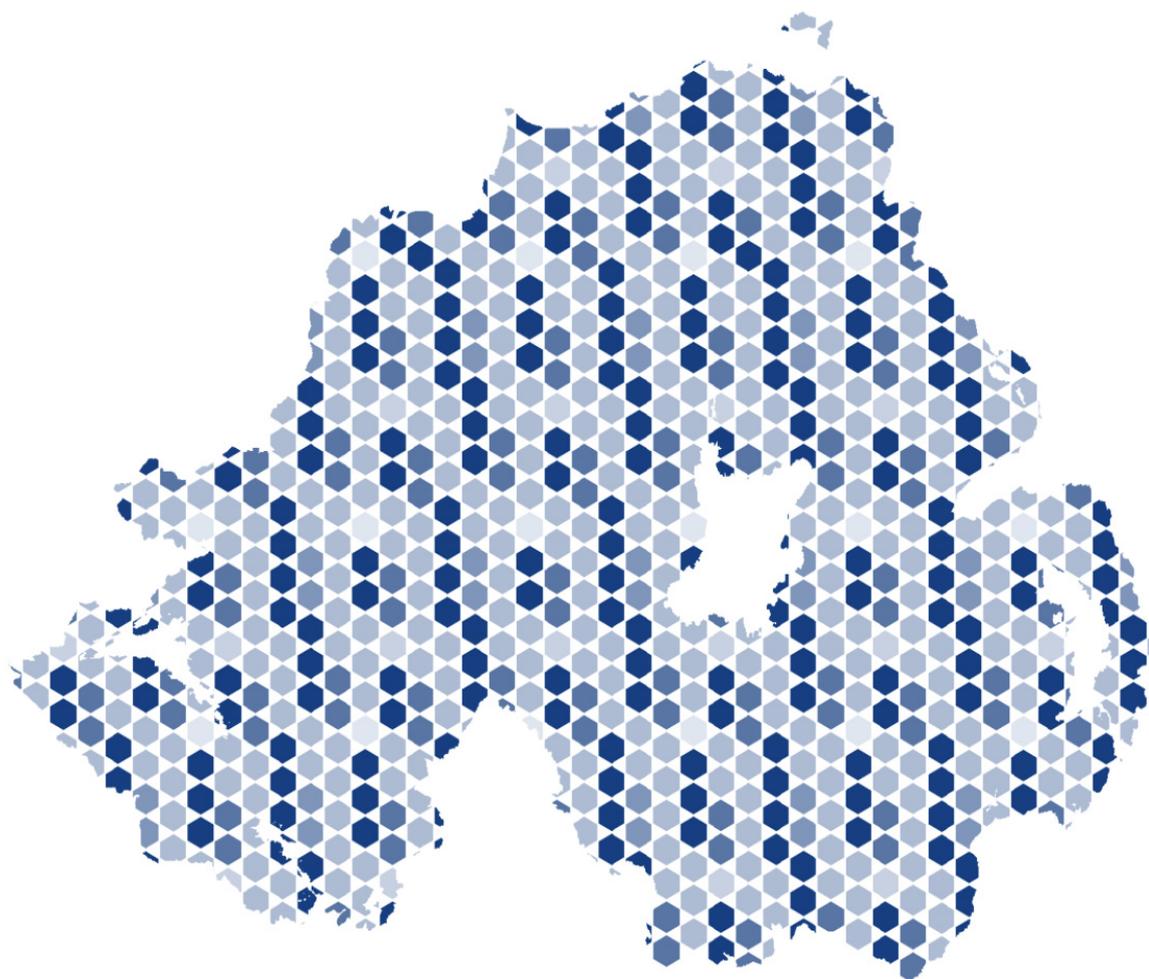


# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Benedict's College,  
Randalstown

Maintained, Non-Selective, Co-educational, 11-16 School

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2012



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

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

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

The term '*similar schools*' refers to schools in the same free school meal category as defined by DE, whether they are selective or non-selective.

ALC	Area Learning Community
CEIAG	Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
DE	Department of Education
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEBP	Individual Education and Behaviour Plan
KS	Key Stage
NI	Northern Ireland
NRC	Northern Regional College
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

## 1. CONTEXT

1.1 St Benedict's College was opened in 2006, following the closure and amalgamation of St Malachy's and St Olcan's High Schools. Enrolment in the school has declined over the past three years and currently stands at 448.

