

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 8 SEPTEMBER 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) attainment within Falkirk Council secondary schools in 2015. Additional information about the post-Results Service performance in 2014 is given in order to provide a comparison.
- 1.2 At this stage the information comes solely from the SEEMIS management information system. This reports on SQA performance and does not take account of non-SQA accredited courses. The information given is based on grades A to C passes at National 5 and Higher. National 3 and 4 passes are ungraded.
- 1.3 Figures will be updated by the Scottish Government later in the session via their Insight information system to include awards at A to D, as well as additional non-SQA attainment awards. This will also include national and comparator authority figures for benchmarking purposes. The updated data will be provided in a later report.
- 1.4 A report was considered at Scrutiny Committee on 20 August 2015 which provided information on historic attainment trends in Falkirk Council. This report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 SQA Attainment in S4

This was the second year in which Scottish schools presented S4 pupils in 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 differ from those seen up to and including 2013. This makes direct comparison of S4 attainment in 2014 onwards with attainment in previous years inappropriate and explains why data only for 2014 onwards are shown in this report.

Early information indicates that overall in Falkirk Council schools:

- 39% of candidates in S4 gained five or more passes at grades A-C at National 5, which compares very favourably with the 2014 figure of 33%.
- 71% of candidates in S4 gained five or more passes at National 4 or better, compared to 79% in 2014.
- 75% of candidates in S4 gained five or more passes at National 3 or better, compared to 86% in 2014.

For those pupils presented for National 5 but failing to achieve an overall award, their schools are likely to present additional evidence that will lead to an award at National 4. The figures above for 2014 take account of such additional accreditation which can take place from August to April of the following year. This explains the lower figures for Nationals 3 and 4 for 2015 compared to those for 2014. It is therefore expected that the 2015 figures for National 3 *or better*, and National 4 *or better* will show an improvement on the above figures when reported in August 2016.

All figures for 2015 will also be subject to amendment when Results Service data are taken into account in due course. Amended figures will be published at a later date.

2.2 **SQA Attainment in S5 and S6**

Session 2014-15 marked the introduction of new SQA Higher qualifications in most subjects, designed to build on learning in S4 in National Qualifications. In 2015, and for one academic session only, the SQA allowed schools to choose to present in either the 'traditional' or new Highers. Subsequently, Falkirk Council schools adopted the new Highers in most subjects, with a small number of departments opting to retain traditional Higher presentation for one further year.

Unlike the move from Standard Grade to National Qualifications, the adoption of new Highers does not militate against comparison with performance in Higher in the previous year, for the following reasons:

- (i) The Higher is regarded by the SQA as the 'Gold Standard', i.e. the fixed standard with which all other levels of qualification should articulate. The standard for Higher, therefore, remains unchanged from previous years.
- (ii) The new Higher is based on the same Curriculum for Excellence principles as the new National Qualifications and is specifically designed to build on them, in the same way that the 'traditional' Highers built on Standard Grade courses.

For the sake of comparison, the tables below shows SEEMIS-generated data for 2014-5 along with data for 2013-14 (the first year of New National Qualifications).

Initial data relating to attainment in 2014-5 by the end of S5 show Falkirk Council secondary schools performing as shown below. All figures for 2015 are subject to amendment post-Results Service. Amended figures will be published in due course.

2.3 **Attainment by the End of S5**

All figures in the table are quoted as a percentage of the S4 roll who have achieved that number of Higher passes or better.

By the end of S5:

	2014	2015
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	50	52
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	29	30
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	14	14

Attainment in 1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better by the end of S5 is 2% higher than last year's post-Results Service figure.

Attainment in 3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better by the end of S5 is 1% higher than last year's post-Results Service figure.

Attainment in 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better by the end of S5 remains the same as last year's post-Results Service figure.

2.4 **Attainment by the End of S6**

By the end of S6:

	2014	2015
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	38	41
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	26	28
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) or better	16	17

Again, all figures are quoted as a percentage of the S4 roll.

Attainment in 3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better by the end of S6 is 3% higher than the post-Results Service figure for 2014.

Attainment in 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better by the end of S6 is 2% higher than the post-Results Service figure for 2014.

Attainment in 1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) by the end of S6 is 1% higher than the post-Results Service figure for 2014.

2.5 **Results Service**

In 2014 the SQA's Results Service replaced the Appeals Service for all National Courses where an exam or coursework contributes to the candidate's final grade. As was the case in 2014, the Results Service is again likely to result in very few changes to candidates' awards compared to the previous Appeals Procedure and will, therefore, have minimal impact on the attainment data.

2.6 **Action within the Authority**

Education officers, along with head teachers, are now reviewing the detailed results for the Council's secondary schools in order to make a fuller analysis of the outcomes of the 2015 exam diet.

