

**Report to:** Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 31 January 2019

**Lead Member/Officer:** Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People/  
Head of Education and Children's Services

**Report Author:** Principal Education Manager and GwE Secondary Lead

**Title:** Verified External Examination Results 2018

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**1. What is the report about?**

The verified KS4 and post 16 examination performance of Denbighshire secondary schools.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information regarding the performance of Denbighshire schools in the 2018 external examinations.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That members review and comment on the performance of schools against previous performance and agree areas for improvement.

**4. Key Stage 4 Comparative data**

This report is different to previous years to take account of the Welsh Government (WG) introducing significant changes to how performance measures are reported. Following Welsh Government consultation on future publication of teacher assessments, there is no comparative nor benchmarking information available.

Significant changes to the pattern and numbers of pupils sitting exams in the Summer 2018 has had an impact on results as demonstrated in the proportion of grades across all subjects in the A+ to C range in Wales decreasing by 1.2pp to 61.6%. GCSEs are being reformed and 15 updated subjects were sat this summer for the first time. The new GCSE suite of qualifications in Science was examined for the first time in 2018, and coincides with the changes to the performance indications at KS4, to include only GCSE results for Science, as two measures in the capped 9 indicator.

There has been substantial change to grade boundaries since the summer of 2017 and November 2017 compared to the summer of 2018, particularly at C grade in English and mathematics. This has made it difficult for schools to ensure accurate projections and target setting. Since September, schools and officers have sought clarity regarding the reasons for this increase. In October, Qualifications Wales published a report on grade boundaries in English specifically. Despite Qualifications Wales' findings the head teachers of our secondary schools along with officers are in

agreement that Denbighshire's schools' data were greatly influenced by decisions regarding registration.

Analysis of Denbighshire's results based on the Welsh Government's main indicators Initial Analysis. In 2018, there was a decrease in the percentage of each main indicator in comparison with 2017, particularly in Science and the Capped 9 Score.

Performance Measures	2017	2018	Wales 18
TL2+	50.0	47.5	55.1
TL2	63.6	59.8	66.9
TL1	90.2	87	93.6
ENGLISH	59.2	55.8	62.6
WELSH	79.3	77.6	74.3
MATHEMATICS	53.5	50.8	59.4
NUMERACY	55.6	54	58
MATHEMATICS (Best of the 2)	58.4	57.0	63.5
SCIENCE	66.8	54.3	63
5A*/A	14.4	12.3	18
CAPPED 9 SCORE	333.9	323.5	350.1
ATTENDANCE	93.7	93.5	93.9

Verified results in Welsh has remained consistently high. 22% of year 11 Denbighshire Pupils entered GCSE Welsh as a first language, in comparison with 17.3% nationally. L2 English performance has decreased 3.4% but Denbighshire performance has been significantly hit by a significant spike in 2018 Summer English grade boundaries. (Appendix 1)

Although 2018 saw a similar and significant increase in mathematics and numeracy grade boundaries, in Denbighshire there is a smaller decrease in Mathematics. As a result, Numeracy and the percentage of learners that achieved one of the two has affected the expected progress in the TL2+ indicator. As a result performance at L2+ is 3.7% below. Because of the changes in the Science qualification, comparison with 2017 performance is not possible.

While the gap in performance between boys and girls has increased in nearly all indicators, and in most part due to a dip in boys' performance, it is also actually the case that the performance of girls in L2+, English, maths, numeracy and best of both actually increased. Despite the volatility in grade boundaries girls performed better in 2018 in comparison with 2017.

Performance of free school meal (FSM) pupils on the L2+ indicator increased significantly in 2018, and as a result performance in 2018 is broadly in line with Wales average, 27.5% Denbighshire, 29.4% Wales. In many indicators, the difference between non FSM and FSM performance has decreased.

### Exclusions

In 2016-17 there were 0.5 permanent exclusions per 1,000 pupils in maintained schools and pupil referral units in Denbighshire. This compares favourably with the Welsh rate of 0.4. In Denbighshire there were 1.6 fixed term exclusions of over five days per 1000 pupils in maintained schools and pupil referral units in Denbighshire. This is less than the national figure of 1.9. Fixed term exclusions of five days or less are considerably below the national rate (104.5 per 100 pupils) in our special schools at 81.8. Our mainstream schools exclude at a rate of 102.8 per 1000 pupils, compared with a rate of 32.4 nationally. (Appendix 3)

## Attendance

Primary attendance has improved over the last five years by 0.8% from 84.3% in 2012-3 to 95.1% in 2017, this is above the Welsh average of 94.9%. Over the last three years there has been little difference between the genders and the FSM/non-FSM difference has narrowed during this time. Secondary attendance has declined by 0.2% in the last year, however there has been a trend of improvement by 1.2% since 2013 from 92.4% to 93.5%, in 2018 this places the LA 17<sup>th</sup> in Wales and Welsh average of 93.9%. The gender gap reduced by 0.2% in 2017 from 0.5% in 2016. The FSM/non-FSM gap remains static at 5.7% in 2018. (Appendix 4)

## Strengths and successes

- Inclusive schools, it is also noted that there is strong collaboration to develop an extensive and balanced curriculum and provision for all learners.
- Welsh (first language) performance is consistently high.
- Primary school attendance
- Significant improvements in specific schools with regard to some indicators.
- An improvement in FSM performance

## Areas for improvement

- Improve performance in English, maths and science at key stage 4
- In specific schools, continue to improve the quality of departmental expertise and leadership in the core subjects.
- Secondary school attendance.
- Fixed term exclusions of five days or less
- Reduce in school variance particularly across core subjects

## Key Stage 5

Performance Measures	2017	2018	+ / - 2017/2018	Wales 2018
6th Form Level 3 - % 17 year olds achieving	97.5	98.2	+0.7	97.6
6th Form 3 A*-A % 17 year olds achieving	9.9	10.4	+0.5	13.4
6th Form 3 A*-C % 17 year olds achieving	51.0	53.6	+2.6	58.1

## Strengths and successes

- Improved performance in all three of the main post 16 national KPI, with L3 above national average. Appendix 2

## Areas for Improvement

- Continue to improve outcomes with more effective use of ALPS as a target setting and tracking tool.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

This report contributes to the corporate priority of Young People: A place where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so. See that every child achieving the expected standard at the end of primary school (Level 4, Key Stage 2) will achieve 5 GCSEs A\*-C (Level 2 Key Stage 4), including English or Welsh (1<sup>st</sup> language) and Maths, by the end of secondary school.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

*N/A*

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

*A prosperous Denbighshire  
A resilient Denbighshire  
A healthier Denbighshire  
A more equal Denbighshire  
A Denbighshire of cohesive communities  
A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language  
A globally responsible Denbighshire*

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

*N/A*

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

*N/A*

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

- The Local Authority and GwE will continue to challenge Headteachers and managers in schools to ensure that schools are taking appropriate action to improve standards.
- To reduce any risks to school support and challenge in Denbighshire schools, Education Managers within the Authority monitor and assess the quality of the regional education service (GwE).
- Ensuring improvement in external examination results.
- Ensure continued improvement against the reduction in 14-19 Learning Pathways Grant and ESF TRAC funding.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Scrutiny's powers with respect to reviewing performance and policy objectives is outlined in Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution.

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