St Benedict's College	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolment	497	513	481	448
FSM (Band 2) Percentage	23.1	24.8	27.7	27.2
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	21.7% (108)	18.7% (96)	19.3% (93)	24.8% (111)
<i>No. of pupils with statements</i>	14	15	22	21
<i>No. of newcomers</i>	21	35	36	40
<b>Intake</b>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	7	7	9.3	15.7
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	17	17	18.6	15.7
% of Y8 pupils with L4 English	54	54	59.3	71.4
% of Y8 pupils with L4 mathematics	66	58	59.3	74.3

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

## 2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

## 3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

**3.1 The standards achieved by the pupils are good<sup>1</sup>.**

### KEY FINDINGS

During the inspection the pupils were polite and respectful, and displayed great pride both in themselves and in their school. Most of the pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning and worked productively, both independently and with others. The pupils interacted well with their peers and with adults, and are developing good personal and social skills.

Overall, the standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level are good. While the pupils' attainments in five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C dipped in 2011, the outcomes remained in line with similar schools; in the previous two years, the pupils' attainments were well above those of similar schools. The pupils' attainments in five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, including GCSE English and mathematics, improved significantly in recent years and

<sup>1</sup> For detailed results in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendices 1 and 2

are in line with the average for similar schools. The majority of subjects at GCSE grades A\*-C are above the NI average by 5% or more, while just under half the subjects exceed the NI average by 10% or more. The pupils who choose courses in vocational subjects also achieve well.

<b>Comparisons based on FSM equivalence</b>	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	90.4	98.2	97.7
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	65.1	64.6	55.7
<b>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</b>	<b>Well above average</b>	<b>Well above average</b>	<b>In line with the average</b>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	24.1	30.9	29.6
<b>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</b>	<b>Below average</b>	<b>In line with the average</b>	<b>In line with the average</b>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	73.3	81.8	85.2

#### 4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

##### 4.1 The quality of provision for learning is very good.

###### KEY FINDINGS

**The provision in English is very good, in geography it is good and in mathematics it is satisfactory<sup>2</sup>.**

Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better and of these, more than half were very good or outstanding. The most effective practice was characterised by high levels of pupil engagement and enjoyment, challenging learning activities which extended the pupils' thinking, effective questioning, and good quality formative assessment of the pupils' learning. The pupils benefited from the very high expectations which the teachers have for their learning. In contrast, in a minority of the lessons observed, the work was over-directed by the teachers and did not challenge the pupils sufficiently to learn.

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

The school promotes a very good ethos of inclusion and, as a result, the pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in their learning. The SEN and the pastoral care teams work well together to ensure that both the educational and emotional needs of the pupils are met. The SENCO plans effectively for the pupils and ensures that appropriate support is in place. The learning and behavioural support assistants are committed, caring, and approachable, and work hard to support the pupils.

Whilst most of the teachers plan effectively to provide a suitably differentiated learning experience for SEN pupils, their approaches are inconsistent. Therefore, the work currently underway to update the IEBPs needs to be completed as soon as possible.

The impact of the withdrawal support for those pupils whose standards in literacy and numeracy are assessed as low, is good. Consequently, all of the pupils achieve well in public examinations.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3

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

### KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are very well cared for through a holistic, inclusive approach to their educational, social and emotional development. In each year group, there is effective communication with staff, parents and carers, which is well-focused on meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. The pastoral staff work effectively with external agencies in support of the young people who experience personal difficulties; this makes a positive contribution to their educational achievements. The pupils benefit from the mentoring programme which guides them well in their learning. Most enjoy their participation in a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, and make an excellent contribution to international and local charities. The pupils gain valuable practical experience of decision-making in school life through their active participation in the school council, and through involvement in assemblies which focus on themes which are relevant to their lives. The pupils' views are sought actively and inform school development planning.

There are very well-conceived strategies for supporting newcomer pupils. They, and their parents, are successfully inducted into the life of the school and the pupils' progress is monitored well.

In discussions with the pupils, all were well aware of what to do if they had any concerns about their safety or well-being. The very few issues raised by the pupils were shared with the Principal.

Aspects of the current personal development programme need to be updated; the school has appropriately identified the need to develop the taught programme in order to support the pupils further in their learning

## **4.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is very good.**

### KEY FINDINGS

At KS3, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and meets effectively the diverse range of learning needs of all of the pupils. At KS4, the pupils have access to 24 courses: 13 general and eleven applied. The school works well with parents and carers to ensure that suitable learning pathways are provided, are matched to the aspirations of the pupils and meet their individual needs.

The curricular enrichment programmes add considerably to the learning experiences of the pupils. These include drama and music activities, and events with a strong emphasis on reflecting the cultures represented within the school. A noteworthy feature is the innovative use of the school library to enhance the pupils' learning and the work carried out to improve literacy through, for example, activities related to the Partnership, Inclusion, Reconciliation, Citizenship and History Project. The school demonstrates well its stated commitment to inclusion through its continued strong links with the DE Inclusion and Diversity Pilot Project.

The school is a committed and active member of the Antrim ALC, and recently joined the Ballymena ALC as part of a useful joint arrangement with a selective and non-selective school, with potential benefits for sharing and broadening the KS4 provision yet further.

**The provision for CEIAG is very good.**

The pupils have a clear knowledge of the career pathways open to them as a result of the high quality guidance and support provided by the careers teachers, the Careers Service advisors and the availability of a suitable range of careers information. The pupils develop well key employability skills, and engage in career planning through a coherent and progressive programme for Learning for Life and Work and Careers. Additionally, they benefit from the range of visits, speakers and work placements and training in interview skills. The CEIAG provision is well supported by the SLT. The Head of Careers provides very good leadership, and has systematic and rigorous arrangements in place to evaluate and improve the quality of the provision.

## **5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.1 The quality of the leadership and the management is very good.**

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The leadership provided by the Principal and by the Vice-principal is outstanding. They possess complementary leadership skills and provide highly effective strategic leadership of the school. They are well-informed about, and responsive to, the needs of individual pupils and ensure that all of the school's developmental work is clearly and appropriately pupil-centred. Their leadership of the school has earned the confidence and respect of the pupils, parents, staff and Governors. The Principal and Vice-principal are supported very well by the other members of the SLT, who provide very good leadership and management of their respective areas of responsibility. The collegial and collaborative ethos promoted by the SLT results in excellent working relationships at all levels.

The quality of the middle management is very good. The co-ordinators and subject leaders link appropriately their departmental priorities to those of the SDP; they monitor and evaluate effectively the work of their departments. The quality of their action planning is very good and is focused appropriately on raising standards. The middle-managers have benefited from the good professional development opportunities provided by the school, and they have responded very positively to the findings of previous inspection visits in order to further improve the outcomes for the pupils.

There is a strong culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement within the school. This is underpinned well by the rigorous analysis and use of relevant quantitative and qualitative data, including the effective use of information gained from questionnaires completed by parents, teachers and pupils.

The Governors are very well-informed and play a very active role in the life and work of the school. They support effectively, and challenge robustly, the implementation of the SDP.

The SDP is of a very good quality and identifies, through meaningful consultation, a range of appropriate priorities to meet the needs of all of the pupils; it guides well the realisation of the school's vision statement, 'Promoting Personal Potential'. The SDP meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and its implementation is effectively and rigorously monitored by the leadership of the school.

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

Given the findings of the inspection, the school meets the needs and expectations of the school and the wider community very effectively.

## 6. CONCLUSION

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

6.2 The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

6.3 It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff continue to plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Benedict's College  
 ii. School Reference Number: 323-0308  
 iii. Age Range: 11-16  
 iv. Status: Catholic Maintained  
 v. Date of Inspection: W/C 23/04/12  
 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 8 Intake	95	100	100	86	70
Total enrolment	478	497	513	481	448

1.3 Attendance

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	Average 2010/11	NI Average 2009/10
% Attendance	91	89.6	87.9	88.5	88.9	89	91

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

31

- iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):

0.837

- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

14.5

Year 2011/12	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	35	41	53	64	55	248
Enrolment: Girls	35	42	45	32	46	200
Enrolment: Total	70	83	98	96	101	448
PTR	14.7	14	15.4	14.7	13.6	

