

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 22nd AUGUST 2011
REPORT ON: SQA ATTAINMENT (PRE-APPEAL DATA - 2011)
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
REPORT NO: 392-2011

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report informs the Committee of the S4-S6 pupil performance in the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination diet of 2011. The figures are taken from the recently released SQA pre-appeal data.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:
- the performance of pupils in the May-June 2011 SQA examinations based on pre-appeal data; and
 - the ongoing strategies being deployed to raise attainment in Dundee's Secondary Schools.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 Pupil performance in SQA examinations is published twice each year based on pre-appeal and post-appeal results. The Pre-Appeal results are issued to all SQA candidates in August when the national performance data is released by SQA. Additional information is made available for analytical and comparator purposes following the national publication of the Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) data in late September. Following the initial round of results each August, schools and candidates may appeal to have their grades improved for a variety of reasons including unexpectedly weak performance or illness at examination time. As a result, the final stage in the process is the publication of post-appeal data in January each year. This reflects the outcome of the appeals process or the changes made due to inaccuracies in the information provided to or held by SQA.
- 4.2 Improving the attainment of pupils in SQA examinations is a long-standing priority for the council, school and education department. It is a key priority within the Council Plan, Service Plan and is a core measure in the Single Outcome Agreement. A number of strategies have been introduced to improve pupil attainment at the key stages of secondary education from S4 to S6. These include the active involvement of school staff in monitoring and tracking pupil progress, the setting of challenging targets and the identified need for staff to deliver consistently high quality learning experiences for all pupils. The annual attainment review process in each secondary school ensures that Head Teachers and senior staff are able to work closely with key staff from within the education

department to analyse SQA results, identify strengths and areas for improvement. Head Teachers will also work with individual Principal Teachers of subjects to analyse performance at school level then compare this with pupil performance at local and national level based on comparator schools with similar features.

4.3 The situation in Dundee is that pupil attainment in SQA examinations has increased over recent years. However, there is no room for complacency and a clear recognition at school and council level that there is continued scope for further improvement. The following strategies remain firmly in place to ensure an ongoing focus on raising attainment:

- the use of a common electronic system at school and departmental level to enable staff to monitor and track pupil performance;
- ongoing improvements in teaching and learning methods through Curriculum for Excellence developments, including, importantly, providing meaningful educational experiences and contexts to meet the needs of all our young people;
- the use of target setting by subject teachers in all secondary schools ;
- the annual analysis of SQA performance at school and departmental level by the Head Teacher, senior managers and principal teachers;
- an annual attainment review by the Head of Secondary Education and Quality Improvement Officers to provide support and challenge to schools and subject departments; and
- ongoing analysis of attainment when set against the performance of schools and council areas with similar social characteristics.

4.4 At a national level, the performance of S4 pupils is measured against a number of specific outcomes based on performance in Access 3 and Standard Grade examinations. Although the performance of pupils in Dundee has increased across all measures over the last 5 years, the ongoing aim for schools is a continued rise in pupil attainment across each measure. The challenge for staff is to consolidate and build on the improvements being made at school and subject level so that the educational needs of all pupils are met fully. The pre-appeal results for 2011 show increases in every key S4 measure. For the first time, pupil performance at English and Maths at Level 3 has now reached 90% which was our target for 2011. Our aim is to build on the significant progress being made in this area with a target of 93%. The situation is similar for pupils attaining 5 passes or more at Level 4 and Level 5 at Standard Grade. Progress has been made but it is recognised that there is headroom for further improvement and this is a focus area across our schools.

End of S4 Measures (Pre Appeal)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
English and Maths at Level 3 (Access 3)	85	84	88	88	90
5+ Level 3 (Access 3)	85	82	85	86	88
5+ Level 4 (Standard Grade)	64	64	68	66	68
5+ Level 5 (Standard Grade)	24	23	27	25	26

4.5 The overall performance of S5 pupils in the 2011 Higher examinations was broadly in line with last year's performance. The attainment of any S5 group is largely based on the strength of the group's performance in the previous year's S4 examination diet. With this in mind the performance of S5 from their S4 baseline was good. It is important to note that S5 pupils do not take Standard

Grade courses and that many pupils now undertake Intermediate Courses (these are not listed as key measures at the end of S5) or a two year Higher course leading to the examination at the end of S6. This is why the performance data for the end of S6 sets out a clearer picture of overall pupil performance since by the end of S6, 30% of pupils now leave school with three or more Highers while 20% of pupils leave with five or more Highers.

End of S5 Measures (Pre Appeal)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1+ Level 6 (Highers)	30	31	31	36	36
3+ Level 6 (Highers)	16	17	16	20	18
5+ Level 6 (Highers)	6	7	7	9	8

- 4.6 The performance of S6 pupils is presented as a set of outcome measures and reflects an overview of pupil performance at Higher and Advanced Higher. This year's performance has seen significant improvements in all measures. It is particularly pleasing to note that 20% of our S6 pupils now leave school with 5 Highers or more and while 30% leave school with 3 Highers or more. These measures show sustained improvement over the years with clear improving trends. The education department target for 3+ Highers at the end of S6 was 28 % and this has now been exceeded. A new long term target has been set at 33% and significant progress has already been made towards this target. There is an improving trend at Advanced Higher level with a slow but steady rise in the level of pupil performance. Pupil performance in the new Scottish Baccalaureate for science has again been positive. Of our nineteen pupils undertaking the Scottish Baccalaureate, eleven pupils passed the Baccalaureate interdisciplinary project and three passed with distinction. In addition seven pupils gained the full Baccalaureate and for the first time we had a pupil who achieved the Scottish Baccalaureate in languages. It should be borne in mind that the total entry for the Baccalaureate in Scotland is relatively small with a sizeable proportion of the entries coming from Private Education Sector. Nationally, last year there were 19 entries for the Languages Baccalaureate and 119 for the Science Baccalaureate.

End of S6 Measures (Pre Appeal)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1+ Level 6 (Highers)	33	34	37	37	44
3+ Level 6 (Highers)	21	22	25	25	30
5+ Level 6 (Highers)	13	14	17	15	20
1+ Level 7 (Advanced Highers)	10	11	13	12	15

- 4.7 The overview of pupil performance in SQA examinations highlights a number of positive developments at individual school and departmental level. It is clear that the focus on improving attainment is leading to improvements in results. The challenge for the education department, schools and staff is to ensure that the success is consolidated and extended. This will require the continued support and commitment of pupils, parents and carers. To this end, the following actions will continue to be taken:

- the support and challenge agenda will continue to be a key feature at school and subject department level;
- the need for staff, pupils, parents and carers to set consistently high expectations will be reinforced at all times;
- the analysis of results and pupil performance will ensure the focus on the identification of positive trends and areas for improvement;
- the introduction of action plans for use by staff where there are identifiable issues in relation to departmental or pupil performance; and

- the sharing of good practice in subject departments will continue to be promoted across secondary schools and subject departments.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environmental assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues.
- 5.2 An equality impact assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact/>.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the compilation of this report. The trade unions have been provided with a copy of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Equality Impact Assessment.

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MW/PC