

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
Report by the Chief Education Officer**

Educational Services: 13th December 2023

Subject: Senior Phase Attainment 2022/23

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To update Members on the performance of West Dunbartonshire schools in Senior Phase Attainment for young people in 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Members are requested to:
- a) Note the contents of this report and the attached appendices;
 - b) Congratulate the pupils, parents and carers, staff in our establishments and our partner providers for their achievements.
 - c) Agree next steps contained in section 4.6 below to improve the consistency of the offer of the Senior Phase across all West Dunbartonshire schools.

3. Background

- 3.1** With the introduction of Insight, the National Senior Phase Benchmarking tool in 2014, emphasis shifted in how a school is judged to be performing. Instead of the previous measures of how many pupils gained a number of passes in examinations at specific levels, a school is now measured according to its performance in key benchmarks. There are both national and local benchmarks. A complete picture of local authority and school performance requires benchmarks to be considered together.
- 3.2** Insight is updated twice a year, in September with results of attainment of young people in both Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) and other awarding bodies, and again in March when it updates all measures with data relating to leaver destinations. For this reason it is not possible to provide a complete picture of performance through the four national measures until after the March update. A further report will be brought to committee once this update is available. At this time, we are able to update on our performance in local measures.
- 3.3** Insight presents information on the achievements of school leavers at their point of exit from school, be that in S4, S5 or S6. Previously, we focussed on the attainment of an individual cohort taken as a whole (S4, S5 or S6). This change is in line with the Curriculum for Excellence approach which sees the

Senior Phase as a single coherent experience leading to a positive destination. Each young person's experience will be different depending on their needs.

- 3.4** Instead of comparing schools with each other or comparing one year group against another, benchmark comparisons are made against 'virtual comparators'. Insight makes these virtual comparisons by selecting real young people from across Scotland that match the characteristics of students in West Dunbartonshire schools or in the local authority as a whole. In the case of school leavers, ten comparable virtual leavers are made for every one of our school leavers from West Dunbartonshire.
- 3.5** Individually, schools will consider their performance in local benchmarks in their work to raise attainment. Themes identified will form the basis of whole school and departmental improvement. This is quality assured through our Local Authority Improvement Framework and through the publication and analysis of school Standards and Quality reports.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** In 2023 we presented 2,320 number of candidates for 10,450 number of qualifications across National 2 – Advanced Higher. 81% of those presentations resulted in a passing grade. This compares with 2,212 candidates for 10,244 qualifications in 2022, 75% resulting in a passing grade.
 - 4.1.1** At National 5, the West Dunbartonshire data shows a maintenance of performance of 80% when compared with 2022. We saw a large increase in the number of presentations (5,175 in 2023, compared with 4,639 in 2022).
 - 4.1.2** At Higher, the West Dunbartonshire data shows an increase in attainment of 1% point when compared with 2022 (78% pass rate in 2023 compared with 77% in 2022). Between 2022 and 2023 the number of presentations marginally increased from 2,539 to 2,596 respectively.
 - 4.1.3** At Advanced Higher, the West Dunbartonshire data shows a decrease in attainment of 3% points when compared with 2022 (69% pass rate in 2023 compared with 72% in 2022). We saw a decrease in the number of presentations (253 in 2023, compared with 313 in 2022).
 - 4.1.4** The performance of each school in relation to the West Dunbartonshire and national average is shown in **figure 1** below. *It should be noted however that percentage pass rates do not convey the number of young people in the cohort being presented for the qualification.*

	CHS	DA	OLSP	SPTA	VOLA	WDC	National
AH	74.29%	85.71%	75.00%	66.25%	54.00%	69.17%	79.82%
H	80.48%	78.38%	84.91%	76.49%	70.39%	78.16%	77.12%
N5	84.63%	79.61%	82.54%	77.77%	74.06%	79.73%	78.75%
N4	99.64%	100.00%	98.87%	71.26%	100.00%	91.40%	87.84%
N3	96.30%	100.00%	94.87%	73.97%	96.72%	85.84%	84.21%

4.2 Insight data

As noted in 3.2 above the data for the four national benchmarks for session 2022-23 is not finalised and published in Insight until March 2024. Therefore data shown below will not include leaver destination data or indeed changes reflected by the Post Results Service offered by the SQA.

In the sections that follow, we have presented data relating to our performance at local authority level. A more detailed analysis of performance of each of our secondary schools is presented in **Appendix 1**.

4.3.1 Local Benchmark 1: Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

Figure 3 below shows the Percentage of S6 Candidates Attaining Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (*Literacy and Numeracy qualifications now include awards for Literacy, English, English as a Second Language, Numeracy and Mathematics*). It shows that at SCQF level 4 young people in WDC are achieving lower levels of attainment than those in our virtual comparator local authority, however at SCQF level 5 young people in WDC are achieving higher levels of attainment than those in our virtual comparator local authority.

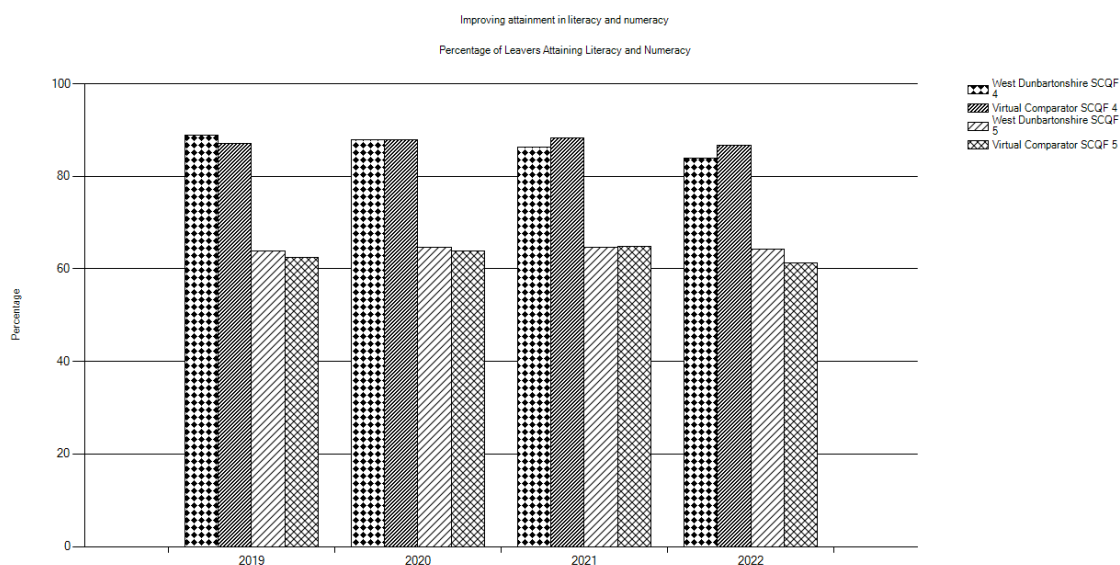


Figure 3 – Performance in Literacy and Numeracy

Local Benchmark 1: Improving attainment in Literacy.

Figure 4 below shows our performance in literacy in isolation from numeracy.

