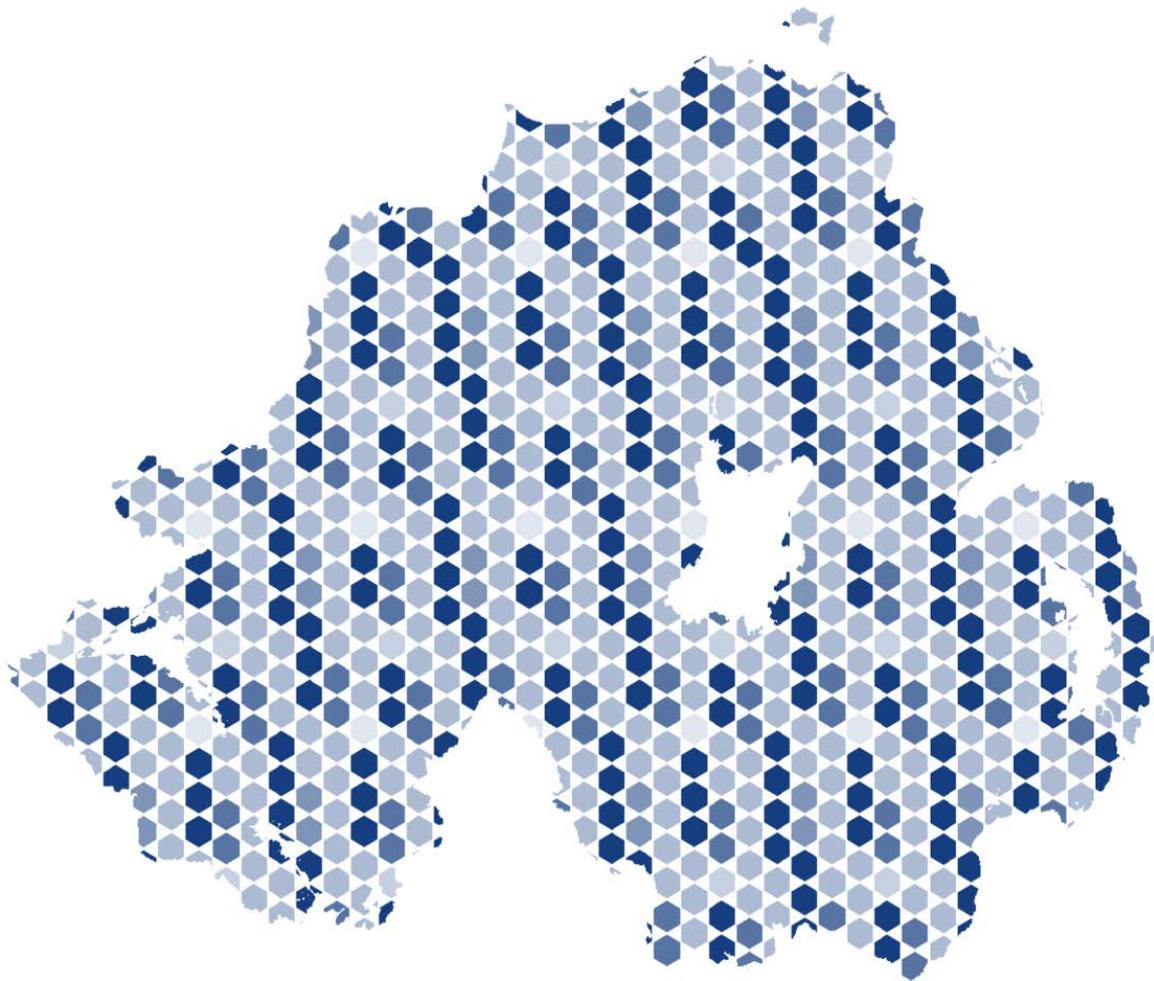


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Brigid's College, Derry

Maintained, co-educational, non-selective 11-19 school

Report of an Inspection in
October 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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

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.

Five percent of parents (26) and 50% of staff (50) responded to the questionnaires. The parents expressed their confidence in the leadership and management of the school, highlighting recent and ongoing improvements to the provision. They commented positively on the support for their children and the school's standing in the local community. The staff highlighted their focus on school improvement, the sense of team work and their commitment to the pupils. A small number of individual issues raised through the questionnaires were discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents) with the governors and senior leaders.

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 focus on the Autism Centre in this inspection.

3. Context

St Brigid's College serves the communities of Carnhill, Galliagh, Shantallow and beyond. The school is located within an area of high socio-economic disadvantage, which is reflected in the very high proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The intake at year 8 has almost doubled since 2013 and there has been a significant rise in the number of pupils identified by the school as having additional needs. In recent years, there have been significant changes in senior leadership. The school has an Autism Centre and an Irish-medium education stream.

St Brigid's College	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	65	111	115	120
Enrolment	528	514	560	600
% Attendance (NI Average)	89 (92)	91.3 (92)	92.6 (n/a)	N/A (n/a)
FSME Percentage ¹	60	68	68	72
% and (Number) of pupils on SEN register	56 (297)	53 (274)	45 (252)	75.3 (453)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the mainstream school	50	53	58	61
No. of pupils with statements of educational need in the Learning Support Centre	13	15	18	17
No. of newcomers	7	6	5	5

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are generally well-motivated; they display positive attitudes towards learning, are well-behaved, and are friendly and welcoming to visitors. The pupils are able to work well independently and with one another. The older pupils take on roles and responsibilities with pride and maturity.
- In the past three years, there has been notable improvement in the pupils' attainment in public examinations. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A* to C has risen significantly from 64% to 81%, which is now well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals band. When English and mathematics are included, the percentage has fluctuated, but remains well above the corresponding average.
- The attainment of pupils entitled to free schools meals in five or more GCSE qualifications or equivalent at A*-C, including English and mathematics, has shown year on year improvement, rising from 27% in 2014 to 38% in 2016.

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

- The percentage of pupils attaining three or more GCE A levels or equivalent at grades A* to C has fluctuated due, in part, to small numbers, but remains above the average for non-selective schools.
- Most of the pupils attain well in vocational courses at Key Stage (KS) 4 and post-16.
- The standards attained by the pupils in English are an important area for improvement. The percentage attaining at grades A* to C has been consistently below the corresponding subject average for similar schools over the past three years. The small number of pupils who are entered for GCSE English literature attain well.
- The standards attained by the pupils in mathematics are good. Most of the pupils make expected or better progress and attain standards in line with the corresponding three-year average in GCSE mathematics at grades A* to C for similar schools. The school introduced recently GCSE statistics and the pupils attained well in the first year of this course.
- The standards achieved by the pupils with special educational needs are good, with most of them making good progress in their learning. The standards attained by the pupils in the Autism Centre, however, are an important area for improvement; the pupils' communication and interaction skills are underdeveloped.
- The standards attained by the pupils are variable across the subjects at GCSE level. As a result, raising attainment further and addressing the variation across individual subjects remains appropriately a key focus of the school's improvement process.
- The proportion of year 14 pupils progressing to further education is above the NI average. The proportion progressing to higher education, however, is below the average, as is the school's retention of pupils between year 13 and year 14; consequently, the school needs to revisit the curriculum offer at post-16 to ensure it is meeting the needs of all of the pupils.

6. Provision for learning

- Most (80%) of the lessons observed were good or better in promoting the pupils' learning; one-third were very good. This strong teaching profile reflects well the school's sustained focus on improving classroom practice through a well-structured and consistent approach to learning and teaching. The most effective practice observed was characterised by: high expectations of what the pupils can achieve; learning activities which engaged and challenged the pupils; and plenary sessions in which the teachers both consolidated and assessed to good effect the pupils' learning.
- In the less effective practice (important areas for improvement or below), the learning activities were not differentiated sufficiently to meet the needs of individual pupils.

- The short-term planning for learning and the assessment of the pupils' work is effective. The quality of the oral assessment of the pupils' learning is mostly good. However, marking for improvement is too variable and needs to be developed further and in a more consistent manner across the school.
- The provision for learning in English is good. All of the lessons observed were good or better. The most effective practice was reflected in well-planned and paced lessons and adept questioning which encouraged extended responses from the pupils. Their thinking and oral skills, however, are not developed consistently enough across the provision.
- The school has prioritised extended writing to develop further the pupils' literacy skills and this is being implemented well across the curriculum. Senior and middle leaders monitor and evaluate systematically the impact of the actions taken to promote literacy, including the use of the well-resourced library.
- The provision for learning in mathematics is good. The department uses data effectively to inform and progress the pupil's learning. Most of the lessons observed were good, with two-fifths being very good. In these lessons, the teachers used a variety of learning and teaching strategies, there was a suitable lesson structure with clear learning intentions, engaging starter activities and appropriate review of previous learning. In a small number of the lessons observed, the planning and teaching did not promote effectively enough the mathematical learning of all of the pupils and needs to be reviewed accordingly.
- There is a well-informed approach to the development of the pupils' numeracy skills through subject-specific tasks across the curriculum. The numeracy intervention programmes are effective in targeting key groups of pupils and raising attainment.
- The provision for learning in the Autism Centre is an important area for improvement. The teachers and learning support assistants in the centre have a detailed knowledge of the pupils and work together effectively, using a range of strategies, to support the pupils' learning needs. However, one-half of the lessons observed did not progress sufficiently the pupils' learning. The planning is not differentiated appropriately, the pupils' timetables are not individualised sufficiently and the curriculum provision does not support or develop adequately the pupils' social and personal skills.
- The school places a high priority on the welfare of the pupils. The quality of pastoral care is very good and contributes positively to the raised standards achieved by the pupils. An ethos of care and support permeates the school and the staff support and encourage the pupils, actively raising their confidence and self-esteem. Appropriate strategies and initiatives have been implemented to meet the complex range of care and support needs of the pupils, and there are effective links with a range of external agencies and organisations which support the pupils.

- Overall, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective; all staff work collegially and to good effect to support the pupils to progress in their learning. Appropriate interventions help the pupils to overcome specific barriers to learning. While these are mostly working well, more needs to be done to continue to improve the quality of the provision; for example, the individual education plans are too general and often the targets are too vague, making it difficult to measure progress.
- The pupils, at KS 4 and post-16, benefit from well-planned work experience placements matched to their career aspirations, needs and abilities. The pupils also benefit from personal interviews with careers teachers and career advisors to inform their decision-making at key transition points. Nevertheless, there are important areas for improvement; the quality and consistency of the learning and teaching in the taught CEIAG lessons is variable and the pupils are not engaged fully in personal career planning. In addition, CEIAG is not sufficiently integrated and promoted within the individual subject areas across the curriculum.
- Over the past three years, the school has reviewed the KS 3 curriculum provision and made appropriate changes in order to support the development of, and progression to, a more relevant curriculum at KS 4. The curriculum offer at post-16, which is currently under review, is not broad enough; it needs to be more balanced and flexible to ensure that a wide range of relevant, qualifications and career progression pathways are accessible for all of the pupils. While the school collaborates with a small number of other schools within the area learning community, the number of pupils involved is low and the opportunity to broaden the curriculum offer through collaboration is underdeveloped.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership, at all levels, is characterised by a strong sense of collegiality and a clear focus on raising standards and improving further the learning experiences and outcomes for every pupil. Over the past three years, the school has undergone a significant but positive process of well-managed change, and is benefiting from the strong strategic leadership which has enhanced the confidence of the staff, governors, parents, pupils and wider school community in the school's improvement journey.
- The senior leadership team is strategic and plays an increasingly important and effective role in leading, monitoring and evaluating the quality of school provision. The team is well-supported in this work by the middle leaders, who carry out their roles to good effect and are developing well their expertise and increasing their capacity to identify and bring about improvement.
- The action to promote improvement is highly effective. The school can demonstrate important improvements in a range of areas, including pupil attendance and attainment, the quality of the learning and teaching and the connections with the wider school community. The school development planning process includes the thorough analysis of data and robust monitoring and evaluation of the improvement work. The school development plan sets out clearly agreed strengths and areas for further development. All staff contribute, through well-conceived action groups and relevant professional development, to the school improvement process.

- The governors are very well-informed about, and have a very clear understanding of and vision for, all aspects of the work and life of the school. They show a strong commitment to the local community, take pride in the recent improvements that have taken place and play an appropriate role in determining the key priorities for the ongoing school improvement process. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the ETI evaluation is that the school and wider community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are comprehensive. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. 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

St Brigid's College demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. There are areas for improvement that the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are to:

- improve the standards attained by the pupils in English, particularly at GCSE;
- improve the outcomes for the pupils and the quality of the provision within the Autism Centre; and
- develop further the curriculum, particularly at post-16, to meet better the needs and aspirations of all of the pupils.

ETI will monitor progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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 SIMS² and verified with the ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in St Brigid's College achieving five or more GCSE examinations and equivalent at grades A* to C and grades A* to E, and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals with the NI average for non-selective schools in the same free school meals category³.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
*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	64	85	81
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁴</i>	<i>64.4</i>	<i>72.9</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	35	32	39
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>32.9</i>	N/A
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	88	98	97
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)	27	31	38

² SIMS: School Information Management System

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

⁴ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the DE Circular 2011/03: '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 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.

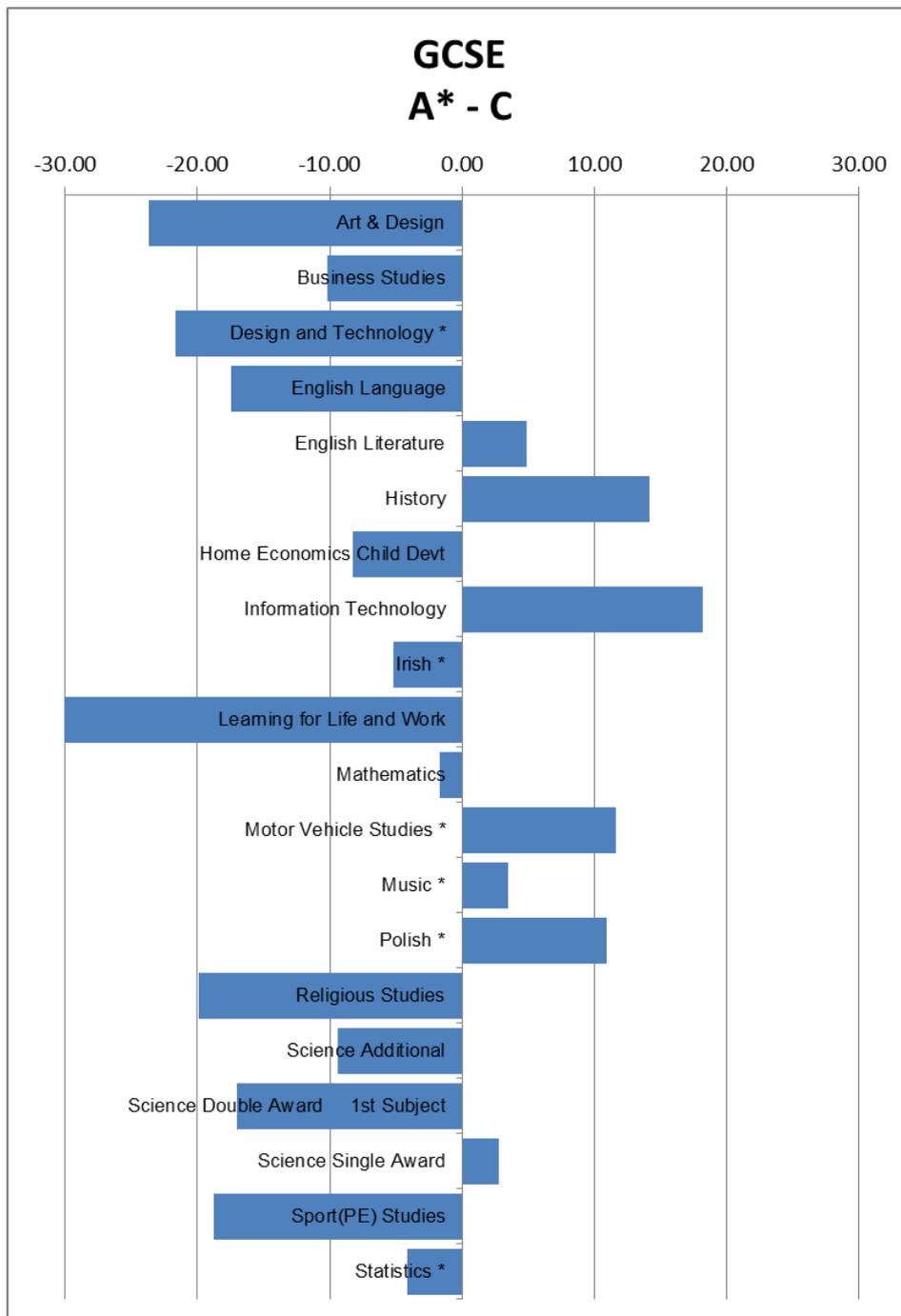
Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years.

Level 2	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*- C	% A*- C	% A*- C	
<i>BTEC Engineering (Double Award)</i>	100	100	100	17
<i>BTEC ICT (Double Award)</i>	100	100	n/a	74
<i>BTEC ICT</i>	100	100	100	27
<i>BTEC Science</i>	100	100	n/a	110
<i>Prince's Trust</i>	n/a	100	100	53
<i>Occupational Studies Business and Services</i>	95	84	94	122
<i>Occupational Studies Engineering Services</i>	75	79	93	56
<i>Occupational Studies Design & Creativity</i>	100	n/a	96	43
<i>Occupational Studies Environment & Society</i>	14	38	21	51
<i>Occupational Studies Technology & Innovation</i>	60	63	68	62
<i>Occupational Studies Construction</i>	20	83	n/a	11

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE 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 average over three years of the percentage of year 12 pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in St Brigid's College is compared with the three-year NI average for pupils in similar NI schools. 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 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 St Brigid's College achieving three or more GCE A levels 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	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	48	85	38
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100	97

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 St Brigid's College achieving 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.

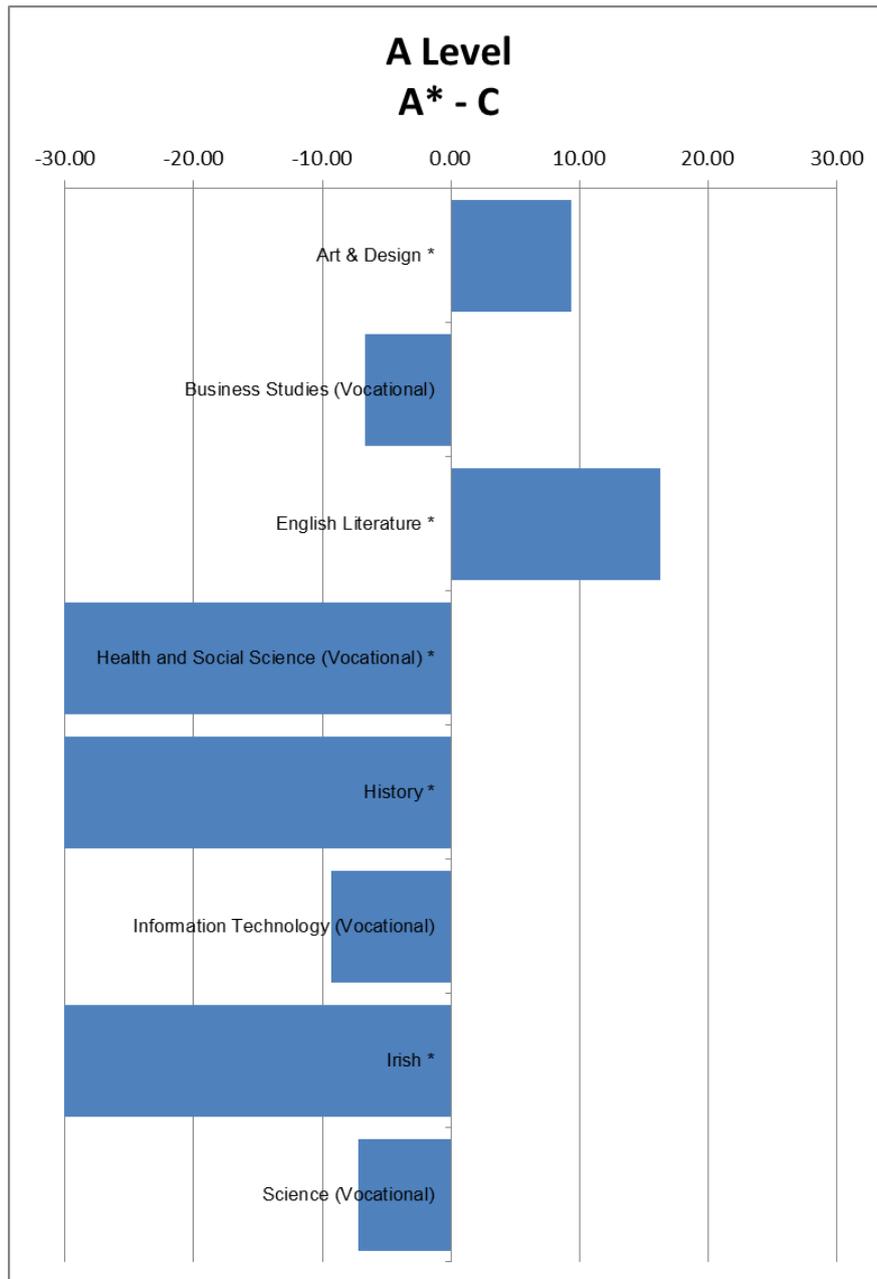
Other level three courses taken in at least two of the last three years

Level 3 BTEC	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total entry over 3 years
	% A* - C	% A* - C	% A* - C	
<i>Health & Social Care</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Travel & Tourism</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Sport</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>24</i>

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 St Brigid's College 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 St Brigid's College 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	43.8
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	78.2	72.3

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 St Brigid's College who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for non-selective schools.

	NI	School	Level 2 (No.)	Level 3 (No.)	Level 4 (No.)
Total Number of Leavers	13157	95			
Employment	10.9%	5%			
Institute of Further Education	44.5%	53%	19	15	14
Institute of Higher Education	23.3%	8%	0	0	8
Work-based Learning (Training)	15.4%	24%			
Unemployed	3.9%	4%			
Unknown	2.1%	0%			

Accommodation/Health and Safety

1. There is insufficient parking space for staff and visitors.
2. The heating system requires attention.
3. The school needs to carry out a risk assessment in relation to the access to and use of the fitness suite.

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