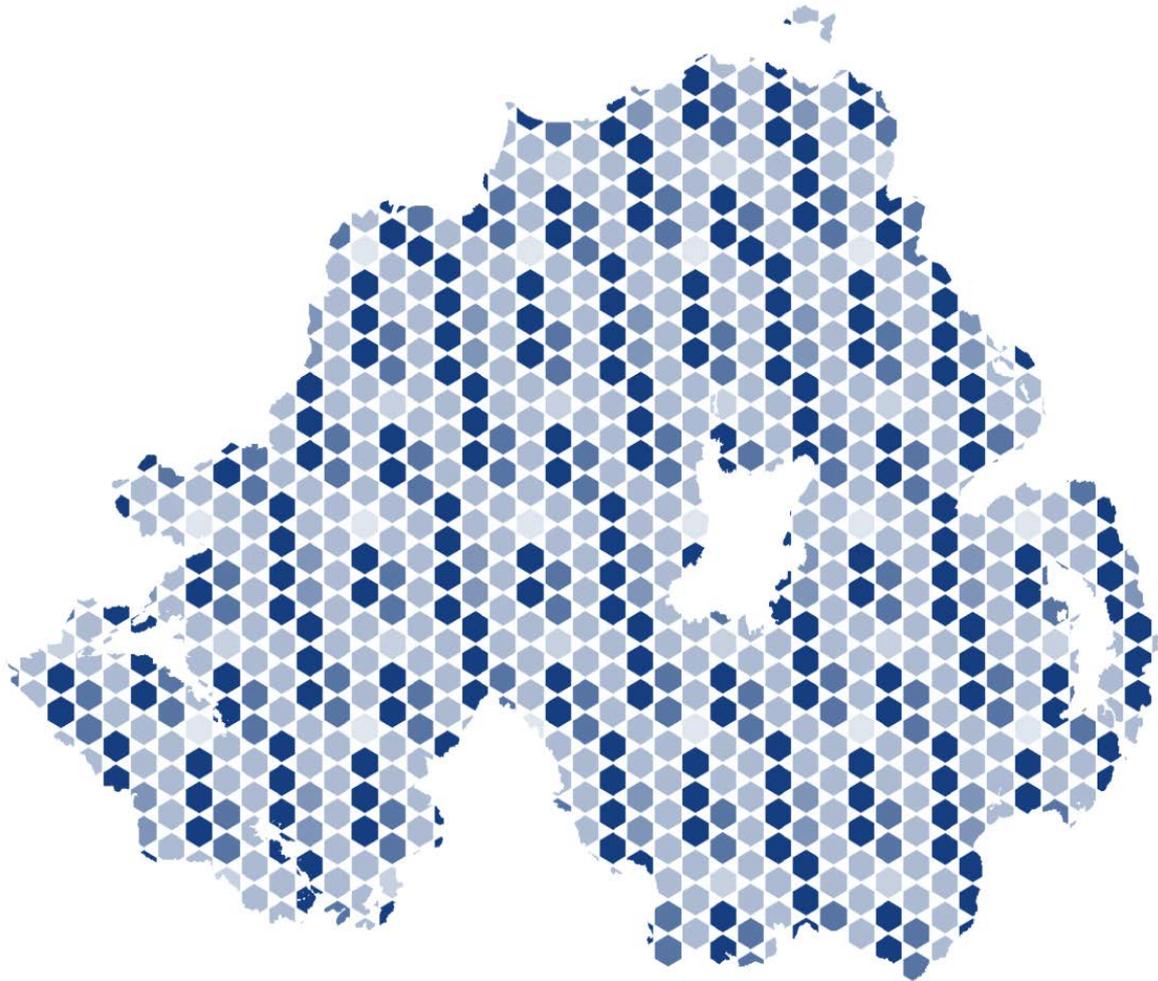


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Killian's College

Catholic maintained, co-educational, 11-18, non-selective
all-ability school

Report of an Inspection
in November 2012

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION Including the overall finding of the inspection	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	PROVISION FOR LEARNING	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	7
 APPENDICES		
	APPENDIX 1 PERFORMANCE & STATISTICAL DATA	
	APPENDIX 2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS: English, mathematics and science	
	APPENDIX 3 ACCOMMODATION AND/OR HEALTH AND SAFETY	

