



Committee report

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Date	15 MARCH 2018
Title	THE ATTAINMENT OF PUPILS IN ISLE OF WIGHT SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2017
Report of/to	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following a year of further changes to secondary school performance measures and the examination of new, more challenging English and mathematics GCSE courses, on some measures, performance at Key Stage 4 has improved relative to that nationally from 2016 to 2017 and on others has broadly remained in line with the changes in national figures, across the Isle of Wight
2. Whilst some schools have made gains against the national figures, others have remained static or declined. This inconsistent picture of individual school improvement is holding back the overall headline performance. The detail of this is provided in the body of the report.
3. The Policy and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the analysis of the Key Stage 4 performance measures presented in this report.

BACKGROUND

4. This report sets out an analysis of the performance of the secondary school system on the Isle of Wight using the Department for Education's (DfE) preferred measures and follows on from the report "The Attainment of Pupils in Isle of Wight Primary Schools" that was presented to this committee on 23 November 2017.
5. New measures were introduced for secondary schools in 2016 which signalled the end to the proportion of students attaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics being used as the key standard against which to judge the performance. Good at GCSE used to be defined as a grade C or above. Schools are now judged against attainment 8 (A8), progress 8 (P8), the proportion of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate

(EBacc) and the proportion of pupils achieving the basics (a grade 4 or better in both English and mathematics).

6. In 2017, new, more challenging GCSE courses were examined in English language, English Literature and mathematics for the first time. These are graded on a 1 to 9 point scale, with 9 being the highest grade. The content of the other GCSE subjects examined in 2017 remained unchanged and the subjects were still graded using letters. When pupils received their results they received a mixture of letter grades and numbers.
7. There is no direct correlation between letter grades and numbers. This creates issues for the calculation of A8 and P8, and defining the threshold attainment level to achieve the EBacc. The DfE has developed an approach to enable these calculations to be made this year, and this approach has been the basis of much discussion within schools. This has centred on the equity of the point scores given to different grades. Whatever the merits or otherwise of these discussions, the approach taken to the calculations in 2017 means that the data cannot be compared directly to that from 2016. At best comparisons can only be made by comparing the difference to the national figure in 2017 to the difference in 2016.
8. Other GCSE courses are being modified and will be examined for the first time in 2018. This will mean that next year's data cannot be compared directly to that from this year.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The "Basics"

9. Prior to 2017, this measure indicated the proportion of pupils who have achieved a C or better grade in both an English and mathematics qualifying qualification. The definition changed in 2017 to take into account the fact that pupils examined in these subjects this year have been following the new, harder revised GCSEs that are graded by numbers. So in 2017, to have qualified for the basics, pupils must have achieved a grade 4 or higher in both subjects.
10. Nationally, it was agreed to set the proportion of pupils reaching the basics this year as close as possible to the proportion in 2016. This provides a helpful basis on which to make a year on year comparison of performance. Of the four secondary school performance measures, this is the one in which there is the greatest confidence in a direct comparison to 2016.

	2017 new measure (% 4+ in an English and mathematics)	2016 old measure (% C+ in an English and mathematics)	2015 old measure (%C+ in English Language and mathematics)
National	64	63	60
Isle of Wight	55	52	51

11. Isle of Wight schools improved against this measure from 2016 to 2017; the performance gap with the national figure has closed by 2%. The improvement from 2016 to 2017 is greater than that nationally.
12. Two schools are now performing above the national average, an improvement upon previous years, and whilst three schools have improved over either the three or two year period, three have remained static or have declined.
13. The underlying subject performance helps understand the reasons for the current situation

	% 4+ in an English 2017	% C+ in an English 2016	%C+ in English Language 2015
National	76	75	69
Isle of Wight	68	71	63

14. In 2016, the gap between the performance of Isle of Wight schools and those nationally was closing at this measure. This was a particular achievement given the KS2 results for that cohort. However, schools have not built upon that success in 2017. Whilst one school has improved consistently since 2015 so that its results in English are well above the national average, relative performance has slipped in too many other schools.

	% 4+ in mathematics 2017	% C+ in mathematics 2016	%C+ in mathematics 2015
National	70	69	69
Isle of Wight	63	57	61

15. Mathematics performance has improved since 2016, and has improved at a faster rate than that nationally. Whilst two schools perform above the national average, the general pattern over the past three years has been erratic. In some schools, improvements have not been embedded and performance has slid back.
16. Schools need to secure gains that have been made previously to ensure that they improve upon the basics in the future.
17. One key element rests with ensuring that appropriate management oversight is maintained across pupils' individual performances in subjects.

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

18. The EBacc measures performance across a tightly defined group of academic subjects. To qualify, pupils must take both English Language and Literature and obtain a grade 5 to 9 in one of them; obtain a grade 5 to 9 in mathematics; obtain an A*-C grade in the sciences; an A*-C in a language (either modern or ancient) and an A*-C in either history or geography.

19. Unlike “the basics” measure, pupils have to achieve a grade 5 rather than 4 in their English and mathematics qualification to qualify. In 2016, pupils had to achieve a C grade or better in these subjects. Consequently, the 2016 and 2017 figures are not directly comparable. Looking at the difference between the national figure and that for Isle of Wight schools in 2017 and 2016 provides at least some basis for an indication of a trend.

