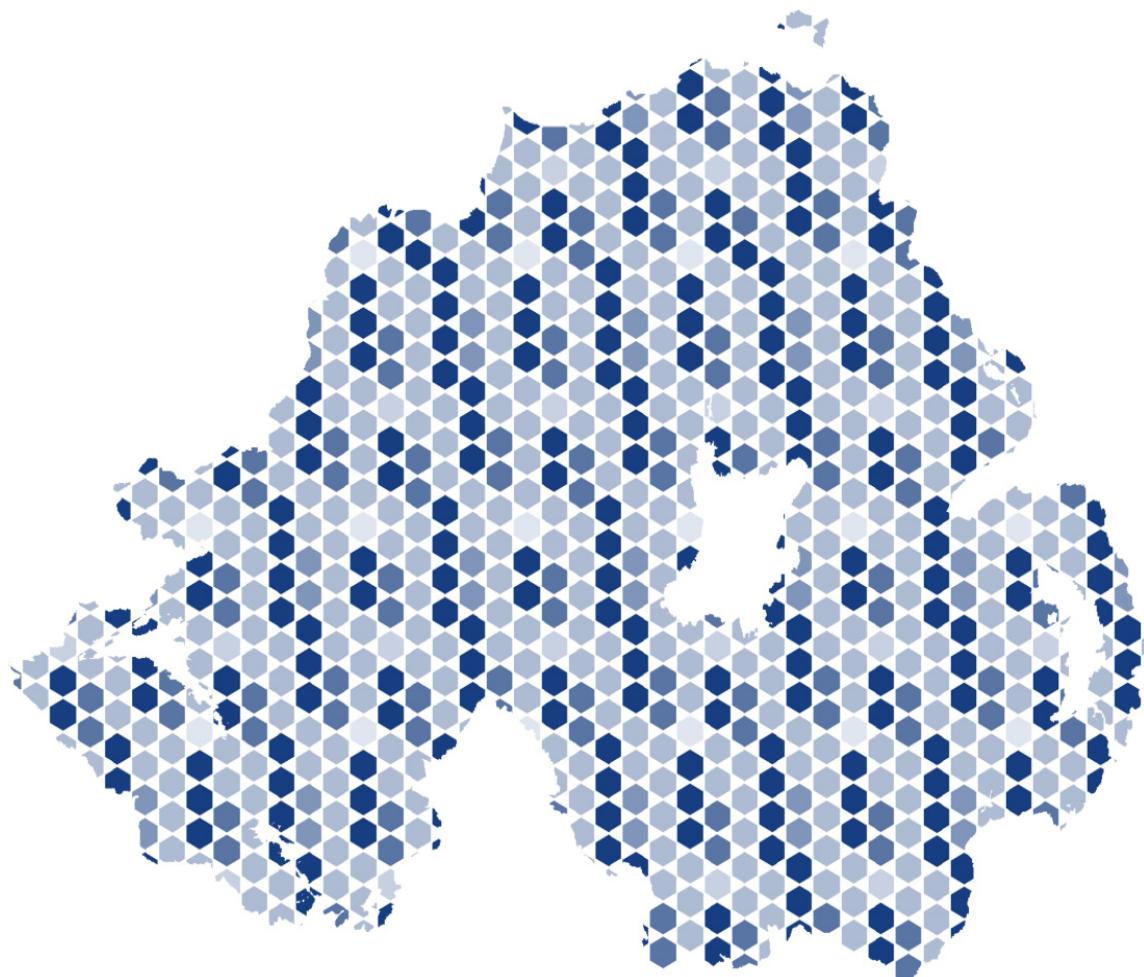


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bangor Grammar School,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in February 2011

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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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Bangor Grammar school is a voluntary grammar school for boys situated near the centre of the town of Bangor. Over the past three years, the enrolment has increased from 878 to 899, of whom 237 pupils are in the sixth form. A large number of the pupils are from Bangor and the greater North Down area. The school reports that 2.9% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and that 6.5% of the pupils require additional support with their learning.

In 2006, the school was given permission to design and build a new school on the Gransha Road. The plans are now finalised and the expected completion date is 2013.

