

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 9 November 2011

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**Subject: Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Examination Results 2011**

### **1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1** To update Members on the performance of West Dunbartonshire schools in the national Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations of 2011.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1** The Scottish Government publishes annually Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) which give a detailed analysis of the national SQA Examination results. The authority has carried out a further analysis of these Tables and Charts which looks at trends over the past 5 years and makes comparisons with other similar education authorities, national performance, and past performance in West Dunbartonshire. The analysis contains data for years 2007 to 2011.
- 2.2** The 2011 data is pre-appeal while the percentages for all previous years are those after appeals have been granted. The 2010 percentages may show some increase once the appeals, which were submitted in September, are granted or rejected.
- 2.3** The first comparison looks at Council performance in a range of measures over the last 5 years (2007-2011). (**Appendix 1**). The term NCD refers to the National Comparison Decile which broadly divides performance across Scotland into 10 groups or deciles. A performance in the top 10% in Scotland has an NCD of 1; in the lowest 10% the value of the NCD would be 10; the Scottish average would be 5 or 6. Comparator data is also provided which relates to performance in similar councils/schools chosen on a range of socio-economic and deprivation indices. Attainment levels should be considered within this deprivation profile. WDC comparator councils are: Clackmannanshire, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.
- 2.4** The second comparison (**Appendix 2**) looks at: School performance in relation to both comparator schools and national performance across 9 measures, (SCQF levels are shown in **Appendix 5**). Results for St Peter the Apostle High School in 2011 are compared with the combined results for St Andrew's and St Columba's High Schools in previous years (2007-09).
- 2.5** Thirdly, overall subject strengths/underperformance are shown (**Appendix 3**). This indicates those subjects in which performance is significantly better or worse when compared to average scores in other subjects taken in at least the last 3 years.

- 2.6** Fourthly, subject strengths/underperformance are shown by school (**Appendix 4**). Again, performance is compared to average scores in other subjects taken. It is significant if performance is above/below this average in at least the last 3 years.
- 2.7** The 2009 HMle report into the education functions of West Dunbartonshire Council noted that 'Attainment has risen across primary and secondary schools, particularly amongst young people with low levels of attainment and those living in the most deprived areas of the authority'. However the report also stated that 'much needs to be done in raising the attainment of middle and higher attaining young people'. There was evidence that there had been 'improvements in attainment by the end of S4, S5 and S6 over the last few years on almost all measures, though some of the gains were small'.
- 2.8** This report attempts to show where the gains have been made and outlines both the strengths and areas for improvement.
- 2.9** This year separate SQA results meetings have taken place between school management teams and the Directorate team, Quality Manager and relevant Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs). These meetings, chaired by the Executive Director, focused on specific school issues and resulted in agreement on an agenda for improvement in each establishment. A summary of the action plan for each school will be presented to the January 2012 meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.
- 2.10** A report detailing the strategies employed to raise attainment in secondary schools across West Dunbartonshire was presented to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in January 2010. Among the strategies employed centrally which impact on attainment in S4-S6 are:
- a range of maximising attendance measures;
  - a range of strategies which have successfully reduced temporary exclusions over recent years;
  - our More Choices, More Chances (MCMC) programme;
  - effective deployment of Pupil and Family Support Workers to support pupils at risk of underachieving or of failing to attend for examinations;
  - detailed analysis of SQA results by consultant Stuart Jardine;
  - meetings of subject principal teachers to discuss attainment issues;
  - extra meetings of principal teachers during examination leave to share practice and shape improvements;
  - development work on improving learning, teaching, assessment and moderation undertaken by Principal Teachers of Mathematics from all five secondary schools as a pilot programme with a view to running similar programmes in all subject areas in the future;
  - SQA results meetings with all 5 schools (see 2.9 above);
  - CPD delivered by Quality Improvement Officer on SQA results analysis for Principal Teachers;
  - in service training packages produced and delivered to provide consistent messages to all staff on improving teaching, learning and attainment;
  - targeted support and challenge by Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) for underperforming subjects;
  - in-depth analysis of school departmental results by QIO, identifying action points for improvement plans

- supported study and Easter revision programmes;
- a range of strategies for improving the quality of learning and teaching, especially through Cooperative Learning;
- involvement of staff in national developments in assessment and qualifications.

**2.11** The latest high level strategy for Raising Attainment in West Dunbartonshire secondary schools was presented to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee in September 2011. At that meeting, it was agreed that Raising Attainment should become a standing item on the committee's agenda.

### **3 Main Issues: SQA Examination Diet 2011**

**3.1** In the five year trends (**Appendix 1**) taking 2007 as the baseline, the Council has improved in all 9 measures. Year on year comparison with 2010 show 5 increased, 1 stayed the same and 3 decreased. We are below our comparator authorities in most measures and there is work to be done in this area.

**3.1.1** When individual school performance in 2011 (**Appendix 2**) is analysed the contribution made by each school to attainment in WDC can be seen.

**3.1.2** There is considerable variation across the 5 schools within the 9 measures. Schools are expected to perform in line with comparators (schools which are 'matched' with WDC schools using a range of deprivation indices). These comparisons are thought to be more relevant to our schools than national comparisons since they relate to similar cohorts of pupils. Commendably, all of our schools have demonstrated that they can achieve at least comparator standards in a range of measures. All schools have demonstrated that they can achieve results at least in line with national average (NCD 5 or 6) in at least one measure. Notably, 4 schools have achieved national standards or better in more than one measure, with one school exceeding national standards in 8 out of the 9 measures.

**3.1.3** Given the socio/economic profile of West Dunbartonshire, any performance which is around national/comparator average across a range of measures is strong. Performance above national/comparator average across a range of measures is very strong.

**3.1.4** Overall, Council performance shows consistent strengths in attainment at level 3 in fourth year, an improving picture in sixth year but a disappointing performance in fifth year. Performance at Higher level in S5, remains a challenge. Some young people choose to study Higher courses over two years rather than one. This has resulted in an improvement in S6 results. All our schools are working to provide more robust information to parents and young people to enable young people to make informed course choices at the correct entry levels.

**3.2** The contribution made by individual subjects to overall attainment is shown in **Appendix 3**. Only those subjects with a three year pattern are shown. It should be remembered that in many subjects performance fluctuates year on year. The breakdown by school is shown in **Appendix 4**. Again, only a three year pattern is shown. Subjects identified as displaying a pattern of

underperformance are the focus of school action plans for improvement. The Quality Improvement team monitors the progress of these plans and supports the departments involved through a variety of means, including the organisation of regular meetings of subject Principal Teachers to share good practice.

- 3.3** Members may wish to note that WDC pupils have demonstrated success in a wide variety of other qualifications which contribute to wider achievement. A significant and increasing number of our pupils are taking vocational courses in a variety of areas including construction, motor vehicle engineering, hospitality, hairdressing, early education and childcare, sport and recreation, rural skills and photography. In addition, a wide range of non-SQA accredited qualifications have been achieved. These include:

- ASDAN awards
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Sport leadership
- Dance leadership
- Pool life guard
- Fashion brand retailing (Caledonian University)
- Mark Scott Foundation Award
- Forest Schools

- 3.4** The Council will ensure that schools are given every challenge and support to raise attainment in the areas outlined in this report through both local engagement and by encouraging involvement with national bodies.

## **4 People Implications**

- 4.1** This report has no implications for personnel.

## **5 Financial Implications**

- 5.1** This report has no direct financial implications. Strategies to raise attainment are financed from schools' devolved budgets and from central CPD budget lines.

## **6 Risk Analysis**

- 6.1** Failure to analyse accurately SQA performance and failure to take appropriate action to tackle underachievement and to raise attainment could put individual pupils and groups of learners at risk of failing to achieve their potential.

## **7 Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment**

- 7.1** No equality issues arising from the content of this report were identified in a screening.

## **8. Strategic Assessment**

- 8.1** This report accords with the strategic priorities for West Dunbartonshire Council. Close scrutiny of SQA data enables future planning which feeds in to social and economic regeneration through support for young people. Through continuous improvement we will provide fit for purpose services.

## **9. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 9.1** Members are requested to:

- (a) note the contents of this report;
- (b) congratulate the pupils, parents and carers, staff and centrally deployed staff for achievements in this year's examinations;
- (c) note the strategies being employed by individual schools and by the authority to raise attainment levels in S4-S6;
- (d) request a report to the meeting of this committee in December 2012 concerning performance in the 2012 diet of SQA examinations; and
- (e) confirm whether they are happy with the way in which information is presented in this report and its appendices, given the number of different formats used over recent years.

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Terry Lanagan  
Executive Director of Educational Services

### **Person to Contact**

David Fulton, Quality Improvement Officer  
Council HQ, Rosebery Place  
Clydebank. G81 1TG  
Tel: 01389 738750  
Email: [david.fulton@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:david.fulton@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1:** WDC Whole School Measures – 5 Year Trends

**Appendix 2:** WDC Whole School Results/Council Performances 2010

**Appendix 3:** Subject Strengths/Weaknesses in West Dunbartonshire

**Appendix 4:** Subject Strengths/Weaknesses by School

**Appendix 5:** The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

**Background Papers:** Report on strategies to raise attainment in West Dunbartonshire secondary schools presented to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on 13 January 2010.

Report on Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement presented to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on 14 September 2011.

**Wards affected:** All