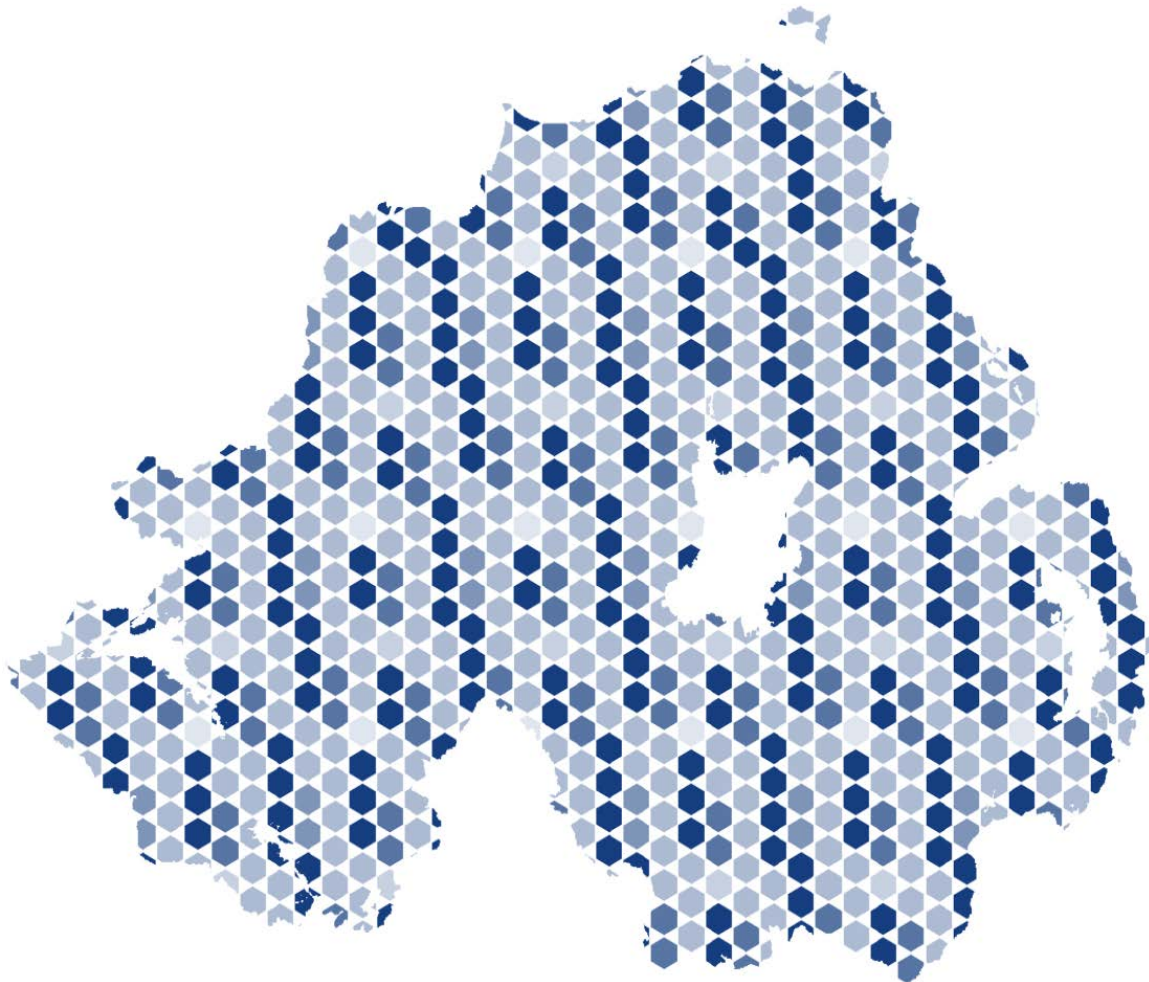


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Dunclug College, Ballymena

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

Report of an Inspection
in April 2013



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

Performance Level
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

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 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>. Inspectors observed teaching and learning, 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; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the returns on questionnaires sent in advance of the inspection to parents and school staff is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	124	75	60.5%	32
Teachers	34	18	53%	*
Support Staff	*	*	100%	0

* = fewer than 5

2. Context

Dunclug College serves the community in Ballymena and a wide area around the town. The school is regularly over-subscribed.

Over the past four years, on entry to the school, approximately two-thirds of the intakes have achieved at the expected level in English and mathematics and a significant minority are identified as having special educational needs. Pupils' attendance has risen steadily from below, to well above, the Northern Ireland average.

There is a sustainable sixth form of 124 pupils who share access to courses across the 'Ballymena Learning Together' area learning community.

