
ATTAINMENT AT S5 AND S6

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
SCRUTINY BOARD INVESTIGATION

NOVEMBER 2005

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SCRUTINY BOARD ATTAINMENT AT S5 AND S6

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 At its meeting on 29 March 2005 the Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake a review of attainment levels of pupils in the 5th and 6th years at secondary schools in Renfrewshire.

1.2 The objective of the Review was to examine attainment levels and investigate the Council's approach towards raising attainment of pupils in the 5th and 6th years with a view to developing an Action Plan. The Action Plan is intended to set out strategies which would ultimately lead to an improvement in attainment levels of pupils in the 5th and 6th years in Renfrewshire secondary schools.

1.3 In undertaking the Review through the meetings on 11 April, 9 May, 23 May and 29 August 2005, the Board has considered evidence from a variety of sources. Contributions were received from :

- Senior Adviser (Performance Management), Education and Leisure
- Senior Adviser (Curriculum), Education and Leisure
- Education Consultant
- Head Teacher, Gleniffer High School
- Head Teacher, Trinity High School
- EIS secretary
- Education Support Services Consultant
- School Board Chair, Gleniffer High School
- 6th year pupils from Trinity High School
- 6th year pupils from Gleniffer High School

1.4 The Scrutiny Board is grateful to all contributors for the time given in preparing papers, presenting evidence and discussing the issues. The Board wishes to acknowledge the contributors' extremely helpful input into this investigation and the work of the Board.

1.5 This report sets out to :

- explain the performance measures noted in comparing SQA examination results;
- present the SQA results of Renfrewshire pupils and how they compare with pupils from schools in comparable authorities and with the country as a whole;
- highlight measures already introduced by Education and Leisure Services and individual schools to help raise attainment in S5 and S6; and
- provide a note of the issues identified by the Scrutiny Board investigation.

Background

1.6 Renfrewshire Council's Education service performs well as recognised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) in the inspection report on the educational functions of the authority in April 2004.

1.7 Raising achievement and attainment has long been a key priority of the Council. The Scottish Executive, through monitoring by HMIE has, over the years, established targets for pupil attainment and these targets relate to both the 5 - 14 curriculum and the national qualifications examination framework. The Authority has developed a rigorous and systematic performance monitoring system which benchmarks the performance of authority schools in Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) Examinations to schools in authorities of similar characteristics and to Scotland as a whole.

1.8 Within Renfrewshire, secondary schools continue to successfully meet the range of young people's needs. Schools, with the support of the Authority, are continually re-appraising teaching and learning strategies in order that they can best meet the needs of all learners.

1.9 Whilst it is accepted that the measure of a successful school involves more than good examination results, it should also be recognised that the level of attainment achieved by pupils by the end of their schooling is crucial in determining the progression routes available to them in their life after compulsory schooling.

2.0 WHAT RESULTS ARE MEASURED?

2.1 The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) publish annual data which gives a detailed analysis of SQA examination results at three levels; authority, school and course levels. The authority has carried out a further analysis of this data to look at trends over recent years (2002-2005) and make comparisons with similar education authorities and national performance.

2.2 The similar authorities are the 'family' of comparator education authorities identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) as similar to Renfrewshire for statistical benchmarking purposes. The benchmarking process attempts to take account of social factors such as the levels of poverty which is recognised as having an effect on education attainment. This is largely determined by the numbers of pupils in each school and authority entitled to free school meals (FME). The five education authorities considered similar to Renfrewshire for comparison of examination performance for 2000-2004 were Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Falkirk, Fife and West Lothian. These were changed by HMIE for 2005 with Dumfries and Galloway and West Lothian being replaced by West Dunbartonshire and South Lanarkshire.

2.3 The data used in this report for 2002-2004 is post-appeal. The data for the 2005 examinations diet is pre-appeal (thus it could alter slightly). Post-appeal data will not be available until January 2006. The comparisons in the report are based on figures from

2002 to 2005 examination diets. The levels referred to in the report are those defined by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and are shown below:

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

		GRADE	GRADE	
LEVEL 7	Advance Higher	A - C		
LEVEL 6	Higher Grade	A - C		
LEVEL 5	Standard Grade - credit	1 - 2	Intermediate 2	A - C
LEVEL 4	Standard Grade - general	3 - 4	Intermediate 1	A - C
LEVEL 3	Standard Grade - foundation	5 - 6	Access 3	

2.4 Introduced in 1999, Intermediate 1 and 2 were designed for students who chose to progress their education through Intermediate 1 and 2 courses before embarking upon Higher courses. Highers are aimed particularly at students who have passed subjects at Standard Grade credit level or Intermediate 2. Advanced Highers are normally taken in sixth year to extend the skills and knowledge gained at Higher.

2.5 This developing qualifications framework allows pupils increased subject choice and opportunity for progression. Over the next few years Education and Leisure anticipate that more and more pupils will opt to take appropriate Intermediate courses. Curriculum links with Reid Kerr College have been strengthening over the years with a significant increase in the number of senior pupils taking courses provided by the college. Success rates have also been improving with an increasing number of pupils gaining more Higher awards in these courses. Overall, this has made a positive impact to the 3+ at Level 6 indicator, increasing it from 30% to 31% for 2005.

Results - Authority Level Summary Data

2.6 Results data is published in two ways:

- percentage of pupils attaining at each SCQF level; and
- percentage of pupils attaining against National Priority measures.

The data used in performance analysis is presented as performance by the end of S4, S5 and S6. This is due to the fact that pupils can leave school after S4 and S5. The following analysis covers these three stages and includes comments relating to :

- Gender;
- comparator authorities; and
- the national situation.

How do Renfrewshire schools perform by the end of S4?

2.7 In the period 2002-2005, the percentage of Renfrewshire pupils achieving 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 remains consistently higher than both the national and family averages. In 2005 the Renfrewshire value is 36.4% compared with a national average of 33.7% and 31.2% for the family of comparable authorities. For this year the

difference between the performances of girls and boys is 9%, which is in line with the national figure.

2.8 The percentages in Renfrewshire achieving 5 or more awards at SCQF levels 3 and 4 are also consistently above both the national and family authority averages. For this year the difference between the performance of girls and boys for both measures is 2% and 8% respectively, and is in line with national differences.

How do Renfrewshire schools perform by the end of S5? (based on the corresponding S4 roll)

2.9 In the period 2002-2005, Renfrewshire has consistently performed better than or equal to the national average and better than the comparator authority average for 3+ and 5+ level 6 (Higher) measures.

2.10 Performance of girls in 2005 is equal to or better than the national average and is always better than the family average. The figures for both 3+ and 5+ at level 6 are unchanged from last year. The corresponding values for boys in 2005 indicate that they are in line with the national average and greater than the family average. The gap between girls and boys performance in both measures remains unchanged since 2004.

How do Renfrewshire schools perform by the end of S6? (based on the corresponding S4 roll)

2.11 For all level 6 (Higher) measures in the 2002-2005 period, Renfrewshire pupils performed better than or equal to the corresponding national values. It is a similar picture when comparing to the family of comparator authorities. Performance in 3+ awards or better at level 6 dipped slightly from 2004 whereas performance in 5+ awards at level 6 or better has slightly increased on 2004 figures.

2.12 Performance of boys in all level 6 measures has remained much the same as 2004 and remains slightly below the national average for 1+ and 3+ at level 6. Improvement is required in both these measures. Renfrewshire consistently performs above its comparator authorities.

2.13 In 2002-2005, performance of girls in all level 6 measures is either equal to or above the national average. Performance in 1+ award at level 6 or better has improved by 1% on 2004 figures. Renfrewshire consistently performs above its comparator authorities.

How does Renfrewshire perform in National Priority measures?

