

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

Agenda Item 11

SQA Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2022)

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: SQA Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2022)
Meeting: Education, Children and Young People Executive
Date: 13 September 2022
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 2022. By February 2023, Insight data will take account of outcomes for school leavers and will include national and comparator authority figures. These will be reported to Committee in the spring of 2022.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education, Children and Young People 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, Children and Young People Executive in the spring of 2023 to take account of updated and additional SQA and other attainment data.**

3. Climate Change Implications

- 3.1 Having consulted the energy and climate change team, outcomes of this report will have no affect on either the organisational or national climate change targets.

4. Background

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Figures will be updated by the Scottish Government's Insight benchmarking system later in the year and this will include results from SQA unit awards, and SQA and non-SQA vocational courses. It will also include:

- HNCs, which pupils from a number of schools study at Forth Valley College as well as within some schools;
- Foundation Apprenticeships;
- ASDAN – e.g. Certificate of Personal Effectiveness;
- Duke of Edinburgh – e.g. Leadership Certificate but not Bronze, Silver or Gold;
- Open University – Young Applicants in Schools (YASS);
- Prince's Trust – e.g. Personal Development and Employment;
- RUTS – e.g. BikeFix Leadership Award;
- Youth Scotland – e.g. Dynamic Youth Awards; and
- SQA Qualifications such as National Progression Awards e.g., Enterprise and Employability, Leaderships Award, Volunteering Skills, Personal Finance, Internet Safety, Cyber Security. (These are being used by schools as an alternative to National 5 and Higher courses and to supplement National 4 courses, particularly in S5.)

4.3 This year the Scottish Qualifications Authority have reported that, nationally, the total number of entries for Highers decreased in 2022 while the total number of entries for National 5 awards and Advanced Highers increased.

4.4 COVID19

4.4.1 In 2020 and 2021, the COVID19 pandemic caused the SQA exam diet to be cancelled. An alternative certification model was introduced in 2020 and revised in 2021. This was designed to validate and moderate estimated grades to ensure consistency across schools and with results from previous years.

4.4.2 In 2022 SQA exams resumed and for this year's cohort it is the first time they have undertaken formal exams.

5. Considerations

5.1 SQA Attainment in S4

- This report shows comparisons between performance in National Qualifications in 2021/22 and the previous four years.
- The attainment of pupils in S4 is given in the table below expressed as a percentage of the total S4 roll.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 3 or better	88	88	93	92	92
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 4 or better	81	81	88	87	89
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 (A-C) or better	41	44	54	51	48

- In SQA level 3 awards, 2022 performance is in line with last year, and higher than pre-covid years.
- In SQA level 4 awards, 2022 performance is the highest yet for Falkirk schools.
- In SQA level 5 awards, 2022 performance is lower than last year, but higher than pre-covid years.
- This is a positive picture; and has been achieved by schools continuing to support and encourage pupils to attain at higher levels.

5.2 Attainment by the End of S5

- Initial data relating to attainment in 2021/22 by the end of S5 is shown in the table below.
- All figures are a percentage of the roll who have achieved the relevant number and level of awards (at A-C) by the end of S5.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	58	56	61	63	58
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	35	32	41	44	37
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	14	16	19	20	18

- SQA Level 6 awards in 2022 were lower than last year, but higher than pre-Covid years.
- The differential in the Higher qualification statistics for 1 or more awards and 3 or more awards is attributed to the wider range of appropriate qualification pathways on offer to pupils in their senior phase.
- The improvement in the level of qualifications will show through in the second attainment report, which will be presented in February 2023, and will include all qualifications at levels 2-7 on the SCQF Framework including Foundation Apprenticeships, National Progression Awards and HNCs.

5.3 Attainment by the End of S6

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

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	45	45	46	51	50
5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better	31	30	32	38	34
1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) or better	18	16	18	24	21

- SQA Level 6 awards in 2022 were lower than last year, but higher than pre-Covid years.
- SQA Level 7 awards in 2022 were, again lower than last year, but higher than pre-Covid years.
- The differential in the Higher and Advanced Higher qualification statistic is attributed to the wider range of appropriate qualification pathways on offer to pupils in their senior phase. The improvement in the level of qualifications will show through the second attainment report which will be presented in the New Year, and will include all qualifications at levels 2-7 on the SCQF Framework including Foundation Apprenticeships, National Progression Awards and HNCs

5.4 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 2022 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 staff and middle managers 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 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. In many of our schools' pupils can also access 1 to 1 intervention and peer mentoring and support.
- IT is used to support pupils in their study, with teachers 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. In addition, pupils have access to online supported study via the Forth Valley and West Lothian Improvement Collaborative and the national Education Scotland Esgoil offer. In 2022 this included support over the Easter holiday period.

- Faculty heads from across the authority continue to meet to identify strategies for improvement across broad areas of the curriculum and within specific subject areas.
- 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 2022 - 2023, 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;
 - (iii) steps being taken to improve attainment in subjects where there is apparent underperformance; and
 - (iv) the attainment and achievements of groups of interest such as children and young people who are care experienced, those affected by poverty and those with additional or specialist needs, will also be looked at in these reviews.

6. Consultation

6.1 None.

7. Implications

Financial

7.1 None.

Resources

7.2 None.

Legal

7.3 None.

Risk

7.4 None.

Equalities

7.5 None.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

7.6 None.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The information provided in this report will be updated for the spring 2023 meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Executive when further and more detailed data is available.

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Director of Children's Services

Date: 31st August 2022

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Appendices

None

List of Background Papers

None