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.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 8, 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

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

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	264	70	43	33
Teachers	57	29	51	10
Support Staff	36	12	33	*

* fewer than 5

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:

Performance Level	Descriptor
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 THE SCHOOL

St Killian's College opened in March 2010 as a result of the amalgamation of St Aloysius High School, St Comgall's College and St MacNissi's College. During the 2009/10 and 2010/2011 academic years, the school operated on two sites; with a campus at Larne and a campus at Garron Tower. However, since September 2011, all of the pupils have been accommodated on the Garron Tower site. St Killian's College is an all-ability school, drawing its pupils from a wide area covering East Antrim and the Glens. Approximately one-fifth of the 804 pupils are in the sixth form.

St Killian's College	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 8 Intake	143	145	127	143
Enrolment	824	829	804	824
% Attendance (NI Average)	93 (91)	92 (91)	N/A (N/A)	93 (91)
FSME Percentage	14	14	17	14
% (No) of pupils on SEN register	13 (106)	17 (140)	17 (110)	13 (106)
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	12	15	19	12
No. of newcomers	-	-	5	-
Intake				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	36	33	19	36
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	43	42	32	43
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	88	89	82	88
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	90	88	84	90

Source: data as held by the school.

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of St Killian's College focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science¹ provision, and provided 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 aspects of 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 the Entitlement Framework.

¹ Focusing, in particular, on physics at all levels, and KS3 and KS4 science.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The overall standards achieved by the pupils are very good².

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils have a belief in their ability to succeed, are confident, work well with each other and have excellent independent learning skills. They express clearly their thinking and their oral contributions during class discussion are of a high standard. By sixth form, the pupils can engage articulately in mature, challenging and informed debate.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	83	87
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well above average</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	71	70
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>	<i>Significantly above average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	98	98
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	36	40

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks³

² For additional performance data in public examinations, including in vocational subjects, see Appendix 1

³ DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

The standards that the pupils attain at General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) level are outstanding. Since the school opened two years ago, all of the pupils have been entered for five or more GCSE subjects including English and mathematics. The proportions of pupils achieving five or more subjects at grades A* to C, and five or more subjects at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, have been well above to significantly above the average for similar non-selective schools, and consistently well above the average for all schools.

The performance of all of the individual GCSE subjects over the past two years, at grades A* to C, is above the corresponding three-year Northern Ireland (NI) average; most of the subjects are more than 10 percentage points above the average. Importantly, most subjects have demonstrated improvement, or maintained a strong performance, over this period.

As a result of well-focused support, most of the pupils who require additional help with aspects of their learning make good progress and are successful in public examinations by the end of key stage (KS) 4.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	94	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	72	70
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 2 A2 levels	100	100

Source: Data as held and verified by the school.

Overall, the standards attained by the pupils at General Certificate in Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level are very good. In the sixth form, almost all of the pupils are entered for three or more A levels; over two-thirds have attained grades A* to C in three or more subjects over the past two years. A majority of the A level subjects are above the corresponding three-year NI average. The proportions of year 12 pupils who progress into the years 13 and 14 are also well above average. Most of the pupils in year 14 progress from A level study into higher education.

The school has developed and implemented a wide range of strategies to raise achievement. Available assessment data is used very effectively to: inform target-setting; track systematically the progress of individual pupils; and identify low and underachievement and associated actions to improve standards. The highly effective mentoring programme has helped to bring about improved levels of attainment across the school and, in particular, for identified pupils at KS4.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1.1 The quality of the provision for learning, teaching and assessment is good.

The provision in mathematics is outstanding, in English it is very good, and in science it is good⁴.

The teachers hold appropriately high expectations of what the pupils can achieve, are very hard-working and prepare thoroughly for lessons. The planning for individual lessons is generally good, and takes appropriate cognisance of the needs of individual pupils who require additional support.

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from very good to unsatisfactory; importantly, most of the lessons were evaluated as good or very good in equal measure, and a very small number were less than satisfactory.

In the more effective practice: there was an effective introduction to the lesson which framed effectively the learning; time was managed appropriately and the pupils completed a range of challenging activities at a brisk pace; the pupils were given opportunities to think and reflect, resulting in the articulation of well-reasoned answers; and the teachers used incorrect or inaccurate pupil responses to extend positively the learning. In these lessons, the pupils enjoyed and engaged fully in their learning, and achieved good or better outcomes.

The limited ICT resources are used well by the pupils to support and extend their learning.

The teachers use skilful questioning to encourage extended responses from the pupils and assess the extent of their learning. However, there is disparity in the quality of the written feedback that is provided to help the pupils improve the standard of their work. More generally, there is variation in the teachers' level of understanding of the purpose, and effective use of a wider range, of assessment for learning strategies.

The school has begun to audit and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching with a view to establishing a policy to inform and improve practice; the inspection findings confirm that this is an appropriate area for development.

3.1.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the pastoral care is outstanding.

The pupils are friendly, well-behaved and demonstrate a high regard for their school and their teachers. The student voice is encouraged and promoted well through: the active student council; the positive contributions to classroom discussions by pupils; and by the high level of responsibility demonstrated by pupils in sixth form in their pastoral roles as prefects, learning mentors and bus monitors. The pupils spoke positively about the impact that the rewards systems has on their behaviour and learning.

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

A significant strength, across the school, is the very strong link between pastoral care and the curricular provision which helps the teachers, learning support assistants, parents and pupils to work together to overcome potential barriers to learning.

Pastoral systems are integrated successfully into the daily routines of the school; the leadership of pastoral care is outstanding.

The school supports well those pupils who are at risk of marginalisation. There are effective strategies to include and retain them in the school.

The school promotes effectively healthy eating and physical activity. There is a good range of physical activities which includes a strong emphasis on competitive and non-competitive sports. The school canteen staff work well with the pupils to promote and develop health and well-being initiatives.

The overall quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

There is a well-planned system of whole-school support for pupils with special educational needs. The pupils who require it, receive high-quality support to help them improve basic numeracy and literacy skills. Individual education plan targets are monitored closely each week to inform appropriately the planning for future learning.

The leadership of the learning support is very good. The team of effective learning support assistants is managed well. There is a clear commitment by the whole-school to provide for the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and ensure their inclusion in all aspects of school life.

The quality of the provision for CEIAG is very good.

The CEIAG provides the pupils with access to high quality information, guidance and support which is tailored to their individual needs, interests and aspirations. The pupils develop well their skills and knowledge through the taught programme for employability and careers. They also benefit from the enhancement opportunities provided, such as visits, guest speakers and training in interview skills. As a result, the pupils have a very clear understanding of the career pathways open to them.

The school gives a high priority to developing CEIAG; the leadership of careers is outstanding. There are systematic and rigorous arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the careers provision; these have led to continuous improvements in the quality of the provision and tangible benefits for the pupils.

3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is very good.

KEY FINDINGS

At KS3, the curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and meets effectively the needs and interests of the pupils. At KS4, the curriculum offer complies fully with the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. Post-16, the school is developing strategically the curriculum, partly through its active membership of the Larne Learning Community, and is working towards meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. The school provides a very good range of courses in the sixth form, which is complemented by a comprehensive enrichment programme, which develops well the pupils' personal, social and life-skills.

Together with the school's effective promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, the curriculum is meeting very effectively the needs of the pupils, the wider community and the economy.

The school has a suitably flexible policy on entering pupils for public examinations; the policy has been revised recently and is kept under review in order to match appropriately the number and type of the courses on offer with the needs, abilities and aspirations of all of the pupils.

Importantly, the provision of an extensive range of sporting and other activities enhances greatly the pupils' learning experiences.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

KEY FINDINGS

The Principal, who has been in post since the school opened in 2010, provides outstanding leadership and has a clear, strategic, pupil-centred vision for the work of the school. He has led and managed a complex amalgamation, established effective working relationships at all levels, and, with the involvement of the staff and governors, has shaped successfully a distinct identity for the school.

The senior leadership team (SLT) also provides outstanding leadership; there is a strong sense of collegiality and an effective, distributed leadership arrangement. A key strength is the high priority given to the welfare of the pupils and to raising achievement.

The SLT supports well, and oversees appropriately, the work of the middle leadership team. The middle leaders are enthusiastic about their role and demonstrate a commitment to the school improvement agenda. Importantly, the school is building further the capacity of leaders at all levels.

Within the school, there is excellent communication, openness and collective working in the best interests of the pupils.

There is a comprehensive school development plan which guides effectively the development work of the school by focusing appropriately on aspects of pastoral care, numeracy, literacy and CEIAG. The current plan is informed by meaningful consultation with the staff and the governors. In the best practice, for example in the mathematics department, the middle leaders monitor robustly and evaluate effectively the quality of the provision for learning, and identify and implement actions to bring about improvement. Across the school, there is a developing culture of self-evaluation and highly reflective practice.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the governors are suitably informed about, and engage actively in, the life and work of the school. There are effective sub-committees which help the governors develop and use their expertise; as a result, the governors are very knowledgeable about standards, the curricular and pastoral work of the school, and school finance. They maintain a well-developed strategic overview of the school, and of the school's place within the local and wider community.

The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the views, which were mainly positive, 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 pupils; these arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the pupils are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

The school has purposeful pastoral links with feeder primary schools which aids the pupils' transition to post-primary. There is also a range of appropriate links with external agencies and other professionals that enhance well the pastoral programme and provide specialist support for vulnerable pupils to help them remain included in the school community.

Concerns⁵ regarding the accommodation were expressed by the governors.

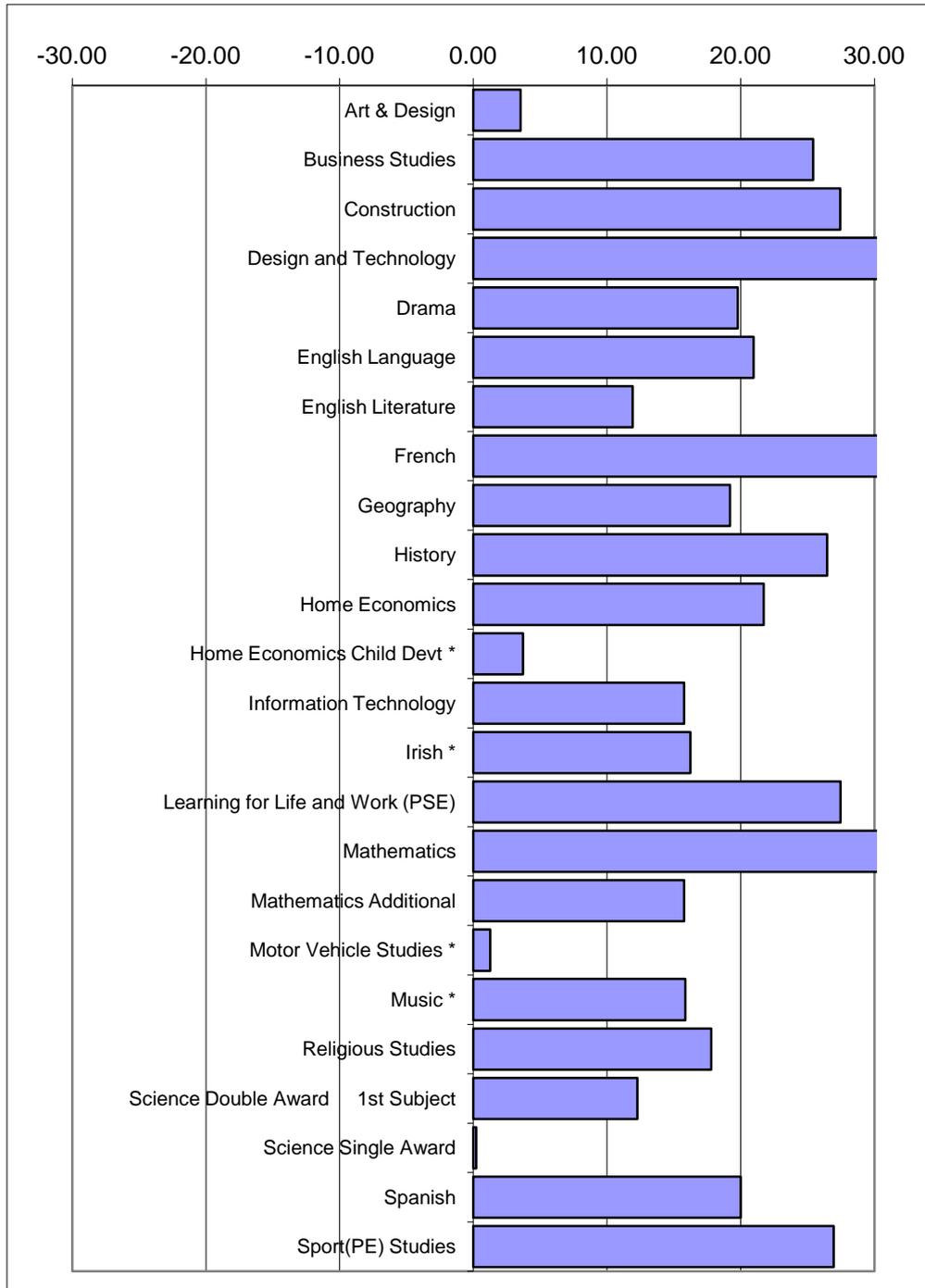
5. CONCLUSION

5.1 **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.

⁵ Issues relating to the school's accommodation are detailed in Appendix 3.

GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Two-year average for St Killian's College⁶ compared with the three-year NI average at grades A* to C



* fewer than 30 entries over the past two years.

⁶ For subjects with two years of entries only.

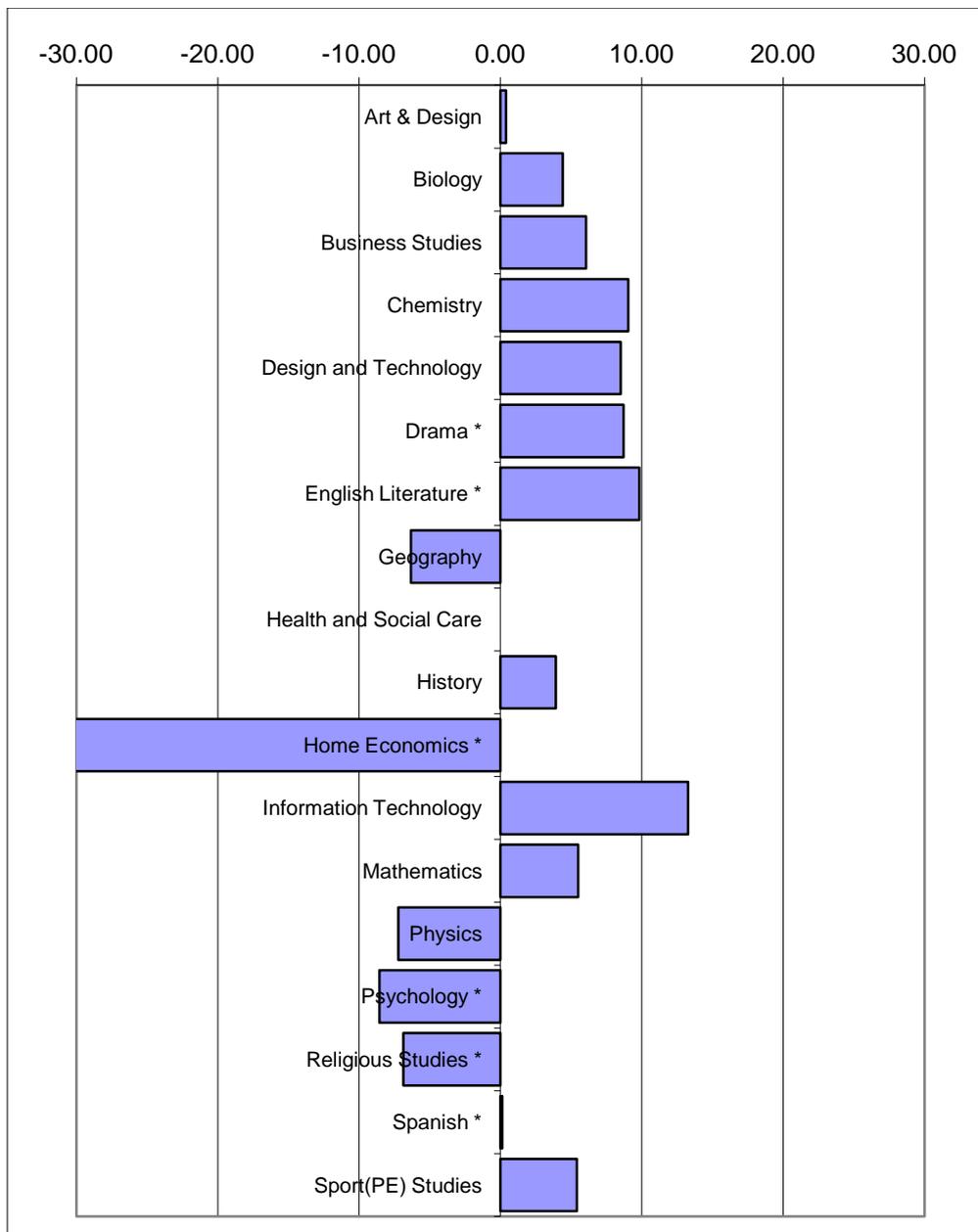
OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 4

