

To: EDUCATION COMMITTEE		Subject: SUMMARY OF SECONDARY ATTAINMENT REVIEWS 2016
From: ACTING HEAD OF EDUCATION (STANDARDS & INCLUSION)		
Date: 24 January 2017	Ref: GMcC/KM	

1. Introduction

Each year, following the publication of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination results, a series of visits to the authority's 23 secondary schools is scheduled to review attainment and achievement in each establishment.

These reviews take place between October and December each year and involve discussion of a dataset for each school prepared by the authority on the attainment of young people in the national diet of examinations which took place in the Summer prior to the schedule of visits.

More recently the scope of attainment considered during the visit has widened to include aspects of attainment in S1 – S3 in addition to the attainment of young people in the senior phase (S4 – S6).

The majority of the data is extracted from the national 'Insight' database and is prepared for publication by the authority. Analysis of Insight data is augmented by additional analysis of data available at local level.

Attainment review meetings normally involve the following officers/teachers:

- The Head Teacher and members of the school's Senior Leadership Team
- Any other member of staff required to report on a specific aspect of school attainment or achievement
- The Head of Service for the school concerned
- The Education Officer for the school concerned
- Continuous Improvement Officers (CIOs) for the area where the school is located
- Peer Head Teacher

The full dataset for meetings held in session 2016-17 was as follows:

- S1 – S3 (S2 CEM Standardised Assessment Data and S3 Teacher Judgement Data)
- S4 – S6 Literacy and Numeracy Data (for Level 4 and Level 5)
- S4 – S6 Improving Attainment For All Data (Lowest 20%/Middle 60%/Highest 20%)
- Attainment versus Deprivation Data (School versus VC for SIMD deciles 1 – 10)
- S4 – S6 SCQF Breadth and Depth Data (School versus VC for Levels 3 – 7 as appropriate for 2014 – 16)
- S4 – S6 2016 SQA Exam Diet Departmental Comparative Performance (Graded Subjects Departmental Rank Order and Course Relative Values)
- School roll/SIMD stage breakdown/FME and Essential Clothing Grant/Pupil Absence and Exclusion Rate

A set of challenge questions was developed for each school based on the school's attainment profile. These questions formed the basis for discussion during the attainment visits.

The agenda for the attainment meetings in session 2016-17 was:

- Discussion and analysis of dataset based on challenge question areas provided.
- Discussion and analysis of data provided by the school:
Attainment of Looked After Children (S4 – S6)
School Wider Achievement Data
- A.O.C.B.

The lead officer for the education service at attainment reviews is the Head of Service with pastoral responsibility for the school's geographic area. The Head Teacher of each school takes responsibility for leading the discussion on significant aspects of the school's attainment and achievement identified each year.

Where good practice has been identified, the reasons for the improvement or good practice have been recorded. Where areas for improvement have been identified, the reasons will be discussed and any actions taken by the school to effect improvement will be recorded. Where appropriate an action plan to make necessary changes will be agreed.

The Continuous Improvement Officers in attendance produce a summary of agreed action points from the meeting highlighting areas of good practice and/or areas for improvement.

Subsequently an overall summary is produced for all 23 secondary schools which provides both schools and the service with summary action points and areas of good practice across all schools.

2. Summary of Main Findings December 2016

2.1 S1 – S3 (S2 CEM Assessments/S3 Teacher Judgements):

The need to track Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), Free Meals Entitlement (FME) and Clothing and Footwear Grant (CFG) more closely to ensure targeted interventions was highlighted.

Introduction of a more robust tracking system with improved staff knowledge of pupils' circumstances.

Improved teacher confidence in applying standards in the BGE but with further work still to be done.

CEM assessments highlighted a difference in scores between those in the most deprived bands and those in the middle bands, particularly in Numeracy.

Many schools report that they have working parties for monitoring & tracking in the BGE (Literacy & Numeracy).