1.2 FOCUS OF THE INSPECTION¹

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching;
- curriculum provision across a wide range of subjects with a particular focus in English, mathematics and science; and
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

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; progress towards the Entitlement Framework (EF) and the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, and the approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The views of the pupils, parents, teachers, support staff and governors were taken into account in the inspection.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.

2.1 The main strengths of the school include:

- the inclusive, caring and supportive ethos;
- the articulate, motivated and well-behaved pupils who demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty to the school;
- the hard work and the dedication of the staff to promoting improvement;
- the good or better quality of the teaching in three-quarters of the lessons observed;

¹ The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in post-primary schools 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 effective leadership of the Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care and the very good quality of the pastoral care provision; and
- the effective leadership provided by the Principal, which has promoted significant improvement in the quality of the pastoral provision for the pupils.

2.2 The main areas for improvement are the need:

- to develop further the leadership and management at all levels, improving significantly the use of evidence-based self-evaluation to bring a sharper focus on raising further the standards being achieved; and
- to disseminate more widely the very good or better teaching practices evident in a significant minority of lessons observed during the inspection in order to improve consistency in the quality of the learning experiences for all of the pupils.

A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

3. THE VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection², as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

Nearly all of the responses from the questionnaires, and the comments from the parents, were highly affirmative, indicating strong support for almost all aspects of the work and life of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the approachable and committed staff, the effective leadership of the Principal, the very strong sense of community and positive ethos within the school, the swift response by the teachers in the event of concerns being raised, the procedures in place to promote positive behaviour, and the wide ranging opportunities available to enable the pupils to feel valued and to develop their personal and social confidence. A minority of the responses raised concerns which included a lack of consistency across the subjects in relation to homework and the need for further support for those pupils experiencing difficulty with aspects of their learning.

Most of the staff responded positively to questions about aspects of the work and life of the school. In particular, they recorded that they are valued by the Principal and the management of the school, and that mutual respect and excellent working relationships exist between the staff and the pupils. All indicated that they like working in the school. A minority of the responses indicated concerns about aspects of communication, and a lack of opportunity for professional discussion about identifying and achieving the school's priorities.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school, highlighting the strong commitment and contribution of the Principal, the senior management team and the staff. They reported they were well informed about the work of the school.

² The number of questionnaires issued and returned, and the number containing comments are shown in Appendix 2.

The pupils, talked articulately, enthusiastically and with a strong sense of loyalty about their school experiences. They highlighted the strong sense of community within the school, the value of the mentoring programme, the support they receive from the staff for their learning, personal development and well-being. They stated that they felt safe within the school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns or require support.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires; where relevant the issues raised are commented on within this report.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

When the quality of teaching is good or better, the pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are motivated and articulate, and they co-operate well with their teachers and each other to apply and consolidate their learning.

The levels of attainment in public examinations are satisfactory.

Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in at least seven subjects, including English and mathematics, increased from 78.52%, which was well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools, to 92.48%, which is just above the respective average. This improving trend reflects the hard work of the staff and their focus on effecting improvement. Over the corresponding period, eight subjects were more than five percentage points below the NI average at grades A*-B; and six subjects were more than five percentage points above the respective NI average. The senior management team (SMT) has identified the need to address this variation in attainment at grades A*-B and the inspection findings endorse this as a key priority.

The percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in three or more subjects at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) Level has fluctuated over the past three years; in two of the three years, the results were below the average for selective schools. Eleven subjects were more than five percentage points above the respective NI average; and four subjects were more than ten percentage points below the respective NI average.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 4.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) ensures effective assessment of those pupils with a wide range of challenging special educational needs (SEN), and identifies well the appropriate type of support required for each individual pupil. Staff are made aware of the differing needs of individual pupils and they work hard to ensure that the pupils are both happy in school and that their needs are being addressed.

The classroom assistants provide valuable support for those pupils with statements of educational need who require assistance in class and there is evidence that their attainments have improved as a result. Given the significant increase in the number of classroom assistants, the SMT will need to review the management and deployment of the classroom assistants as the support develops and expands.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.2.1 STANDARDS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The overall provision for learning, teaching, and assessment is satisfactory.

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; in three-quarters of the lessons it was good or better and in one-third of the lessons it was very good or outstanding.

In the most effective practice the teachers have high expectations, plan for those pupils in their classes with complex additional needs and prepare well for group and paired work that supports and motivates the pupils to engage in learning. During the lessons the teachers share the learning intentions well with the pupils, build on prior learning and use an effective range of questioning strategies and explanations to elicit extended answers from the pupils in order to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills. The pupils respond well to their teachers, remain focused on task and are keen and eager to learn.

Pupils presenting with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) are nurtured in a very positive and supportive way, and those with significant challenges benefit from the developing links between pastoral support and curricular provision.

In the less effective practice, in one-quarter of the lessons observed, the pace, pitch and challenge for the pupils was low. There was an over-reliance on teacher exposition, closed questioning and limited opportunity for the pupils to engage actively in effective pair and group work. This resulted in missed opportunities to advance the learning. Work was insufficiently matched to the needs and abilities of all of the pupils and there was insufficient consolidation of the learning at the end of the lesson.

The effectiveness of the differentiation in the learning and teaching varies too much across departments and reduces the impact of any subject specific targets set out in Individual Education Plans (IEP). In addition, there is limited data available to track the progress of those pupils experiencing difficulty in English and mathematics.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

The school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum which is relevant to the needs, interests, abilities and career aspirations of the pupils.

The school engages actively in, and makes a positive contribution to, the work of Bangor Learning Partnership and the North Down and Ards Area learning Community. There is good collaboration between the school, other local schools and the further education sector. This engagement broadens the learning opportunities for pupils, and increases the school's curricular offer as required by the EF. The school is making some progress on widening the curriculum offered at key stage (KS) 4 and post-16, which is well focused on meeting the pupils' interests and abilities.

The SMT show a clear commitment to the rationale which underpins the aims of the EF and they recognise appropriately the need to broaden further the access to additional applied courses for KS4 and post-16 pupils.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The school has a caring and supportive ethos, and demonstrates an appropriate holistic approach to the educational, personal and social development of the pupils. The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care has been in post for three years and provides effective and strategic leadership. She is supported by a well-informed, committed and energetic team of key pastoral staff who work hard to support the pupils in their care. The pastoral team carries out its functions in an atmosphere of mutual support; this collegiate approach draws effectively on the collective and individual strengths of the team and its members.

Very good opportunities are created by the staff for the pupils to accept responsibility through a range of initiatives designed to meet their specific needs. For example, the recent establishment of a well-researched school council has enabled consultative processes to be firmly established between pupils and staff. Among the strengths of the pastoral provision are: the wide ranging extra-curricular learning experiences, including those with an international dimension, the emphasis on encouraging high standards of behaviour, the very strong sense of community within the school, the peer mentoring programme, and the effective transition arrangements for those entering the school in year 8 and leaving in post-16. The school development plan (SDP) identifies the need to develop further the role of the form tutor; inspection evidence endorses this aspect of pastoral provision as a key priority for development.

4.2.4 SAFEGUARDING

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

4.2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The provision for CEIAG is good.

The head of careers provides very good leadership. She promotes a collegial approach within the department to the ongoing development of the careers provision. Links have been made with the Area Learning Community, parents and other bodies to enhance the provision. The pupils engage with an appropriate range of opportunities which enables them to develop the knowledge, skills and qualities they need to choose and implement an appropriate career plan. The pupils benefit from a range of useful learning opportunities, such as work experience in KS4 and year 13, an interview skills programme and careers visits. The programme is monitored through analysis of parental and pupil questionnaire responses, and is reviewed regularly to ensure the needs of all of the pupils are being met. Pupils in the sixth form have access to a wide range of up-to-date learning resources, including ICT based careers information materials, to support them in making appropriate career decisions. They demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the progression routes available to them.

To improve further the integration of all aspects of CEAIG in the school, the SMT needs to ensure that the strategic vision for CEIAG is more clearly defined and takes into account all of the contributory aspects of the curriculum to CEIAG and the staff development needs in this area.

4.2.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. For example, the very good nutritional quality of the school meals and the completion of a comprehensive healthy eating audit that is used well to inform the whole-school food programme and to support the pupils in adopting healthy lifestyles.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory.