2.14 In 2001 the Scottish Executive launched its National Priorities in Education initiative. In the area of attainment, National Priorities are monitored using seven performance indicators. These are as follows:

The percentage of the relevant S4 roll achieving awards by the end of S6 in:

- Level 3 or better in English and mathematics;
- 5+ awards at level 3 or better;
- 5+ awards at level 4 or better;
- 5+ awards at level 5 or better;
- 1+ award at level 6 (Higher) or better;
- 3+ awards at level 6 or better; and

- 5+ awards at level 6 or better.

2.15 In these particular measures three-year averages are used to reduce the effect of exceptional performance in a single year. The comparative period runs from 2003 to 2005. The performance indicators are based on percentages of pupils achieving SQA awards by the end of S6, and are calculated using the appropriate S4 roll.

2.16 At SCQF level 6, performance has generally been fairly static over the period. At 1+ level 6 or better, performance has been consistently better than that of our comparator authorities and in generally in line with the national figures.

For 3+ level 6, Renfrewshire's performance has been static over the period i.e. performance has been consistently in line with national averages and slightly better than our comparator authorities.

For 5+ at level 6 Renfrewshire's performance has been stable over the period. Performance has been consistently slightly below national averages.

Summary of performance indicators from 2004 to 2005

2.17

<i>By the end of S4</i>	Slippage in 5+ at level 3,4 and 5;
<i>By the end of S5</i>	Improvement in 1+ at level 6; No change in 3+ and 5+ at level 6.
<i>By the end of S6</i>	Slippage in 1+ and 3+ at level 6; No change in 5+ at level 6.

3.0 HMIe REPORT FINDINGS

3.1 HMIe carry out school inspections on all schools and have the target of inspecting all secondary schools by 2008 and thereafter, inspecting each secondary school once in every 6 years. Since 1999, all of Renfrewshire's secondary schools have been inspected.

3.2 HMIe carry out inspections in all schools through evaluating key aspects of the school's work to answer the following questions:

- How good are learning, teaching and achievement?
- How well are pupils supported?
- How good is the environment for learning?
- What is the school's capacity for bringing about continuous improvement?

3.3 The views of parents, carers, pupils and staff are taken into account and the inspection seeks to identify what the education authority and the school needs to do to bring about further improvements.

3.4 HMIe inspection procedures ensure that inspections are independent, responsive, open and fair. The inspection of secondary schools examines :

- 4 subject departments (English and Mathematics departments and two others determined by HMIe)
- the school profile

- 7 key areas and associated quality indicators -
 - Curriculum
 - Attainment
 - Learning and Teaching
 - Support for pupils
 - Ethos
 - Resources management
 - Leadership

3.5 The education functions of Renfrewshire Council, the local education authority, were inspected from December 2003 - January 2004 with the subsequent report, published in April 2004, concluding that the Council provided very effective educational services and was adding value to the work of its educational establishments in providing an effective service for all learners. The report also stated that some aspects of attainment at the upper stages of secondary schools required improvement.

(All HMIe reports from 1998 onwards are available on the website www.hmie.gov.uk)

4.0 INTERVENTION MEASURES

4.1 The Scrutiny Board heard evidence of measures and strategies taken forward at both the local authority and individual schools level to help support pupils, teachers and parents to ultimately increase attainment levels and achievement levels for all pupils. This section provides information on intervention and support measures already being implemented in schools.

HQ Central staff

4.2 The focus on attainment in S5 and S6 is undertaken by the authority and schools working in partnership to respond to the improvement agenda of the authority through a variety of strategies. Broadly this involves:

- (a) detailed analysis of examination results
- (b) consultation, discussion and planning
- (c) staff development
- (d) appropriate deployment of resources
- (e) education development service support.

4.3 More specifically, issues surrounding pupil attainment are continually being monitored by the authority in a number of ways including :

- Analysis of examination results, de-briefing and action points
- Meetings with headteachers
- Subject network meetings
- In-service training for staff-including raising attainment
- Consortium arrangements-pupils accessing courses in other schools and Reid Kerr College
- Curriculum flexibility-offering non-traditional courses

Dissemination of good practice information and techniques is the key way the authority tries to address raising attainment issues.

