

Cabinet Report

10 June 2015

Educational Attainment/Standards Report 2014-15



Report of Corporate Management Team
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Councillor Ossie Johnson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

1. This report summarises how Durham County Council's Education Department provides support and intervention, including intensive support for schools in most need, to ensure the best educational outcomes for children and young people in Durham. It also sets out the results from tests and examinations at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4/5 for 2014 which, when compared with national averages, provide the key outcome measures for primary and secondary education respectively.

Key Stage 2 - Background

2. At the end of the primary stage of education there are still formal, national assessments of pupils' attainment in mathematics and English, through externally set and marked tests for all 11 year-olds. Writing is judged by teacher assessments, moderated by the local authority. Assessments are made against pre-set levels, with level 4 being the "expected level" for this age group and level 6 being the highest achievable through the tests.

Key Stage 2 - Outcomes

3. The table below sets out the percentage of pupils in Durham and nationally that achieved level 4+ in English (reading), English (writing), mathematics, and the three combined at the expected level for this age group, in 2014. This is the key reported outcome measure at KS2.

KEYSTAGE 2		
	Level 4+	
	Durham LA	National
Reading	89	89
Writing (teacher assessment)	85	85
Mathematics	87	86
Reading/Writing/Mathematics	79	78

4. Attainment levels across the local authority continue to be broadly in line with national levels and the strong trend of improvement in Durham continues year on year.

5. Reading test results in particular saw improvements that meant 50% of Durham's children obtained a Level 5 or better. Results in the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test also improved with 78% of pupils getting a Level 4 or above compared to 75% in 2013.
6. Writing at Level 5+ remains a priority for Durham schools, and support in this area is provided by both Education Development Advisers (EDAs) and subject specialists, with information routinely shared at termly head teacher briefings and subject networks.
7. The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress (2+ levels of progress) improved in 2014; 92% in Reading, 94% in Writing, and 91% in Maths. These are all one percentage point above national state-funded schools' results. In summary, children completing Key Stage 2 in Durham schools in 2014 made better progress in all three subjects than those leaving primary schools in 2013.
8. Amongst disadvantaged children in the county, a group which includes our looked-after children, 69% reached Level 4+ in all three subjects. This is up from the result of 65% for the equivalent cohort last year. It is also 2 percentage points better than the 2014 national result for disadvantaged children, reflecting the impressive work that has been done by schools, supported by the local authority, to provide improving educational opportunities for this priority group.
9. Another priority in Durham and more widely, boys' achievement, improved from 73% getting Level 4+ in RW&M in 2013, to 76% this year.

Key Stage 4 - Background

10. Assessment at Key Stage 4, which represents the end of compulsory schooling, continues to be through externally set and marked GCSE and GCSE equivalent examinations across a wide range of subjects and courses. These are graded from A*-G with national benchmarks of achievement. Annual results from examinations at each of Key Stages 4 and 5 (sixth form) are analysed in order to identify trends across the local authority and to inform discussions with specific schools regarding challenge and support.
11. The table below shows 2014 outcomes. There is a continuing rising trend in all measures, 5+ A*-C (including English and maths), 5+ A*-C and 5+ A*-G.
12. National accountability measures for GCSEs changed in 2014 when the government determined that when a student takes more than one examination in the same subject, or re-takes the same examination, only the first entry counts. This first applied in 2014 but was implemented after many schools had already committed pupils to certain examination pathways: hence a fall in both national and local pass rates. This was further affected by the ruling that a maximum of two approved GCSE qualifications, such as BTECs, could count in the performance measures for each student, whereas previously there had been no limit.
13. In summary, despite national accountability measures changing, Durham was once again in 2014 above the national average in all the recognised national benchmarks. The year-on-year rate of improvement in GCSE outcomes has been significantly greater than the national rate of improvement since 2007.

KEY STAGE 4	2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Durham LA	National	Durham LA	National	Durham LA	National	Durham LA	National
5+ A*-C (Eng/maths)	60.0	59.0	62.5	59.4	63.1	59.2	57.6	53.4
5+ A*-C (or equiv)					91.4	81.8	65.0	63.8
5+ A*-G					96.6	94.3	92.9	89.7
Ave. Points Score* <i>calculated from grades achieved per student</i>					517.7	459.2	358.8	355.1

14. In terms of students making expected progress, 72.7% did so in English (against national percentage of 70.4%), and 68.3% did so in mathematics (national average 70.8%). There is an improving trend in maths in Durham, but focused work is being undertaken by subject specialists and advisory teachers, working with effective departments in schools, to improve rates of expected progress in this subject.
15. Other areas for improvement at KS4 are increasing attainment at A*/A, reducing the attainment gap between pupils receiving the pupil premium and others, and reducing the expected progress gap between pupils receiving the pupil premium and others. In general, these areas for improvement reflect national and local priorities.
16. However, Durham remains 3rd out of the 12 regional local authorities for the key measure, 5+ A* - C (E/M). **Nationally Durham LA is in the top third of all local authorities** against this measure, and is ranked 6th of all LAs for the percentage of pupils getting 5+ A* - C. This is as a result of consistent, accurate support and challenge from Education Development Partners, subject specialist inspectors and other school improvement personnel, contributing to the high number of good or better schools in Durham compared with both regional and national statistics.