	%EBacc 2017 (new measure)	%EBacc 2016 (old measure)
National	21%	25%
Isle of Wight	13%	13%
Difference	8%	12%

20. There has been a relative improvement against the national figures from 2016 to 2017 in this measure. One school in particular has made significant improvement, so that there is now one Isle of Wight school performing above the national average.
21. These figures are calculated by dividing the number of pupils who achieved the EBacc by the number of pupils in the cohort. If small numbers of pupils are entered for this qualification, then the percentage of pupils who achieve it will be small. Schools need to consider the number of pupils entered carefully; entering small numbers runs the risk of depressing this measure.
22. In Isle of Wight schools, there is no clear pattern in the numbers of children entered for the range of subjects that will lead to them achieving the EBacc. In some schools there is a relatively large number, in others it is much smaller. Concern has been expressed by schools that entering large numbers of pupils into the necessary range of subjects does not meet the needs of the pupils. On the other hand, a number of schools are entering a wide range of pupils into the required subjects. A key next step will be to engage with schools in a discussion around the basis of their curricula and their entry policy.

Attainment 8 (A8)

23. The calculation of A8 is complex, looking at pupils’ average performance across eight subjects from a tightly defined set that includes an English, mathematics, three EBacc subjects and three other subjects. A8 is not a threshold measure (for example, the proportion of pupils who are awarded grade C and above), but gives a sense of an average performance that pupils have achieved across the basket of subjects. Just focussing on improving pupils who are on the C/D borderline will only have a slight impact on A8. The performance of all pupils across a wide range of subjects really does count towards this measure.
24. For reasons discussed above, A8 figures in 2017 are not directly comparable with those from 2016. Again, though, comparing the difference with the national figure with last year’s will help form some conclusions (below).

	A8 2017 (new measure)	A8 2016 (old measure)
National	46.4	50.1
Isle of Wight	40.1	43.6
Difference	6.3	6.5

25. There has been little change between the performance of Isle of Wight schools and those nationally from 2016 to 2017.
26. Two schools have improved in relative terms, so that one is now above the national average; three have declined and two are static.

Progress 8 (P8)

27. P8 is a measure of the progress pupils have made from KS2 across the A8 basket of subjects relative to their peers nationally. National performance information is used to estimate the A8 score of each pupil based on their KS2 performance. This is subtracted from their actual A8 score and the mean of the difference calculated across the school. P8 is therefore a relative measure, dependant on pupils' performance nationally. Schools cannot predict with any accuracy what it might be ahead of the examinations.
28. In a school with a P8 of zero, pupils have on average performed in line with pupils with similar starting points nationally. If the score is positive, then pupils have made more progress from their starting points than nationally; if it is negative, then pupils have made correspondingly less progress.
29. As well as changes to the way in which A8 has been calculated this year, changes have also been made to the calculation of the KS2 baseline. Again, these changes make direct comparison to the 2016 figures difficult. However P8 is calculated relative to that nationally which therefore provides a level of comparability

	P8 2017 (new measure)	P8 2016 (old measure)
National	-0.03	-0.03
Isle of Wight	-0.36	-0.33
Difference	-0.33	-0.30

30. P8 has declined slightly across the Isle of Wight schools. This means that pupils make less progress from their starting points across the basket of 8 subjects than do their peers nationally. No school on the Island now has a positive P8 score. This indicates that A8 should be higher for all schools given children's starting points.
31. It is possible to look at the contribution made by English, mathematics, the three EBacc subjects and the three other subjects to the overall P8 figure, school by school.

32. This shows that pupils made their best progress in mathematics. In three schools this was in line with that nationally, although in the others it was below the national figure and this pulled down the overall figure for the Isle of Wight so that it was below that nationally.
33. English was second best. Pupils made the same, or better, progress nationally in two schools but worse in the rest.
34. A smaller proportion of pupils followed the EBacc qualifying subjects than nationally. Indeed the proportion dropped in Isle of Wight schools compared to that nationally from 2016 to 2017. If pupils do not have three EBacc subject results, this will penalise schools in the calculation of P8. This has happened in a number of Island schools and is part of the reason why the contribution made in this area to P8 was low.
35. A careful review of the distribution of subject grades suggests that in a number of subject departments in a number of schools, teachers are mainly focussing on trying to maximise performance at the C or 4 threshold. This still remains a key target, as it is this that determines pupils' entry on to post 16 courses.. However, the A8 measure and the related P8 measure are based on "every grade counts". So, as well as their focus on threshold measures, schools need to focus on maximising performance at higher grades and reducing the proportion of students at the lower end to improve the school's A8 and P8 measures.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

36. There are no additional financial considerations resulting from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

37. The "Duty to promote high standards in primary and secondary education," originates from the 1996 Education Act. This provision was amended in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act to include, "...and the fulfilment of potential." The 2006 Act spells out the responsibility of the Local Authority to promote high standards; ensure fair access and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. This duty applies to children of compulsory school age and those of any age (up to 20) who are registered as pupils at maintained schools.
38. It is the 2006 Act which also introduces the inspection of LA statutory functions by Ofsted. "The Framework for Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement," based upon sections 135 and 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, was published in May 2013. The LA duty to write an action plan following an unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection had already been introduced in the 2005 Education Act

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

39. Improved educational outcomes benefit all groups but have the most marked impact upon the life chances of the most vulnerable. Outcomes are assessed specifically against the needs of a range of vulnerable groups and the performance of children with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living in relative poverty and children in the care of the Local Authority, in so far as this does not identify individuals, are reported upon in this paper.

SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

40. The attainment of better educational outcomes has a direct impact upon future economic wellbeing and, therefore, upon potential involvement in criminal activity. Success at school promotes self-esteem, attendance and good behaviour leading to greater community cohesion, adult independence and active citizenship.

RISK MANAGEMENT

41. A clear understanding of examination results and priorities for improving them is necessary in order to improve school performance of the Isle of Wight and mitigate against poor educational outcomes for children and young people.

OPTIONS

42. Not applicable

EVALUATION

43. Standards have improved against those nationally or remain broadly in line. Addressing the year by year variation at an individual school level is the key next step that needs to be taken to secure stronger outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services notes the outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 on the Isle of Wight.

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