5.1 The Principal has been in post for ten years and is highly committed to the work and life of the school. His care for the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils has gained him the respect of the governors, teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community. He has led the school effectively through a number of important initiatives. These include a whole school review of discipline, pastoral provision and related policies, with a clear focus on improving further the quality of pastoral care, reducing the barriers to successful learning and equipping pupils with the confidence and skills to contribute as effective members of the community.

5.2 The SMT has been reorganised recently: two new vice-principals have been appointed and two heads of department are on temporary secondment to the team. The SMT has worked hard and effectively to develop a culture and ethos of self-evaluation within the school; for example, through the use of homework and departmental audits, the dissemination of good classroom practice to ensure better consistency across the curriculum, and using the outcomes from year 11 information system (YELLIS) assessment tests as a motivational tool to encourage learning. The SMT clearly recognise the need to develop significantly the processes of self-evaluation existing within the school to ensure that strategies for implementing whole-school improvement are manageable, consistent across the departments, understood and implemented by all of the staff. It will be important that the SMT provide members of middle management with sufficient time and relevant training to allow them to monitor and evaluate effectively the quality of the learning and teaching within their areas of responsibility. The staff need to make a more rigorous and effective use of the wide range of internal and external performance data already available in the school to inform the setting of qualitative and quantitative targets. In addition, realistic and manageable targets need to be set and agreed within departments and used to monitor and evaluate classroom practice and the value-added improvement in the pupils' learning to raise further the standards being achieved.

5.3 The collaboration between the SENCO and the Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care is effective and ensures that the pupils' needs are reviewed and evaluated regularly. It will be important that the scope of the management arrangements operating between the pastoral care and SEN provision is widened to include learning and teaching as an additional key focus. Management at all levels need to have a sharper focus on monitoring how well the provision in the different subjects is meeting the pastoral and curricular needs of the pupils, including the more able and those with IEPs.

5.4 The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. To develop further the development planning process, the SMT set up a number of working groups with key staff selected to track and inform specific aspects of the related action plans. This good practice provides an effective and inclusive process for the staff to be more involved in decision-making related to the SDP priorities and should be

developed further. The SMT has appropriately identified the need for a greater consistency in the quality and effectiveness of development planning and provision of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum for management at all levels. It will be important for the SMT to provide evaluative feedback to all departments on their action and development planning.

5.5 There is very good communication between the Principal and the governors; the governors are hard-working and highly committed to the whole-school community. They are well informed about school developments, and are involved appropriately in decisions regarding the strategic direction and development of the school.

5.6 The school deploys its financial resources appropriately, providing pupils with a suitable curriculum, making effective use of all available resources and, in doing so, providing good value for money.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 In most of the areas inspected the quality of the education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and in leadership and management, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the pupils are to be met more effectively.

6.2 The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

English

The quality of the provision in English is satisfactory.

The strengths include:

- the positive working relationships and good rapport between the teachers and pupils in the lessons observed;
- the very good efforts made to celebrate pupil achievement and enhance the physical learning environment, through the attractive displays of the pupils' work;
- the pupils' motivation and ability to work well collaboratively and persistently in a range of contexts;
- the good achievements and standards of pupils, particularly at GCE 'A' level English Literature in grades A-C over the last three years;
- the priority given to encourage reading, including the significant role played by the school library;
- the commitment of the head of department to leading change, particularly in acknowledging the need to raise standards for all the pupils, and to improve the overall quality of the provision.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to improve the consistency in the quality of the teaching by embedding a wider range of learning and teaching strategies, including more frequent use of ICT and differentiation, in order to engage all the pupils more actively in their learning; and
- to raise standards further, particularly for the more able.

Mathematics

The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

The strengths include:

- the good working relationships between the pupils and teachers;
- the commitment and hard work of the teachers in supporting the pupils;
- the thoroughness of the teachers' preparation for the lessons;
- the good or better quality of teaching in the majority of the lessons observed;

- the good introduction of Financial Capability as part of the mathematics provision; and
- the commitment and enthusiasm of the head of department.

The areas of improvement include the need:

- to improve the overall quality of the teaching through, for example, using effective questioning strategies and engaging the pupils more actively in their learning;
- to develop further self-evaluation to promote improvement; and
- to raise standards through, for example, ensuring appropriate progression and that the work is more closely matched to the pupils' mathematical ability.

Science

Overall, the provision for science is satisfactory.