Other courses taken in the last two years.

Level 2	2011	2012	Total entry over 2 years
	% pass	% pass	
National Certificate in ICT	29	88	15

GCE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Two-year average for St Killian's College⁷ compared with the three-year NI average at grades A* to C



* fewer than 20 entries over the past two years.

⁷ For subjects with two years of entries only.

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: KEY STAGE 5

Other courses taken in the last two years.

Level 3	2011	2012	Total entry over 3 years
	% pass	% pass	
BTech Construction	100	100	18

STAYING ON RATE (Current year13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	65	NI Av. Year 13	48
Year 14	54	NI Av. Year 14	37

LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS

	Year 12	Percent.	NI %	Yr 13/14	Percent.	NI%
TOTAL	44			100		
Another School	7	16	16	*	-	3
Employment	*	-	4	-	-	12
Full-time Further Education	26	59	45	12	12	31
Full-time Higher Education	-	-	-	77	77	39
Full-time Training	6	14	28	6	6	7
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	*	-	4	*	-	7
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	-	-	3	-	-	3

* fewer than five.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS: ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE⁸

English

The provision for English is very good.

The strengths of the provision include:

- the very good working relationships in all of the classes observed;
- the very good standards attained by the pupils in public examinations;
- the good quality of the pupils' extended writing and high levels of presentation across the year groups;
- the quality of the teaching observed, all of which was good or very good;
- the effective programmes of support provided for those pupils require additional support with literacy; and
- the effective leadership of the department.

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is outstanding.

The strengths of the provision include:

- the pupils' enjoyment of the subject, the high uptake of A level mathematics and the outstanding levels of attainment in public examinations;
- the very high expectations of the teachers who instil in the pupils a belief that, with hard work, they can experience success in mathematics;
- the quality of the teaching which was always good or better, and was very good in two-thirds of the lessons observed;
- the extremely hard-working teachers who, through careful pupil-centred planning, have created a happy and challenging learning environment;
- the outstanding leadership of mathematics across the school and the very effective monitoring, evaluation and review of all aspects of the provision; and
- the culture of reflection and evaluation among the teachers and the pupils, focused on the continuous improvement of the pupils' learning experiences.

⁸ Focusing, in particular, on physics at all levels, and KS3 and KS4 science.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is good.

The strengths of the provision include:

- the very good relationships between the pupils and the teachers in almost all of the lessons observed;
- the good standards attained by the pupils in public examinations;
- the quality of the teaching, which was good or very good in most of the lessons observed;
- the good quality of the departmental planning, and the very good quality of the learning and teaching resources produced by the teachers;
- the commitment of the departmental team to improving the quality of the provision; and
- the effective, collegial leadership of the department.

The area for improvement is to:

- use more effectively the outcomes of the department's monitoring processes to identify priorities for further development and to inform departmental planning and practice.

ACCOMMODATION

- The buildings are not compliant with the access arrangements for disabled pupils in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005.
- There is a shortage of adequate accommodation, and a lack of changing facilities, for pupils in physical education.
- The roofs are leaking in the Castle building, music room and above the toilets in the St Joseph's building.
- The skylight window in the music room is leaking and there is a loss of heat through the metal window.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school needs to review the policy and practice in relation to the management of radioactive substances within the science department as a matter of urgency.
- The recommendations made in the fire risk assessment carried out in March 2012 need to be progressed as a matter of urgency.

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