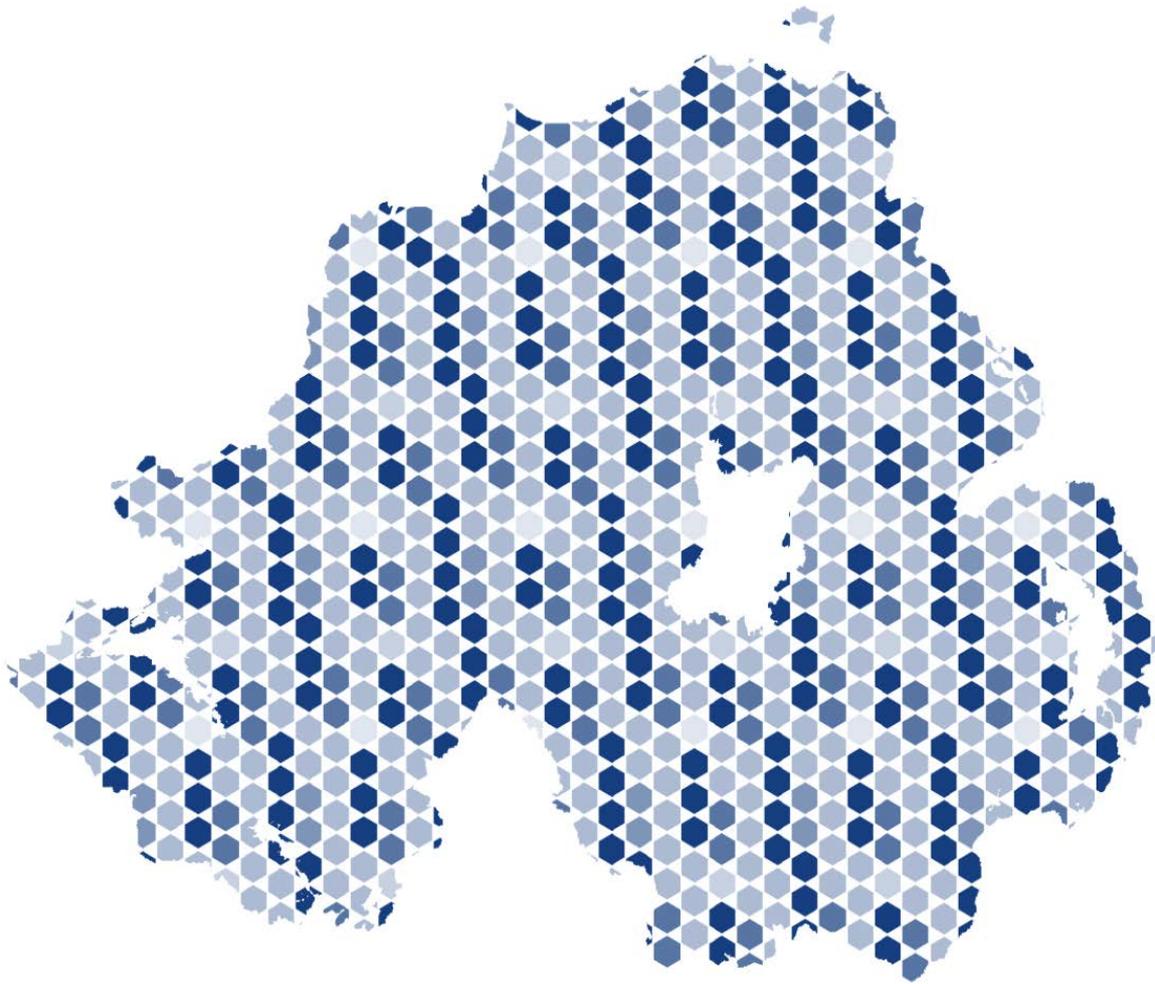


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Carrickfergus College,  
Co Antrim

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

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2013



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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## CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