KS5 results

17. Outcomes at Key Stage 5 continue to compare very well with national averages. The percentage of students receiving two or more A-levels at the highest grades improved significantly on the previous year. In all recognised national benchmarks where the data has been made available, Durham is ahead of national averages.

	2+ A*-B		2+A*-E		APS	
	Durham (Community Sixth Forms)	National (Community Sixth Forms)	Durham (Community Sixth Forms)	National (Community Sixth Forms)	Durham (Community Sixth Forms)	National (Community Sixth Forms)
2013	49.8	45.3	98.7	97.2	805.4	769.7
2014	53.3	46.6	98.7	98.0	808.7	773.4

(Source: NCER/EPAS)

Role of DCC's School Improvement Team

18. In almost all cases, schools are supported in their efforts to achieve these very high educational standards by the direct challenge and support of school improvement officers. These officers work closely with head teachers, senior leadership teams and governing bodies to interpret school data accurately and to set appropriately demanding attainment targets for all pupils. Comprehensive data analysis enables school improvement officers to establish consistent baselines so that support is well-identified and the challenge to improve is always accurately gauged.

19. School improvement officers provide subject specific support and intervention, as required, including supporting schools with monitoring, evaluation, work scrutiny and moderation of standards. Unlike other local authorities in the region, Durham provides termly networks in almost all subjects, and these are well-attended and highly regarded for the quality of training provided and the strategic direction and co-ordination they offer for mid leaders in schools. The school improvement team is involved in a comprehensive training offer for all teaching and non-teaching staff, from those joining the profession to experienced head teachers.
20. A published intervention and support policy is well understood by schools, and clarifies the level of monitoring and support provided, which is in inverse proportion to success according to Ofsted inspection criteria. The Head of education and school improvement managers meet regularly with the Lead Member.
21. Where schools are identified through the council's monitoring as requiring improvement (or in danger of falling into an Ofsted category of concern), action to improve standards in these schools is decisive. The focus of action is predominantly on securing provision and outcomes for pupils with support that is immediate, intensive and sustained until internal capacity in the school has been assured and attainment improved. Where schools are identified as causing concern, a communications protocol ensures that elected members are automatically notified.
22. Reports from HMI inspections of Durham schools that have been deemed as 'requiring improvement' or worse frequently cite the impact and influence of the local authority's support in driving improvements that are made. A single example, but representative of many similar comments, is: "The local authority has an accurate grasp of school performance, because the checks that it makes are robust. Effective support and training, including for governors, have added to the drive and pace of improvement." (Ofsted inspection report published April 2015).
23. It is as a result of this fast and efficient intervention when necessary, plus consistent, accurate challenge at all times, that standards in most County Durham schools remain impressively above national averages and above results achieved in local authorities which are statistically comparable to Durham.
24. The most recent published inspection data indicates that the percentage of primary and secondary schools judged to be good or better in **County Durham is 87.1%**. The national figure is 81.1% and the regional figure is 86.1%.

Conclusion

25. Durham continues to compare very favourably with the national picture in terms of test and examination outcomes for children and young people.
26. The local authority has a confident and firmly established knowledge of attainment and progress measures, with understanding of all key areas for improvement. It is as a direct result of the thorough and detailed involvement of school improvement officers in the process of support and challenge to schools, that standards remain high and continue to improve across the vast majority of Durham schools. The vital local knowledge shared by the Education Service officers is recognised by the both the Regional Commissioner and Senior Ofsted HMI, and is invaluable as the local authority anticipates and takes action to secure a good or better education for all children and young people.

Recommendation

27. Cabinet is requested to note the content of this report and to disseminate the information contained within the report more widely as appropriate.

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Appendix 1

Improving Early Years Foundation Stage results

Percentage with 'Good level of development' *	2013	2014	Improvement
Durham	42	57	15
National	52	60	8

* expected level at end of reception class

Improving Key Stage 1 results

Percentage at Level 2B or above in:	2012	2013	2014
reading	75	77	79
writing	64	67	69
mathematics	75	77	79
Overall average points score	15.2	15.5	16.2

Improving Key Stage 2 results

	2012	2013	2014
Percent Level 4+ (RWM combined)	75	78	79
Percent making 2 or more levels of progress in:			
reading	91	90	92
writing	91	92	94
mathematics	90	90	91

Headline GCSE results remain above national

	2012	2013	2014 Durham	2014 National
5+ A*-C (including Eng/Maths)	62.5	63.1	57.6	56.6

Headline A-level results remain above national

		2013	2014
Durham Community Sixth Forms	2+ A*-B	49.8	53.3
	2+ A*-E	98.7	98.7
National Community Sixth Forms	2+ A*-B	45.3	46.6
	2+ A*-E	97.2	98.0

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk – Potential reputational issues if results dip in the future

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - NA

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – Any changes to school monitoring systems will be subject to consultation with schools.

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None