Dunclug College	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	111	118	115	113
Enrolment	644	639	657	695
% Attendance (NI Average)	89 (91)	91 (91)	94 (91)	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	19	20	21.4	21.5
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	33.9 (218)	35.2 (225)	37.4 (246)	42.3 (294)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	25	26	26	27
No. of newcomers	-	-	8	12
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	1.8	4.2	14.8	3.5
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	7.2	6.8	13.9	6.2
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	64	72	67.8	67.3
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	68.5	72	67.8	67.3

Source: data as held by the school.

3. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all learners, the purpose of the post-primary inspection is, through an effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the learners;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- to inform the school's planning for improvement.

4. Overall findings

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

5. Achievements and standards

Almost all pupils are well motivated, engage actively in learning and have a confident, positive demeanour; they set personal targets, with the help of the teachers, which support their learning well and help them to make progress. They develop very well as articulate, independent learners; the senior pupils provide good leadership to younger pupils through, for example, mentoring support.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

There is a significant, long-term trend of improvement in standards² in Dunclug College. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE³ examinations at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has doubled over the last three years and is in line with the average for similar schools. The standards in a majority of the GCSE subjects, at grades A* to C, are in line with or well above, the three-year NI average; at grades A* to E, the standard in almost all GCSE subjects is good, with nearly all year 12 pupils attaining five or more GCSEs at this level in 2012.

Over the past three years, the attainment of the pupils in three GCE A⁴ level qualifications at grades A* to C has more than doubled, with more than one-half achieving at this level in 2012; in all subjects, attainment at grades A* to E is above the NI average and attainment in vocational qualifications is good. Progression of the pupils to employment and further education is well above the NI average.

Those pupils who require additional support for their learning develop their social and personal skills well, make good progress and attain standards at GCSE in line with their ability. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals who achieve at the expected level in GCSE examinations has varied considerably over the past three years, rising significantly from 2010 to 2011 and then declining in 2012.

6. Provision

Planning, teaching, learning and assessment in most of the lessons observed was good or very good in almost equal measure. The teachers have a considerable capacity to bring all of the teaching to the same high standard. They are able to draw on examples of highly effective teaching which is characterised by: high expectations; good quality planning and support for individual pupils; motivating and interactive approaches; use of resources such as ICT to support learning effectively; and by providing feedback which helps the pupils to improve.

Those pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage. They are integrated very well and benefit significantly from a wide range of well-planned interventions and effective support from the learning support assistants, who have a very good knowledge and understanding of the pupils' needs. The 'Pathways' programme, which, through well-planned provision, supports very well the diverse range of pupils' needs, is a significant strength of special needs provision.

The strengths of the outstanding pastoral provision include its close integration with teaching, which nurtures effectively a positive disposition for learning amongst all of the pupils. The very good provision for literacy and numeracy across the school, including through very good English and mathematics teaching, develops the pupils' skills and increases their capability as independent learners. The views of the pupils on the effectiveness of teaching and learning are taken carefully into consideration and they are involved well in decisions about the school. Effective home-school links have raised attendance to high levels and help pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. Both pupils and parents express strong appreciation for the care and support experienced throughout formal and informal learning.

² Refer to the appendix for performance and statistical data

³ General Certificate of Secondary Education

⁴ General Certificate of Education Advanced

The pupils state that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. There is continued monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the pastoral provision by a forum of senior teachers and year heads.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance, including both the taught provision and the contributions through teaching in other subjects, is effective. The pupils develop the confidence to take part in interviews and to make informed choices, based upon well-developed research skills. Liaison with external agencies enhances effectively the pupils' learning experiences and there are many opportunities to find out about employment in the local community and beyond.

The curriculum at key stage (KS) 3 and at KS4 is broad and balanced, is relevant to the needs, and is appropriate for the ability levels and career aspirations, of the pupils. Curriculum choice is well-tailored to address the needs and interests of the pupils at post-16, but does not yet meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. However, the principal and the senior leadership are committed to providing full entitlement and need to build on the school's very good links and effective mutual collaboration in the Ballymena Learning Together community to ensure full compliance with the Entitlement Framework by 2015.

7. Leadership and Management

The current school development plan (SDP), coming to the end of a three-year cycle, is well-conceived and its priorities advance effectively the school's mission, '*Preparing for life*'.

The school's provision is based on a sound analysis and understanding of the pupils, their needs and the strengths of the school; the SDP⁵ reflects a highly effective approach to improvement.

At a senior level (comprising the principal, senior leadership team, leadership forums and board of governors) the outstanding strategic leadership of the school is both cohesive and collegial. The governors are very well informed and play an integral and appropriately challenging part in all stages of the improvement process. The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of both leadership and governance.

Through clear, decisive leadership, the senior leaders build continually on the capacity of all of the middle managers and teachers to meet the needs of the pupils and to improve their own effectiveness in leading their respective areas of responsibility. Continued support for the development of leadership at middle management level is necessary to raise standards consistently and to develop further the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating effectively the quality of the provision.

There is a developing, systematic understanding of data analysis which helps focus all aspects of the school's provision on the collective and individual needs of the pupils. The school has identified appropriately, in the school development plan, the need to improve further attainments in GCE A level qualifications at grades A*-C, in a small number of GCSE subjects and more consistently for those pupils entitled to free school meals.

⁵ The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is very good.

The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

APPENDIX

Performance & statistical data

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	43.4	55.7	60.7
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁶</i>	<i>67.2</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>57.8</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	17.2	38.1	32.6
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>33.6</i>	<i>31.8</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	75.8	89.7	92.1
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	5.56	41.18	20

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

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

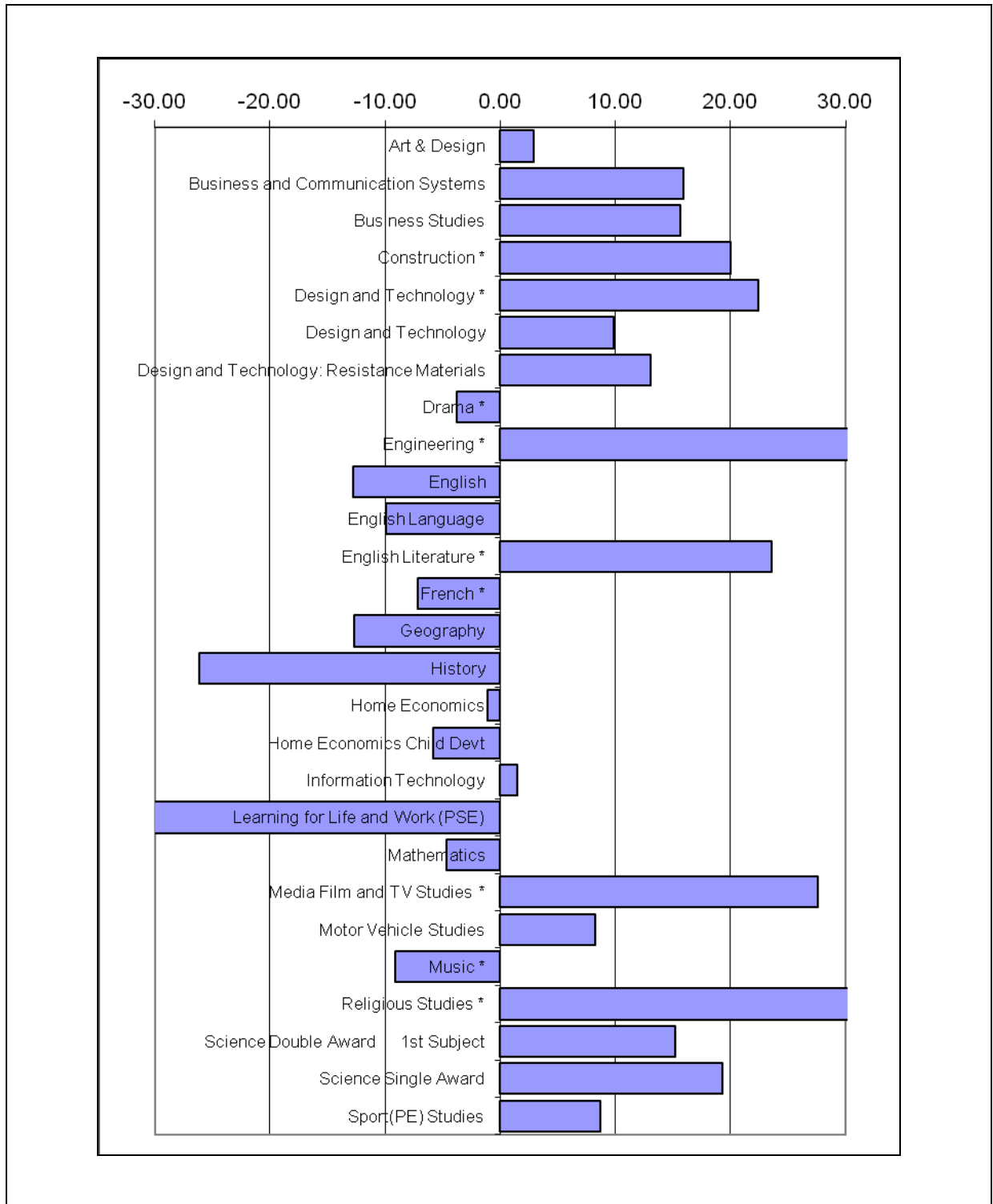
GCSE Subject	2010		2011		2012		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Hospitality and Catering	92	100	69	94	74	96	55

Level 2	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC Agriculture	-	100	100	12
BTEC Horse care	-	100	100	5
Occupational Studies DA	93	94	-	45

⁶ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

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



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	55.6	53.3	81.5
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	22.2	31.1	59.3
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	91.1	93.3	96.3

Source: Data as held and verified by the school.

