

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 1 st February 2024
Report Subject	Learner Outcomes – GCSE and A level results 2022/23
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explains the gradual return to pre pandemic examination arrangements for year 11 and year 13 learners and the national and local authority performance measures outcomes for 2022/23. Given the varying examination arrangements for learners since 2019, caution must be exercised when comparing outcomes between subsequent years.

Welsh Government restarted the reporting of key stage 4 outcomes at a school level using the approach adopted prior to the pandemic in 2018/2019. This approach saw the introduction of new transitional interim measures for secondary schools that looked to ensure a greater focus on raising aspirations for all learners. For key stage 5, the 2021/22 and 2022/23 examination periods were also transitional. In 2022/23, Qualifications Wales set the results at a national level at a midway between 2018/19 and 2021/22.

The Local Authority, in partnership with the Regional School Improvement and Effectiveness Service (GwE), endeavours to secure high quality outcomes for learners. All Flintshire schools benefit from bespoke support according to their identified school improvement priorities.

Welsh Government determined in 2019 that performance data traditionally aggregated for comparison at local, regional and national level be removed. All benchmarking, comparisons with other establishments, and the placing of schools and local authorities in rank order is no longer acceptable or possible. The only comparative data available to local authorities in these key stages are the national averages.

There is now a greater focus on the use of data by schools in their self-evaluation processes rather than for public comparison. In this context, data should be analysed on a local level and as a starting point to inform local priorities.

Welsh Government's expectation is that performance information is used to support schools and local authorities to understand their own context and improve their own offer. It should not be used in isolation to judge performance or compare schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the outcomes for key stages 4 and 5 examinations in 2022/23 and recognise the hard work of secondary schools in Flintshire in supporting their examination year groups.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Explaining Learner Outcomes – GCSE and A level results 2022/23
1.01	<p>Interim performance measures for key stage 4.</p> <p>These transitional measures, introduced in 2019 removed the narrow focus on C/D borderline grade outcomes to instead recognise the achievement of all learners at key stage 4. As previously reported, these measures were paused during the pandemic. Welsh Government announced that these measures would be restarted for summer 2023 key stage 4 results. This includes the policy of counting only first entries of examinations.</p> <p>For the academic year 2022/23, this means that Welsh Government will be publishing the following headline indicators, all based on point scores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capped 9 Indicator (interim measures version) • Literacy indicator • Numeracy indicator • Science indicator • Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate indicator • A*-A grades <p>The analysis of results is based on year 11 GCSE and age 17 A level results for pupils in maintained schools, pupil referral units and pupils educated other than at school in Wales.</p>
1.02	<p>Examination and centre assessed grades.</p> <p>2021/22 and 2022/23 were transitional years, where qualifications returned to written examinations following the disruption of the pandemic. This was not yet a complete return to pre-pandemic arrangements. In 2022/23, some support still remained in place for learners sitting examinations, through the provision of advance information to exam centres and a supportive approach to grading. Qualifications Wales set the results at a national level broadly between 2018/19 and 2021/22 outcomes.</p>

	Given the varying examination arrangements for learners since 2019, caution must therefore be exercised when comparing outcomes between subsequent years.									
1.03	<p>Individual school data will be published by Welsh Government on the <i>My Local School</i> website under the section on Attainment. The website was updated in December 2023 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the publication of attainment and attendance information • Updated FAQs • Secondary attendance data for 2022/23 • Financial reserves for 2022/23 • School budget per pupil for 2023/24 • Number of pupils and characteristics • Free school meal (FSM) eligibility – 3-year average • Teacher numbers and Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) <p>Performance measure data for 2022/23 is expected to be updated on the website in early 2024.</p>									
1.04	<p>National outcomes at key stage 4 2022/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022/23, the average Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) was 356.5 points. This was a small increase from 354.4 points in 2018/19. • The average Skills Challenge Certificate indicator was 31.6 points. • Learners scored highest in the literacy indicator. The average literacy indicator was 39.7 points, the average numeracy indicator was 37.1 points, and the average science indicator was 36.9 points. 									
1.05	<p>National outcomes at key stage 4 by pupil characteristics 2022/2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females scored higher in the Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version). However, the gap between males and females narrowed from 32.9 to 24.4 points from 2018/19 • Pupils not entitled to free school meals scored higher in the Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) with 293.8 points than pupils eligible for free school meals with 382.6 points and the gap widened since results in 2018/2019 from 77.3 points to 88.7 points. • The gap between White British learners and Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils widened in the Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version), with Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils achieving better outcomes than White British pupils. 									
1.06	<p>Flintshire outcomes at key stage 4 in 2022/23</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Performance Measure</th> <th>Flintshire 2023</th> <th>Wales 2023</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Capped 9 points score (interim) *</td> <td>351.6</td> <td>356.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% of Capped 9 points score (interim) contribution made up of non-GCSEs (other 6 slots only) *</td> <td>25.5</td> <td>29.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Performance Measure	Flintshire 2023	Wales 2023	Capped 9 points score (interim) *	351.6	356.5	% of Capped 9 points score (interim) contribution made up of non-GCSEs (other 6 slots only) *	25.5	29.3
Performance Measure	Flintshire 2023	Wales 2023								
Capped 9 points score (interim) *	351.6	356.5								
% of Capped 9 points score (interim) contribution made up of non-GCSEs (other 6 slots only) *	25.5	29.3								

WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator – points score	34.0	31.6
Literacy Indicator – points score	39.8	39.7
Numeracy Indicator – points score	37.5	37.1
Science Indicator – points score	38.0	36.9
5+ A*-A or equivalent *	17.9	20.3

Caution needs to be applied when comparing these results as Flintshire has a current qualification profile that reflects a higher local expectation of a focus on GCSE qualifications over non-GCSE than the current national average. This means that the Capped 9 and A*A indicators will be suppressed in comparison to the national profile. Schools make considered decisions around their curriculum and qualification offer to make sure they are able to best meet the needs of each cohort of learners.

1.07 Flintshire pupil characteristics at key stage 4 2022/23

- Females scored higher in Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) at 365 points than males with 339.2. This was a slightly wider gap at 25.8 points in comparison with the national gap of 24.4 points.
- Pupils not entitled to free school meals scored higher in the Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) with 375.5 points than pupils eligible for free school meals with 287.4 points. The gap was slightly smaller at 88.1 points compared to the national gap of 88.8 points.
- In the subject indicators of literacy, numeracy and science, females scored higher than males in literacy and science but slightly lower in numeracy. The widest gap was in literacy where males scored 37.5 compared to females who scored 42.2. This is a slightly smaller gap of 4.7 points in Flintshire compared to the Wales gap in literacy between girls and boys at 5 points.
- The science indicator is statistically higher than the Wales average points score (38.0 compared to 36.9)
- The 5+A*-A is lower than the Wales average (17.9 compared to 20.3)

1.08 Comparisons on modelled outcomes based on FSM eligibility in 2022/23

Performance Measure	Flintshire 2023	Modelled score
Capped 9 (interim)	364.1	368.2
Welsh Bacc Skills Challenge Certificate	35.3	35.5
Literacy Indicator	41.1	41.2
Numeracy	38.7	38.2
Science	39.4	38.4

1.09 **National A level context 2022/23**

The 2021/22 and 2022/23 examination periods were transitional. In 2022/23, Qualifications Wales set the results at a national level at a midway between 2018/19 and 2021/22. For 2022/23, the percentage of A levels awarded A*- A and A*-C was still higher than before the pandemic.

	<p>Given the varying examination arrangements for learners since 2019, and work on developing new consistent performance measures at post 16, caution must be exercised in making any comparisons about outcomes between subsequent years.</p>
1.10	<p>Consistent performance measures for post -16.</p> <p>Since 2014/2015, Welsh Government has been committed to developing new performance measures in the post 16 sector, that will enable measurement of learner outcomes on a programme basis and to do so consistently across sixth forms and colleges for the first time. The timescale for this work was impacted by the pandemic.</p> <p>These new performance measures at post 16 replace the previous separate measures of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sixth forms - the Level 3 threshold and points scores, based on learners who take exams; and • colleges - learning activity success rates, based on learners enrolled and their outcomes within a single year of study. <p>They are intended to be used together to give a rounded picture of sixth forms' and colleges' outcomes, with no one measure being more important than the others. They are not used to derive an overall 'score' or rating for each provider.</p> <p>The three measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement - a measure of the completion and attainment of learners undertaking A level, vocational and Welsh Bacculaureate learning programmes. • Value added - a measure of the progress made by learners, over and above what would normally be expected based on their prior attainment and gender. • Destinations - a measure of the proportion of learners who progress into further learning (including higher education) and/or employment. <p>The reports provided to schools and colleges to date as these new measures are rolled out and refined, are specifically intended for internal use. It is the intention of Welsh Government to publish provider level outcomes to a wider audience at a future date via an online portal, currently in development. This portal is expected to be similar to <i>My Local School</i> with a mix of tables and graphs. Welsh Government do not expect the portal to be in place before 2024/25, recognising the Covid-related disruption to assessment processes.</p> <p>Welsh Government currently produces an annual report on the completion and success rates of learners on vocational programmes, general education programmes (including A levels) and the Welsh Bacculaureate. The release date for the report covering August 2022 – July 2023 is scheduled for March 2024.</p>

1.11	<p>National outcomes for A level pupils aged 17 (sixth form outcomes) as at 27th September 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022/23 the percentage of A Level entries awarded A*-A, A* to C and A*-E grades decreased from 2021/22. The largest decrease was at A* - A, with a decrease of 7.2 percentage points. • The percentage of pupils awarded A*-A grades was 34.2% • The percentage of pupils awarded A*- C grades was 80.5% • The percentage of pupils awarded A*-E grades was 99.4%
1.12	<p>Outcomes for A level pupils nationally aged 17 (sixth form) by pupil characteristics up and includes the results of successful appeals up to 27th September 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females outperformed males at A*-A and A* -C grades; the gap at A*-E was negligible. • The gap between White British pupils and Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils widened at A*-A and A-C grades with Black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils achieving better outcomes than White British pupils; the gap at A*-E was negligible. • There is no figure for free school meal entitlement because the number of such pupils in the cohort is too low to allow meaningful comparisons.
1.13	<p>Outcomes for A level learners in Flintshire aged 17 (sixth form) (WJEC results only, August 2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of entries in Flintshire was 1048 • The percentage A*-A grades awarded was 32.3% • The percentage A*-C grades awarded was 79.4% • The percentage A*-E grades awarded was 98.3% <p>This data does not include any minor adjustments as a result of any successful appeals by learners; post results day raw data is not made available at local authority level. National 2022/23 achievement data will be made available in March 2024. This will include the national publication and individual school and college reports which will be sent directly to each institution (containing their own data). Destinations data is provided on a different timescale to the achievement measures to allow time for learners to progress into a sustained destination and for their data to be collected, matched, and analysed. For destinations, the latest data published is for 2020/21 and the 2022/22 data is expected to be available next September.</p>
1.14	<p>All Flintshire schools with sixth forms are supported by the local authority and GwE to have access to value added data through a system called ALPS, to support their self-evaluation work at post 16. ALPS data supports schools in looking at the value that they add to the learning and attainment of their learners. For A level outcomes, the starting point is an average GCSE score. This helps schools to identify strengths and plan improvement priorities at subject level and for groups of learners. Analysis of this value-added data based on information submitted by schools suggests progress of students post-16 is strong. In 2023, all six Flintshire schools with post 16 provision had a 'red' strong three-year T score. The three- year T score is</p>

	the average of the 3 grades over three years and gives a sense of performance over time.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Council commissions its school improvement services through GwE via an Inter-Authority Agreement with the other North Wales councils. This sets the value of the financial contribution from Flintshire which can be reviewed every three years.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.</p> <p>The Council's Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment that outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Anti-poverty Impact – The local authority seeks to mitigate the impact of poverty through its partnership work programme and through the careful monitoring by GwE Supporting Improvement Advisers (SIAs) of how schools use their Pupil Development Grant (PDG) to support those pupils at risk of potential underachievement. Schools are also required to publish their plans for the use of PDG annually.</p> <p>Equalities Impact – The 2019 inspection of Flintshire's education services undertaken by Estyn recognised good practice in provision for pupils' wellbeing and additional learning needs. This continues to be reflected in Flintshire's values, strategy, provision and outcomes.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Learner outcome data is a core element of the annual self-evaluation procedures undertaken by the Education & Youth Portfolio and this is consulted upon with all key education stakeholders.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Welsh Government Statistical Release, examination results 2022/23</p> <p>https://www.gov.wales/examination-results</p> <p>My Local school https://mylocalschool.gov.wales/</p> <p>WG Consistent performance measures post -16</p> <p>https://www.gov.wales/consistent-performance-measures-post-16-learning-learner-destinations</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Average Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) – Introduced in 2018/19 and is reached by adding a pupil’s 9 best examination results which must include English or Welsh First Language, Mathematics or Numeracy and a Science GCSE. A single A* grade at GCSE = 58 points, an A grade = 52 points, a C grade = 40 points and so on. This does not indicate the range or distribution of scores for pupils, who individually will have a wide range. This indicator is intended to reflect outcomes for schools and not to assess individual pupil performance.</p> <p>The Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) – forms part of the Welsh Baccalaureate and is assessed at either Foundation Level 1 or National Level 2. National Level 2 is graded A*- C and Foundation Level 1 is graded as Pass* and Pass. The SCC focuses more on coursework completed during the academic year rather than final examination.</p> <p>Subject Performance Indicators (Literacy, Numeracy and Science)- the headline subject indicators show the average score of all included pupils in Wales. The highest average points score possible is 58 (should every pupil achieve an A*) and the lowest average points score is 16 (should every pupil achieve a G)</p> <p>Free School meals – pupils are eligible for free school meals if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or support payments.</p>

GwE – Regional School Effectiveness & Improvement Service for North Wales

ALPS Education - Value added system measuring progress against a standardised starting point. For A level outcomes, the starting point is an average GCSE score.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation representing the eight largest national awarding bodies offering qualifications in the UK. These qualifications include GCSEs, A levels, Scottish Highers as well as vocational qualifications.

The Welsh Joint Education Council (WJEC) is an examination board, providing qualifications and exam assessment to schools and colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and independent regions. WJEC is the largest provider in Wales.