1.5 Leavers' Destinations

2009/10	Year 12	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	114	
Another School	28%	14.8
Employment	9%	5.2
Full-time Further Education	61%	47.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A
Full-time Training	0%	25.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	3.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	3%	3.8

**TABLE 1 outlines the school's GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS**

**HEADLINE STANDARDS**

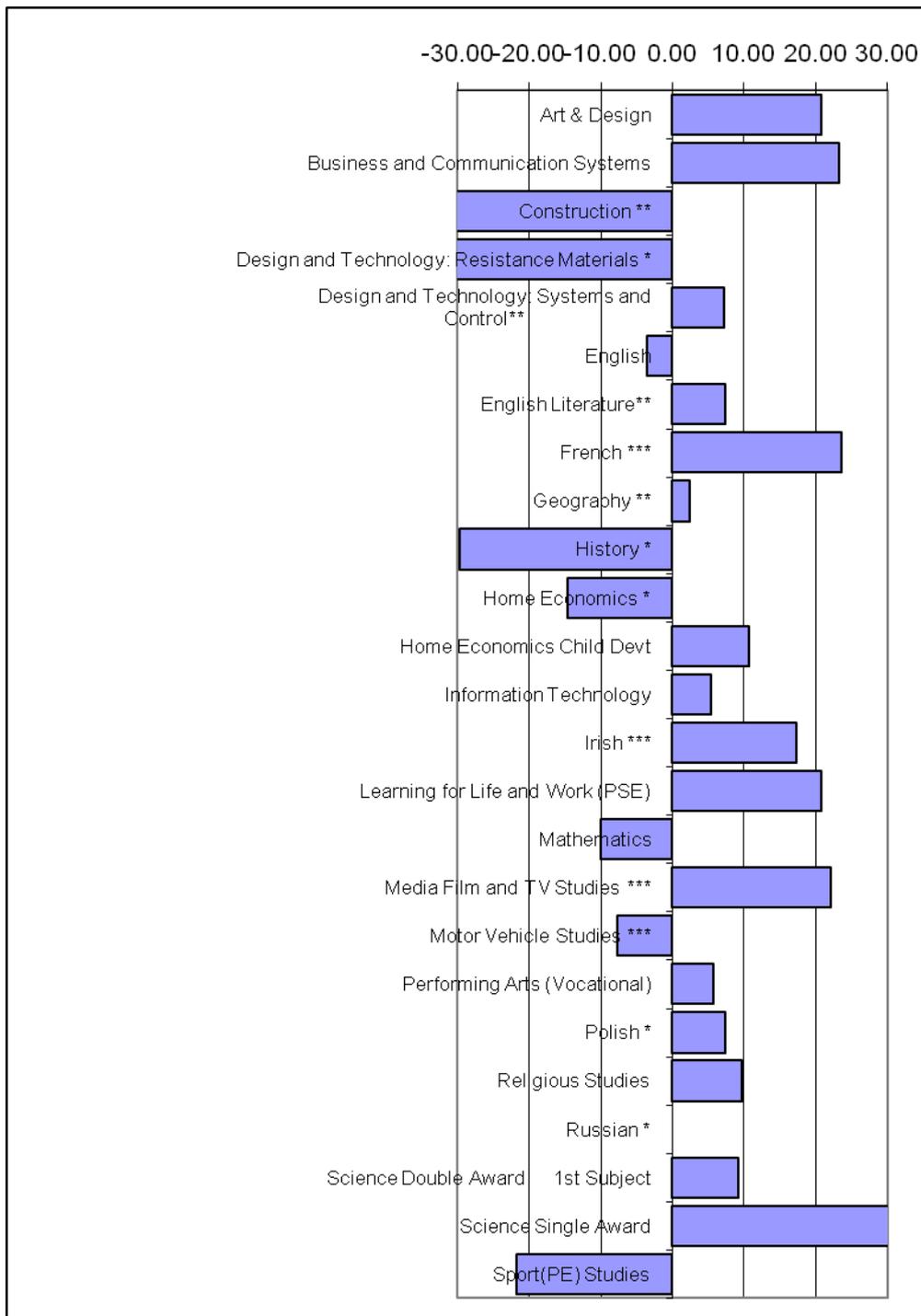
**NB:** The NI average for all non-selective schools of pupils obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics in 2011 is 36.4%

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

<b>Comparisons based on FSM equivalence</b>	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	90.4	98.2	97.7
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	65.1	64.6	55.7
<b><i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i></b>	<b><i>Well above average</i></b>	<b><i>Well above average</i></b>	<b><i>In line with the average</i></b>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	24.1	30.9	29.6
<b><i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools</i></b>	<b><i>Below average</i></b>	<b><i>In line with the average</i></b>	<b><i>In line with the average</i></b>
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	73.3	81.8	85.2

**Source:** Data as held by Department of Education (NI) and as agreed with the school.

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

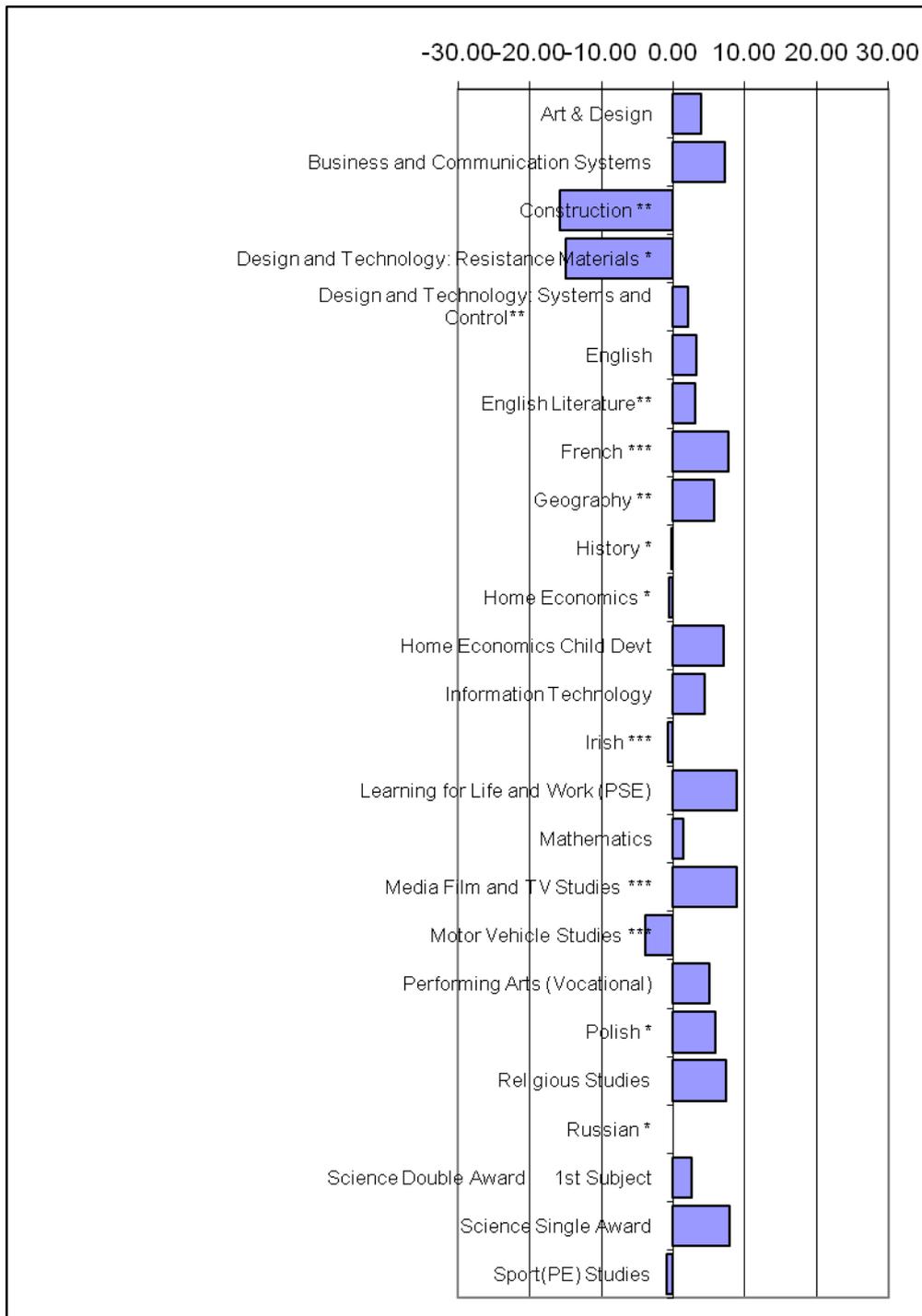


\*\*\*The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011: French, Irish, Media, Film & TV Studies and Motor Vehicle Studies.

\*\*The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over two years to June 2011: Construction, Design & Technology: Systems and Control, English Literature and Geography.

\*The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over one year to June 2011: Design & Technology: Resistance, History, Home Economics, Polish and Russian.

**Table 3** shows the **3 year average performance of each individual subject at GCSE Grades A\*-E**, compared with the corresponding Northern Ireland average



\*\*\* The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over three years to June 2011: French, Irish, Media, Film & TV Studies and Motor Vehicle Studies.

\*\* The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over two years to June 2011: Construction, Design & Technology: Systems and Control, English Literature and Geography.

\* The following subjects had an entry of fewer than 30 pupils over one year to June 2011: Design & Technology: Resistance, History, Home Economics, Polish and Russian.

**Table 4 OTHER RESULTS: Key Stage 4**

Applied and Vocational Courses taken in the last three years  
(Level 2 qualifications)

Subject	2009		2010		2011		Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	% A*-C	% A*-E	
Occupational Studies (COA)	45	87	56	94	69	92	49

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS**

#### **English**

**The overall quality of the provision in English is very good.**

The strengths of the work include:

- the quality of the teaching observed, almost all of which was good or very good;
- the very good, comprehensive planning across the key stages, supported by appropriate resources available online in the school;
- the good standards attained by the pupils in GCSE English and English Literature;
- the strategic analysis and use of data to track the pupils' progress, identify their needs and provide appropriate support;
- the range of effective strategies to support those pupils identified as having additional needs in literacy; and
- the very good leadership of the head of department.

#### **Geography**

**The overall quality of the provision in geography is good.**

The strengths of the work include:

- the good examination outcomes achieved by the pupils in GCSE geography;
- the quality of the teaching observed, all of which was good or very good;
- the effective use made of ICT to support teaching and learning;
- the very positive working relationships between the teacher and the pupils, characterised by the pupils' good levels of participation and enjoyment in their lessons;
- the good quality planning which provides opportunities for the pupils to develop their critical and creative thinking skills and to investigate a range of contemporary geographical issues; and
- the effective leadership of the head of department and her commitment to bring about continuous improvement in the provision.

The area for improvement is to:

- monitor and evaluate more closely the outcomes and standards achieved by the pupils, especially across KS3, in order to inform future planning and classroom practice.

## **Mathematics**

**The overall quality of the provision in mathematics is satisfactory.**

The strengths of the work include:

- the good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the quality of teaching, which was good or very good in a majority of the lessons observed;
- the good levels of individual support provided for the pupils in the lessons observed;
- the commitment of the head of department and her very good leadership and management; and
- the arrangements for self-evaluation, including the use made of performance data.

The areas for improvement are to:

- raise the standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations; and
- improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, particularly through more effective questioning of the pupils.

## SCOPE AND METHOD OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of St Benedict's College focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

Inspectors evaluated teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities. Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, geography and mathematics and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas. Their findings are reported in Appendix 3.

The inspection also focused on the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life and on the school's progress towards the EF.

The arrangements for the inspection included:

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire to the inspection;
- meetings with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 10 and 12 (including the School Council)

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	101	25	25	15
Teachers	31	25	80	*
Support Staff	16	6	37	*

**Source:** Returns from questionnaires to Inspection Services Branch at DE \* = fewer than 5

The returns from most of the questionnaires sent to the teachers, the support staff and the parents were very positive in almost all respects; in particular the parents appreciate the care, guidance and support provided for the pupils and the approachability of the Principal and staff. The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors, the very few matters emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The library door requires a vision panel.
- The first floor toilet provision is not fit for purpose and the school has a lack of toilet provision in general.
- The school security system requires cameras.
- The installation of the extraction fan, which has already been supplied, in home economics, is required immediately.
- The wooden tabletops in the home economics rooms are unsuitable for food preparation.
- The science preparation room needs extraction.
- An urgent risk assessment should be made of all fire doors, to ensure that they conform to safety regulations.

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