The tracking of pupils from P7 to S3 allows CEM testing information to be used for specific targeting of pupils.

Transfer of information from primaries will give much more detailed information on all pupils, including CEM data, which can be used to identify and target pupils in all areas of the curriculum.

Some schools identified discrepancies between teacher judgements, CEM testing results and the performance of pupils in the lower SIMDs.

Schools are aware that further work is required on achievement of a level and are looking for continued support in this area.

In relation to teacher judgements of pupils Curriculum for Excellence levels in the BGE, staff tended to be conservative when assigning levels to pupils.

Proposed national standardised assessments for pupils in S3 should help to improve and refine teacher judgments.

2.2 Literacy and Numeracy (S4, S5 & S6 Literacy and Numeracy at levels 4/5):

Some schools questioned the impact of Life Skills Maths for N4/5 and indicated this is being discontinued as the content and assessment approach did not meet the needs of pupils who did not need to progress in Mathematics in Fifth Year.

Active Literacy strategies are now embedded in the BGE phase to provide a cohesive learning experience from primary into secondary.

Schools reported positively on the impact and approach of active literacy with a focus on understanding standards across the whole school.

Benchmarking documentation for Literacy and Numeracy has helped to ensure understanding of standards across all curricular areas.

Some schools reported developing partnerships across curricular areas such as Mathematics and Science to ensure appropriate challenge in Numeracy.

2.3 Improving Attainment for All (Attainment of Lowest 20% / Middle 60% / Highest 20% for S4, S5 & S6):

Schools are now ensuring that there is more robust monitoring and tracking across all stages S4-S6.

Some schools are highlighting very good progress with lowest and middle attainment cohort. However, in some cases this is not mirrored in the case of the highest 20%, particularly in S6. A number of factors contribute to this underperformance in S6 including pupils who have unconditional offers for higher education.

2.4 Attainment Versus Deprivation (by SIMD decile and/or stage):

Schools are offering a broader range of curricular choices for students.

For example the introduction of Skills for Work, N5 Laboratory Science and NQ alternatives to N5 Numeracy and Finance.

Schools are seeking to ensure that students are placed in the correct subjects/levels including, where appropriate, courses delivered by external providers, notably New College Lanarkshire.

Most schools are engaging with SIMD data and making all staff aware of this, ensuring they have a clear picture of the SIMD profile of all pupils.

Schools engaging with SIMD data are able to track pupils closely and have a suitable picture of progress.

Schools highlighted barriers to learning and stressed they have an equal approach to all pupils across all SIMD deciles.

2.5 SCQF Breadth and Depth (SCQF awards – stage and/or level):

As a result of the review of the Senior Phase the reduction in the number of subjects from eight to seven offered at S4 has been welcomed by schools as it provides students with an increased focus and a greater allocation of time in their subject.

Schools stated that the configuration of the options programme in the upper school was having a motivating effect on young people.

Locality arrangements have enabled more young people to take up vocational and academic subjects in line with their desired post-school aspirations. This includes arrangements for S6 Advanced Higher Grades.

Effective mentoring arrangements, where staff volunteer to lead additional focused sessions, are having a positive impact on attainment.

Links with NLC Hub, Right Track and other training providers were commended for their efforts in ensuring pupils are ready for work.

The inputs of Home School Partnership Officers (HSPO) and NLC Inclusion Support Base (ISB) staff in engaging pupils to explore appropriate college courses and seek positive leaver destinations were also commended.

2.6 Departmental Performance (S4-S6):

No pattern of consistently high performing subject departments was evident in schools, either in relation to size of department or geographic location.

In a similar fashion, no pattern of consistently underperforming departments was found.

The biggest influence cited by schools which affected departmental performance related to staffing.

The effectiveness of Faculty Heads (with responsibility for a number of subjects), is still variable in terms of the performance of subject areas within faculties.

The appointment of young and enthusiastic staff is a recurring factor in departmental success, especially in subjects where the faculty head has limited experience.

The graphs containing average tariff scores suggest that certain subjects, in terms of pupil performance, have a high level of consistency in almost every school. At S4 National 5 and S5 Higher Grade, the statistics indicate Drama, English, Music and PE fall into this category.

Although schools are unable to access comparator departments, many have taken the initiative to contact schools, both within and beyond the authority in order to observe good practice. Schools are already sharing the success of this initiative via attainment reviews and other forums, and are confident that by implementing the practice observed elsewhere this will lead to improvement in performance across departments.

Robust monitoring and tracking of student progress through NQs is a common feature.

A greater focus on student subject choice in the Senior Phase with appropriate support via a range of interventions, is also a key factor in improving student performance.

A common example of intervention is targeted discussion with pupils, in small groups or individually, around subjects related to students' potential destinations.

2.7 School Absence & Exclusion Data:

Schools indicated a more active role for PT Pupil Support and HSPO to engage with 'at risk' families. In many cases attendance has improved due to continued development of SEEMIS and electronic registration and electronic alerts to parents. There are continuing issues with pupils taking holidays in term-time which, in some cases, is exacerbated by cultural traditions.

Across the authority, there is a much more positive picture in terms of reducing overall exclusion rates. Schools continue to engage in strategies for inclusion including early intervention, summer transition schools etc.

3. Additional Comments

Headteachers commented positively on the 'challenge question' approach to the review meetings.

Schools appreciated the contents of the review pack and found the meeting with authority staff very useful.

The interpretation of NQ data using Scotland wide statistics was informative and allowed a more revealing insight into the statistics.

Schools intimated that it would be helpful to include data on vocational courses, positive leaver destinations and wider achievement.

The loss of some key college courses has had a major impact in the upper school and has resulted in a number of schools developing a range of innovative partnerships to fill the gaps.

The focus on DYW and the very strong and impressive relationships established with a range of businesses is an example of excellent practice in many schools.

Peer Head Teachers made a valuable contribution to the review meetings and found the experience invaluable in developing effective partnerships and exchanging good practice.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The opportunity for dialogue between service officers and senior staff in schools was a positive experience for all involved and provided insights which can and do inform future policy and practice on improving attainment and achievement across the secondary school estate.
- 4.2 The use of challenge questions was welcomed by staff in all schools as providing a clearer focus for discussions at the meetings.
- 4.3 The involvement of a peer Head Teacher was viewed by service officers and school-based staff as a positive development over the past two years. Both school-based staff and service officers viewed the involvement of the peer Head Teacher as providing an objective and informative commentary on the data presented from a school perspective.
- 4.4 All of the data presented in the pack provided was found to be useful in providing a rounded picture of attainment and achievement in secondary schools in North Lanarkshire.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Service officers will engage in dialogue with school-based staff regarding the content and format of the attainment pack used in future meetings of a similar kind.
- 5.2 The nature and scope of the challenge questions used in meetings will be kept under review in order to reflect Council and national priorities.
- 5.3 The use of data in the Broad General Education in secondary schools (S1 – S3) will be extended to include other published information in due course e.g. the outcome of national standardised assessments.
- 5.4 The individual school and overall authority summary of the outcomes of the 23 meetings concerned will be analysed to further inform the work to be undertaken by Continuous Improvement Officers in providing targeted support for secondary schools as part of the Support around the School and Communities Team approach.

4. Recommendations

Elected members are asked to

- (i) note the contents of this report.
- (ii) commend all staff in schools for their work in producing very positive attainment and achievement outcomes in North Lanarkshire in 2016.
- (iii) commend the work of staff involved in the attainment reviews in producing comprehensive summaries of attainment and achievement in North Lanarkshire secondary schools in 2016.



Gerry McCormick
Acting Head of Education (Standards & Inclusion)

Members wishing further information please contact:

Gerry McCormick, Acting Head of Education (Standards & Inclusion) on 01236 812279