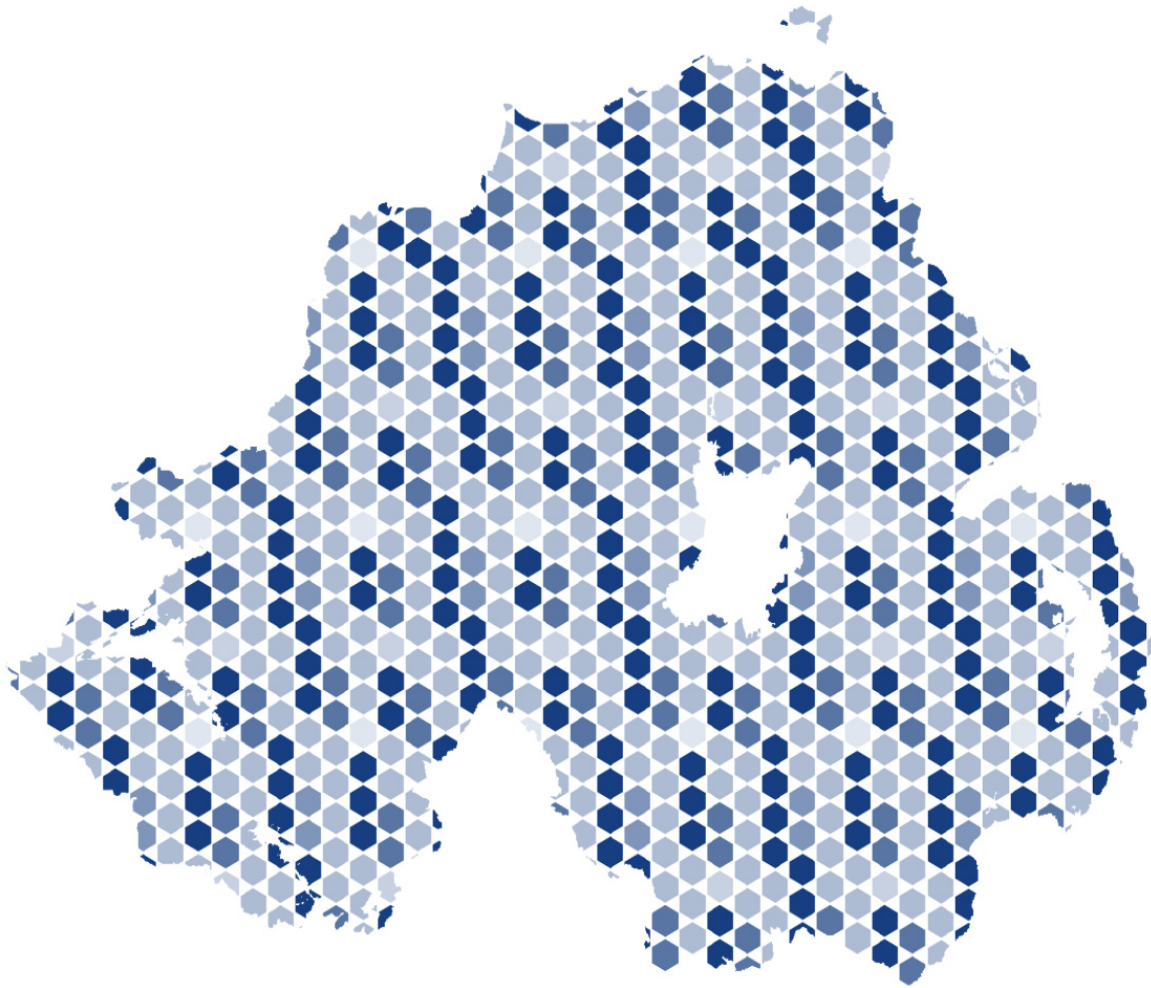


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Grammar School,
Armagh

Voluntary Boys' Grammar 11-18 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	3
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: Mathematics, Science and Technology
	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, whether they are selective or non-selective, as defined by the Department of Education.