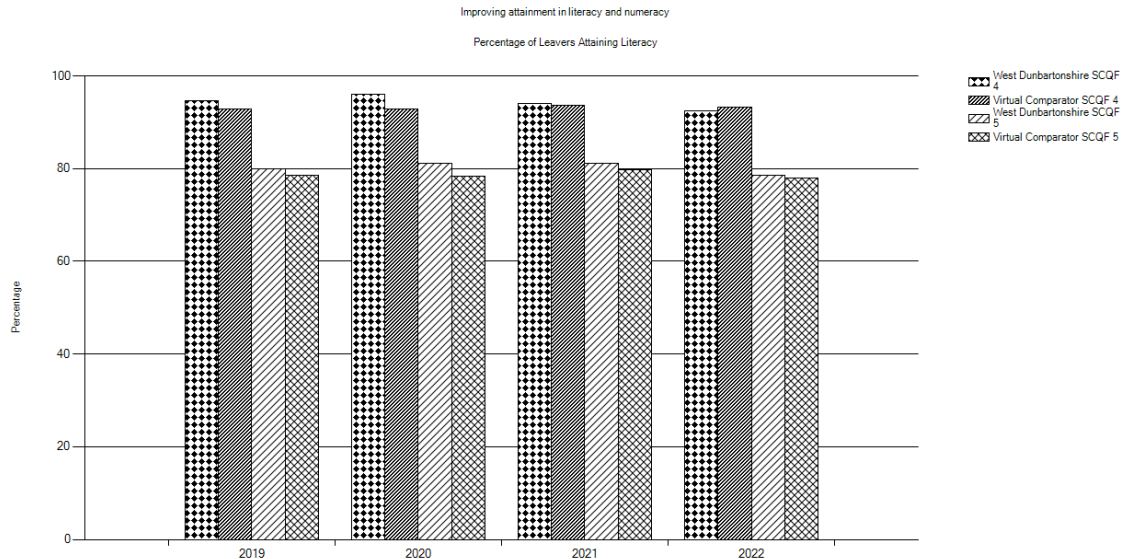


Figure 4 – Performance in Literacy

This shows that we have gradually reduced our performance over time in literacy at SCQF Levels 4 and 5. Compared to our virtual comparator, we are below at SCQF Level 4, but above at SCQF Level 5.

Local Benchmark 1: Improving attainment in Numeracy.

Figure 5 below shows our performance in numeracy in isolation from literacy.

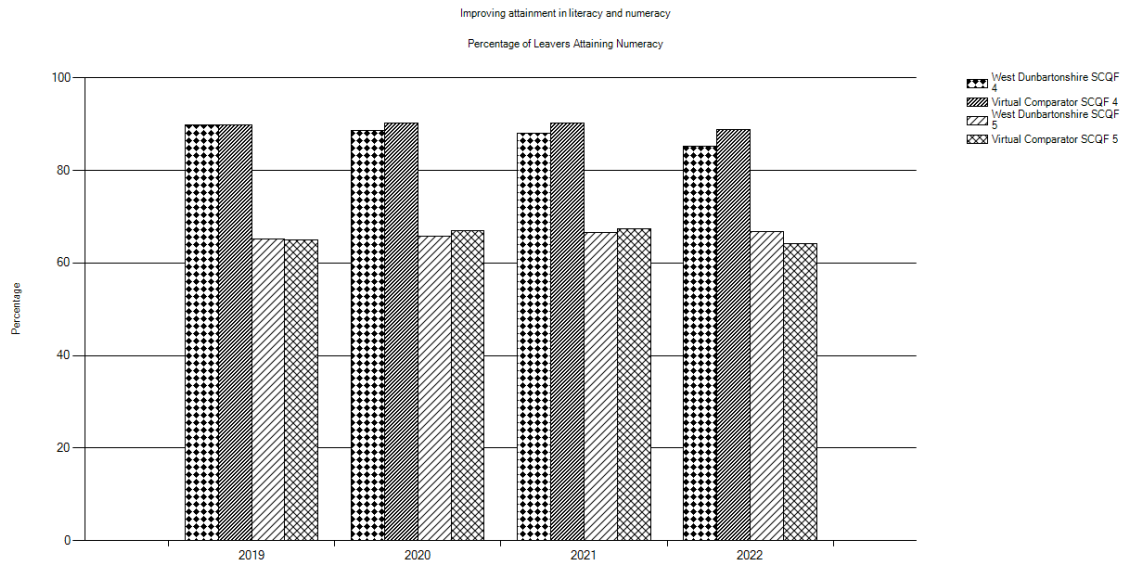


Figure 5 – Performance in Numeracy

This shows that whilst we have gradually reduced our performance over time in numeracy at SCQF Level 4 and we underperform our virtual comparator, we have seen a slight increase at SCQF Level 5 where we outperform our virtual comparator.

When viewed separately, it is clear that attainment in literacy is higher than numeracy, with a higher percentage of our young people leaving with a level 5 award in literacy than numeracy.

4.3.2 Local Benchmark 2: Improving attainment for all

This measure allows us to examine how different ability cohorts are attaining in relation to our virtual cohort and the national cohort. Attainment is measured using a tariff scale developed for Insight. This scale allocates points to each qualification (*courses and units which make up courses are all allocated points*). The number of points awarded is dependent on the level of the course, with more demanding qualifications being awarded more points than less demanding ones. Three cohorts are identified, those in the bottom 20% of tariff points scored, those in the middle 60% of tariff points scored and those in the top 20% of tariff points scored.

Figure 6 below shows the average total tariff points gained by our cohorts of young people.

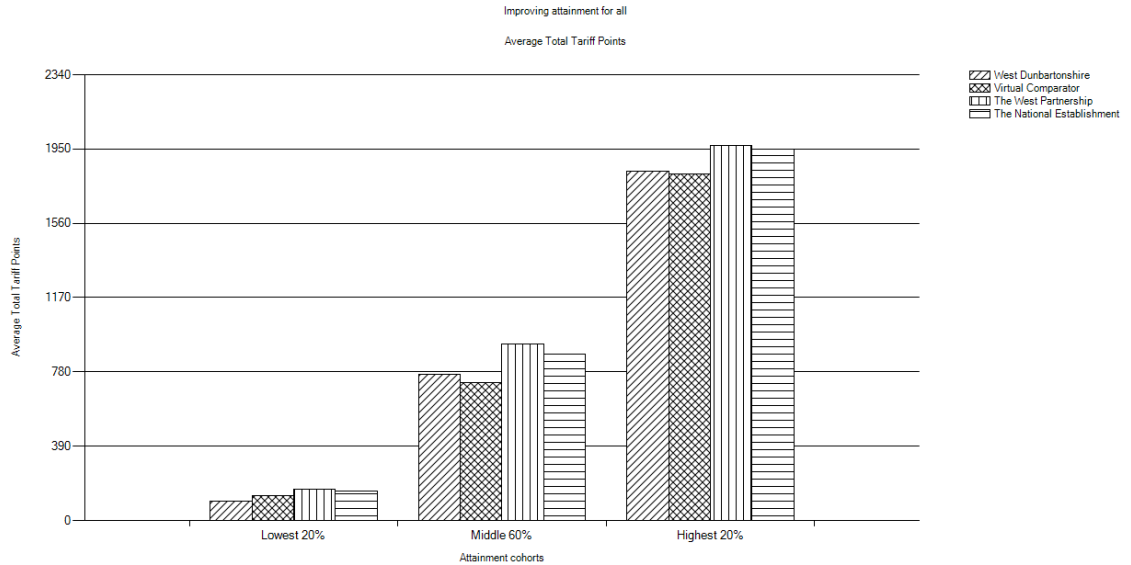


Figure 6 – Average Total Tariff points

This shows that the least attaining young people in WDC are attaining below our virtual comparator, and below the national cohort. Young people in the middle 60% are showing levels of attainment above our comparator but below the national cohort. The highest attaining cohort's tariff score is above those in the virtual comparator but below the national cohort.

When viewed through the lens of deprivation, our performance changes.

Figure 7 below shows the attainment of our young people who reside in the most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile. (Quintile 1 refers to the attainment of young people with postcodes within data zones identified as being in the 20% most deprived in Scotland according to SIMD. Those young people in quintile 5 have postcodes in the 20% least deprived data zones according to SIMD)

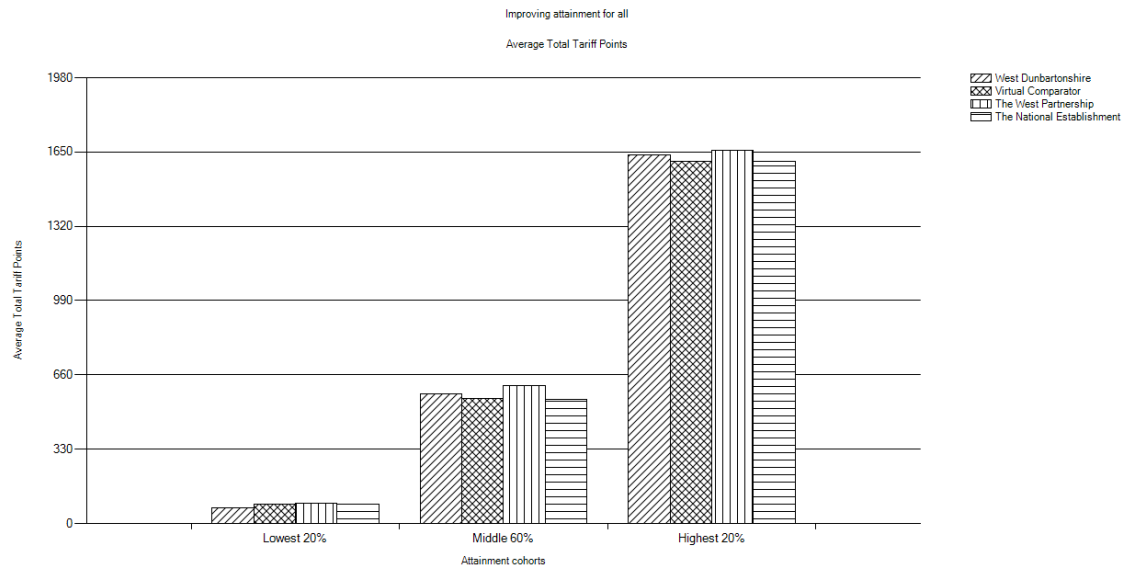


Figure 7 – Average Total Tariff Points for SIMD Deciles 1-2

This shows that from SIMD quintile 1 our lowest 20% attaining young people attainment is below our virtual comparator and the national average, whilst the attainment of both our middle and highest attaining young people in quintile 1 is greater than our virtual comparator and the national average.

4.3.3 Local Benchmark 4: Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers

This measure shows attainment measured using the same tariff scale as referred to in the **Improving attainment for all** measure above. Young people are presented in a decile according to their Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data. Decile 1 refers to the attainment of young people with postcodes within data zones identified as being in the 10% most deprived in Scotland according to SIMD. Those young people in decile 10 have postcodes in the 10% least deprived data zones according to SIMD. The area of each the 'circle' represents the number of young people in each decile. Ideally the attainment line for Scotland would be level through each decile showing that SIMD had no correlating effect on a student's attainment. Unfortunately this is not the case nationally or locally, but further work could be done to define causation.