4.4 When considering attainment in S5 and S6, it is important to note that much of the work on learning styles, teaching strategies, participation and pupil self esteem starts when the pupils are in the early stages of the secondary school or indeed in primary school. To this end, the authority continues to work with both primary and secondary schools in implementing strategies to raise attainment, not least through additional funding provided to schools from central 'Raising and Supporting Achievement' funds.

5.0 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE INVESTIGATION

5.1 The evidence presented to the Scrutiny Board and subsequent discussions led to a number of issues being identified. These can be summarised as follows:

- i. Renfrewshire pupils in S5 and S6 are performing in line with or slightly better than the national average and that of comparator authorities. It has been the policy of Education and Leisure for a number of years to improve attainment levels. Measures are already being implemented in secondary schools across Renfrewshire to improve the performance of all pupils and Education and Leisure is continuing to take forward and develop ways of raising performance levels, particularly at S5 and S6. It is essential that there is a drive to increase attainment overall, rather than maintain static levels. Figures indicate that year on year, there is consistency with attainment figures. The overall aim however is to find ways to raise this level through introduction of new, innovative approaches.
- ii. As with the country as a whole, there remains an attainment gap between boys and girls. Intervention measures are currently being implemented across Renfrewshire to try to address this issue. Strategies will continue to be monitored and adjusted as necessary to remove this attainment gap and raise overall attainment of all pupils.
- iii. Expectations and attainment in S1 and S2 is an issue in many schools. The review of the 5 - 14 curriculum by the Scottish Executive is welcomed. Attitudes towards attainment are very much moulded early in secondary school and have an impact on attainment in S4, 5 and 6. Are S1 and S2 pupils challenged enough? Raising attainment and expectations of attainment in this sector could be a key area requiring attention to have an overall impact upon attainment levels. It is anticipated that secondary schools will require to examine practices and attainment levels in S1 - S4

and possibly trial new approaches and joint ventures. This could include embarking earlier on standard grade courses, increasing the amount of work covered both in class time and with homework, tracking pupils and monitoring pupil progress and ensuring that pupils are covering the curriculum at an appropriate pace.

- iv. Delivering the volume of work that makes up the Higher curriculum from May until the following March puts teachers and pupils under considerable pressure. Where work for level 5 courses (Standard or Intermediate Grade) is introduced earlier, there is an opportunity to begin level 6 courses earlier. Schools should consider their whole teaching plan from S1 to S5/6 to consider introducing courses earlier and continued monitoring would be required to assess the impact this would have. This is a practice carried out in some other local authorities. It is considered that this is a possible area to be examined and considered for inclusion in an Action Plan to raise attainment in S5 and S6.
- v. Schools are already implementing a variety of measures to assist pupils with homework and to provide appropriate additional support. Pupil feedback on the effectiveness of this support could assist in resource planning to ensure the correct areas are being covered.
- vi. It is considered that the key to raising attainment is through having a positive learning and attainment ethos throughout each school. Teachers play a very important role in maximising pupil attainment levels at all stages in their education. Motivation of both staff and pupils is a key driver to raising attainment levels. Therefore, it may be beneficial for Education and Leisure to consider additional or new training courses for teachers in different motivational techniques, learning styles, and in what makes 'the best' teachers.

Other Issues Raised

5.2 Other issues of a more strategic (national) nature were also discussed within this investigation. The local authority should note the issues and where possible, support any initiatives that may address the issues.

- Parental expectation and involvement with school work has an influence on pupil attainment levels. It is recognised that parental support and involvement plays an important part in a child's education. It is essential therefore that the authority continues with its work in involving parents/carers in their child's education and that high expectations and the achievement ethos are understood and shared.
- There is a general lack of understanding amongst parent and employers about the current exam accreditation system. Further information is required from the SQA to address this issue.
- Pupil commitments outwith school eg to part-time working can interfere with study time.

