

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Educational Services Committee: 4 December 2013

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**Subject: Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Examination Results 2013**

### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1** To update Members on the performance of West Dunbartonshire schools in the national Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations of 2013.

### **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 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) note that a report will be submitted to the meeting of this committee in November 2014 concerning performance in the 2014 diet of SQA examinations.
  - e) Note that performance data will be presented in a different format from August 2014. This will be linked to the new Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool, currently being developed by the Scottish Government.

### **3 Background**

- 3.1** 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 2009 to 2013.
- 3.2** The 2013 data is pre-appeal while the percentages for all previous years are those after appeals have been granted. The 2013 percentages may show some increase once the appeals, which were submitted in September, are granted or rejected.
- 3.3** The first comparison looks at Council performance in a range of measures over the last 5 years (2009-2013). (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 socioeconomic and deprivation indices. Attainment levels should be considered within this deprivation profile. WDC comparator councils are: Clackmannanshire, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.

- 3.4** The second comparison (Appendix 2) looks at: School performance in relation to both comparator schools and national performance across 11 measures, (SCQF levels are shown in Appendix 5). Results for St Peter the Apostle High School in 2012 are compared with the combined results for St Andrew's and St Columba's High Schools in previous years (2008-09).
- 3.5** 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.
- 3.6** 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.
- 3.7** Separate enhanced Leadership for Learning meetings take place between school management teams and the Directorate team, Education Managers and relevant Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs). These meetings, chaired by the Executive Director, focus on SQA results and on specific attainment issues and result in agreement on an agenda for improvement in each establishment. A summary of the attainment action plan for each school will be presented to the February 2014 meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.
- 3.8** 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. A subsequent report on strategies for Raising Attainment was presented to the committee in September 2011. Regular updates have been presented to committee in the last year.

Over the last 2 years a number of initiatives have arisen from the plan. These include.

- Revision of SQA/STACS meetings to focus more on school attainment strategies, including input from the wider management teams and pupils. Attainment action plans are produced from these meetings
- Each school has appointed secondees (STARS) to provide focussed support to the implementation of their strategy, including links to the literacy strategy.

- Supported study and Easter revision programmes were enhanced by a series of 'Masterclasses' in higher English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, history and geography. Modern studies, biology, human biology were added this session.
- Development of a website, 'Learn, Achieve, Succeed' to support pupils and parents.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** In the five year trends (Appendix 1) taking 2009 as the baseline, the Council has improved in 10 out of 11 measures with no change in 1 measure. Year on year comparison with 2012 show 7 increased, 3 stayed the same and 1 decreased. We are performing close to our family average in most measures.
- 4.1.1** When individual school performance in 2013 (Appendix 2) is analysed the contribution made by each school to attainment in WDC can be seen.
- 4.1.2** There is considerable variation across the 5 schools within the 11 reported 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 almost all 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 average in at least three measures, with one school exceeding national standards in all of the 11 measures.
- 4.1.3** 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.
- 4.1.4** Overall, Council performance shows consistent strengths in attainment at level 3 in fourth year and steady improvement at 3+ and 5+ level 6 in fifth year. Last session's strong performance in sixth year has been maintained. Performance at 5+ level 5 in S4 remains a challenge. It should be noted that our schools equalled or exceeded their highest ever levels of attainment in 8 of the 11 measures.
- 4.2** 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.

**4.3** The 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, beauty 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
- John Muir award
- Caritas award
- Saltire awards

**4.4** 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.

## **5. People Implications**

5.1 This report has no implications for personnel.

## **6. Financial Implications**

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

## **7. Risk Analysis**

7.1 Failure to accurately analyse 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.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

8.1 There are no new or significantly changing policies, services or financial decisions involved in the recommendations of this report, therefore an EIA is not required.

## **9. Strategic Assessment**

- 9.1 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.

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Terry Lanagan  
Executive Director of Educational Services

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**Person to Contact:** David Fulton, Quality Improvement Officer, Educational Services, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU. Telephone (01389) 737333.

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix 1: WDC Whole School Measures – 5 Year Trends
- Appendix 2: WDC Whole School Results/Council Performances 2013
- 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.**