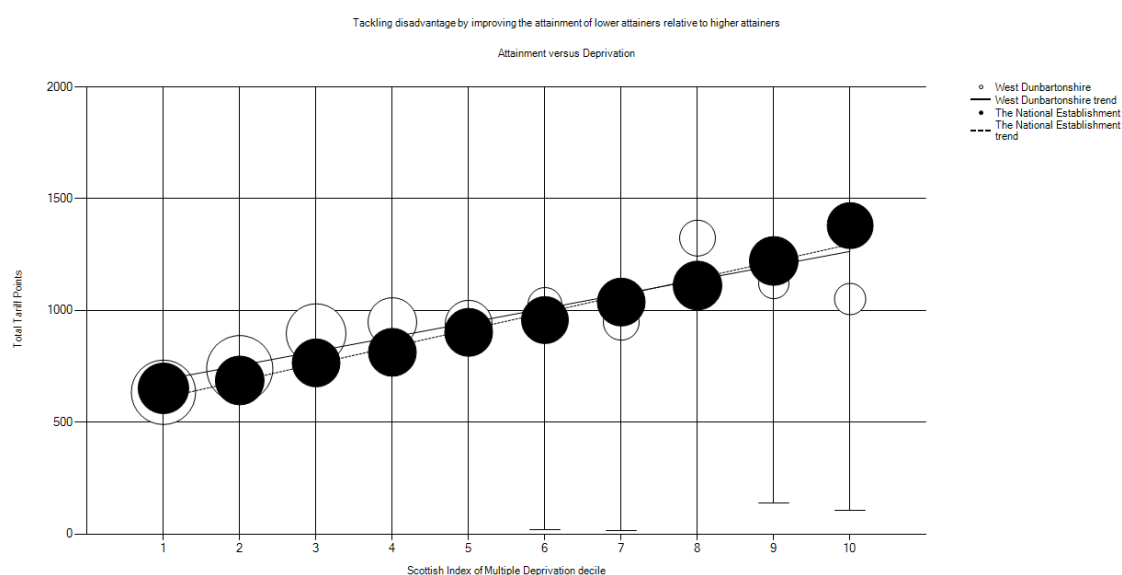


Figure 8 – Attainment versus Deprivation

Figure 8 above shows that the majority of the school pupils in WDC have postcodes in the lower SIMD deciles (*larger 'white circles' in deciles 1-4*) and consequently that few of our pupils reside in upper deciles. The data shows that the young people of WDC in deciles 2,3,4,5,6 and 8 have attainment either equal to or better than our virtual comparator, whilst the attainment of young people that reside in SIMD deciles 1,7,9 and 10 is lower than our virtual comparator.

4.4 The relationship between qualifications and destinations.

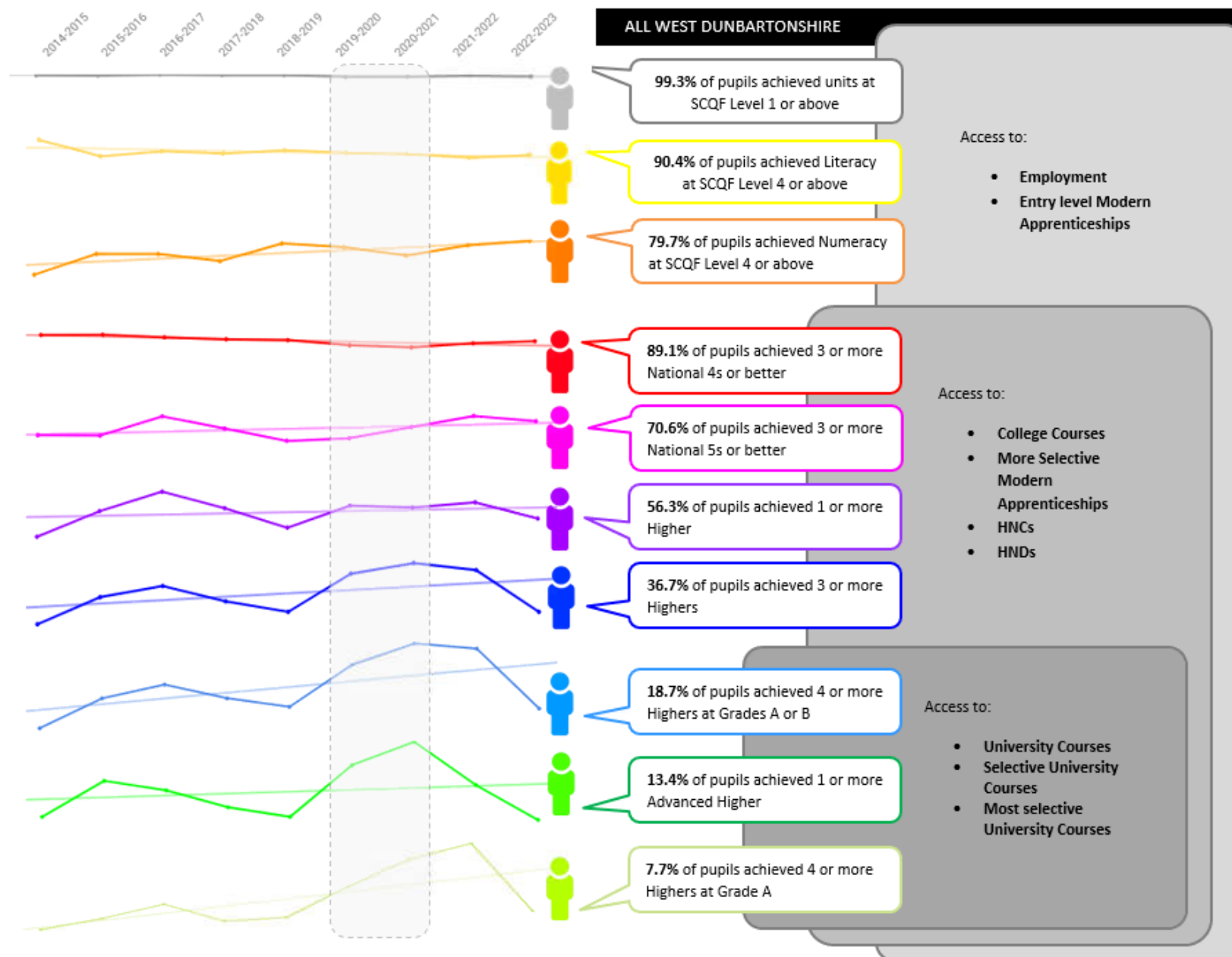
With the establishment of Curriculum for Excellence, young people were entitled to a Senior Phase that continued to develop the four capacities and gain qualifications, and entitled to support into making a transition into a sustained positive destination. With Insight, these two entitlements have been brought much closer together.

