

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 9 SEPTEMBER 2014
Author: JOINT ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper reports on Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) attainment within Falkirk Council secondary schools in 2014. Additional information about the post-appeal performance over the five years from 2009 to 2013 is given as well as the comparison with the national average and that of our comparator authorities.
- 1.2 The current comparator authorities for Falkirk Council are Angus, Clackmannanshire, Fife, Moray and South Lanarkshire Councils.

2 CHANGES TO NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- 2.1 This year saw Scottish schools present S4 pupils for the first time in the new National Qualifications as part of the Curriculum for Excellence. The different types of qualifications and the removal of Standard Grade, taken together with the different approaches to delivery mean that attainment patterns across SCQF levels will vary from those seen in previous years and will make direct comparisons of S4 attainment between 2013 and 2014 inappropriate. This year's data will provide a baseline for future benchmarking.
- 2.2 Early indications suggest that overall in Falkirk, **82.4%** of candidates entered for National 5 qualifications attained grade A-C, which compares favourably with the Scottish average of **81.1%**. This early analysis also showed that **95.7%** of candidates entered for National 4 qualifications achieved a pass, compared with the Scottish average of **93.0%**.
- 2.3 Education officers, along with headteachers, are now reviewing the detailed results for our secondary schools in order to make a fuller analysis of the outcomes of the 2014 exam diet.

3. SQA ATTAINMENT IN S5 AND S6

- 3.1 S5 and S6 pupils followed the same syllabus as previous years and therefore we can compare their attainment with previous years. The average post-appeal performance of Falkirk Council's secondary schools over the last five years is given below together with the average figures for our comparator authorities and for Scotland. SQA performance for 2014 is an estimate produced from the schools' management information systems. Figures will be confirmed by the Scottish Government later in the session, when national and comparator authority figures will also be available.

The figures are quoted as a percentage of the appropriate S4 roll.

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
By the end of S5:							
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	Falkirk	39	44	44	47	49	50
	Scotland	41	43	45	47	49	
	CAs	40	42	43	46	47	
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	Falkirk	21	25	24	27	27	29
	Scotland	23	25	26	27	29	
	CAs	21	23	24	25	26	
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	Falkirk	8	12	9	13	13	14
	Scotland	11	11	12	13	14	
	CAs	9	9	10	11	12	
By the end of S6:							
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	Falkirk	30	31	35	35	38	38
	Scotland	31	33	35	37	38	
	CAs	29	32	33	35	36	
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	Falkirk	17	20	24	23	26	26
	Scotland	21	22	24	26	27	
	CAs	18	21	21	23	24	
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) or better	Falkirk	11	13	16	14	17	16
	Scotland	14	15	16	16	17	
	CAs	13	15	15	16	16	

Note: 2008-2013 figures provided by the Scottish Government; 2014 figures provided by schools' management information systems (SEEMIS).

4. CHANGE TO APPEALS PROCESS

- 4.1 2014 sees the SQA's new Results Service replace the Appeals Service for all National Courses where an exam or coursework contributes to the candidate's final grade. The new Results Service will consist of an 'Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service' which operates before the exam results are sent out, and a 'Post Results Service' which will run after the candidates have received their certificates. This will consist of a clerical check and/or a marking review of the exam paper, if required by the school.
- 4.2 It is expected that these changes to the appeals process will result in fewer changes to candidates' awards, and therefore post-appeal changes to school and authority level performance figures are less likely.

5. ATTAINMENT BY THE END OF S5 AND S6

The table below gives a brief analysis of how the 2014 S5 and S6 results compare with previous years.

	Comparison with last year	Comparison with 5 years ago	Comment
1 or more Highers by end of S5	1% higher than last year	11% higher	Highest recorded performance
3 or more Highers by end of S5	2% higher than last year	8% higher	Highest recorded performance
5 or more Highers by end of S5	1% higher than last year	6% higher	Highest recorded performance
3 or more Highers by end of S6	Equal to last year	8% higher	Highest recorded performance
5 or more Highers by end of S6	Equal to last year	9% higher	Equals the highest recorded performance
1 or more Advanced Higher by end of S6	1% lower than last year	5% higher	2nd highest recorded performance

6. FUTURE ACTION

- 6.1 School staff are trained in the detailed analysis of SQA examination results. This helps them to analyse performance in each subject area, identify areas of weakness and take appropriate action to improve attainment.
- 6.2 Authority officers hold a review meeting with each secondary school on an annual basis at which there is detailed discussion of attainment at whole school and subject level. Improvements are recognised and strategies for further improvement are discussed. The attainment and achievements of vulnerable groups such as looked after children and pupils at risk of underperforming are also scrutinised.
- 6.3 Within each secondary school, senior managers and principal teachers also analyse examination results and discuss strategies for improvement. This is then incorporated into school improvement planning.
- 6.4 Principal teachers also meet together on a subject basis within Curriculum Management Groups to identify strategies for improvement.
- 6.5 A focus on effective learning and teaching as part of Curriculum for Excellence is having a positive impact and pupils' awareness of their progress and is helping them to take increased responsibility for their own learning.
- 6.6 Increasing use is being made of attainment data to set targets with pupils for individual subjects. Progress towards these targets is then monitored by principal teachers, pastoral staff and senior management within secondary schools. Mentoring schemes are also in place to provide targeted and proportionate support to pupils as required.
- 6.7 The Secondary School Improvement Partnership (SSIP) takes the opportunity to consider the examination results at school and authority level, and will continue to share expertise and agree strategies to drive forward key priorities and improvements

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 The Education Executive is asked to note the SQA attainment of our schools and the strategies outlined to further improve performance.

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Joint Acting Director of Education

Date: 28 August 2014

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL