

improving quality

raising achievement

Standards and Quality in Falkirk Council Schools

session 2009/10



Falkirk Council
Education Services



We are pleased to introduce the eleventh annual report on the standards and quality of Falkirk Council's schools. The report outlines the progress made across all our schools during session 2009/10 against a range of local and national priorities.

Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) is a process which aims to support and challenge the work within schools and education authorities to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners.

Falkirk Council Education Services participated in a VSE in partnership with the HMIe in September 2010. The final report, published in March 2011 is available on the Falkirk Council website and some of the self-evaluation results which underpinned the VSE are included in this document.

The hard work and dedication of our headteachers, teachers and all support staff within schools is very much recognised and appreciated, as indeed are the valuable roles played by our headquarters staff, the Educational Psychology Service, other Council Services and outside agencies, including HM Inspectors of Education, all of whom work with us to enable our pupils to realise their full potential.



Julia Swan
Director of Education



Councillor Dr Alex Waddell
Convener of the Education Committee

	<i>Page</i>
Foreword	1
Introduction	3
Education Services' Vision and Aims - 'Learning to Achieve in Falkirk'	4
Service Planning	5
Survey Results - October 2009	7
Service Evaluation	12
Validated Self Evaluation	13
Performance Indicators	18
Local Improvement Priorities 2011-2014	25
Appendix 1	26

Context and Challenges for the Council

Education Services is the largest of Falkirk Council's services with approximately 2,665 employees (full-time equivalent) and a gross revenue budget of approximately £167 million (2009/10).

School education is provided for more than 20,000 pupils in 49 primary, 8 secondary, 2 special schools and 3 day units. The service provides over 3,100 places in 8 nursery schools and day nurseries and 42 nursery classes for children in their pre-school years and co-operates with local private sector providers to ensure a comprehensive, high quality pre-five service across the whole Council area.

Pupil attainment and achievement in both our primary schools and secondary schools continues to rise - in some cases by much more than the Scottish average - and we now compare favourably with the rest of Scotland. Our level of exclusions remains steady and low, again comparing well with the rest of Scotland. Attendance, which has been a particular service priority, has risen with secondary attendance now the highest it has ever been. Children cannot learn if they are not in school and various measures have been effective in tackling this issue.

We anticipate that our population will continue to increase - mainly due to the number of births which will continue to put pressure on our schools to provide places. We are fortunate to have one of the best school estates in Scotland with only one of our schools being graded 'C'. All our secondary schools have been built within the last ten years and are fit for purpose to provide a 21st century education. We are working to make sure our schools are as environmentally friendly as possible and all new developments are sustainable.

It is expected that the funding of public services in Scotland will fall significantly in the next few years and efficiency savings have already been made both within Education Services and across Falkirk Council services as a whole. We have made a commitment to protect frontline jobs and schools' finances wherever possible. Unemployment amongst young people in the area has dropped over the last ten years but is now increasing again due to the economic down turn. We recognise that we must continue to work in partnership with others locally and nationally to face these challenges.

Education Services has recently undergone a restructuring, promoted by the retirement of a Head of Service. The service now operates as two divisions - Educational Planning and Resources and Educational Support and Improvement. In the last year the Curriculum Support Team have moved as a whole to Camelon Education Centre. All other central teams have recently moved to premises in Grangemouth creating an opportunity for closer cross-team working. Further restructuring at Falkirk Council corporate level has yet to be confirmed but one issue that will impact on Education Services is the creation of a Trust to deliver Community Services. It is anticipated that Community Learning and Development staff and functions will transfer to Education Services in summer 2011.

Learning to Achieve

In support of the Council's corporate aspirations, Education Services has its own vibrant, new Visions and Aims, as expressed in the Service's main strategic document - 'Learning to Achieve'.

Learning to Achieve sets out how we will deliver the changes brought about in education nationally because of 'A Curriculum for Excellence' and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our schools, children and young people. The document has been produced in a variety of formats to be as accessible as possible to all stakeholders and sets out how we go about delivering education across all Falkirk Council educational establishments.

'Learning to Achieve' can be accessed via the Education pages on the Council's internet web page at <http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/education>



Learning to Achieve
 A Strategy for Raising Achievement

Falkirk Council
Education Services

Background

The quality assurance processes of the Scottish Education system have been based on self-evaluation since HMIE published their quality indicators in the early 1990s in 'How Good is our School?' Schools and education authorities use these joint criteria to monitor and evaluate quality and progress.

Community Education follows a similar process using the quality assurance framework 'How Good is our Community Learning and Development 2'.

Following the 2000 Standards in Scottish Schools Act, similar criteria were developed for education authorities to use for self-evaluation, and thereafter, by HMIE for INEA inspections. These quality indicators were called 'Quality Management in Education 2'.

The quality assurance cycle entails self-evaluation using the relevant quality indicators, the establishment of areas of strength and areas for development and the development of action plans for continuous improvement. For schools, these are the School Improvement Plans; for authorities, they are Local Improvement Priorities that are then encapsulated in Service Improvement Plans. The Service Improvement Plan is structured according to the Council's Corporate Plan goals. For Community Education, actions are embedded in the Community Services' Service Plan, Unit Plan and Team Plans. Learning Communities also have improvement plans that detail priorities for CLD.

In addition to this cycle of quality assurance and service improvement, the Concordat has provided a range of priority actions agreed in the Single Outcome Agreement.

Current Practice

Prior to the second INEA inspection of December 2006, Education Services moved to a three year programme of self-evaluation: and in-depth evaluation followed by a lighter touch in the following two years. This formed the basis of the self-evaluation document presented to HMIE in 2006 and led to the next round of service planning via the Local Improvement Priorities.

Both the self-evaluation process and the accuracy of its findings were favourably commented on in the INEA report and contributed to the positive evaluations made by the HMIE in the sections on 'Capacity for Improvement'.

The summer of 2009 has seen the second round of in-depth self-evaluation. This has entailed surveys of:

- headteachers/managers
- school staff - teaching and non-teaching
- centre staff
- pupils - annual rolling programme by double clusters
- parents - annual rolling programme by double clusters

In addition, focus groups of centre staff and headteachers have undertaken detailed, in-depth review of service areas against Quality Management in Education 2 quality indicators.

The processes outlined above provide a large body of data and information about the quality of service provided by Falkirk Council Education Services. This in turn provides evidence for our evaluation and for further in-depth scrutiny during the Validated Self-Evaluation process.

Community Education has had 3 HMle Inspections of Learning Communities since November 2008 - the learning community around Graeme High School in 2008, Braes High School in August 2009 and Grangemouth High School in January 2010. Given that this is a new framework and led through the auspices of the Community Learning and Development Partnership there has been a strong focus over the last 18 months on improving planning processes around learning communities. A programme of self-evaluation has been developed across Community Learning and Development partners in response to the new framework and this has resulted in an improving trend of quality improvement indicators.

During the second inspection, of the Braes High School Learning Community, the HMle inspectors decided to disengage with the inspection process on the third of the five allocated days. This was based on a view that the CLD Service understood itself very well and understood where improvements were required. The CLD Service and its partners have continued to embed the learning from these inspections.

In future years, self-evaluation processes will be within the remit of the Head of Educational Planning and Resources so may become more focused on resource issues as well as outcomes for children. The corporate decision to pilot the use of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) will also impact on the process we follow when we next undergo our in-depth self-evaluation in 2012. It is likely that we will be able to call upon the support of facilitators and critical friends in other services. The move to a proportionate VSE model of support and challenge visits to schools will also have an impact on service planning processes and the way we conduct self-evaluation.

SELF-EVALUATION SURVEY RESULTS - October 2009

Every year Education Services conducts a questionnaire based self-evaluation survey of key stakeholders - school based staff, pupils and parents. Two different school clusters are targeted every year in rotation so that each school cluster has an opportunity to respond to the survey every 4 years. The number of responses from each stakeholder group is attached at Appendix 1.

In October 2009 Larbert School cluster and Grangemouth School cluster were surveyed. The headline results from these surveys are shown below. These results are fed into our planning processes and have an impact in setting the Local Improvement Priorities for the service.

Larbert and Grangemouth Clusters - Staff, Parents and Pupils

Key to terminology

All	100%
Almost all	90%-99%
Most	75-89%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority	25%-49%
Significant minority	0%-24%

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS - STAFF (TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF)

The staff identified the following strengths:

- Almost all teaching staff agreed that they had an annual PRD meeting with their line manager and most agreed that the school's PRD process supports their professional development.
- Almost all teaching staff agreed that a range of CPD opportunities were available.
- Most teaching staff agreed that their contribution to the school was valued.
- Most teaching staff agreed that there are good leadership opportunities available to them.
- Most teaching and support staff agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of leadership and management demonstrated by the headteacher and/or senior management team in their school.
- Almost all teaching staff and most support staff agreed that they have had Child Protection training and were now clear about their role.
- Almost all teaching staff and support staff agreed that pupils are generally well behaved in their school.
- Most teaching staff and support staff agreed that their school had effective arrangements for managing pupil behaviour.
- Most teaching staff agreed that they were given the opportunity to discuss the implications of policies/strategies when they are introduced.
- Most teaching staff agreed that there were clear lines of communication in the school.
- Almost all teaching and support staff agreed that staff in the school demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Most teaching staff agreed that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the School Improvement Plan.
- Most teaching staff agreed that they had opportunities to be involved in decision making processes in the school.

The following areas were identified for improvement:

- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that there was a range of CPD opportunities available to them.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that there are good leadership opportunities available to them.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that they had an annual PRD meeting with their line manager and that the school's PRD process supports their professional development.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that their contribution to the school was valued.
- A significant majority of teaching and support staff disagreed that there was effective communication amongst staff in the school.
- A significant majority of support staff disagreed that they were given the opportunity to discuss the implications of policies/strategies when they were introduced.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that there were clear lines of communication in the school.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that they were given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the School Improvement Plan.
- A significant minority of support staff disagreed that they had opportunities to be involved in decision making processes in the school.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS - PARENTS

The parents identified the following strengths:

- Almost all parents responded very favourably to every statement regarding the learning environment in schools.
- Most parents responded very favourably to every statement regarding pastoral support in schools.

- Almost all parents agreed that staff are courteous and helpful and make them feel welcome in the school, and also most agreed that any questions they have are answered quickly by school staff.
- Almost all parents agreed that their child has opportunities to take part in activities outside the classroom.
- Most parents agreed that they are kept informed of the work of the Parent Council and/or Parents Association.
- Most parents agreed that their child gets about the right amount of homework.
- Most parents responded very favourably to every question regarding communication with the school.
- Most parents agreed that pupils were generally well behaved in the school or nursery, and seven out of ten agreed that the school/nursery had effective arrangements for managing pupil behaviour.
- A majority responded favourably to every question regarding parental contact with Education Services.

The parents identified the following areas for improvement:

- One in six parents disagreed that teachers/officers let them know ways to continue their child's learning at home. (One in ten parents did not know.)
- Three out of ten parents did not know if there were good facilities in the school/nursery for parents.
- Areas with significant numbers of parents responding 'don't know' were - how consultation allows parents to influence aims and plans for education and whether parents get speedy responses to complaints and enquiries.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS - PUPILS (SECONDARY AND PRIMARY P4-P7)

The pupils identified the following strengths:

- Almost all of primary pupils and most secondary school pupils enjoyed being at school, enjoyed what they learned at school and felt safe and well looked after in school.
- Most primary pupils agreed that they were treated fairly in school.
- Almost all primary pupils responded very favourably to every question regarding contact with teachers.
- Most or almost all secondary pupils responded very positively to most of the statements regarding contact with teachers.
- Almost all primary pupils responded very favourably to most questions regarding pastoral support in schools.
- Most secondary pupils responded favourably to most questions regarding pastoral support in schools.
- Almost all primary and secondary pupils agreed that they get on well with other pupils.
- Almost all primary and most secondary pupils agreed that they have a say in deciding how to improve the school.
- Most primary and secondary pupils agreed that they get about the right amount of homework and almost all agreed that teachers check it.

The pupils identified the following as areas for improvement:

- Three out of ten secondary pupils disagreed that they were treated fairly in school.
- Three out of ten secondary pupils disagreed that staff in school were good at dealing with bullies.
- A majority of primary and secondary pupils agreed that the behaviour of pupils in school was good but commented that it could be better.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS - STAFF AT CENTRE (including comments from the in-depth self-evaluation)

In October 2009, staff at centre and headteachers were also surveyed:

Seventy nine centrally employed staff completed the self-evaluation questionnaires from a possible 183 - a 43% response rate. All centrally based teams contributed comments to the in-depth self-evaluation.

The staff at the centre identified the following strengths:

- Almost all staff at the centre agreed that they are confident in dealing with problems and complaints.
- Most staff at centre agreed favourably with most statements regarding staff development and support and commented that staff are generally happy with CPD arrangements.
- Some staff commented that they do not get a regular Achievement and Personal Development Scheme (APDS) interview but plans are in place to address this.
- Most staff at centre agreed that the authority is well led, managers take action if they raise concerns and that their work for the authority is recognised and valued.
- Most staff at centre agreed that they have access to the information they need to do their job effectively.
- Staff commented on improvements in this area including the roll out of SEEMIS and other information systems.
- Most staff at centre agreed that they have a sound knowledge about the authority's procedures for Child Protection.

The staff at the centre identified the following as areas for improvement:

- A small majority of staff at centre agreed that there is a high quality working ethos in the authority and comment that it is improving.
- Just under three out of five staff disagreed that morale is high amongst staff in the authority but commented that it is showing improvement. Staff commented that staff morale within teams was good.
- Three staff out of ten disagreed that they had sufficient time to fulfil their remit effectively.
- Just under half of the staff at centre disagreed that elected members demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of education in the Council area although a significant minority did not know.
- Three out of ten staff at centre disagreed that they have good opportunities to be involved in decision making and contribute to the implementation of the Local Improvement Priorities although this has improved.
- A small majority of staff at centre agreed that their team regularly evaluates its performance and this has slightly improved.
- A small majority of staff at centre agreed that senior managers take a high profile in joint planning and working with external partners and agencies although this has improved and a significant minority answered that they didn't know.
- A small majority of staff at centre agreed that there is a partnership approach to supporting young people and that they have been involved in training or sharing good practice with staff from other departments of the Council or that there is effective liaison with other departments and services of the Council. Staff commented that they would welcome more partnership working and collaboration.
- A small majority of staff agreed that there is effective communication amongst staff in the authority although this is improving.

- Staff have commented on the difficulty of keeping up to date with new policy developments and maintaining awareness of existing policies although they know where they can get copies of the relevant documents.

SUMMARY OF KEY RESULTS - HEADTEACHERS/MANAGERS

This includes comments from the validation exercise at the November 2009 headteachers' meeting where headteachers/managers agreed that the results of the survey were largely accurate and that a general trend towards improvement was noticeable. An action plan to address the areas of particular concern raised by headteachers/managers, for example financial information and Employee Resources support has been drawn up and is currently being implemented. Headteachers/managers were also asked to agree the Local Improvement Priorities for 2010/13 for the service as a whole. The response rate is attached in Appendix 1.

The headteachers and managers identified the following strengths:

- All headteachers/managers agreed that senior managers in Education Services show a high level of commitment to the promotion of quality and that the authority has encouraged their establishment to develop a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the range of their work.
- Almost all headteachers/managers agreed with the rest of the statements regarding consultation, planning and quality improvement.
- Most headteachers/managers agreed that the service fosters good links with agencies such as Social Work and the Health Service.

- Almost all headteachers/managers agreed that the service has a range of policies appropriate to the current needs of their establishment and most agreed that these were backed up by clear procedures for putting them into place.
- Most headteachers/managers agreed that the service consults effectively with their establishment and other customers, such as Parent Councils and parent and pupil groups.
- Most headteachers/managers agreed that the service is effective in disseminating good practice about improved standards and quality in schools and are prompt and helpful in responding to any contact from schools.
- Almost all headteachers/managers agreed that they are clear about the role of the authority's officers with regard to their school.
- Most headteachers/managers agreed that they are confident that the authority has good knowledge of their performance as head of establishment that support is available and that authority officers maintain effective contact with their establishments, recognise and celebrate success at establishment and individual level and assist with staff development and training to support improvement.
- Some comments were made that Falkirk Council compares favourably to other local authorities with the Quality Improvement and Curriculum Support Teams seen as being particularly supportive.

The headteachers and managers identified the following as areas for improvement:

- While most all headteachers/managers felt well supported but equally challenged to bring about continuous improvement in their establishments, some felt that scrutiny visits needs to be reviewed to be less time consuming and avoid schools feeling that they are being audited too often. A comment was made that a common understanding of quality was a key area for development.

- A small majority of headteachers/managers agreed that establishments are appropriately consulted on the direction of the service.
- Some headteachers/managers commented that communication with teams at the centre is inconsistent with some teams performing well and others less so.
- A small majority of headteachers/managers agreed that the authority's financial procedures are effective for their establishment and comments were made that budget information was given too late.

SERVICE EVALUATION

As a result of its self-evaluation processes, Education Services evaluated itself against the quality indicators of Quality Management in Education 2.

The six point scale for self-evaluation, based on evidence for each of the Quality Indicators (QIs) is as follows:

for their stage.

QI	Indicator	2006 Score	2009 Score	2010 Score
1.1	Improvements in performance	4	5	5
1.2	Fulfilment of statutory duties	4	5	5
2.1	Impact on learners	4	4	5
2.2	Impact on parents/carers and families	4	5	5
3.1	Impact on staff	4	4	4
4.1	Impact on the local community	4	4	4
4.2	Impact on the wider community	4	4	4
5.1	Delivering education services	4	4	4
5.2	Inclusion, equality and fairness	4	4	4
5.3	Improving the quality of services and establishments	4	5	5
6.1	Policy review and development	4	4	5
6.2	Participation of learners and other stakeholders	4	5	5
6.3	Operational planning	3	4	4
7.1	Sufficiency, recruitment and retention	4	4	4
7.2	Deployment and teamwork	4	4	5
7.3	Development and support	4	4	4
8.1	Partnership working	4	4	5
8.2	Financial management	4	4	4
8.3	Resource management	4	4	4
8.4	Information systems	3	4	5
9.1	Vision, values and aims	4	4	5
9.2	Leadership and direction	3	4	5
9.3	Developing people and partnerships	4	4	5
9.4	Leadership of change and improvement	4	4	5
10	Capacity for improvement	4	4	5

The 'Six Point Scale' for Key Area Evaluation

- 6 (EXCELLENT)
Outstanding standard that exemplifies the very best practice. Implies high levels of performance will be maintained.
- 5 (VERY GOOD)
High standards of provision that should be achievable by all. Appropriate to continue without significant adjustment.
- 4 (GOOD)
The strengths have a significant positive impact, but improvement is still required.
- 3 (ADEQUATE)
Strengths have a positive impact, but the weaknesses constrain the overall quality of service and require to be addressed.
- 2 (WEAK)
May be strengths but the important weaknesses substantially diminish quality of service provided. Planned and structured action required.
- 1 (UNSATISFACTORY)
Major weaknesses require immediate remedial action.

VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION

Introduction

VSE is a process which aims to support and challenge the work within schools and education authorities to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. It recognises that self-evaluation is increasingly well embedded across the Scottish educational landscape and that high quality self-evaluation can lead to continuous improvement for learners and the achievement of excellence in practice and provision. VSE acknowledges that the responsibility for improving services and outcomes lies with the self-evaluator. The role of the validator is to support, extend and challenge the self-evaluation at both school and service levels, and so affirm (or otherwise) and strengthen outcomes for learners.

Falkirk Council requested that HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) work alongside the Council to undertake a validated self-evaluation (VSE). Throughout the VSE, Council staff worked alongside HM Inspectors (HMI). This joint report includes HMIE's assessment of the rigour of Falkirk's self-evaluation process. It describes how the VSE will continue to the ongoing self-evaluation of Falkirk Education Service and provides a summary of the agreed key strengths and future actions.

The aims, nature and scope of the VSE process are described in the **HMIE website**.

The context of self-evaluation in Falkirk Council

HMIE joined Falkirk Council to carry out the VSE in the second year of the authority's planned three year self-evaluation programme. As a regular part of HMIE's support and challenge role, the District Inspector (DI) had worked closely with the Education Service to assist them in continuous improvement, particularly in the new development of a new quality improvement framework for schools. The VSE was therefore embedded within the authority's existing programme of improvement

planning and in their work with the DI.

Prior to HMIE engagement in 2009, Falkirk Education Service had already carried out a comprehensive self-evaluation using Quality Management in Education 2 (QMIE2). The three year evaluation programme had started with an extensive and systematic stakeholder consultation to evaluate the services provided by the education authority (EA). A wide range of stakeholders contributed to the evaluation and this was used to identify key areas of strength and areas for further development. In addition to the information obtained from stakeholders, the EA used other sources of data to help inform future improvement priorities. For example, they used information from audit reports, HMIE inspection reports, benchmarking with other authorities and national and comparator statistical information in relation to attainment. From this rich source of information the EA identified priority areas for further improvement. Implementation Task Groups were then established to take forward five priority areas:

1. Enterprise, More Choices More Chances (MCMC) and 16+ (Task Group 1)
2. Strategic implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (Task Group 2)
3. Outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) (Task Group 3)
4. Evaluation of the Parent Strategy (Task Group 4)
5. Reconfiguration of the Quality Improvement Framework (Task Group 5)

The process of validated self-evaluation in Falkirk Council

During the VSE, HMIE joined the Implementation Task Groups in their planned activities which were designed to help them take forward their areas for improvement. This involved, for example, joining meetings with relevant partner

agencies, meeting with stakeholders to evaluate the impact of a strategy, engaging with other officers of the Council and Education Services to plan next steps in the development of policy and practice, and contributing to focus groups. During these activities, HMle engaged in discussions with officers and stakeholders and modelled the type of questions and analysis which are necessary to enhance the quality and interpretation of information obtained from the evaluation activities.

Following the first VSE week, the Education Service's Management Team and HMle met to take stock of the initial findings and the progress of the VSE. The next stage included a smaller HMle team who worked alongside senior officers and the lead officers of the Implementation Task Groups to further refine the authority's self-evaluation and so improve the original task evaluations and proposals for improvement. This led to a clearer focus on outcomes for stakeholders. As a result of this joint work with HMle, the reports from the VSE will provide a framework for future Education Services' performance reporting.

HMle's assessment of the quality of self-evaluation in Falkirk Council

In all of the task groups, staff were highly motivated and committed to gathering high quality information to support improvements in policy and practice. For example, Task Group 3 had available a substantial amount of performance data showing trends over time including 5-14 data, SQA tariff scores, attendance, absence, exclusions and leaver destination figures for Looked After Children.

Analysis of data included comparisons of gender, tariff scores, highest qualification gained, current status and details of the first two destinations taken after school. The data was further analysed by Looked After at Home (LAAH) groupings and Looked After away from

Home (LAAFH). The group had also looked at a sample of case files to provide more qualitative information about the experiences of Looked After Children in Falkirk. HMle worked closely with all of the lead officers of the task group to ensure that the data sources were used effectively to identify key areas for improvement and to triangulate evidence from a range of sources. At times too much information was available which made it difficult to focus on the key messages. The work identified scope to improve efficiency in relation to the amount of data required to inform future improvements.

In all Task Groups, members worked well together demonstrating very good partnership and a clarity of vision. For example, the Enterprise in Education Steering Group meeting (Task Group 1) showed that members had a clear understanding of where they needed to improve services, had robust statistical and qualitative information from a wide range of initiatives and had used some of this well to inform future practice. HMle worked with the Task Groups to further improve their use of data so that they could better evidence the impact they were making on outcomes for their stakeholders. By the end of the VSE, all of the Task Groups were making better use of the very comprehensive and robust data which had been meticulously and systematically collected for self-evaluation.

The quality of questioning used by Task Group members improved over the week. There was a growing emphasis on questions which would enable the Task Groups to evaluate the impact and outcomes on stakeholders. For example, in Theme 4, parent groups, headteachers and other stakeholders were increasingly asked more probing questions about, for example, the difference the Parent Strategy had made to their lives and what evidence they could give to demonstrate the impact.

Engagement with stakeholders and HMIE enabled each of the Task Groups to develop their understanding of how their area for improvement impacted on other service providers. For example, in Implementation Task Group 2 it was recognised that greater collaboration and sharing of information between the Quality Improvement Officers and Curriculum Development Officers would help to make decision making more robust, increase its validity and improve the quality of services. This became a key action point for future engagement of these officers.

In the second stage a smaller team of HMI and an associate assessor worked closely with senior officers and task leaders to further refine their self-evaluation. This resulted in a strengthening of the evaluative statements in the reporting documents. HMIE reinforced the need to make the links between the evidence gathered and the outcomes for stakeholders. These discussions resulted in lead officers revising the VSE reports for each of the Implementation Task Groups. Falkirk Education Services will use the amended reports and learning which took place during the VSE to model future work within the Education Service and possibly with other partners in the Council.

At all times there was an openness and honesty which reinforced the high levels of motivation shown by all staff to improve services to children, young people and their families.

Summary of HMIE's assessment of the quality of self-evaluation in Falkirk Council

During the VSE, Task Group members worked very well with HMIE and further developed their existing partnership through planning, working and evaluating together. There was a strengthening culture of self-evaluation across the service. Staff were strongly committed to improvement through self-evaluation and this was characterised by a willingness to question

their existing practice and look at ways in which to improve the robustness of evidence gathering. Overall, the programmes and activities were well considered and provided good opportunities for the team to consider the quality and outcomes of a wide range of provision. Some activities in the themed groups were too broad and required a more focused approach. Through the VSE process, staff became increasingly aware of the range of data that was available and of the need to use this more effectively to corroborate evidence. As a result of the VSE process, Falkirk staff improved their capacity to self-evaluate in order to bring about service improvement. During professional discussion with HMIE, senior officers were both reflective and self-critical, interrogating their own practice, resulting in a better understanding of where services were less effective. They welcomed and took full advantage of the independent benchmarking of quality which HMIE provided. The VSE process also provided insight into how the methodology could be successfully used across other Council services such as the children's commission. This will be further progressed by senior officers. The Resources Division found the process particularly useful and will be further developing the approach.

What strengths has the validated self-evaluation identified?

- Falkirk Council and HMIE jointly identified the following high level strengths:
- Strong commitment of the Convener, Director and Heads of Service to continuous improvement, including the Education Service's clear vision, values and aims, strengthened through the strategic document Learning to Achieve.
- Strengthening approaches to support and challenge within the service leading to improved performance, particularly for vulnerable groups.

- Strong early years provision supporting children to have the best possible start in life, and steady improvements in attainment across primary and secondary stages with improved performance in attendance, exclusions and positive destinations.
- Extensive range of cultural and sporting opportunities provided for learners.
- A wide range of positive partnerships and innovative approaches to involving children, young people and parents in policy development and review.

What is the Council's capacity for improvement?

Falkirk Education Service has demonstrated its ability to secure improvements in important areas and to make significant contributions to Council and national priorities, for example, improved pupil attainment and achievement. There is evidence that the service's capacity to improve has strengthened in recent years and that the pace of implementing key changes has increased. Senior managers have focused on developing a culture of self-evaluation where staff at all levels have been encouraged and empowered to make decisions and adopt creative approaches to improving processes and service delivery.

VSE has been effective in further developing Falkirk's self-evaluation skills, resulting in a further refinement of plans to improve quality improvement approaches across all areas of the Education Service. The process has also helped the service focus more clearly on outcomes and on making even more effective use of data to achieve improved outcomes. This will provide the service with the confidence to continue to innovate, in particular, in its implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and to develop the VSE approach with other partners across the Council.

HMIe have confidence in Falkirk Council Education Service's capacity for further improvement.

What does the Council plan to do next?

As a result of the work undertaken within the VSE process, Falkirk Council and HMIe have agreed the following areas for further improvement:

- Building on existing systems to make even better use of data to inform and direct the improvement agenda and enhance the impact being made by the service on outcomes for learners.
- Further develop and implement the Quality Improvement Framework for schools and extend the methodology used in VSE to all services provided by the Education Service and appropriate areas within the Council to continue to increase the impact of these processes.
- Through rigorous self-evaluation, continue to identify key themes for in depth scrutiny as part of a rolling programme of quality improvement.
- Further improve the implementation of the Education Service's Quality Improvement Framework by creating better structures to allow more joint working across teams (for example, joint working between the quality improvement and curriculum development teams).
- Develop a strategic plan in collaboration with partners that addresses the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence in a comprehensive way so as to embrace the whole 16+ agenda, More Choices, More Changes, Determined to Succeed and 'My Future's in Falkirk'.
- Redefine relationships and linkages with Community Learning and Development to ensure strong partnership working.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

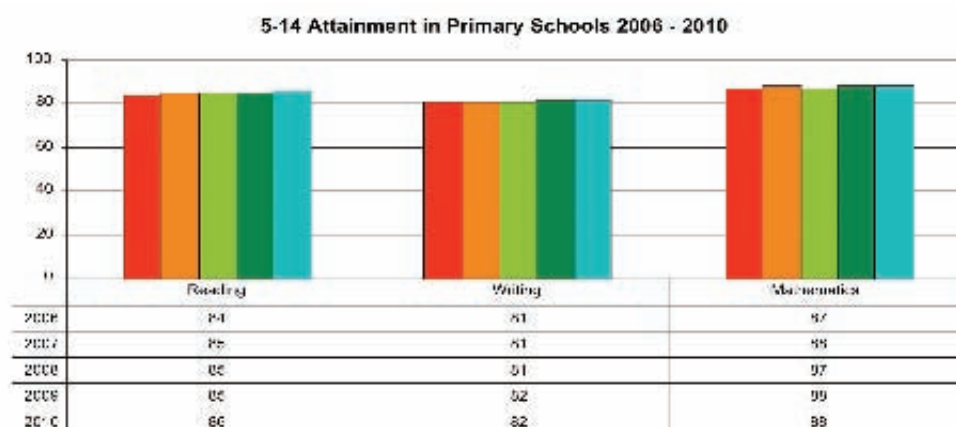
The Single Outcome Agreement sets out the key priorities for Falkirk Council for the three years from 2009 to 2011.

Education Services progress towards meeting these outcomes is shown below.

5-14 Attainment - Primary School

The average attainment figures for Falkirk Council's primary schools in the three curricular areas of reading, writing and mathematics are given below. The figures show the percentage of pupils in P3, P4, P6 and P7 attaining or exceeding the appropriate levels for their stage.

		June 2006	June 2007	June 2008	June 2009	June 2010
Reading	Falkirk	84	85	85	85	86
	Comparator Authorities	81	82	83	84	n/a
Writing	Falkirk	81	81	81	82	82
	Comparator Authorities	75	76	77	78	n/a
Mathematics	Falkirk	87	88	87	88	88
	Comparator Authorities	84	85	85	85	n/a



A significant number of primary pupils are achieving 5-14 levels at an earlier stage (for example attaining Level A in P2 rather than in P3 or Level B in P3 rather than in P4). The table below shows the percentage of pupils in P3, P4, P6 and P7 who exceeded the appropriate levels for their stage in each of the three curricular areas in the last four years.

	June 2007	June 2008	June 2009	June 2010
Reading	40	42	44	45
Writing	27	29	28	30
Mathematics	28	31	30	32

Falkirk Council's primary schools have made good progress in all three curricular areas in session 2009/10 having improved or maintained overall attainment and supported a significant number of pupils to achieve levels beyond that for their stage.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Attainment

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) groups comparable qualifications by SCQF Level as shown below.

SCQF Level	Qualifications
3	Standard Grade (Foundation Level), Access 3 Clusters
4	Standard Grade (General Level), Intermediate 1
5	Standard Grade (Credit Level), Intermediate 2
6	Higher
7	Advanced Higher

The main measures for SQA attainment in secondary schools are:

- The percentage of the S4 roll gaining SCQF Level 3 or better in English and mathematics.
- The percentage of the S4 roll gaining 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better.
- The percentage of the S4 roll gaining 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better.
- The percentage of the S4 roll gaining 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better.
- The percentage of the original S4 roll gaining 1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better in S5.
- The percentage of the original S4 roll gaining 3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better in S5.
- The percentage of the original S4 roll gaining 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better in S5.

The average performance of Falkirk Council's secondary schools in the above measures is given below together with the average figures for our comparator authorities and for Scotland.

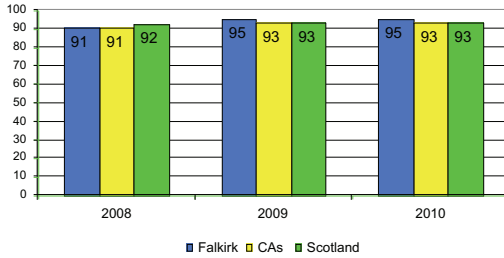
The figures are quoted as a percentage of the appropriate S4 roll and so 1% represents approximately 2 students in a secondary school with an S4 roll of about 200 students.

		2008	2009	2010
English and mathematics at SCQF Level 3 or better by S4	Falkirk	91	95	95
	Comparator Authorities	91	93	93
	Scotland	92	93	93
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better by S4	Falkirk	89	92	93
	Comparator Authorities	90	91	93
	Scotland	91	91	92
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better by S4	Falkirk	72	77	79
	Comparator Authorities	77	78	78
	Scotland	76	78	78
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better by S4	Falkirk	33	35	35
	Comparator Authorities	33	34	33
	Scotland	34	35	36
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better by S5	Falkirk	37	39	44
	Comparator Authorities	37	40	42
	Scotland	39	41	43
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better by S5	Falkirk	19	21	25
	Comparator Authorities	20	21	23
	Scotland	22	23	25
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better by S5	Falkirk	7	8	12
	Comparator Authorities	7	9	9
	Scotland	10	11	11
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better by S6	Falkirk	26	30	31
	Comparator Authorities	28	29	32
	Scotland	30	31	33
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better by S6	Falkirk	15	17	20
	Comparator Authorities	18	18	21
	Scotland	20	21	22
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 or better by S6	Falkirk	11	11	13
	Comparator Authorities	12	13	15
	Scotland	13	14	15

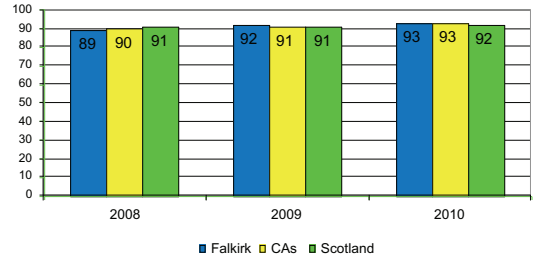
Note: The above figures have been taken from data provided by the Scottish Government. The data contained in the tables above are shown below in graphical format to assist in interpretation.

performance indicators

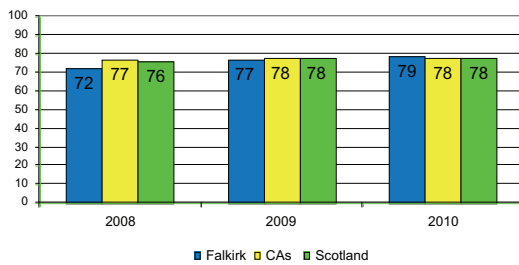
English & Maths at SCQF level 3 or better by the end of S4



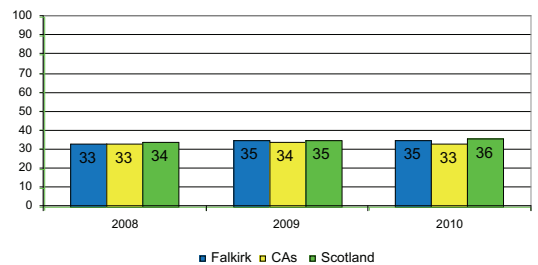
5 or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better by the end of S4



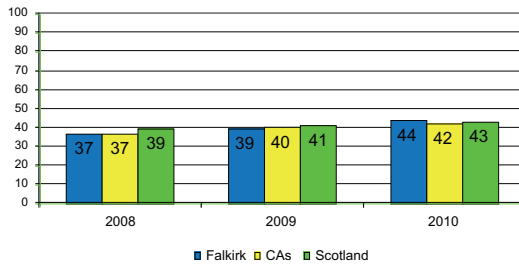
5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better by the end of S4



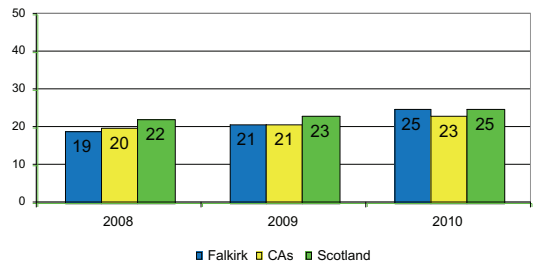
5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better by the end of S4



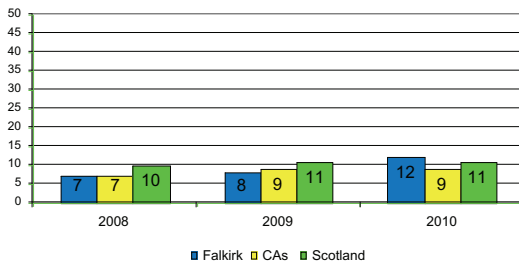
1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better by the end of S5



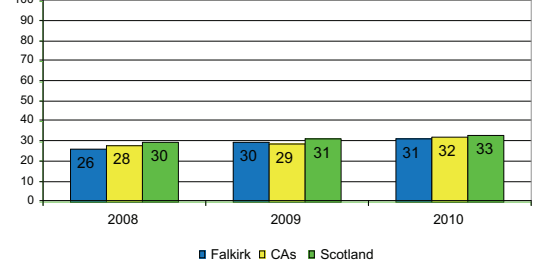
3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better by the end of S5



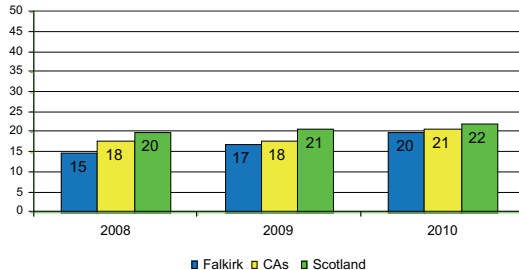
5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better by the end of S5



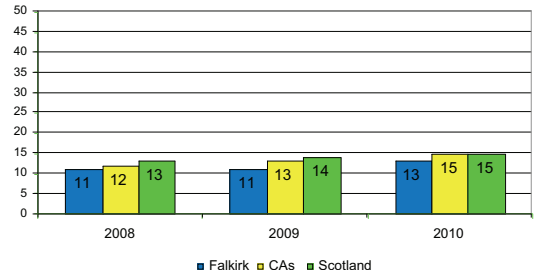
3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better by the end of S6



5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better by the end of S6



1 or more awards at SCQF level 7 by the end of S6

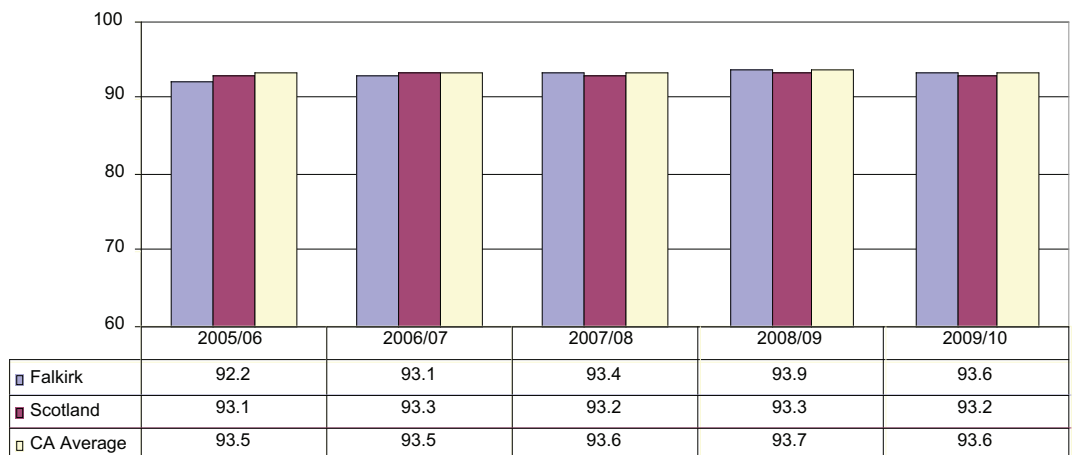


Pupil Attendance

All Sectors

Pupil attendance during session 2009/10 equalled the level of our comparator authorities and was slightly higher than the national average.

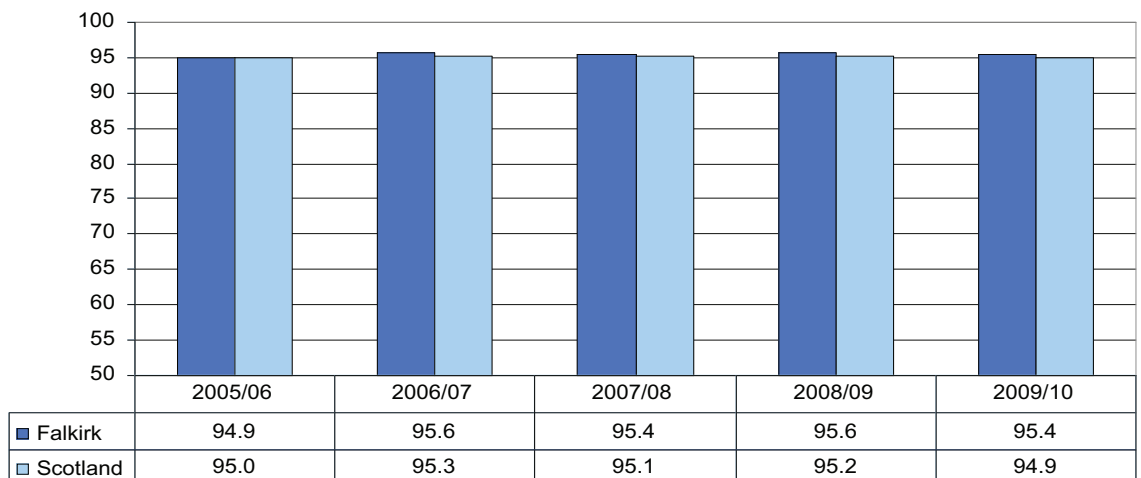
Average Pupil Attendance (all sectors)



Primary

Attendance rates in primary schools have been slightly higher than the national average for the past 4 years..

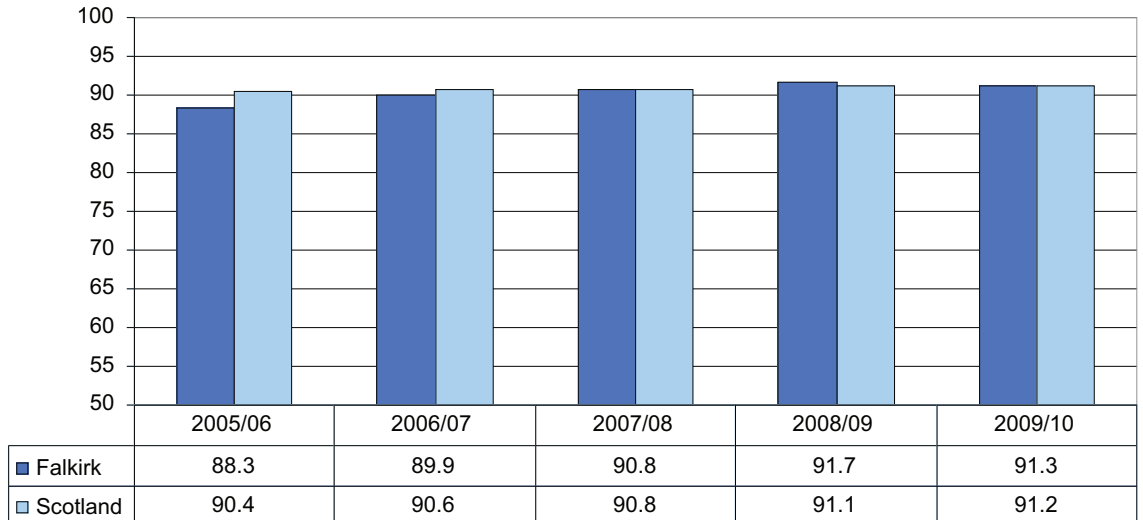
Attendance rates in Primary Schools



Secondary

Encouragingly, our secondary schools' pupil attendance figures are much improved on recent years' performance as shown in the chart below. Pupil attendance in secondary schools is now in line with the rest of Scotland.

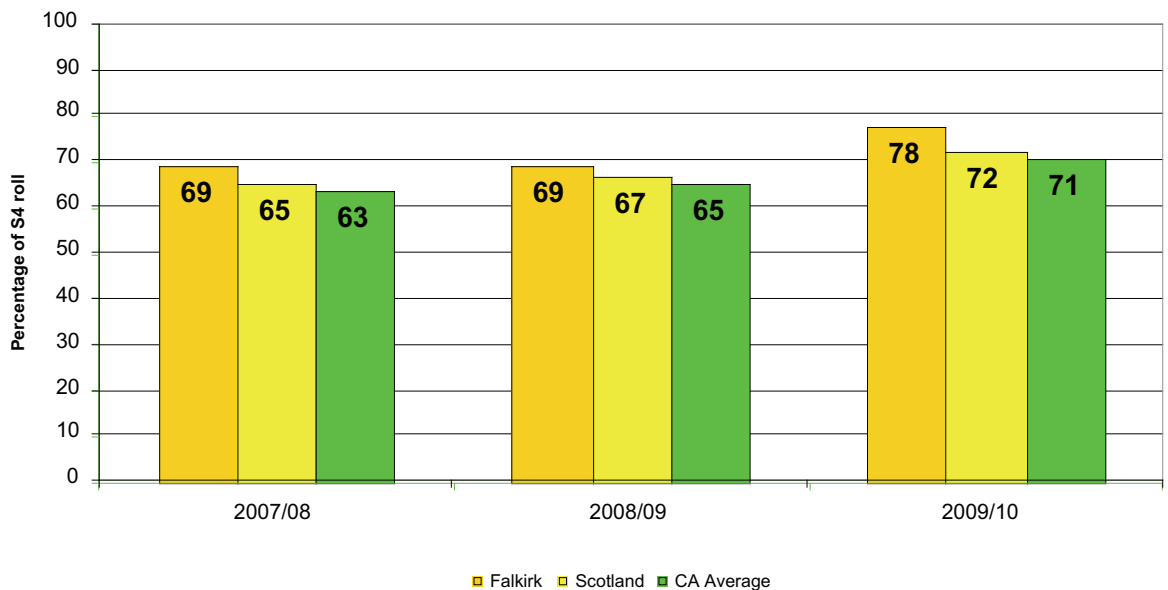
Attendance rates in secondary schools



Staying on Rates

In recent years, a slightly higher percentage of Falkirk young people have stayed on to S5 than the Scottish average and the average of our comparator authorities.

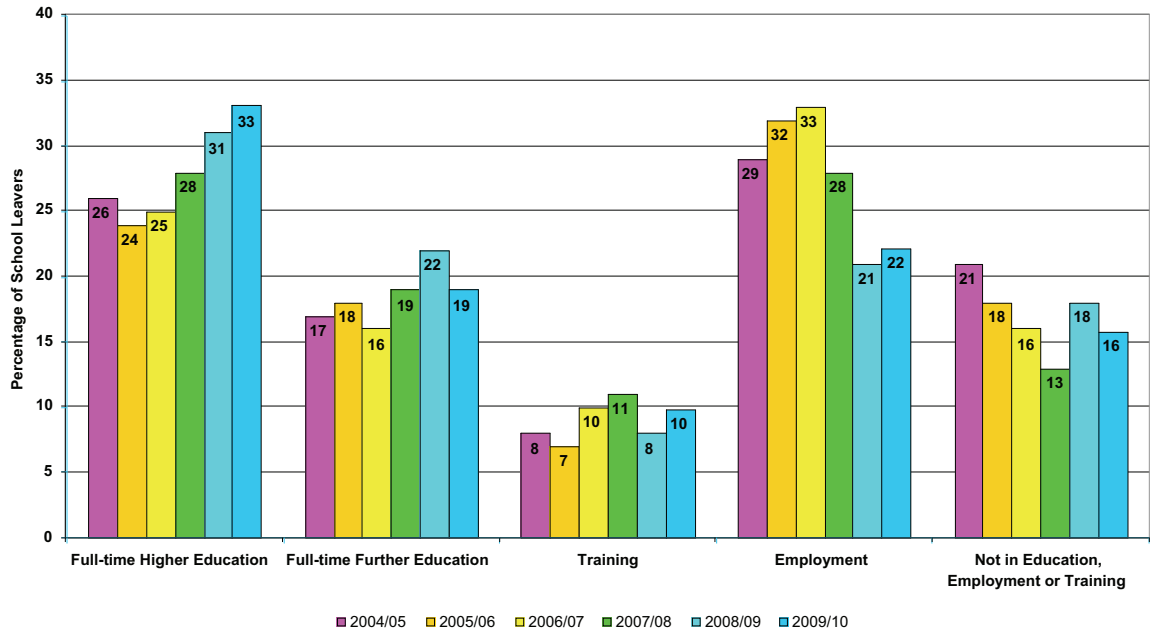
Percentage of S4 pupils staying on to S5 (post Christmas)



Destination of School Leavers

The table below highlights an increasing percentage of young people leaving school and entering higher education. The percentage of young people leaving school and not entering education, employment or training (NEET) has fallen slightly since last year, when we saw the effects of the recession. Schools are continuing to work closely with partners such as Forth Valley College and Skills Development Scotland to ensure that young people have appropriate opportunity to make a positive transition from school.

Destination of Falkirk School Leavers (2004/05 to 2009/10)

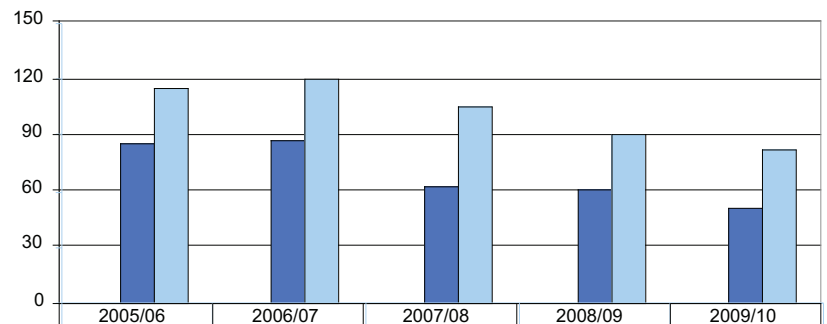


Temporary Exclusions

The total number of temporary exclusions from Falkirk Council schools reduced by 7.5% during 2009/10. The charts below show that the number of temporary exclusions per 1,000 pupils in Falkirk Council schools remains well below the national average.

Temporary Exclusions - Primary Sector

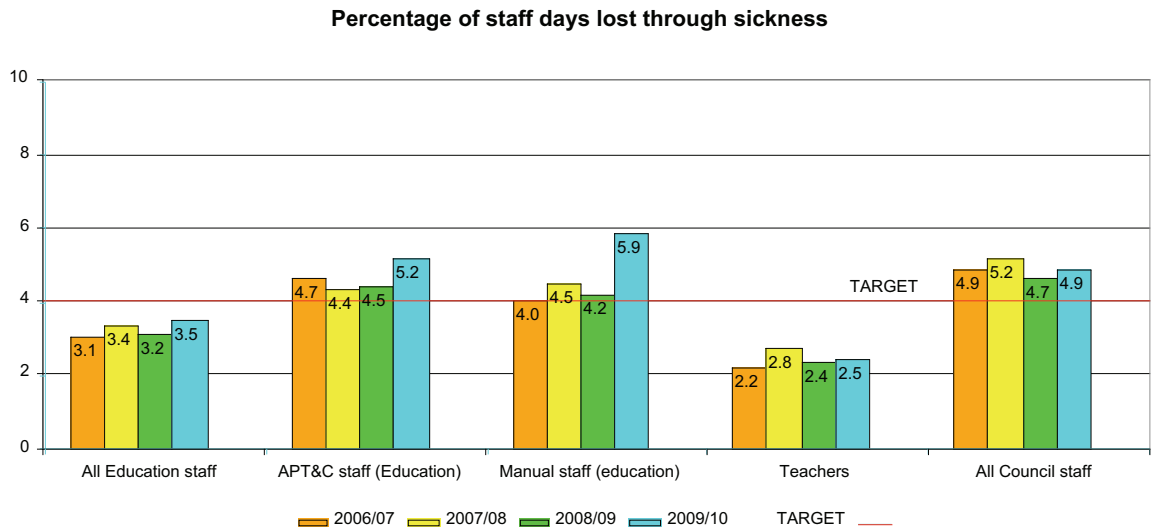
Temporary Exclusions -Secondary Sector



	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Number of exclusions	785	801	576	547	459
Exclusions per 1,000 pupils (Falkirk)	86	87	63	61	51
Exclusions per 1,000 pupils (Scotland)	115	120	106	91	82

Absence - Staff

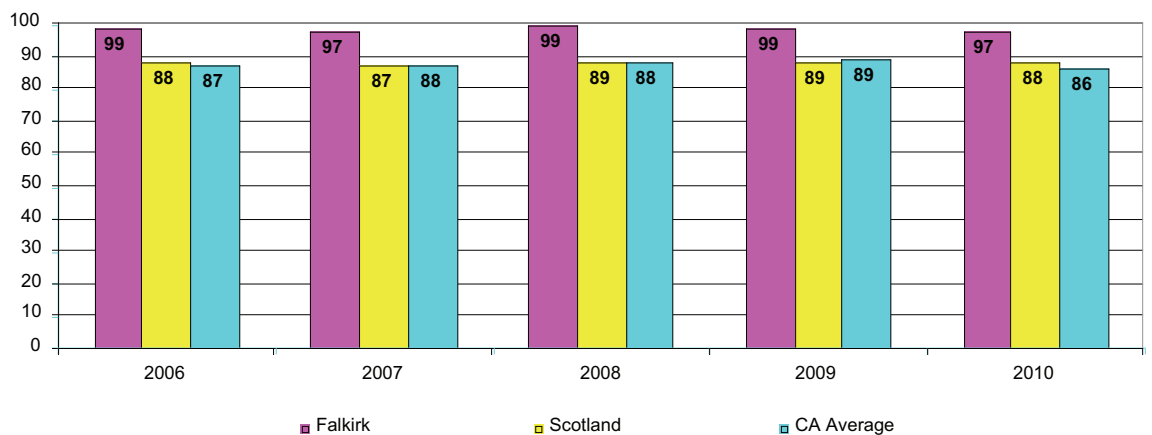
Between April 2009 and March 2010, Education Services staff lost an average 3.5% days due to sickness absence. The Council average for the same period was 4.9%. Variations occur across different job types with teachers traditionally showing the lowest levels of sickness absence. The chart below shows the average absence levels for the different staff categories.



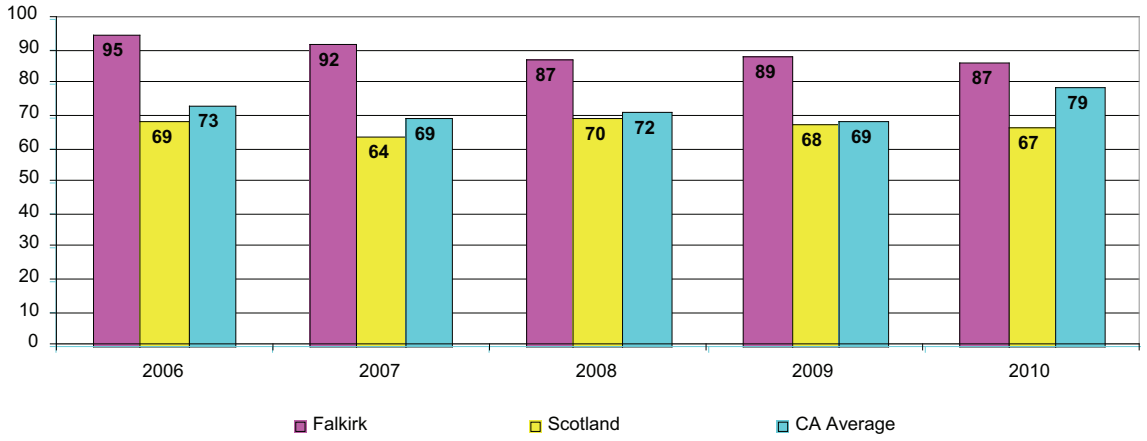
Free School Meal Entitlement

The charts below show that the number of children in Falkirk schools who are entitled to free school meals and are actually taking up that entitlement is consistently higher than both the Scottish average and that of our comparator authorities.

Percentage of primary pupils registered for free school meals and present, taking free school meals.



Percentage of secondary pupils registered for free school meals and present, taking free school meals



local improvement priorities 2011-14

improving quality

raising achievement

Local Improvement Priorities 2011-2014 Overall Summary					
1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>Further raising levels of achievement and attainment among young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Curriculum for Excellence ■ Effective Learning and Teaching ■ Literacy ■ Numeracy ■ Health and Wellbeing ■ Senior Phase ■ Wider Achievement ■ Personal Support ■ Assessment/Reporting ■ GLOW ■ Attendance 	<p>Further developing a thriving, sustainable and vibrant economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ My Future's in Falkirk ■ Improving School Leaver Destinations ■ More Choices, More Chances/16+ Learning Choices 	<p>Continuing to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our citizens and communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Behaviour Improvement/Restorative Approaches ■ Getting it Right for Every Child - Integrated Children's Services ■ Child Protection 	<p>Increasing our efforts to tackle disadvantage and discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Looked After Children ■ Early Years Framework 	<p>Enhancing and sustaining an environment in which people want to live, work and visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pupil Participation ■ Parental Participation ■ Leadership Development 	<p>Service Management Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scottish Government Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Primary (P1-P3) Class Sizes ■ Maintaining Teacher Numbers ■ Property Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Early Years Amalgamations ■ New RC Primary School (Antonshill) ■ Capital Programme 2011/12 - 2013/14 ■ Demographic Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Early Years/Primary Capacity Review ■ Admission and Reserved Places Policy Review ■ Workforce Planning Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teacher, Probationer and Other School Staffing Needs ■ ICT Infrastructure Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Broadband/SEEMIS Development ■ Financial Governance and Risk Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2011/12 Budget Planning ■ Gaelic Strategy ■ Quality Improvement Framework (VSE)

Summary of responses received from Larbert and Grangemouth clusters.

Teaching and support staff

Sector	Number of Responses Possible	Number of Responses Received	Percentage Response
Early Years	57	62*	N/A
Primary Schools	255	163	64%
Secondary Schools	307	98	32%
Special/Day Units	102	23	23%
TOTALS	770	346	45%

*Some primary staff answered as Early Years (unknown quantity)

Parents

Sector	Number of Responses Possible	Number of Responses Received	Percentage Response
Early Years	273	78	29%
Primary Schools	3116	936	30%
Secondary Schools	2540	421	17%
ASL/Day Units	156	30	19%
TOTALS	6085	1465	24%

Pupils - Secondary and Primary (P4-P7)

Sector	Number of Responses Possible	Number of Responses Received	Percentage Response
Primary Schools	1893	1357	72%
Secondary Schools	2672	1384	52%
TOTALS	4565	2741	60%

Headteachers and Managers

Sector	Number of Responses Possible	Number of Responses Received	Percentage Response
Early Years	10	4	40%
Primary Schools	49	32	65%
Secondary Schools	8	4	50%
Special/Day Units	5	2	40%
TOTALS	72	42	58%

If you need this leaflet in large print, community languages, Braille, or audio tape
contact Diane Cherry (01324) 50660
e-mail: diane.cherry@falkirk.gov.uk

هذه الوثيقة متاحة عند الطلب
في اللغات الأخرى في المجتمع.

此文件設有其他
語文，請向有關
方面索取。

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ
ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪੁੱਛਣ ਤੇ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ।

یہ دستاویز دوسری کمیونٹی زبانوں میں مطالبے پر دستیاب ہے۔



Falkirk Council
Education Services



June 2011