Figure 9 on the following page shows the performance over the past 9 years of our school pupils, and the relationship between the levels of qualifications they attain and what destinations this could lead to. Presented as a trend analysis, this helps us view the success of our young people over time, as there are fluctuations in attainment for each cohort of young people

It should be noted that in 2020 and 2021, SQA replaced their normal process with an 'Alternative Certification Model' during the pandemic, which is highlighted in the trend analysis shown in figure 9.

Figure 9 on the following page shows this for the young people of West Dunbartonshire as a whole.

Outcome of the cohort of young people completing the Senior Phase, 2015 – 2023



4.5 Although this report focuses on SQA attainment, young people in WDC have demonstrated success in a wide variety of other qualifications which contribute to wider achievement. Following the updating of Insight in March 2024, a further report will be brought back to committee in June 2024 showing the wider achievements of our young people, and their progress to destinations beyond school.

4.6 Work with schools in session 2022/23 identified areas for improvement, particularly in the area of equity of course provision across establishments. Schools have agreed to:

- improve the balance of the offer across consortium partners, making sure all schools are playing an equitable role in the offer of courses; and
- ensure that greater use of online courses is pursued, especially for young people wishing to take minority subjects that may not prove viable to run in a particular school.

The update report on Senior Phase attainment and destinations which will be brought to committee in June 2024 will also contain an update on course options and uptake by young people reflecting this work.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no personnel issues related to this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications related to this report.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 As members are only being asked to note the contents of this report and the attached appendix a risk assessment is not required.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Educational Services has carried out a screening in equality for this report. The report was found not to be relevant to the specified equality duty because the content provides an update on service delivery rather than stating a change of policy.

9. Strategic Environmental Assessment

9.1

10. Consultation

- 10.1** Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.

11. Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** This report reflects the Council's aspiration to 'increase skills for life and learning' which is a supporting priority to the strategic priority of having 'a strong local economy and improved job opportunities' for 2017 - 2022.

Laura Mason

Chief Education Officer

Date:

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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Insight data for West Dunbartonshire schools.
Background Papers:	None.
Wards Affected:	All council Wards.