School staff are trained in the detailed analysis of SQA examination results. Each school's analysis is supported by a member of the Senior Management Team who has particular expertise in analysing attainment data at whole-school level and who is well-placed to inform the management and faculties in their school of strengths and areas for development in attainment.

Within each secondary school, faculty heads also analyse examination results and agree strategies for improvement with their departmental staff. This is then incorporated into school and faculty improvement planning.

Faculty heads from across the authority meet together within Curriculum Management Groups (CMGs) to identify strategies for improvement. Since each faculty may cover a number of subject areas (e.g. the Science faculty will have responsibility for biology, chemistry and physics) Subject Development Groups (SDGs) have also been established to promote improvement in individual subjects. Development work across all CMGs and SDGs is co-ordinated by a Curriculum Support Officer with responsibility for secondary education.

Falkirk Council has identified a number of teachers to become SQA Nominees. These teachers support the SQA's internal assessment procedures for National Qualifications. Their expertise and knowledge of the National Qualifications courses and associated standards is shared with the relevant CMGs and SDGs.

Authority officers will hold a review meeting in each secondary school early in the current academic session. This will comprise detailed discussion of attainment at whole school and subject level. Improvements in attainment will be acknowledged and strategies for further improvement agreed for schools to incorporate into their school and faculty improvement plans. The attainment and achievements of vulnerable groups such as looked after children and pupils otherwise at risk of underperforming will also be scrutinised.

These meetings will be supplemented by a further meeting with each school's management in March 2016, following the publication on Insight of updated attainment data (i.e. for 2015 Leavers). These meetings will also review progress on the school's Improvement Plan.

A focus by schools and the Service on effective learning and teaching, as part of Curriculum for Excellence, is having a positive impact on pupils' awareness of their progress and is helping them to take increased responsibility for their own learning.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members of Education Executive;

- 3.1 note the SQA attainment of Falkirk Council secondary schools and the strategies outlined to further improve performance; and**
- 3.2 request the Director of Children's Services to provide a further report in 2016 on attainment and achievement in Falkirk secondary schools, based upon Insight data.**

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Director of Children's Services

Date: 5 August 2015

Contact Officer: Tony Bragg, Team Manager (Performance Management), ext 6624.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF SQA ATTAINMENT WITHIN FALKIRK
SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2012-14**
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 20th AUGUST 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following the Education Services report to the Performance Panel on the 26th March 2015, the Scrutiny Committee has requested an overview and analysis of SQA attainment in Falkirk schools over time.
- 1.2 The overview and analysis contained in this report is intended to inform and support Elected Members in their scrutiny of school attainment through examination of trend data across a range of attainment measures.
- 1.3 The report also examines how our secondary schools are performing in relation to similar schools in other authorities.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report considers the trends for Falkirk Council over a three year period (2012-14) in overall attainment by the end of S6, in certain key national measures.
- 2.2 The table in **Appendix 1** shows trends over 2012-14 in SQA¹ attainment at Higher level and at other levels in the accreditation framework.
- 2.3 These figures give us a picture of year-on-year variation for the Authority. There has been improvements over time in eight of the ten selected measures. There will be greater variation on a year to year basis for individual schools than for the whole authority, and an expected variation in performance between schools.
- 2.4 In any given year, and for any particular measure there will be three main factors affecting school level performance:
 - The effectiveness of the school itself (including leadership, quality of learning and teaching, and quality of support for individual pupils).
 - The socio-economic profile of the school's catchment area (including its levels of relative deprivation).
 - The relative ability of a particular group of pupils in any given year (year-on-year variations will be more apparent at school level than authority level, due to the smaller numbers involved).