The strengths include:

- the very good teaching observed in just over one-third of the lessons, characterised by the many well-planned opportunities for the pupils to collaborate and learn from each other during classes, undertake frequent experimental and investigative work, use a wide range of written and ICT resources, and be actively involved in and enjoy their scientific work;
- the effective coverage of scientific knowledge and content in the pupils' written work, the schemes of work and in the teaching observed;
- the analysis of results achieved in public examinations, and the comparison of these to NI averages for similar schools which was used to draw up appropriate priorities for improvement;
- the well-presented pupils' written record of their scientific work;
- the many extra-curricular opportunities for the pupils to extend their interest in, and knowledge of, science through, for example, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activities, science clubs and participation in external competitions; and
- the good standards achieved by most of the pupils, including those attained in public examinations.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise the standards of achievement for a minority of the pupils, including the standards attained in GCSE examinations at grades A*-B which are not high enough;

- to disseminate better the very good practice observed across the science department, with a more effective involvement of the heads of department for biology, chemistry and physics in this process, and focusing strongly on the further development of scientific processes and skills, including more frequent problem-solving and decision-making tasks; and
- for improved leadership and management of the chemistry department, focusing strongly on the department working more effectively as a team.

APPENDIX 2

	Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage returned	Number of written comments
Parents	180	95	53%	56
Teachers	61	36	59%	11
Support staff	50	11	22%	2

APPENDIX 3

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: Bangor Grammar
 ii. School Reference Number: 442-0015
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary
- v. Date of Inspection: W/C 28/02/11
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	140	138	128	126	128
Total enrolment	912	894	878	888	899

1.3 Attendance

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	95.8	95.7	95.1	95.2	96	96.2	95.6	96	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 58.62
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 15.34
- iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.86

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	128	127	133	136	138	119	118	899
Enrolment: Total	128	127	133	136	138	119	118	899
PTR	17.352	17.037	18.03	14.626	15.581	12.762	13.207	

1.5 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	19		105	
Another School	5%	24.1	2%	1.3
Employment	0%	3	11%	3.4
Full-time Further Education	89%	58.9	10%	9.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	75%	82.8
Full-time Training	0%	6.4	1%	0.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.7	0%	1
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	5%	5.9	0%	1.6

APPENDIX 31.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: Bangor Grammar School SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	99.25
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	91.11	96.27	98.5
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	86.67	91.04	92.48
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	82.22	90.3	95.49
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	78.52	87.31	92.48
GCE A Level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	70.1	79.57	70.21
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A levels	94.85	95.7	97.87

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table 1 showing the GCSE subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-B	Business Studies Drama Journalism Music	Accounting(Finance) Information Technology	English English Literature French Geography German History Mathematics Religious Studies	Additional Mathematics Design and Technology Physics Sport (PE) Studies	Art & Design Biology Chemistry Spanish
GCSE A*-C	Business Studies Journalism		Accounting (Finance) Additional Mathematics Biology Chemistry Chinese Design and Technology Drama English English Literature French Geography German History Information Technology Mathematics Music Physics Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	Art & Design	Spanish
GCE A*-C	Business Studies Information Technology *Music *Psychology	Biology Drama English Literature French Geography Physics Religious Studies	Art & Design Chemistry Further Mathematics History Politics	*Design and Technology	*German Mathematics Spanish Sport (PE) Studies

*Denotes subject which had a total entry of less than 30 over 3 years

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

Table 2 showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1

	100%-96%	95%-86%	85%-76%	75%-66%	65%-0%
GCSE A*-B		Accounting (Finance) Music	Drama History Information Technology Mathematics Sport (PE) Studies	Additional Mathematics Art & Design Biology Chemistry Design and Technology English English Literature Geography Physics Religious Studies	Business Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject French German Journalism Spanish
GCSE A*-C	Chinese Mathematics Music	Accounting (Finance) Additional Mathematics Art & Design Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject Drama English English Literature Geography History Information Technology Journalism Physics Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies French German Spanish		
GCE A*-C		Art & Design Design and Technology Drama Further Mathematics German History Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies	Biology Business Studies Chemistry English Literature French Geography Information Technology Physics Spanish	Ancient History Sport (PE) Studies	Psychology

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

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