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 5

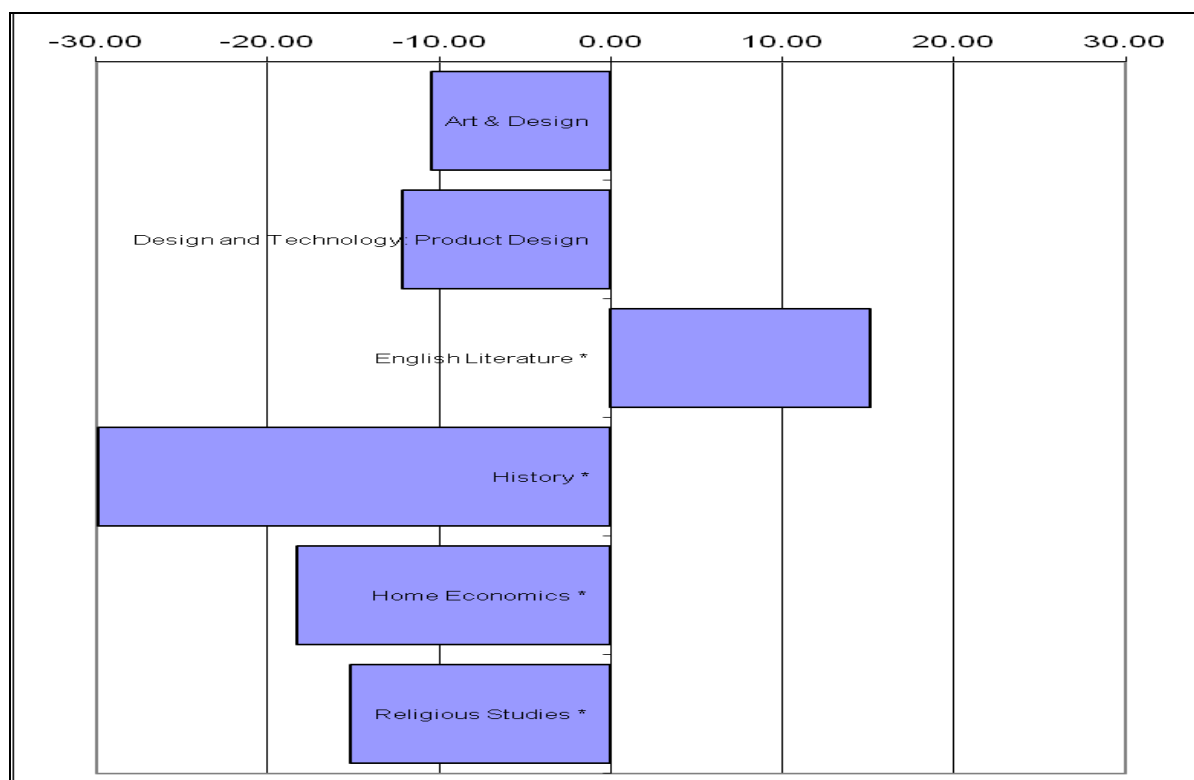
Other [level 3] courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

GCE Subject	2010		2011		2012		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business (Vocational)	95	100	62	100	67	100	38
Health and Social Care	43	93	55	100	82	94	53
Information Technology (Vocational)	54	92	33	93	80	100	38
Travel and Tourism	83	100	60	80	80	100	16
Performing Arts (Vocational)	0	100	25	75	50	100	12
Moving Image Art	100	100	86	100	100	100	12

Level 3	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
<i>BTEC Engineering</i>	-	100	100	7
<i>BTEC CCLD</i>	-	100	100	19
<i>BTEC Sport</i>	100	100	100	18

GCE Examination Results

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



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

Year 13	67	NI Av. Year 13	47.85
Year 14	26.9	NI Av. Year 14	36.5

LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS

* = fewer than 5

	Year 12	Percent.	NI %	Yr 13/14	Percent.	NI%
TOTAL	56			58		
Another School	*	*	15.8	0	0	2.5
Employment	7	12	4.4	12	21	11.7
Full-time Further Education	37	64	45	27	47	31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	21	38.5
Full-time Training	7	12	28	*	*	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	*	*	3.5	*	*	6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	*	*	3.3	5	9	3.1

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