¹ Scottish Qualifications Authority

- 2.5 It is important when making comparisons between schools to consider each school's socio-economic context. It is not appropriate to compare the raw attainment figures of different schools without knowing more about them.
- 2.6 One way of taking this context into account is to look at the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for the schools concerned. With reference to this measure, Falkirk High School and Grangemouth High School serve the most deprived areas within Falkirk Council area. Larbert High School serves the least deprived areas (see **Appendix 2**).
- 2.7 A more valid way of comparing a school's performance is to compare it's results to schools from across Scotland with similar characteristics.
- 2.8 **Appendix 3** gives a three year picture of performance by the end of S6 for individual Falkirk schools, relative to comparable groups of schools. It does this for Higher, National 5, and for level 3 English and Mathematics. The group of schools, for example, that Falkirk High School is compared to is a different group to that for Denny High School.
- 2.9 This appendix indicates whether each school is performing *in line with*, *better than*, or *less well* than its comparator group of schools with similar characteristics.
- 2.10 To seek greater consistency in performance between schools then this should be interpreted in terms of:
- a school's performance improving over time and/or
 - a school comparing favourably to other schools that have similar socio-economic characteristics.
- 2.11 Within that interpretation, very good performance in SQA attainment could be evidenced by a school consistently performing better than comparable schools in a range of key measures.
- 2.12 The SQA performance of Falkirk secondary schools could be predominantly described as 'improving' as evidenced in **Appendix 1**. However when **Appendix 3** is examined it is clear that for the most part Falkirk's schools are performing *in line with* schools with similar characteristics across the range of performance measures (65%). Comparatively few measures are *better than* (24%) and there are a number of measures for which Falkirk schools are performing *less well* than other Scottish schools. (**Appendix 3** looks at 6 measures over three years for 8 schools. Of these 144 measures: 34 were *better than*; 94 were *in line with*; and 16 were *less well*.)
- 2.13 There is therefore room for significant improvement in attainment levels across the authority as a whole.
- 2.14 All Falkirk secondary schools have refined their systems for tracking pupil progress in the senior phase (S4-6). This has allowed for more targeted support and intervention for pupils where it is required, and for more accurate target setting by schools in relation to recognised performance measures.
- 2.15 Schools are generally using data well to drive performance and address areas for improvement at whole school or departmental level. The analysis of data is further strengthened through support and challenge arrangements involving central officers, and in some instances, peer review.

- 2.16 Through the implementation of better systems of tracking pupil progress; more robust support and challenge arrangements involving central officers; and on-going professional development Children's Services will support Falkirk's schools to drive up attainment levels.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members of Scrutiny Committee:

- 3.1 note the information contained within this report, particularly with reference to appendices 1 and 3.**
- 3.2 request the Director of Children's Services to provide a further update on 2015 attainment to the Education Executive and the Scrutiny Committee when this information is available.**
- 3.3 request that further reports should provide the basis for regular performance reporting on attainment and achievement, focusing on overall attainment, progress of lower attaining pupils, and attainment relative to socio-economic deprivation.**

Director of Children's Services

Date: 30 July 2015

Contact Officer: Alex Black, Education Service Manager, ext. 6629

Appendix 1

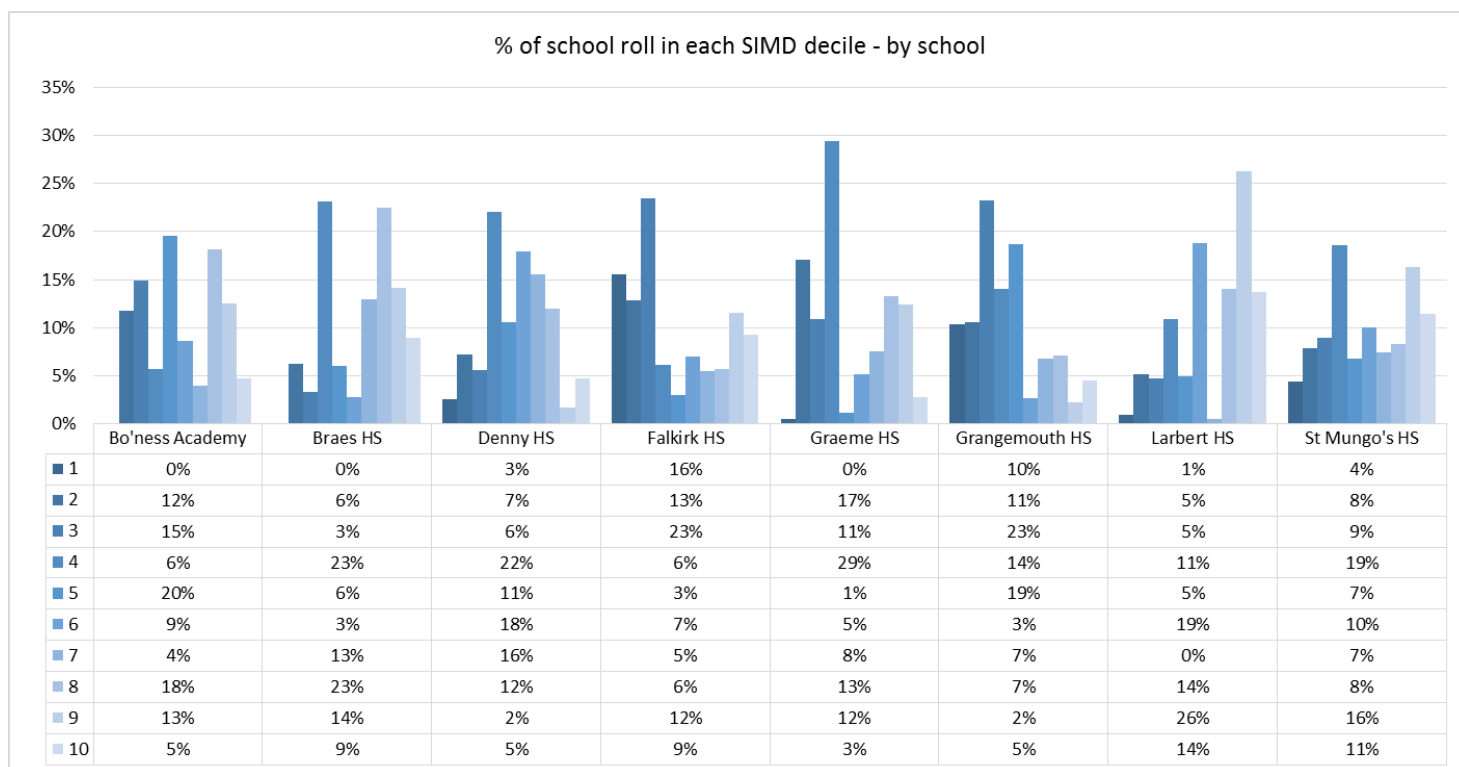
Attainment by the end of S6 (shown as percentage of original S4 roll)²

