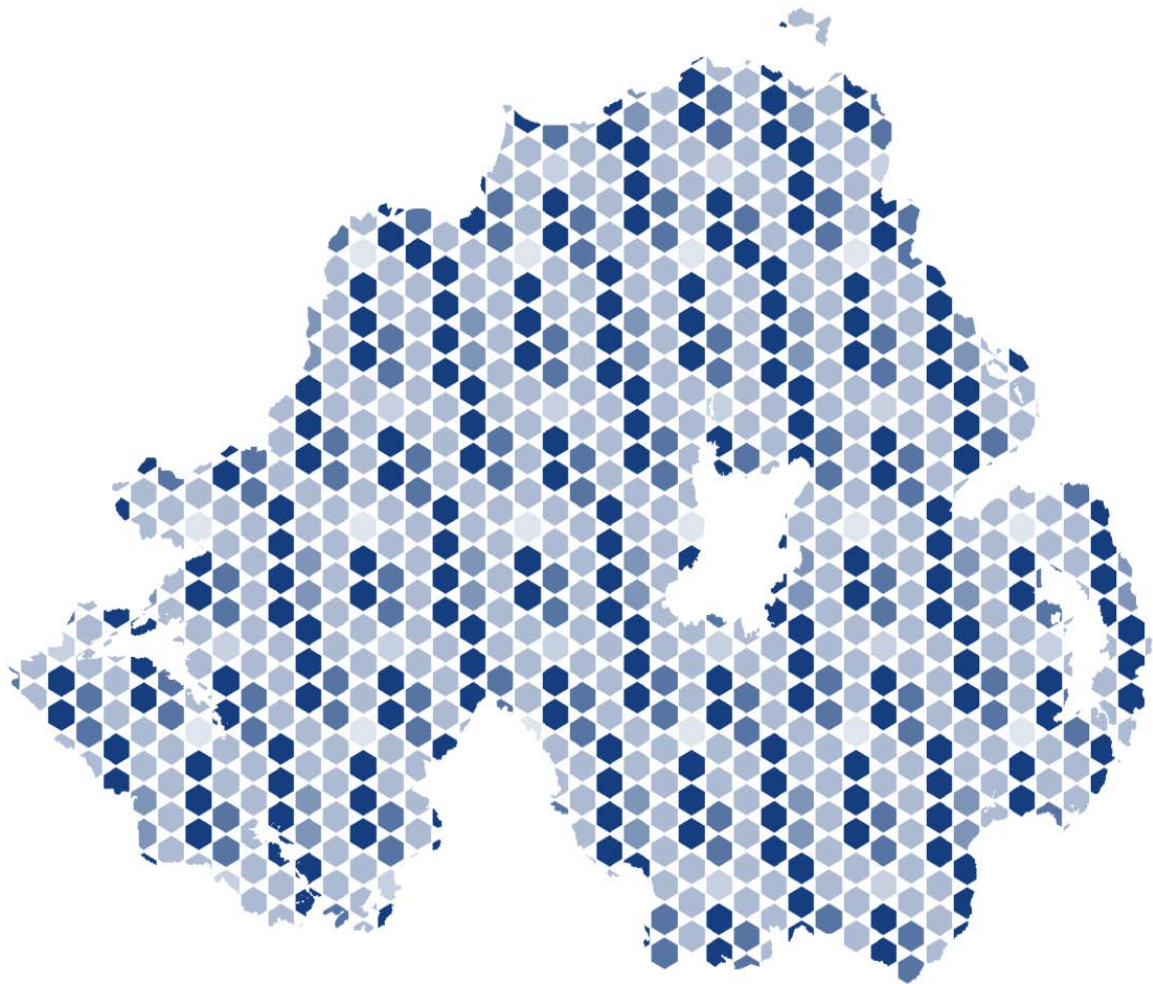


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Coleraine Grammar School,  
County Londonderry

Voluntary, selective, co-educational 11-19 school

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
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CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## 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: [Together Towards Improvement Post-Primary | Education and Training Inspectorate](#).

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, 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 minority of parents (65) and around one-half of the staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses of the parents expressed good levels of satisfaction with the school's curricular and extra-curricular provision and they indicated that their children are happy at the school and enjoying their learning. The staff's responses highlighted their commitment to working together and setting high standards. A large number of individual issues were raised by both parents and staff through the questionnaires and the additional comments provided. These issues included low standards of achievement, communication and aspects of leadership. The issues were discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents) with the governors and the principal.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of inspection is, through 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**

Coleraine Grammar School opened in September 2015 following the discontinuance of Coleraine High School and Coleraine Academical Institution. As a result, considerable work was undertaken to create new arrangements for leadership and staffing and to set in place key structures, all within a very short timeframe. The school is currently operating on a split site arrangement. It was oversubscribed in both 2015 and 2016. The school is involved in a Shared Education partnership with two other schools in the area; these links extend and enhance the pupils' experiences.

Coleraine Grammar School	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	157	158
Enrolment	1487	1375
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.49 % (N/A)	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	12.8	12.4
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	8.9% (132)	8.95% (123)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	11	7
No. of newcomers	*	*

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the pupils are respectful, motivated and well-disposed towards learning; they display good levels of engagement with one another and are able to work independently. While the year 13 and 14 pupils access a range of learning opportunities which further develops their resilience, leadership and self-management skills, the opportunities for similar development are underexploited for the pupils in key stage (KS) 3 and 4.
- Public examination data was available for one year only; the academic ability of this cohort of pupils varied widely. Although the benchmarked standards reported below need to improve, the school can demonstrate that it has added value to the standards the pupils had achieved on entry to the school.
- The standards attained by the pupils in English are an important area for improvement. They are significantly below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for selective schools in GCSE English Language at grades A\* to B. Just over one-third of the pupils are entered for GCSE English literature and the standards attained are above the NI average at grades A\* to B. The standards attained by pupils entered for GCE A level English literature are slightly above the NI average. In lessons, the pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning in English.

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

- Overall, the standards attained by the pupils in mathematics are also an important area for improvement. They are well below the NI average for similar schools in GCSE mathematics at grades A\* to B but are in line with the NI average in GCSE further mathematics. The standards achieved by pupils entered for GCE A Level mathematics at grades A\* to C are in line with the NI average for similar schools. The pupils are motivated, enjoy learning mathematics and respond confidently to questions.
- The standards attained by the pupils in biology, chemistry and physics at KS 3 are good. In GCSE physics, the pupils attain good standards in line with the NI subject average and the standards attained by the pupils who take GCE A level physics are also good.
- Around 78% of the pupils attained seven or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A\* to C in 2016; this is well below the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals band. When English and mathematics are included, the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A\* to C is also well below the corresponding average.
- The standards attained by pupils entitled to free schools meals are below those of their peers, with just under 70% of these pupils achieving this important benchmark; the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs also requires improvement.
- The standards attained by the pupils in around 60% of the individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A\* to B are not good enough. Consequently, improving the standards attained by the pupils and addressing the variation across individual subjects is central to the school's improvement process.
- Around 66% of the pupils attained three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A\* to C in 2016; this is well below the average for similar selective schools.
- A small number of pupils were entered for vocational courses at KS 4 and post-16; a majority of these pupils attained well.
- There is a gap between the attainment of girls and boys in public examinations, with the girls attaining higher standards. The school have recognised this and are working to address this gap; the scope and pace of this work, however, needs to intensify.
- The proportion of year 14 pupils progressing to further education is above the NI average, whilst the proportion progressing to higher education is below the average, as is the school's retention of pupils between years 12 and 13 and years 13 and 14. The school has recognised the need to develop further the curriculum offer at post-16 to ensure it is meeting the needs, interests and abilities of all of the pupils.

## 6. Provision for learning

- There is a variation in the quality of planning, learning, teaching and assessment across the school. There is a well conceived learning and teaching policy, along with good subject planning. However, the out-workings in the classroom do not reflect this consistently enough. Consequently, 72% of the lessons observed were good or better in progressing the pupils' learning; the remaining 28% of the lessons observed required improvement. In the most effective practice, there were well structured lessons that had clear and achievable learning outcomes, good use of stimuli and engaging activities to develop pupils' interest in learning and effective use of questioning to improve their understanding and subject specific vocabulary. The more effective lessons supported well the development of pupils' inter-personal, social and communication skills and there was good dialogue between the teacher and the pupils.
- Notwithstanding, there were important areas for improvement in 28% of the lessons observed. These were characterised by over-direction in the teaching, including low teacher expectation, and shortcomings in the provision of appropriate and effective differentiation and support for pupils. The school had identified the need to improve further the quality of learning and teaching; the inspection findings endorse this as a matter of priority. Improving the consistency of the quality of learning and teaching, including through greater differentiation and providing high quality feedback on pupils' work is an important area for improvement.
- The provision for learning in English has important areas for improvement. While 60% of the lessons observed were effective, the remainder had important areas for improvement. In the most effective practice, the pupils had opportunities to lead the learning, develop and express their own knowledge and respond to that of their peers. In the less effective practice, the teaching did not adequately build on prior learning or take account of the needs and abilities of all of the pupils.
- A recently ratified literacy policy is informing the development of literacy across the curriculum, but this is at an early stage. A number of literacy initiatives are being undertaken and there is an appropriate focus on implementing a whole school marking policy to support pupils in improving their literacy skills across the curriculum.
- The provision for learning in mathematics has important areas for improvement. A majority (67%) of the teaching observed in mathematics was good or better, with one-quarter of it being very good. In these lessons, the teachers used a variety of effective learning and teaching strategies, there was a suitable lesson structure with clear learning intentions and effective reviews of previous learning. The pupils consolidated and extended their mathematical understanding by engaging positively in their individual work, in groups and through whole class discussion. In the less effective practice, in a significant minority (33%) of the lessons observed, the learning was not matched to the individual needs of the pupils and they were not given sufficient opportunities to discuss their learning.
- While a numeracy policy has recently been implemented, the development of numeracy across the curriculum is also at a very early stage of development.

- The provision for biology, chemistry and physics at KS 3 is good, as is the provision for physics at KS 4 and post-16. Practical work and extra-curricular activities related to science are used well to help foster the pupils' enthusiasm and their understanding of scientific concepts. The teachers are developing further their teaching and assessment practice to better meet the needs of all of the pupils.
- The provision of care and support for the pupils is founded on a developing sense of school community. The ethos reflects well the school's vision to become a *'caring, respectful, and supportive environment where all pupils and staff aspire to excellence in every area of school life.'* The pupils have an increasing sense of pride in their school community, which is reflected in their participation in, and enjoyment of, a wide range of extra-curricular activities which the school staff supports actively. The care and support provided is underpinned by comprehensive and integrated policies which have the potential to support effectively the pupils in their learning and enhance their progress. There are inconsistencies in the out-workings of the school's agreed pastoral policies and all of the staff, working together as a cohesive team, need to support further the school's pastoral provision.
- The needs of those pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage. The learning, personal and social development of the pupils is supported well by the teachers and the support staff. The individual education plans for pupils, which the staff are working to improve, include useful and supportive information on the pupils' strengths and identify appropriate strategies to progress the pupils' learning. In the most effective practice, teachers annotate and amend the plans; the learning support team now need to monitor and evaluate more closely the impact of their planning, teaching and assessment on the quality of the pupils' learning, the progress they make and the standards they achieve. In addition, the subject teachers need to focus, in a measurable way, on how they can support more effectively those pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs.
- The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is an important area for improvement. Whilst year 10 pupils benefit from an informative careers convention, at KS 3, the provision for pupils is underdeveloped and they do not have sufficient access to a progressive programme of careers education to enable them to make informed choices at a key transition point. The pupils in year 12 and those at post-16 have access to a more coherent, taught programme of careers education. The post-16 pupils benefit from mock interviews and well-planned work experience placements, which are matched well to their career interests and intended progression pathways. Access to work-related learning opportunities and experiences are overly limited for the pupils at key stages 3 and 4. The contribution of individual subjects to the pupils' careers education is not sufficiently embedded. While all pupils at key stages 3 and 4 have access to learning for life and work provision, the quality of the learning and teaching varies considerably and is not monitored or evaluated sufficiently. The school has enhanced recently the accommodation and equipment for the careers provision to ensure that a well-resourced focal point exists on both sites.



- The curriculum at KS 3 has appropriate breadth and balance and is subject to an ongoing review to ensure it meets the needs of all of the pupils. The school provides a good range of subject choices at KS 4, with some flexibility in the number of GCSE or equivalent qualifications taken by the pupils; some new courses have been introduced which are targeted at particular groups of pupils to better meet their needs. However, the curriculum at KS 4 is not meeting the progression pathway needs of all of the pupils and there are insufficient vocational qualifications to ensure that the very wide range of abilities at this stage are sufficiently catered for. At post-16, the pupils have access to a broad and relevant curriculum offer, although the school needs to review the higher than average number of pupils who do not progress from year 13 to year 14. The curriculum provision is supplemented through collaborative links with the Coleraine Area Learning Partnership. While a curriculum team has been established to review the curriculum, this is at an early stage and strategies to monitor and evaluate the impact of curriculum development on the pupils' learning experiences, and the standards achieved by them, are underdeveloped.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- Significant and effective work has been undertaken within a relatively short timeframe to establish a solid foundation on which to build leadership and management structures and processes for the new school. This work provides a solid framework for improving the quality of learning and teaching and is addressing the need to broaden the curriculum. In addition, this work has led to improvements in pupil behaviour, work and attendance. Given the very demanding nature and complexity of the work associated with the creation of the new school, the senior leadership team has prioritised appropriately, and given due attention to, creating a shared vision and values for the new school community. Currently, shortcomings remain in aspects of communication and staff welfare, which remains a work in progress; these matters need to be addressed quickly and appropriately. Importantly, the leadership has recognised that the improvement focus is now placed on developing greater consistency in the quality of learning and teaching, in order to raise academic standards.
- There is clear evidence that the middle leaders are committed, hard working and have the capacity to develop further the areas for which they have responsibility; they have carried a heavy workload in making the management foundations and structures for the new school operational and they would now benefit from having sufficient time and support to carry out the next stages of this work, which is about embedding higher quality pedagogy that demonstrably impacts positively on pupils' learning experiences and outcomes attained.
- A new school development plan has been created as a result of wide consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors; this is well-informed by an evaluation of the progress made against the targets and actions in the one-year leadership action plan. While many of the identified priorities are appropriate, the self-evaluation process within the school, including the effective use of data is not sufficiently well-developed at present. Appropriately, the major focus of the work to date has been on bringing together the staff, cultures and systems of the two contributory schools. Going forward, the school development plan should be reviewed to incorporate the findings of this inspection; a higher priority needs to be placed on raising the standards the pupils attain through sharper action plans which focus more clearly on improving the quality of the learning and teaching, together with more rigorous and robust monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the improvement work.

- 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 have demonstrated very high levels of commitment to the school and have worked very well together to establish the school and create staffing and other structures. The governors are very supportive of the school, are aware of the challenges including the need to improve the standards attained by the pupils and address staff welfare matters. The governors play an important role in the current school development planning process; they are well informed about the strengths of the school and of the need to develop further particular aspects of provision such as the curriculum. As the school develops, there will be a need to provide greater challenge and expect more accountability from the leadership at all levels, to enable all pupils to achieve to their full potential.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. While these arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, the principal and governors need to carry out a risk assessment in relation to the access points to the buildings on the Castlerock site. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they are concerned about their safety or well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Coleraine Grammar School needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The main area for improvement is to raise the standards the pupils attain, particularly through:

- improving the consistency in the quality of all aspects of learning and teaching;
- improving the out-workings of monitoring and evaluation, including the action planning and use of data, so that it impacts positively on pupil experiences and outcomes; and
- improving the quality of communication across the school.

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 in 12 to 18 months.

## Examination performance and other statistical data

### GCSE and equivalent examination results for 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 Coleraine Grammar School achieving seven or more GCSE examinations and equivalent at grades A\* to C and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category<sup>3</sup>.

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	79.08
<a href="#">The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</a>	90.5
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	78.24
<a href="#">The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</a>	90.5
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	89.96
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)	69.2

### Other examination results at key stage 4 for 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving at grades A\* to C in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCSE level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

<b>Level 2</b>	2015-16	Total entry
	% A*- C	
Occupational Studies - Engineering	69.2	28
Occupational Studies - D & T Graphic Products	40	10

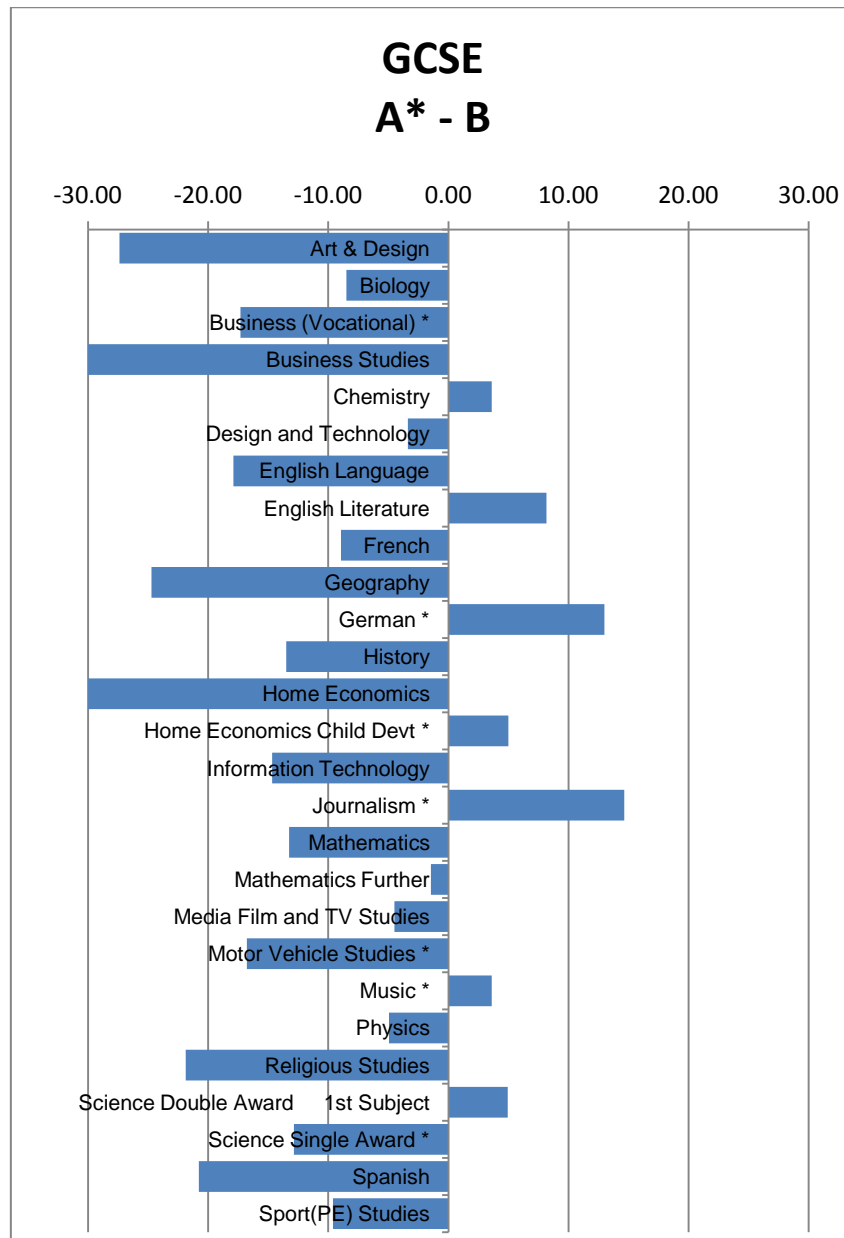
<sup>2</sup> SIMS: School Information Management System

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

## Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A\* to B for 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the graph details the percentage of year 12 pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A\* to B in individual subjects in Coleraine Grammar School, compared with the three-year NI average for similar pupils. A positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.

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



\*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

### GCE A level examination results at grades A\* to C, 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 Coleraine Grammar School achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A\* to C, compared with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2015-16
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	97.6
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	66.3
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	76.8

### Other examination results: Post-16

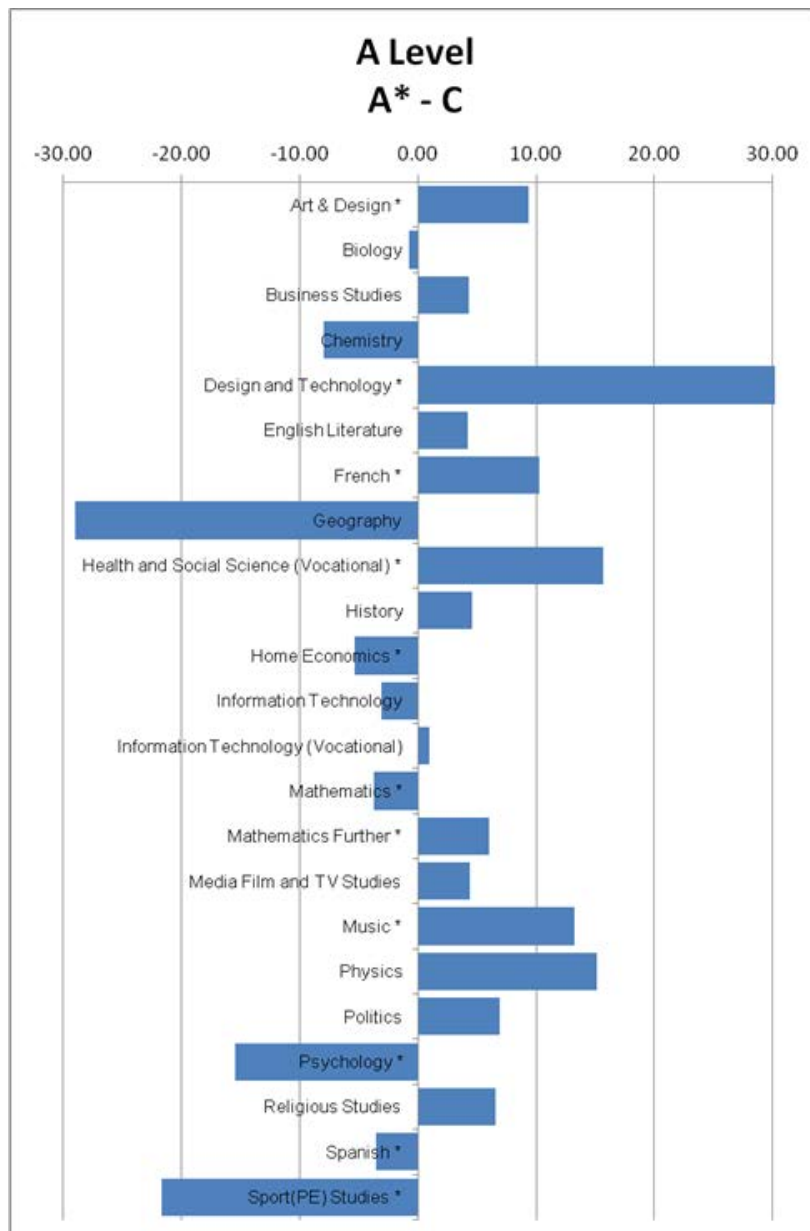
Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in Coleraine Grammar School achieving at grades A\* to C in vocational/applied courses equivalent to GCE A level. No average is available from the examining board(s) for the subjects in this table to facilitate comparison.

Level 3	2015-16	Total entry over 3 years
	% A* - C	
Subsidiary Diploma - Construction	66.7	6
Subsidiary Diploma-Engineering	71.4	7

## Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level at grades A\* to C for 2015-16

Based on data held by the school in SIMS and verified with the ETI, the bar chart below shows the percentage of pupils achieving at GCE A level at grades A\* to C in individual subjects in Coleraine Grammar 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



\*indicates fewer than 20 entries over 3 years

### 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 Coleraine Grammar School, from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for selective schools (from school census returns to the Department of Education for the most recent year for which data is available.)

	<b>NI Average</b>	<b>School</b>
% Yr12 staying on to Yr13	88.5	68.6
% Yr13 staying on to Yr14	91.3	86.8

### Leavers' destinations

Based on data held and verified by the school with the ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from Coleraine Grammar School who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for selective schools.

	<b>NI</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Level 2 (No.)</b>	<b>Level 3 (No.)</b>	<b>Level 4 (No.)</b>
Total Number of Leavers	4548	269			
Employment	5.7%	7.8			
Institute of Further Education	25.9%	39	7	90	8
Institute of Higher Education	62.7%	46.8			126
Work-based Learning (Training)	2.9%	0.4			
Unemployed	1.1%	0.7			
Unknown	1.7%	2.2			

**Accommodation**

1. The principal and the governors need to carry out a risk assessment of the access points to the school buildings on the Castlerock site.
2. While the teachers and the pupils work well within the constraints of the current split site arrangement, this impacts significantly on many aspects of school life. The travel between the two school sites makes demands on the health and well-being of the staff and the resource implications of running two buildings is having an unsustainable impact on the school budget.



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