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
RNIC	Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

1. CONTEXT

1.1 St Patrick's Grammar School Armagh attracts pupils across a wide geographical area from 40 different primary schools; the enrolment has remained generally steady over the past four years. The pupils on entry to the school have a wide range of academic abilities. Over the last four years, approximately one-third of year 8 pupils had attained a Level 5 in English at KS2, which is significantly below their attainments in mathematics. There are 216 pupils in the sixth form.

St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	796	783	803	813
FSM (Band 1) Percentage	9.80	11.4	11.2	11.7
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	1.9% (15)	4.2% (33)	5.4% (43)	4.2% (34)
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	15	20	23	18
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	20	26	30	30
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	32	31	33	34
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	53	66	60	67
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	62	64	61	63
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	44	32	37	33

Source: Data as held by the school.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified the need for improvement in school development planning, and in achievements and standards at GCSE level which the school has the capacity to address. ETI will monitor the school's progress on these areas for improvement.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are good¹ overall. There is a distinct variation, however, in achievements and standards at A level compared to those at GCSE level.

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils have a very positive disposition to learning and have very good social and personal skills. In most of the lessons observed they interacted confidently with their teachers, and showed high levels of competence in team work and problem-solving skills, as well as independent learning. With very few exceptions, they are well-motivated and are keen learners. The inspection identified features of good practice, where the pupils attained very high standards of academic work; this was particularly evident in the sixth form.

¹ For detailed results in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendices 1 and 2.

GCSE Results

Comparisons based on FSME Percentage	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalentents in at least 7 subjects	100	100	99
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	89.47	86.67	84.75
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category	Well below average	Well below average	Well below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and mathematics	89.47	85	82.2
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category	In line with the average	Below average	Below average
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	94.74	93.33	94.07

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

Most of the pupils make good progress in English and mathematics at KS3.² The pupils, however, attain GCSE outcomes which are below the NI average in comparison with similar selective schools. Over the last three years there has been a steady decline in the proportion of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics. While this is due in part to the wide range of academic abilities of pupils entering the school, more action is needed to improve GCSE outcomes, and to support more effectively the pupils who are under-achieving.

Over the last three years, at grades A*-B, the results in a significant minority of GCSE subjects are 5% or more below the average. Approximately one quarter of the subjects are 5% or more above the NI average for boys in selective schools.

GCE Advanced Level Results

Comparisons based on FSME Percentage	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	98	99	98
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	71.58	80	82.42
Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category	In line with the average	Above average	Above average

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

The pupils attain very good GCE A level outcomes, which are above the average for similar selective schools and have improved steadily over the last three years.

Half of the individual subjects at A level at grades A*-C are 5% points or more above the corresponding NI averages.

The results of the Subsidiary Diploma in Construction are very good, with 97% of the pupils achieving passes at grades A*-C over the last three years; nearly all at Distinction level.

The high standards of academic achievement at GCE A level are a feature of the work of the school.

² Based on the Key Stage 3 assessments as held with the school.

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is good.

The provision in mathematics and science is good; in technology it is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of teaching in just under half of the lessons observed was very good or outstanding, and in most of the lessons it was good or better. A strong feature in most lessons is the very good rapport between teachers and the pupils. In the better lessons, there was effective use of active learning approaches to motivate pupils, well-planned peer assessment, meaningful practical activities, innovative use of ICT, and skilful questioning techniques to enable pupils to provide extended oral responses. In a minority of the lessons, there was insufficient planning and consolidation of prior learning, lack of pace and challenge, and ineffective questioning strategies to promote the pupils' learning. The quality of teaching and learning was predominately strong in the sixth form.

The SEN provision is good.

The Reading Partnership programme provides effective support for a rolling number of pupils who are chosen by class teachers to participate in a six week course to support their literacy. The statistics indicate that all of the participants attain improved reading scores. The provision for newcomer pupils is very good and they attain well in public examinations.

The SENCO ensures that the individual education plans (IEPs) are clear and realistic; they are compiled through effective consultation with teachers and are used effectively to inform short-term planning to meet the needs of all of the pupils; they are reviewed regularly.

While there is satisfactory cooperation between the SENCO and Learning Support Co-ordinator, they need to collaborate more strategically in order to raise further the standards of the pupils who require support with their learning.

The school has implemented recently well-planned support in literacy for pupils in year 8. The numeracy support, however is at very early stages, is not so effective and needs to be adjusted to meet better the individual needs of pupils.

The provision for ICT is very good.

The school has a clear strategic vision for the use of ICT in teaching and learning. The pupils have good opportunities to develop a wide range of digital technology skills through their taught ICT classes, which they apply to good effect in many subject areas across the curriculum.

4.2 The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding.

KEY FINDINGS

Through an extensive programme for personal development the pupils are provided with well-planned opportunities which help them develop socially and emotionally. Issues of current interest and relevance are considered in this programme, including mental health, decision-making, and preparing for life after school. Form teachers play a significant role in the delivery and monitoring of this work.

The year 8 pupils, and their parents, benefit from a well-planned induction programme with opportunities for all of the pupils to meet socially and work together at the beginning of the school year.

The pupils' behaviour observed during the inspection was very good. The pupils met with members of the inspection team and spoke in a mature and considered way about their experiences at school; they reported that they knew what to do if they had any concerns regarding their safety or well-being.

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. In particular, the Sportzone facility at lunchtime encourages the pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

The vice principal, with responsibility for pastoral care, provides excellent leadership and has placed a strong emphasis over the last four years in developing and guiding the pastoral provision. The provision is delivered effectively by a team of heads of key stage, year heads and form teachers; the inspection confirms that the benefit for the pupils has been very positive.

4.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

At KS4 and post-16, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. At KS4, however, a minority of pupils do not take a course in science, which restricts unduly their post-16 option pathways. The school has, for many years, fostered collaborative arrangements with local post-primary schools, and more recently, though these links, has made further progress in widening the provision of applied courses for pupils in the school. The school is on target to meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework by 2013.

The provision for CEIAG is good.

The pupils develop well their knowledge and understanding of careers and employability issues and good career planning skills, through which they reflect effectively on the personal skills and capabilities that informs their career aspirations, in a taught careers programme provided through the timetabled lessons in Learning for Life and Work. At post-16 the pupils participate in good quality work placements and a well-organised mock interview day that involves excellent links with the local and national employers.

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.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and the management are good.

KEY FINDINGS

The principal provides measured and sensitive leadership, based on strong values and a clear strategic vision, which has had a very positive impact on the life and work of the school. He plays a proactive role in developing cohesive links between the school, the wider community and schools in the local area. He has worked hard to build on the strengths in the school and has successfully developed a culture of inclusiveness and openness at all levels.

The SDP, however, is not compliant with the requirements of the 'The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010'. The effective use of data is under-developed across the school, particularly in tracking the progression of the pupils' learning across the Key Stages, especially those pupils who are underachieving at GCSE level, and in setting meaningful targets for whole-school improvement, particularly at KS4.

The inspection identified examples of good practice in whole-school curriculum planning, including the effective implementation of key aspects of the RNIC, notably the effective use of connected learning at KS3, assessment and reporting, and in the use of ICT across the curriculum. There is a need, however, to develop more coherent approaches to school development planning and target-setting that is based on rigorous self-evaluation leading to improvement in order to raise standards generally by the end of KS4.

The middle management team provide good leadership and management for their areas of responsibility including good levels of collegial working within the departments. Across most departments, however, there is a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, including in the use of data to identify and prioritise areas for development. The teachers display high levels of professionalism and commitment in their working relationships with staff and pupils in the school.

The governors are highly committed to the work of the school, and play an appropriate role in the strategic direction of the school. They show high levels of support for the Principal, management, teachers, and support staff in the school.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people which reflect the guidance issued by DE.

6. CONCLUSION

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

The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision.

The inspection has identified two areas improvement which the school needs to address. The areas for improvement are the need to:

- implement more coherent approaches to school development planning, based on better use of data and rigorous self-evaluation leading to improvement; and
- raise overall standards and achievements at GCSE level.

The ETI will monitor the school's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Patrick's Grammar v. Date of Inspection: W/C 26/03/12
 ii. School Reference Number: 542-0268 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary Grammar

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	114	116	116	125	123
Total enrolment	812	796	783	803	813

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	96.9	96.6	96.8	97	97.6	96.7	92.2	97	95
% Attendance young people on Special Educational Needs Register	97.1	96.9	97.1	96.2	97.7	95.2	-	97	95

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 50 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.656
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 16.26 Number of Teachers involved in Area of Study: (Focused only) 20

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	123	129	119	116	110	123	93	813
Enrolment: Total	123	129	119	116	110	123	93	813
PTR	17.614	18.473	17.041	15.485	13.974	16.877	14.533	

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

Year 13	90.2	NI Av Year 13	93.9
Year 14	83.3	NI Av Year 14	86.9

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	24		92	
Another School	13%	30.7	1%	1.7
Employment	29%	3	2%	3.6
Full-time Further Education	58%	54.1	22%	10.2
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	72%	80.6
Full-time Training	0%	6.5	3%	0.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	0.7	0%	1.3
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	4.9	0%	2

TABLE 1 outlines the school's GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

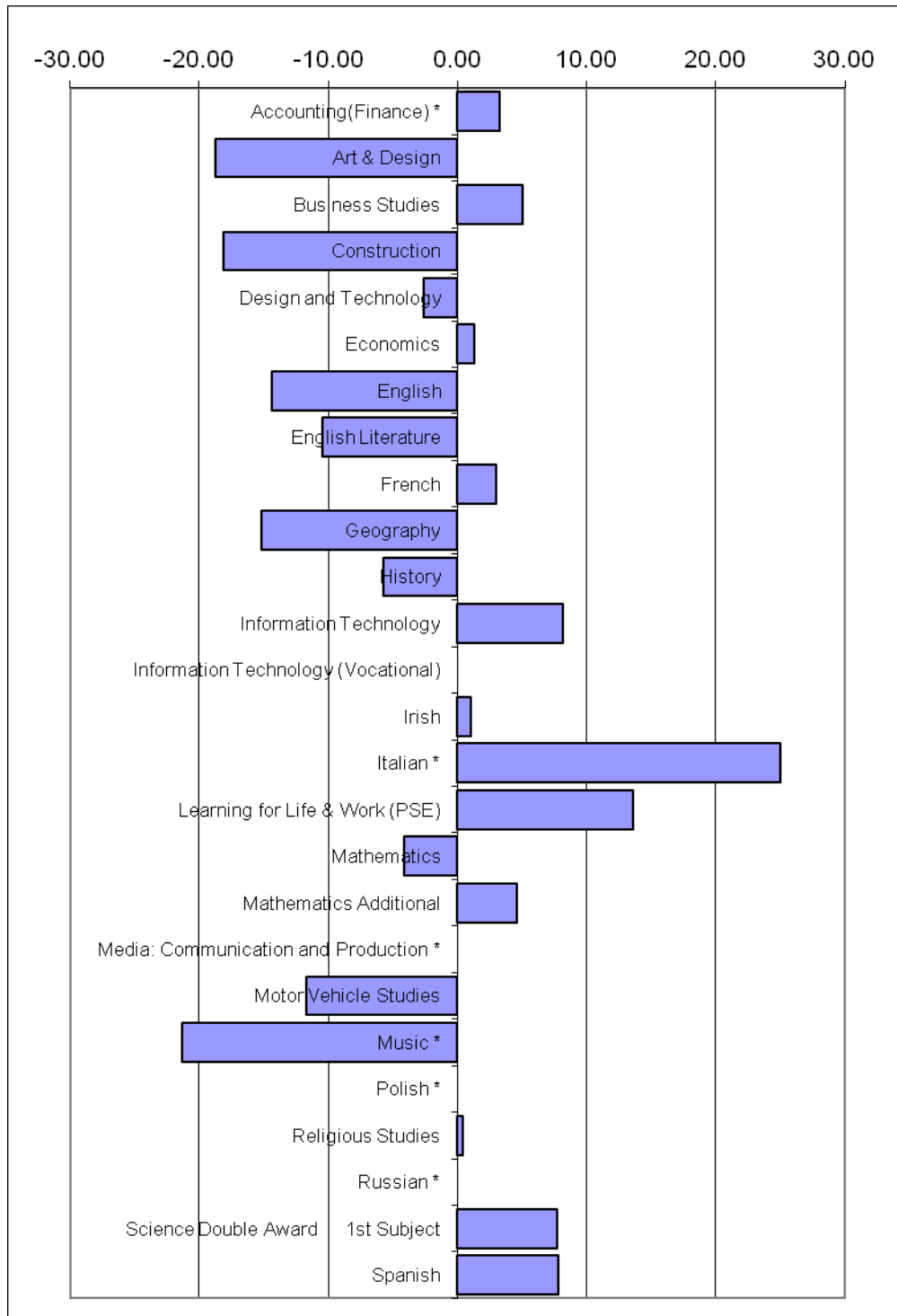
HEADLINE STANDARDS

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 FSME Percentage	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalentents in at least 7 subjects	100	100	99
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	89.47	86.67	84.75
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and mathematics	89.47	85	82.2
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Below average</i>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	94.74	93.33	94.07

TABLE 2 shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCSE Grades A*-B**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



The following subjects had an entry of less than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011:
Accounting, Italian, Media Communications and Production, Music, Polish and Russian

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 in 2011:

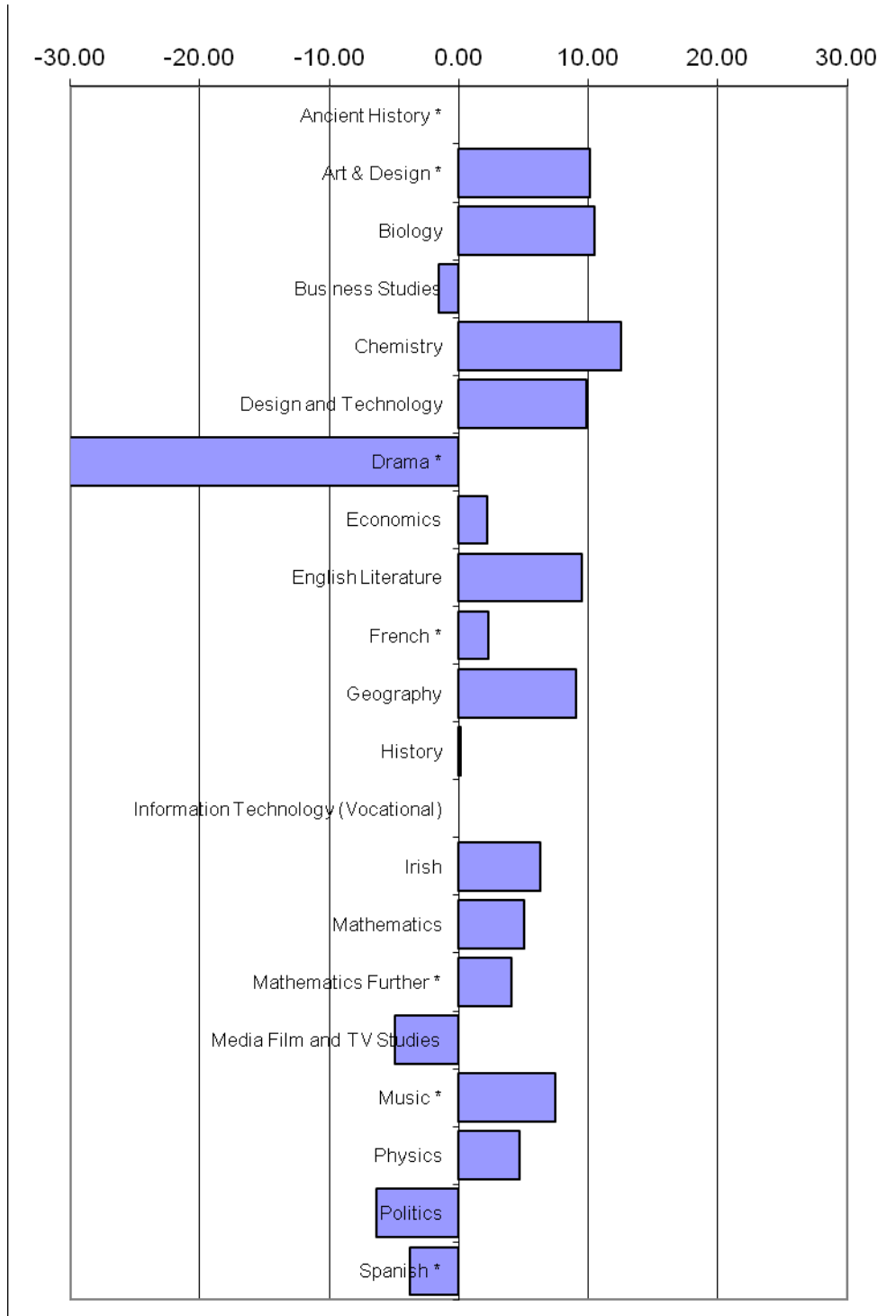
3 or more grades A*-C = 76.5%

2 or more grades A*-E = 99.3%

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

Comparisons based on FSME Percentage	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98	99	98
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	71.58	80	82.42
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>

TABLE 4 shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCE 'A' Level Grades A*-C**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



The following subjects had an entry of less than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011:
 Art and Design, Drama, French, Further Mathematics, Music and Spanish

Other Results

Key Skills	2009		2010		2011	
	No of Pupils	% Pass	No of Pupils	% Pass	No of Pupils	% Pass
Level 3 ICT	-	-	60	100	47	100
Level 3 COPE	27	52	19	74	24	96

Subject	2009	2010	2011	Total Entry Over Three Years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	%A*-C	
Advanced Subsidiary Diploma in Construction	97.4%	97	96.5	102

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the motivated pupils who enjoy, and participate enthusiastically in, learning mathematics;
- the excellent working relationships between the pupils and their teachers;
- the good standards in GCSE additional and GCE A Level mathematics;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, most of which was good or very good;
- the appropriately wide range of strategies used to engage the pupils actively and collaboratively in their learning; and
- the head of department and departmental team who work collegially and demonstrate a commitment to development work.

The areas for improvement are to:

- raise the levels of attainment in GCSE mathematics; and
- develop the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision to identify actions to bring about improvement.

Science

The overall quality of the provision for science is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the positive working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the good or very good quality of the teaching in the majority of the lessons observed;
- the willingness of the pupils to respond enthusiastically and apply their scientific knowledge when given the opportunities;

- the good standards achieved by most of the pupils, including those attained in public examinations at all levels; and
- the commitment of the head of department and the departmental team to review and improve classroom practice.

The areas for improvement are to:

- adopt a more strategic approach to improvement planning that focuses on the quality of the pupils' learning and is informed by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and the quality of the pupils' work; and
- increase the percentage of pupils taking science at KS4.

Technology

The overall provision in Technology and Design is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very good results attained by the pupils in GCE technology and design;
- the well-motivated pupils who display enthusiasm for the subject;
- the quality of the teaching observed, all of which was good or better;
- the positive ethos established within the department underpinned by the excellent rapport between the teachers and the pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- the very good tracking systems developed by the department to monitor the pupils' progress and inform learning and teaching; and
- the very effective leadership of the head of department and the support provided by his departmental team to improve further the attainments of the pupils.

SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of St Patrick's Grammar School Armagh 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 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. Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to mathematics, science and technology providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Detailed findings are reported in Appendix 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, and 14.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	160	72	45	41
Teachers	50	41	82	8
Support Staff	34	17	50	*

Source: Returns from questionnaires to DE. * = fewer than 5

Nearly all of the responses from parents show high levels of satisfaction with the quality of provision in the school. Recurring strengths reported include: the quality of pastoral care; the very supportive teachers and administrative staff; the strong rapport between staff and pupils; the good balance between academic work and the extensive provision of extra curricular activities and the effective communications between the school and parents. The responses from teachers show high levels of support for the leadership of the principal, and the senior management team, and the strong ethos in the school. The responses from some members of the support staff raised concerns about the effectiveness of communication between senior managers and support staff. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Principal and SMT need to review the timetabling arrangements to ensure that the class sizes across the science provision and in technology and design at KS3 do not exceed the recommended number as stated in DE Circular 2004/5: Class Sizes in Practical Subjects in Post-Primary Schools.

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