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 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. At the time of the inspection, year 12, 13 and 14 pupils were on study leave; representatives from each of these year group did participate in discussions with inspectors and a small number of revision sessions were observed.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire. Data on questionnaire return is shown in the table below.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	137	100	73	14
Teachers	44	42	95	5
Support Staff	25	21	84	6

## QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

## PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 CONTEXT OF SCHOOL

Carrickfergus College draws almost all of its pupils from the local town. Over the past four years the enrolment has decreased by 10%; however, the intake in 2012 to year 8 increased significantly. The sixth form enrolment currently stands at 118. On average, approximately two-thirds of the pupils enter year 8 with the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics.

Carrickfergus College	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	89	107	92	122
Enrolment	746	716	685	670
% Attendance (NI Average)	90 (91)	90 (92.3)	91 (92.6)	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	19	20	20	23
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	13 (97)	16 (114)	19 (132)	18 (79)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	11	11	11	8
No. of newcomers	9	5	*	*
<b>Intake</b>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	*	*	*	*
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	13	11	9	7
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	57	62	71	73
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	69	64	78	68

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

\* fewer than 5

### 1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science provision providing detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. A summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and the progress towards meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

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

### 1.3. OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

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

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 The quality of the achievements and standards is good.

#### KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are friendly and welcoming and they engage enthusiastically and confidently to talk about their work. Most of the pupils in each year group are confident in their learning and, when given the opportunity, they work well together in pairs and groups and demonstrate good thinking, social and interpersonal skills.

#### Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

<b>GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions</b>	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	96	97
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	41.6	68.8	66.1
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Above average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	25.6	29.1	33.1
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>	<i>In line with the average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	89.1	94.3	93.4
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	5	2	5

There has been significant improvement in the standards attained by the pupils in key stage 4 over the past three years. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more subjects at grades A\* to C, including GCSE<sup>2</sup> English and mathematics, has improved significantly. Over the past two years approximately two-thirds of the year 12 pupils attain five or more GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C. The performance of just over one-half of individual GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C is in line with or above the three-year NI average for non-selective schools. The attainment in most of the key stage 4 vocational subjects is very good. Almost all of the year 12 pupils attain five or more subjects at grades A\* to E at key stage 4 and the standards attained by almost all of the pupils who have special educational needs are good.

<sup>2</sup> General Certificate of Secondary Education

The percentage of year 12 pupils entitled to free school meals achieving at the expected level is very low. The school has identified the need to address this underachievement and to raise standards in a significant minority of subjects at GCSE level.

**Data on Year 14 (A2) performance:**

<b>GCE A Level or equivalent</b>	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	84	90	83
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	55.3	48.8	35.2
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	97.4	100	100

The percentage of pupils who progress to higher education is above the NI average for non-selective schools. In the last two years, all year 14 pupils obtained two or more qualifications at grades A\* to E at GCE A2<sup>3</sup> level or equivalent. The attainment in all subjects, at grades A\* to E is above the NI average.

The percentage of pupils attaining three GCE A2 qualifications or equivalentents at grades A\* to C has decreased over the past three years. The school has identified strategies to help address this decline, such as modifying appropriately the entry requirements for post-16 subjects and introducing a more robust system for monitoring the progress of the pupils in the sixth form.

**3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

**3.1 The quality of provision for learning is good.**

**KEY FINDINGS**

**The quality of the provision in English is good; in mathematics, is satisfactory; and, in science, is very good<sup>4</sup>.**

The quality of the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most of the teaching was good or better, with one-fifth of the lessons observed being satisfactory. In the most effective practice: the pupils were engaged actively in their learning through well-structured discussion in effective paired and group work; open-ended questioning was used to elicit extended oral responses from the pupils; and, the teacher’s vibrancy, enthusiasm and love for the subject were clearly evident. In the least effective practice time-keeping and the pace of the lesson was slow and the work set was not sufficiently challenging.

Overall, the quality of the planning for learning is good; however, there is significant variation in the quality of the planning across the areas of study. There is also variability in the teachers’ skills in the effective deployment of assessment for learning strategies, including in the marking of pupils’ work. Further staff development and more rigorous monitoring and

<sup>3</sup> General Certificate of Education (Advanced)

<sup>4</sup> For detailed findings of the provision in English, mathematics and science, see Appendix 2.

evaluation of the quality of the learning experiences of the pupils are needed to help address this inconsistency. The quality of planning, learning, teaching, and assessment in both science and technology and design are excellent and can be used as examples of best practice within the school.

### **3.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.**

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

##### **The quality of the pastoral care is very good.**

The pastoral team, teachers and support staff have high levels of commitment and respond sensitively to meeting the social and emotional needs of the pupils. The more vulnerable pupils are supported well through established links with a range of appropriate external agencies. The quality of the working relationships between the staff and pupils at all levels is very good; the pupils value highly the additional pastoral and academic support provided by the staff. The pupils are aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety, care and well-being.

The wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities help to develop the individual talents and confidence of the pupils; the parent/carer responses to the questionnaire indicate very high levels of satisfaction with this aspect of provision. Parents are kept abreast of all aspects of the life and work of the school through the creative use of podcasts on the school's website, which showcase the work and life of the school.

##### **The quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good.**

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through good links with the primary schools. These pupils benefit from helpful small group teaching sessions to meet their literacy, numeracy and pastoral needs. The learning support assistants are deployed well throughout the school, give good support to the pupils who have special educational needs and provide useful, written information to parents on a daily basis. Most of the individual education plans are appropriate; however, the targets set in a minority of the individual education plans are not. It is important that the provision for the pupils is monitored in a more robust manner in order to evaluate the appropriateness of the targets set and the effectiveness of the support being provided by the teachers.

##### **The quality of the provision for CEIAG is good.**

The pupils across the school are provided with a relevant programme of CEIAG within employability at KS3, and as discrete, timetabled careers education classes for pupils at KS4 and post-16. In years 11 and 13 the pupils participate in a well-planned work experience programme that develops their knowledge and understanding of the world of work and enhances their employability skills. Overall, most of the pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the employment, training and education opportunities available. It is important that the school focuses on improving the pupils' ability to apply the information and skills to assist them in making better informed personal career decisions. The school has identified appropriate priorities for development including the need to embed further the careers education within all subjects and devote the necessary time and continuity to the staffing arrangements in order to ensure greater consistency in the pupils' learning experiences.

### **3.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is good.**

#### KEY FINDINGS

The senior leadership show a strong commitment to the Entitlement Framework by making effective use of staff expertise within the school and through collaboration with the local post-primary schools in the Carrick Learning Community. The school provides the pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum which is relevant to their needs and is appropriate for their ability levels and career aspirations. It will be important, as the school continues to develop and expand its curriculum offer, to review the arrangements for accessing and quality assuring suitable provision through the Colleges of Further Education and other providers.

## **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 The overall quality of leadership and management is good.**

#### KEY FINDINGS

The senior leadership team, including the principal and governors, provide effective and collective strategic leadership and direction based on a sound knowledge of, and pupil-centred vision for, the school. There is a culture of mutual respect and open communication between all staff, pupils, parents and governors. The parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about the life and work of the school; they support actively the work of the staff, meet regularly with all members of staff to discuss key aspects of the school's provision and provide an appropriate challenge function.

The middle managers in the areas under focus provide effective leadership for the organisation and administration in their areas of responsibility. A significant proportion of the teaching and support staff are participating in training to support the achievement of key strategic objectives in the school development plan. In addition, the senior leadership team have put in place a wide range of support structures to develop the capacity of the staff to carry out their roles effectively.

The school development plan guides well the work of the school. Extensive consultation is undertaken with pupils, parents, staff and governors in the identification of appropriate objectives and targets; the school makes good use of performance data to help inform this process. Whilst the actions identified in the school development plan have promoted effective strategies to raise standards, it is important that the middle managers and teachers, when monitoring and evaluating the provision, focus more sharply on improving the quality of the learning experiences for the pupils.

The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the high levels of satisfaction expressed by the teaching staff, support staff and parents and the very small number of concerns emerging from the questionnaires.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## 5. CONCLUSION

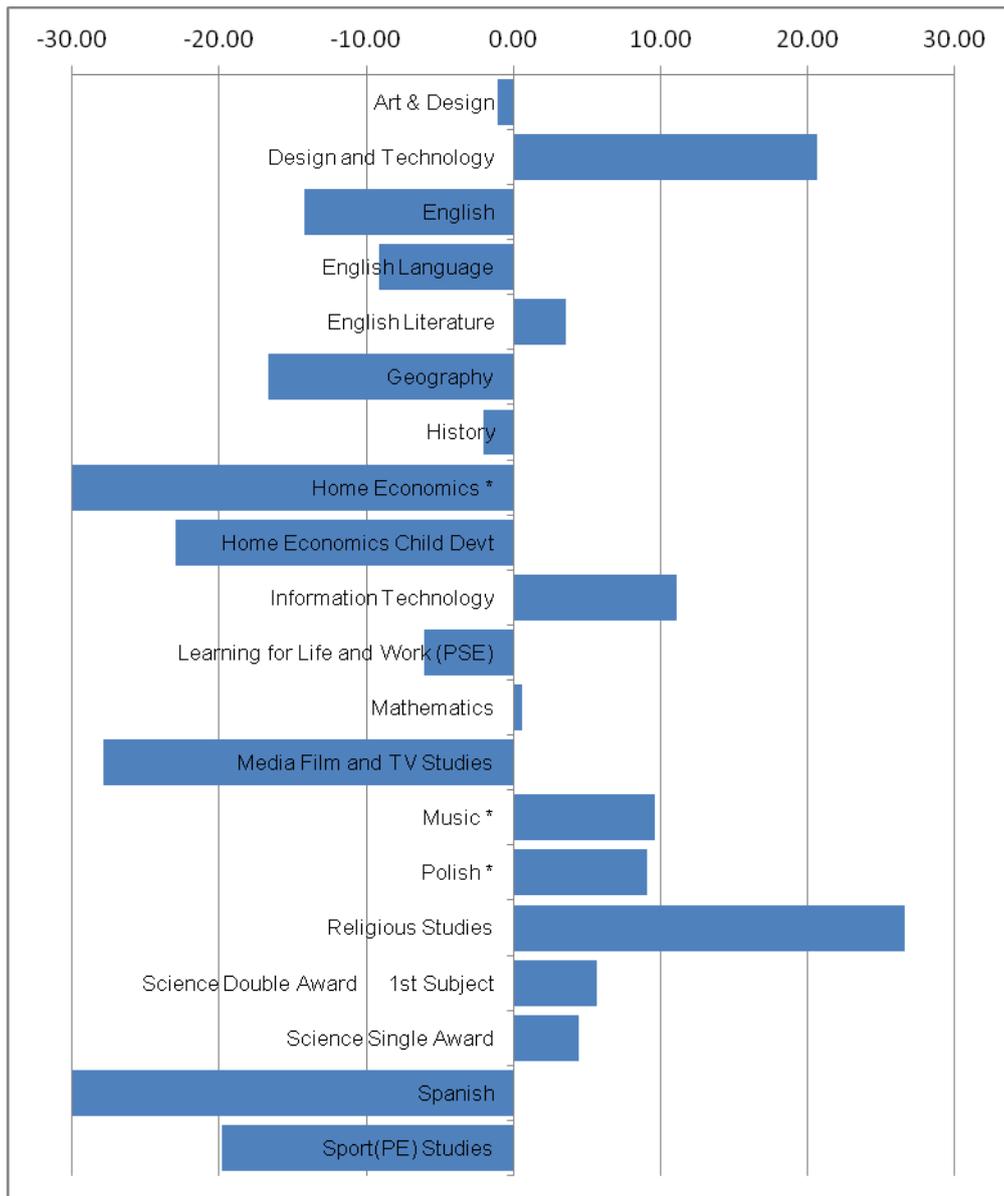
In the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational provision, including very good pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

The main area for improvement is the need for self-evaluation to focus more sharply on the quality of the learning experiences in order to effect improvement and to raise further the standards the pupils achieve.

1.1 GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average

GCSE A\* to C from 2009-10 to 2011-12



## 1.2 OTHER RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

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

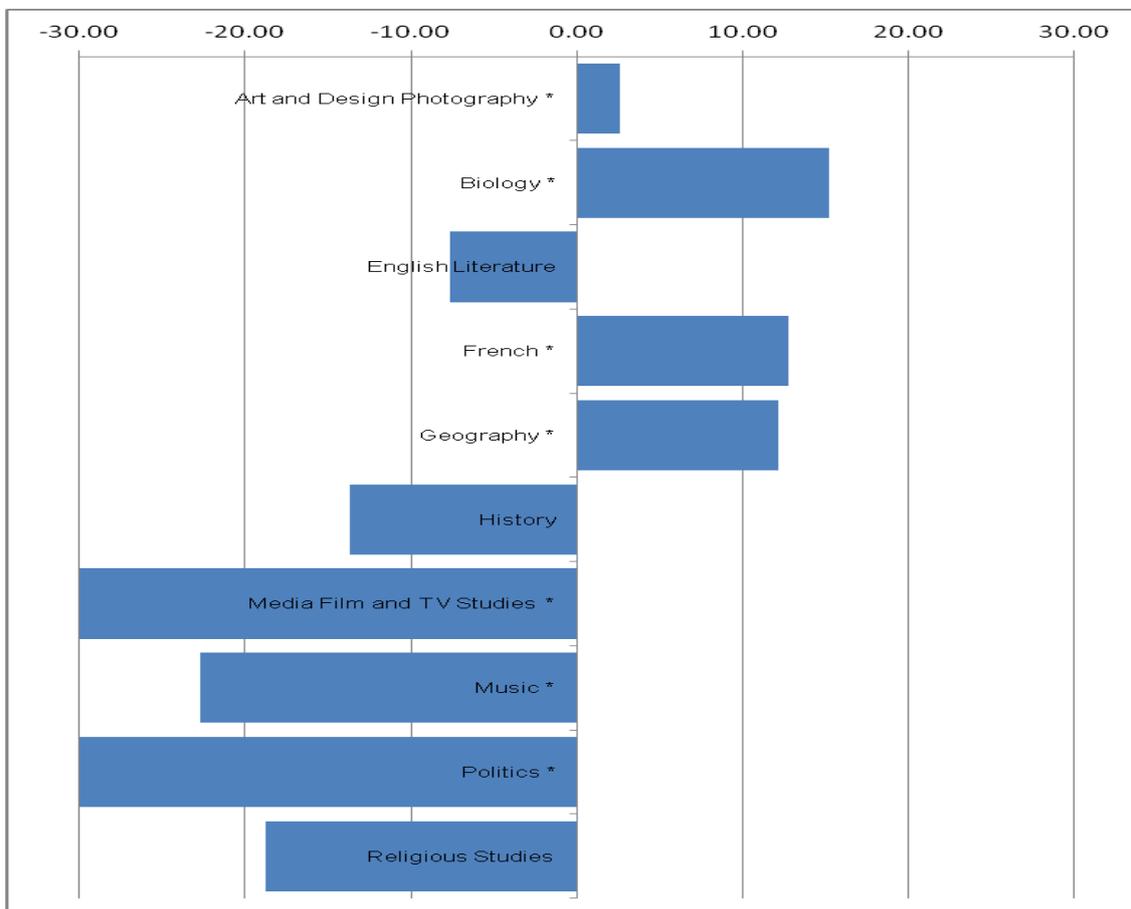
GCSE Subject	2010		2011		2012		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business (Vocational)	-	-	89	100	90	100	57
Hospitality and Catering	0	39	25	75	13	46	41

Level 2	2010	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	% pass	
BTEC ICT	-	100	100	49
Hair and Beauty	100	100	95	94
Occupational Studies	-	74	97	64

### 1.3 GCE (A2) EXAMINATION RESULTS:

Comparison with the three-year NI average#

GCE A\* to C from 2009-10 to 2011-12



#### 1.4 OTHER RESULTS: POST-16

Other courses taken in at least two of the last three years. (All Level 3, unless otherwise stated)

GCE Subject	2010		2011		2012		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Business (Vocational)	88	100	67	100	71	100	31
Health and Social Care	62	97	63	95	24	96	73
Information Technology (Vocational)	100	100	75	100	63	100	86

#### 1.5 Staying On Rate 2010/2011 (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	48.1	NI Av. Year 13	47.85
Year 14	38.5	NI Av. Year 14	36.5

#### 1.6 Leavers Destinations 2010/2011

	Year 12	Percent.	NI %	Year 13/14	Percent.	NI%
TOTAL	87			44		
Another School	5	6	15.8	*	*	2.5
Employment	*	*	4.4	11	25	11.7
Full-time Further Education	40	46	45	10	23	31.1
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	43	38.5
Full-time Training	29	33	28	*	*	6.5
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	7	8	3.5	*	*	6.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	*	*	3.3	*	*	3.1

\* = fewer than 5

## SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

### English

#### **The quality of provision for English is good.**

The main strengths of the English provision include:

- the pupils' positive dispositions to learning and the good working relationships in most of the lessons observed;
- the quality of the learning and teaching, which was good or better in a little under three-quarters of the lessons observed;
- the improving trend in examination outcomes in GCSE English at grades A\*-C over the last three years and the good outcomes achieved in English Literature at GCSE and GCE A level;
- the effective use of self-evaluation, including performance data, to identify pupils who are able to benefit from a range of appropriate intervention strategies; and
- the strategic development of the work of the department provided by the Head of English and her commitment to raise standards and consistency in the learning experiences for all of the pupils.

The area for improvement is:

- the need to improve further the GCSE English outcomes at grades A\*-C.

### Mathematics

#### **The quality of provision for mathematics is satisfactory**

The main strengths of the mathematics provision include:

- the hard-work and commitment of the teachers;
- the high level of individual support provided for the pupils;
- the good or better quality of teaching in just over half of the lessons observed;
- the good leadership and management of mathematics; and
- the range of activities being used to promote mathematics.

The areas for improvement are:

- the further improvement of the standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level;
- the widening of the range of teaching approaches, including effective questioning, in order to have more challenging learning experiences for the pupils; and
- the greater use of monitoring and evaluation to prioritise more effectively the targets for development.

## **Science**

**The quality of provision for science is very good.**

The main strengths of the science provision include:

- the very good leadership of the heads of science, including their effective emphasis on the department working well as team;
- the very good quality of the departmental documentation, including an action plan setting out appropriate priorities for action in the medium term;
- the very good or outstanding learning and teaching observed in most of the lessons, characterised, for example, by the teachers' good use of learning outcomes to structure lessons well; the pupils' active involvement in a wide range of practical and theoretical activities and their extensive written record of a wide range of work, often in their own words;
- the good use of quantitative and benchmarked data to track the pupils' progress and the standards they eventually reach;
- the many opportunities for practical and investigative work in the majority of the classes observed; and
- the overall very good standards reached, including the very good attainment in public examinations.

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