

Agenda Item 51 Appendix 9

This appendix provides further information about GCSE results as requested by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20th January

Performance of ethnic groups

Most of the larger ethnic groups performed above the national average and the figure for the white group by the main measures. The percentage of the Black/Black British group (48 pupils) gaining 5+A*-C including English and maths 54.2% in 2009 and 57.9% of the Mixed / dual heritage group (107 pupils). The Asian group (48 pupils) achieved above the LA average and 45.8% gained the 5 good GCSEs including maths and English this is below national average. The relatively small number of pupils in some of these groups means that the statistics should be treated with some caution.

Standards at GCSE

The 2009 Ofsted judged our children's services to be performing well overall. Whilst recognising that achievement at age 16 is below that of similar areas (we are 8th in the group of 11 areas deemed similar to us for the headline measure) the report also states that proportion of young people who achieve qualifications by age 19 is significantly higher than those other areas. We have a high proportion of pupils staying in education at 16.

Citywide the performance in GCSE examinations was not satisfactory in 2009 although it was variable across the schools. