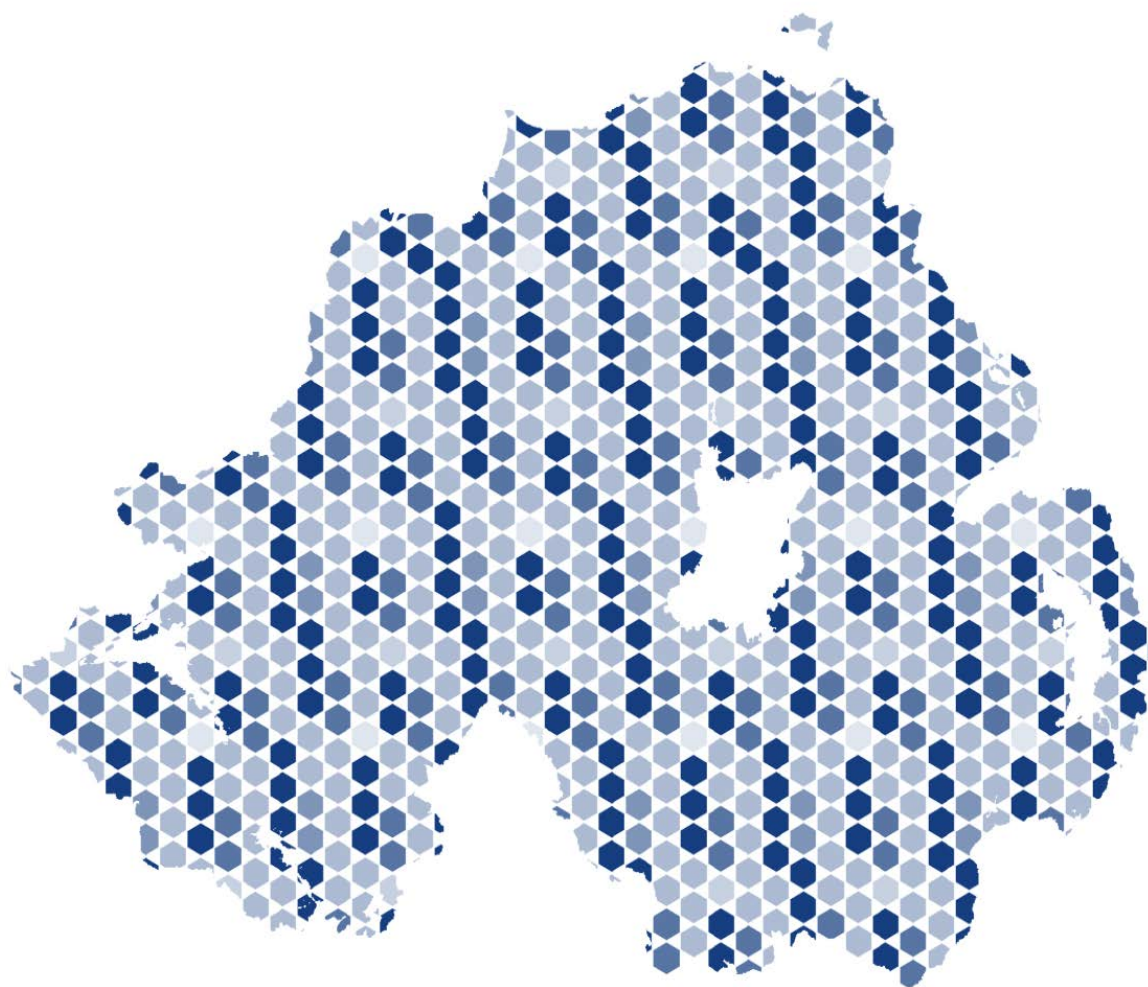


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

## Ashfield Boys' High School, Belfast

All boys controlled, non-selective 11-18 school

Report of an Inspection in  
September 2016

## Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievements and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

## Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

A small number of parents (24) and 55% of the staff (41) responded to the online questionnaires. All of the staff who responded were affirmative of the work of the school; a small number who provided additional comments reported positively on the strong ethos of care for pupils and staff. Almost all of the parents who responded affirmed the work of the school; in the written comments, they valued the progress being made by their sons and the support provided to them.

During the inspection, the inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils. Almost all of the pupils who talked with inspectors are proud of the school and are very loyal to it. They spoke positively of the good working relationships they have with their teachers and value what the teachers do for them. A small number of the senior pupils raised concerns around excessive time spent in study, a lack of enrichment activities and some inflexibility in the subject choices at post-16.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of a 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 pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on science in this inspection.

## **3. Context**

Ashfield Boys' High School is an all boys controlled, non-selective school catering for pupils from 11-18 years of age. The school is located in East Belfast and has been oversubscribed for some years. The catchment area of the school is one of high economic and social deprivation. Over the past few years, the enrolment in the sixth form has increased significantly.

Approximately 32% of the pupils in the school have been identified as requiring support with aspects of their learning, 61 of whom have a statement of educational need. The number of newcomer pupils has increased over recent years and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased to around 40%.

Ashfield Boys' High School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	117	121	122	123
Enrolment	709	737	744	768
% Attendance (NI Average)	91.1% (92.0% )	91.7% (92.0%)	91.7% (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	24.4	36.6	41.9	40.1
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	26.23% (186)	30.8% (227)	34.14% (254)	32.4% (249)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	45	53	55	61
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the Learning Support Centre (if appropriate)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
No. of newcomers	9	5	15	21

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Important areas for improvement

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- Almost all of the pupils are well motivated and keen to learn; they are mostly very well behaved, respectful and work well with each other. The pupils mostly engage well with their learning and show good levels of interest, engagement and enjoyment. The senior pupils, especially those at post-16 and those with additional learning needs, have insufficient opportunities to participate in a formalised programme of curriculum enrichment that affords meaningful and incremental opportunities for the acquisition and development of skills in leadership, mentoring, resilience and self-management.

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

- Over the past three years, the school has had a notably high number of pupils withdrawn from the public examinations data as a result of an inappropriate application and misinterpretation of the ineligibility criteria as set out by the Department of Education. Given the significant number of pupils withdrawn as a result of welfare issues, the school, including the governors, need to: be more vigilant in the application of this process; re-visit the personal development curriculum across the school to ensure that it is meeting the social, emotional and cognitive needs of all the pupils, which enable them to have sufficient resilience to complete their courses successfully; and improve the administrative aspects of the process to ensure all documentation relating to, and associated with, the application of the ineligibility criteria is comprehensive, accurate and retained. The evaluations on levels of attainment in public examinations that follow are set within this context.
- The standards attained by the pupils in English are an important area for improvement. However, there has been an increase in the number of pupils entered for GCSE English language and there is an improving trend in their attainment at grades A\* to C, which is moving the attainment ever closer to the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. In lessons, the pupils display positive attitudes to English and most engage effectively in paired and group discussion.
- The pupils attain good standards in mathematics; they engage well in their learning and the standard of work in their books is good. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE mathematics and the level of attainment at grades A\* to C, over the past three years, is consistently above the NI average for similar schools. The standards attained by the small number of pupils who take GCSE further mathematics and GCE A level mathematics show an improving trend.
- In science, the standards attained by pupils in public examinations are very good. All pupils at key stage 4 are entered for a GCSE or equivalent qualification. Over the past three years, the standards achieved by the pupils in GCSE double award science and single award science at both grades A\* to B and A\* to C are significantly above the corresponding NI three-year average. The uptake for science at post-16 is high and the pupils achieve well above the corresponding NI three-year average.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications, or equivalent, at grades A\* to C has increased from 68% to 84%; this is now well above the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has fluctuated, but at 50% is now in line with the NI average for similar non-selective schools. It is noteworthy that the corresponding percentage for pupils entitled to free schools meals has increased significantly to around 46% in 2016; this is now well above the NI average for non-selective schools.

- Most of the subjects at GCSE grades A\* to C are in line with or above the corresponding three-year average for similar schools; just under two-thirds of the subjects are more than ten percentage points above the subject average. At GCE A level, around one-half of the subjects are in line with or above the corresponding subject average.
- Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels, or equivalent, at grades A\* to C has increased from 47% to 54%, which is now above the average for non-selective schools.
- A high number of pupils take vocational subjects at levels 2 and 3; almost all of them attain high standards across the range of subjects.
- The outcomes achieved by the pupils with additional learning needs indicate an improving trend. However, the monitoring system which tracks the progress they make is not systematic enough to allow the school to be secure about how much progress each pupil makes in his learning.
- The proportion of year 14 pupils progressing to courses in higher or further education is well below the NI average for boys in non-selective schools. In addition, there are a small number of cases where pupils leave at year 14 to undertake level 2 studies at a local college of further education or in work-based learning. It will be important for the school to use more effectively the data on leavers' destinations to inform revisions to the curriculum pathways available to the pupils.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- Planning, learning, teaching and assessment are good overall, but there is variation in quality across the school. Planning for individual subjects is generally sound and the recent effort to bring greater consistency to planning processes is impacting positively. One-half of the lessons observed were effective (good) in promoting and progressing the pupils' learning, with a further one-quarter (25%) very good. Learning and teaching strengths include: effective use of classroom activities to develop the pupils' oral skills and promote confidence; effective use of questioning by teachers to improve the pupils' understanding and develop their thinking skills; and purposeful group activities that provide appropriate opportunities to make the learning interesting and engaging.
- In the one-quarter of lessons that had important areas for improvement, there was a lack of differentiated activities to support the needs of all the pupils and too much teacher talk; this prevents the pupils from engaging fully in their learning and limits opportunities for them to acquire and develop inter-personal, thinking and communication skills. The school has identified the shortcomings in its assessment of, and for, learning and has introduced an appropriate suite of assessment measures which supports the teachers with important information to inform their learning and teaching strategies and help them measure pupil progress in going forward.

- Literacy and numeracy across the school remain areas for on-going improvement. There is a strategy to improve the quality of the pupils' written communication across the curriculum, but it is not implemented consistently within individual subjects. While many subject-contextualised opportunities for the pupils to develop further their numeracy skills have been identified, the promotion and development of their numeracy skills across the curriculum is not well enough thought through, or embedded, in subjects outside of mathematics. Consequently, there is a need for a more consistent approach to literacy and numeracy across all subjects, which will impact positively in the classroom and this needs to be monitored and evaluated incisively.
- The provision for learning in English, mathematics and science is good.
- The provision for the care and support of the pupils is an important area for improvement. There is an underdeveloped taught pastoral programme, shortcomings in the quality and impact of the individual education plans and a special educational needs (SEN) register which is not used adeptly enough to support fully the needs of all these pupils. The school provides significant resources, including key personnel, to support the pupils' welfare. The staff are committed and, appropriately, intervention programmes are being reviewed for pupils with additional learning needs. Work has begun to embed a more effective use of data to inform and improve aspects of the pastoral provision. There is, however, a lack of cohesion in how staff co-operate at whole-school level to assist the work of the learning support department.
- The curricular provision across the key stages is not sufficiently broad, coherent or balanced. While the number of courses offered has increased, with an associated increase in standards attained, the pupils are too restricted in their choice of subjects to meet their needs, interests and abilities, particularly at post-16. The school needs to review the sixth-form entry policy to ensure the pupils have the pre-requisite level of attainment to cope with the demands of level 3 study. While the school has appropriately placed a priority on reviewing the curriculum offer, the strategies to monitor and evaluate the impact of curriculum development on the pupils' learning experiences are not sufficiently discerning. The school offers a small number of subjects through the area learning community (ALC) at post-16. However, opportunities to extend and improve the curriculum offer through collaboration with the local further education colleges and other schools within the ALC are underdeveloped.
- The pupils have access to relevant up-to-date resources and individual careers guidance interviews. Most pupils benefit from appropriate work experience placements. The taught programmes of employability and careers education, however, lack coherence and progression and the pupils have insufficient opportunities to make use of the information available to them to inform their personal career planning, particularly at key transition points.



## **7. Leadership and management**

- A new school development plan has been devised in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors, and is informed by the progress made against the targets and actions in the preceding plan. While many of the identified priorities are appropriate, the self-evaluation process in the school is not sufficiently well developed or robust; consequently, the plan is not informed adequately by an effective monitoring of the quality of provision. In addition, the actions to effect improvement across the identified priorities are too numerous and not focused sharply enough on the required improvements in a specific and measurable way. The school development plan should be re-visited to incorporate the findings from this inspection.
- There has been a recent and significant restructuring and refresh of the membership of the core leadership team in the school. Some early progress has been made in reviewing, evaluating and implementing strategies to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The strategic leadership of the school, however, is an important area for improvement. The process of systematic monitoring and evaluation of improvement actions is largely underdeveloped across the school, particularly in some key aspects such as curriculum planning and pastoral provision. Consequently, work needs to be undertaken to build further the capacity of the senior leaders to undertake their work more effectively.
- While there is variation in the effectiveness of the work of middle leaders, the evidence is clear that there is capacity at this level to identify and bring about improvement. They are receptive to school improvement work and most of them have the capacity and willingness to perform their roles more effectively with clear and appropriate guidance and support.
- The school has invested recently in a range of standardised and attitudinal tests to measure and inform better the tracking and monitoring of the pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. The school is at an early stage in determining progress in pupils' learning; the use of data to inform the quality assurance and accountability processes is underdeveloped. Much remains to be done to embed the use of this wide dataset by leadership at all levels to ensure that it informs fully the target-setting process, the pupils' personal development programme and supports the school's priority of ensuring that all pupils progress fully in their learning.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are supportive of the school and understand well the important role it plays in the community; through high levels of involvement in the current school development planning process they are largely well informed of the strengths of the school and about some of the areas for further development. To improve the governance further, there is a need to ensure: greater accountability and challenge, at all levels of leadership; that the curriculum followed by the pupils is appropriate; and that all of the pupils have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In particular, the school needs to address the unacceptable practice of removing pupils from class without adequate supervision arrangements in place, and to develop more positive approaches to behaviour management. In addition, the policies for anti-bullying and Relationships and Sexuality Education need to be reviewed to ensure they reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education and best practice in schools. Overall, there is a need to improve the provision for the care and support of the pupils, and the arrangements for safeguarding.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

The school needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, which include the need to:

- review and improve the curriculum offer and access, and examination entry policy and practice, to meet better the academic, progression and personal development needs of all of the pupils;
- use, record and report quantitative and qualitative data more effectively and accurately, at all levels, to track and monitor the progress in learning of all the pupils; and
- develop further the capacity of the leadership to provide better informed strategic direction and contribute more fully to the school improvement agenda through effective monitoring and evaluation to sustain and raise standards further.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.

The ETI will also return to the school within six weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues.

## Examination performance and other statistical data

## GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS<sup>2</sup> and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in Ashfield Boys' High School achieving five or more GCSE's (A\* to C and A\* to E) and equivalent subjects, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>3</sup>.

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	99	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	68.27	68.00	83.70
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>68.3</i>	<i>68.0</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	46.15	36.00	50.00
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>42.9</i>	<i>42.1</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	86.54	87.00	94.57
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)	31.03	20.51	45.71

<sup>2</sup> SIMS: School Information Management System

<sup>3</sup> See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

### Other examination results at key stage 4 from 2013-14 to 2015-16

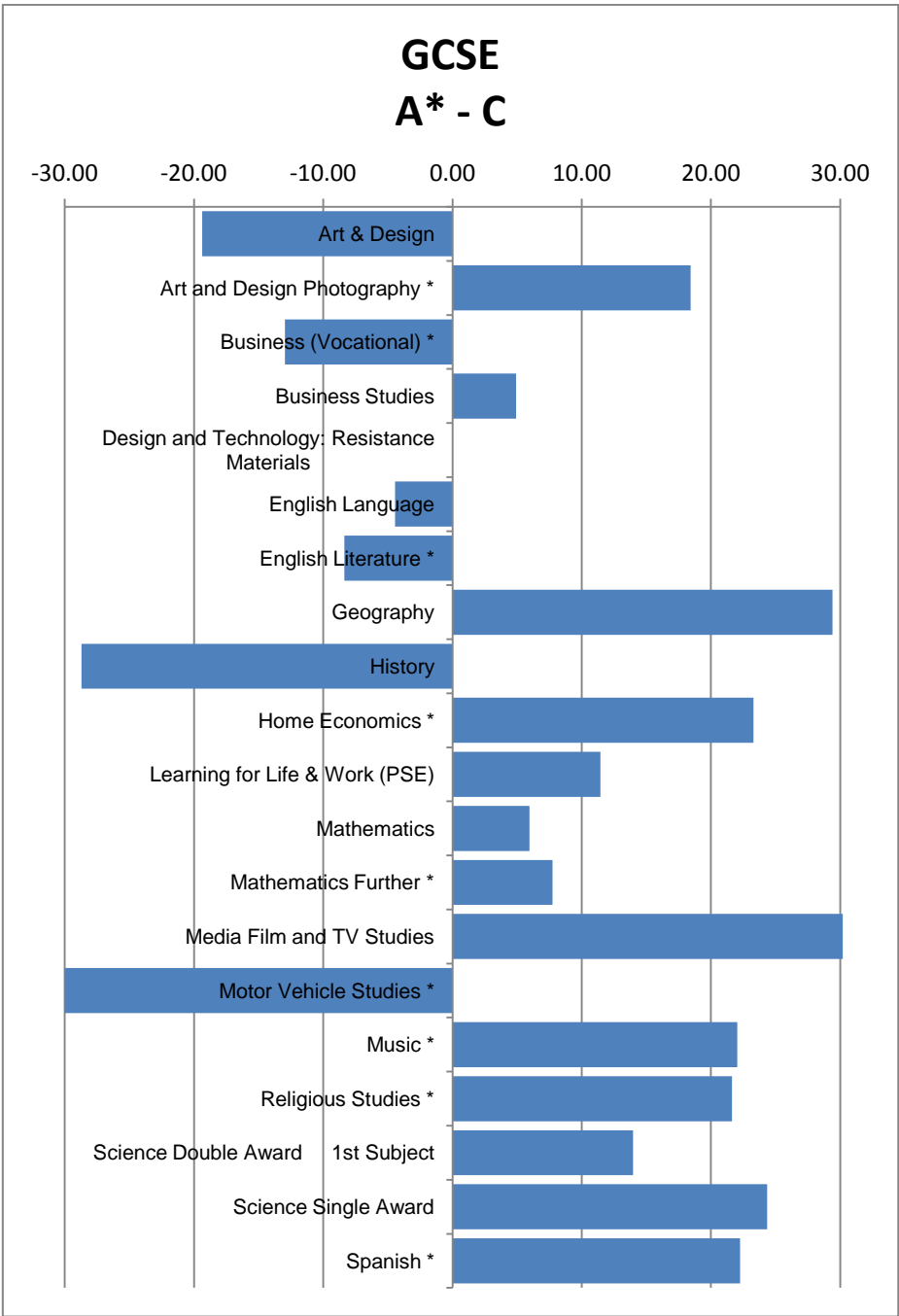
Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the tables below shows the percentage of year 12 pupils in Ashfield Boys' High School achieving at grades A\* to C in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining boards for the subjects in these tables to facilitate comparison.

Level 2	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*- C	% A*- C	% A*- C	
BTEC Engineering	n/a	100	100	81
BTEC ICT	n/a	100	100	192
BTEC Sports Studies	100	100	100	108
BTEC Science	n/a	100	100	77
BTEC Travel & Tourism	n/a	100	100	10
BTEC Hospitality	n/a	100	100	11
BTEC Media Studies	n/a	100	100	45
BTEC Business Studies	n/a	100	100	45

# Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A\* to C from 2013-14 to 2015-16

The bar chart below illustrates, based on data held by Ashfield Boys’ High School and verified with the ETI, the performance of each GCSE subject at grades A\* to C, in all exam boards, compared with the three-year average for pupils in non-selective schools. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above average. As the number of entries to each subject may vary considerably, comparisons should be treated with caution.

## Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A\* to C



\*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

### GCE A level examination results at grades A\* to C from 2013-14 to 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in Ashfield Boys' High School achieving three or more GCE A levels, or equivalent, at grades A\* to C, and two or more GCE A levels at grades A\* to E.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	82	67	87
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	46.94	44.83	53.57
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	95.92	93.10	94.64

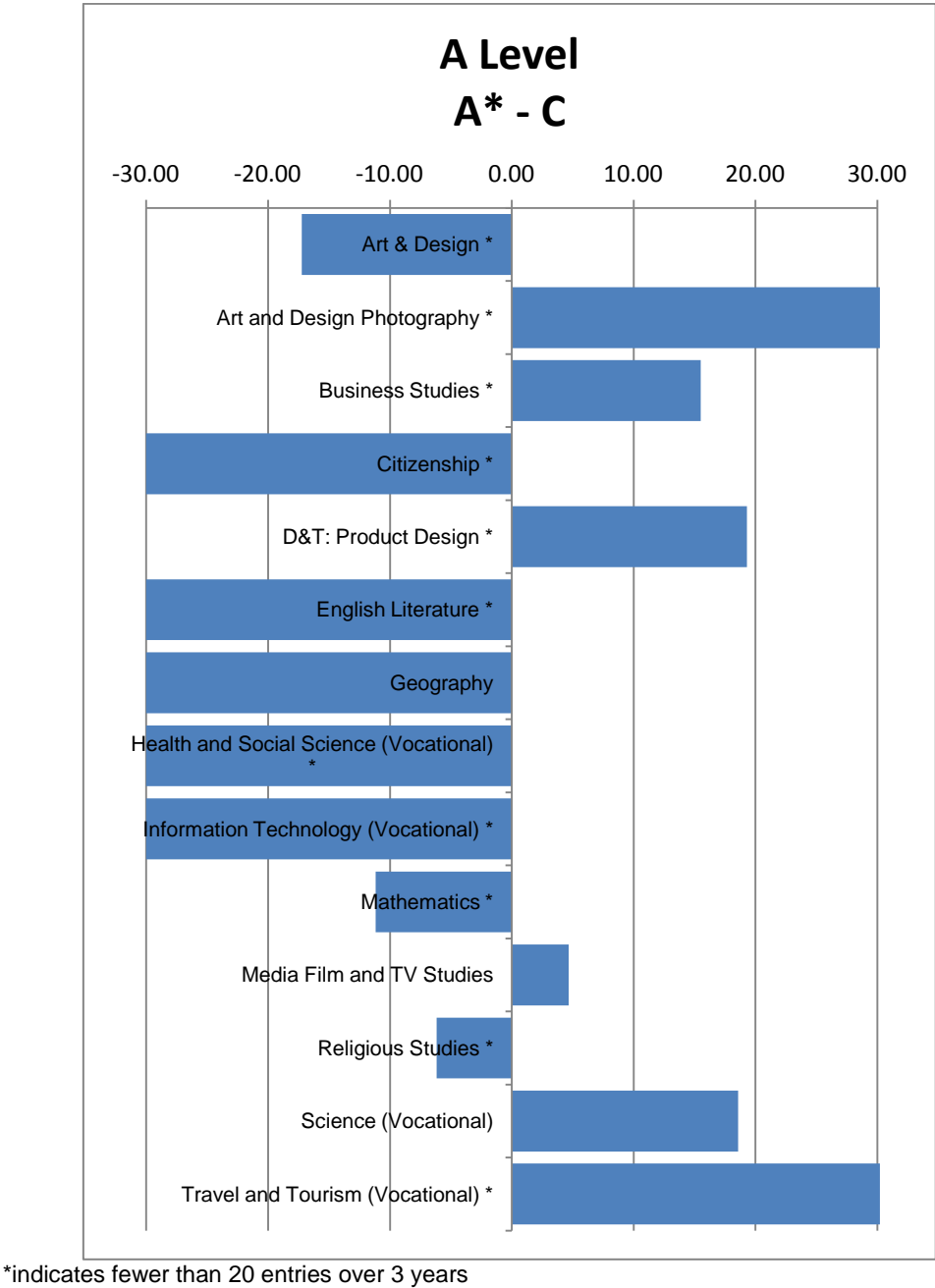
### Other examination results: Post-16

Level 3	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total entry over 3 years
	% A* - C	% A* - C	% A* - C	
BTEC ICT	n/a	83.3	91.7	58
BTEC Sports Studies	100	89.2	100	79
BTEC Engineering	100	100	100	41
BTEC Business Studies	100	100	100	38

**Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level at grades A\* to C from 2013-14 to 2015-16**

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the bar chart below shows the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCE A level at grades A\* to C in individual subjects in Ashfield Boys' High School compared with the three-year NI average. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. As the number of entries to each subject may vary considerably, comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.

**Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A\* to C**



## Staying on rate

Based on data held in SIMS by the school and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at Ashfield Boys' High School, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for non-selective schools from school census returns to the Department of Education for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	47.8	73.9
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	78.2	85.2

## Leavers' destinations

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from Ashfield Boys' High School who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment, compared with the average for all boys in non-selective schools.

	NI	School	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	13157	106			
Employment	10.9%	20.8%			
Institute of Further Education	44.5%	34.9%	23	14	
Institute of Higher Education	23.3%	13.2%			14
Work-based Learning (Training)	15.4%	17.9%			
Unemployed	3.9%	11.3%			
Unknown	2.1%	1.9%			

Source for NI data: School Leavers Survey



**Accommodation**

There are some deficiencies in the school's accommodation, including:

- Inadequate canteen space for the number of pupils, which is placing restrictions on timetabling.

## **ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF ASHFIELD BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, SEPTEMBER 2016**

### **SAFEGUARDING**

In line with the child protection/safeguarding procedures of the Education and Training Inspectorate, the district inspector and the reporting inspector from the original inspection returned to Ashfield Boys' High School on 11 November 2016 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place on the 19 September 2016; the purpose of the visit was to ensure that the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection, had been addressed.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements were evaluated as satisfactory.

During the interim period, the school had received support from the Child Protection School Support Service of the Education Authority and the Behaviour Support Team of the Education Authority.

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