

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It consists of a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower, the top-right a stag's head with antlers, the bottom-left a sailing ship on waves, and the bottom-right a crowned eagle with spread wings. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. A banner at the bottom contains the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 10

SQA Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2018)

Falkirk Council

Title: SQA Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2018)
Meeting: Education Executive
Date: 4 September 2018
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides information on the initial analysis of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) attainment within Falkirk Council secondary schools in 2018.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education Executive is asked to:

- (1) note the SQA attainment of Falkirk Council secondary schools; and**
- (2) agree that a future report will be presented to the Education Executive in the spring of 2019 to take account of updated and additional SQA and other attainment data.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At this stage, information on SQA results comes solely from the SEEMIS management information system and reports on passes in National 3 and 4 courses and A - C passes of graded courses within the National Qualifications framework. SEEMIS reports are limited at this stage solely to SQA performance and do not take account of other non-SQA accredited courses.
- 3.2 By the end of February 2019, the Scottish Government's Insight benchmarking system will take account outcomes for school leavers and will include national and comparator authority figures. The system will also include results from SQA course awards, SQA unit awards, non-SQA courses such as vocational awards, Foundation Apprenticeship qualifications, Higher National Certificates (HNC), Duke of Edinburgh awards etc. In Falkirk, these alternative pathways are becoming increasingly popular with a significant number of pupils and have encouraged many previous S4 and S5 leavers to remain at school longer.

4. Considerations

4.1 SQA Attainment in S4

- This report shows comparisons between performance in National Qualifications in 2017/18 and the previous two years.
- The attainment of pupils in S4 is given in the table below expressed as a percentage of the total S4 roll.

	2016	2017	2018
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better	86%	87%	88%
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better	79%	81%	81%
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 (A-C) or better	38%	38%	41%

- The figures above do not take account of any pupils gaining awards following referral to the SQA's Post Results service (which replaced Appeals on the introduction of Nationals and New Highers).
- The initial results in 2018 create a positive picture: performance has increased by 1% at Level 3; has been maintained at Level 4 and has increased by 3% at Level 5. All 3 of these measures are currently at their highest level to date in Falkirk schools.

4.2. Attainment by the End of S5

Initial data relating to attainment in 2017/18 by the end of S5 is shown in the table below.

- All figures are quoted as a percentage of the original S4 roll who have achieved the relevant number and level of awards (at A-C) by the end of S5.

	2016	2017	2018
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	58%	57%	58%
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	34%	34%	35%
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	15%	15%	14%

- Attainment of 1 or more Highers by the end of S5 has increased by 1% from last year which matches the previously highest figure of 2016.
- Attainment of 3 or more Highers by the end of S5 has also increased by 1% from last year and is now at its highest level to date in Falkirk schools.

- Attainment in 5 or more Highers by the end of S5 has fallen by 1% this year.

4.3 Attainment by the End of S6

- All figures are a percentage of the original S4 roll who have achieved the relevant number and level of awards (at A-C) by the end of S6.

	2016	2017	2018
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	40%	45%	45%
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	29%	31%	31%
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) or better	17%	18%	18%

- The figures in all 3 S6 performance measures have been maintained, consolidating the improvement shown in the previous year. These figures are the highest to date across Falkirk schools.

4.4 Future Changes to National Qualifications

- Under the direction of the Scottish Government, the SQA has made changes to the way in which young people are assessed in National 5 qualifications. The significant change has been the decision to remove mandatory unit assessment from National Qualifications, initially at National 5 level in 2017/18, and in future sessions at Higher and Advanced Higher level. The purpose of this is to reduce the amount of assessment undertaken by young people working towards qualifications
- The removal of units as a mandatory part of the National 5 course has implications for what is known as 'Recognising Positive Achievement' (RPA). Up to this point, a pupil who studied a National 5 course and gained the course units as well as the Added Value Unit at National 4 level, would have gained an automatic National 4 pass in the subject if they failed the final National 5 examination. This arrangement provided a 'safety net' for pupils who failed the National 5 examination in any subject as they were credited with what they had achieved. With the removal of mandatory units, this will no longer happen as a matter of course.
- As an interim measure, schools can continue to present pupils for the units that were formerly part of National 5 courses, as well as the National 5 course award. By also completing the Added Value Unit at N4, this means that a small number of identified candidates could still benefit from the RPA process and gain a National 4 award in the subject should they fail the National 5 examination.

- The Scottish Government has been clear that this should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, we would anticipate that the number of pupils who are presented for units as well as the course award, will be limited in number and be no more than around 10%-15% of any subject cohort.
- The threshold to achieve a Grade D award at National 5 has been extended to include candidates who achieve between 40% and 49%. This reflects the complexity of the external assessment as a consequence of removing the mandatory units. This will be introduced to Higher awards next session and to Advanced Higher the following year.

4.5 Action within the Authority – Senior Phase

- Education officers and head teachers are now reviewing the detailed results in order to make a fuller analysis of the outcomes of the 2018 exam diet.
- School staff are experienced in the detailed analysis of SQA examination results. Each faculty head reports to a member of the senior management team in their school to account for attainment in the subjects for which they are responsible. Together they develop an action plan to improve identified areas, such as teachers' planning, teaching strategies and approaches to assessment.
- Each pupil's progress is tracked by the class teacher in conjunction with a member of the school's pastoral team. Pastoral heads have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils' circumstances – their home background, attendance and other factors that might affect progress – and can advise class teachers regarding these so that realistic attainment targets for each young person can be set.
- Schools increasingly identify groups of pupils at risk of not achieving and provide additional support for them. This can take the form of lunchtime or after-school study support clubs.
- IT is used to support pupils in their study, with teachers increasingly using IT-based resources to motivate pupils. Pupils are also directed towards IT-based resources they can access at home to support their studies. Heriot Watt University's SCHOLAR programme provides online resources and individual tuition which pupils can access in school and at home.
- Faculty heads from across the authority continue to meet as Curriculum Management Groups (CMGs) to identify strategies for improvement across broad areas of the curriculum and within specific subject areas.
- As teachers' experience of teaching National and new Higher courses continues to grow, confidence in identifying the appropriate standard has also grown resulting in more accurate assessment and prediction of performance. Falkirk Council schools' SQA Nominees and Markers are key to supporting shared knowledge of standards.

A number of teachers have taken up roles as SQA Appointees, who lead teams of Nominees from across a number of authorities and who, therefore, have the deeper understanding of SQA standards and knowledge of good practice.

- Authority officers will hold review meetings in each secondary school early in session 2018/19, at which attainment will be the key focus. School managers will account for: (i) the impact of their tracking and monitoring of performance at individual pupil level; (ii) the overall effectiveness of this in informing learning and teaching; and (iii) steps being taken to improve attainment in subjects where there is apparent underperformance. The attainment and achievements of vulnerable groups such as looked after children and those living in areas of relative deprivation will also be looked at in these reviews.

5. Consultation

5.1 None.

6. Implications

Financial

6.1 None.

Resources

6.2 None.

Legal

6.3 None.

Risk

6.4 None.

Equalities

6.5 None.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

6.6 None.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The information provided in this report will be updated for the spring 2019 meeting of the Education Executive when further and more detailed data is available.

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Appendices

None

List of Background Papers

None