	2012	2013	2014
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better	24	27	28
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better	37	41	40
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better	53	55	57
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better	50	53	54
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better	73	75	78
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better	81	82	85
Literacy at SCQF Level 5 or better	67	68	70
Numeracy at SCQF Level 5 or better	57	58	63
Literacy at SCQF Level 4 or better	89	90	89
Numeracy at SCQF Level 4 or better	79	79	81

² Level 6 on the SCQF (Scottish Certification & Qualifications Framework) equates to Higher level. Level 5 equates to Credit level or Intermediate 2 in the old qualifications, and National 5 in the new qualifications. Level 4 is equivalent to General level or Intermediate 1 in the old qualifications, and National 4 in the new qualifications. Level 3 is equivalent to the old Foundation at Standard Grade, Access 3, or the new National 3. Later in the report, Level 7 corresponds to the Advanced Higher.

Appendix 2

The chart below shows the percentage of pupils in each SIMD decile in each secondary school



Additional notes to Appendix 2:

- SIMD = Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
- The index is calculated using factors such as income, employment and educational levels within an area
- This index divides the country into 10 equal parts (or deciles) with decile 1 representing the most deprived areas of Scotland, and decile 10 representing the least deprived areas
- The profiles of Bo'ness Academy, Braes High School, Denny High School and St Mungo's RCHS are unremarkable, in that the pupils in those schools live in a spread across the deciles
- Falkirk High School has the greatest percentage of pupils living in the more deprived deciles (1-3) at 50%
- Grangemouth also has a significant percentage of its pupils living in the more deprived areas (44%), but also has less of its pupils than Falkirk High School living in the least deprived areas (deciles 8-10)
- Graeme High School has a skewed distribution with almost a third of its pupils living in areas within decile 4 (slightly more deprived than the national average).
- Larbert High school serves the least deprived areas in Falkirk with 54% of its pupils living in areas within deciles 8-10

Appendix 3³

Bo'ness Academy	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Bo'ness Academy mostly performs in the mid 50% range of comparable schools. S6 in 2013 was a less able cohort overall.

Braes High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			




Across a three year period, Braes High School has mostly performed in line with comparable schools, but with a strong performance in some measures in 2013

Denny HS	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Denny High School mostly performs in line with schools that have similar characteristics

Falkirk High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Falkirk High School performed well in 2014, providing more pace and challenge to pupils in S6

³  within the middle 50% range of performance of comparable schools
 within the upper 25% range of performance of comparable schools
 within the lower 25% range of performance of comparable schools

Graeme High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Graeme High School performs well, or in line with comparable schools. The end of S6 performance in 2013 was notably strong

Grangemouth High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Grangemouth High School has a variable attainment profile with some stronger and weaker performances in some years and measures. The school has a staying on rate below the national average, and this will also affect the proportion of the S4 roll achieving awards in S5/6. The S6 cohort in 2013 was a relatively able cohort

Larbert High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

Larbert High School has performed strongly in most measures across the three years cited. It has refined its tracking and monitoring systems, allowing for more focused personal support to pupils where required

St Mungo's High School	2012	2013	2014
1 or more awards at Level 7			
5 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
3 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
1 or more awards at Level 6 or better			
5 or more awards at level 5 or better			
English & Maths at Level 3 or better			

St Mungo's RCHS performs mostly in line with schools that have similar characteristics. A particular focus on the Advanced Higher in S6 has had a positive impact upon attainment in that measure in 2014.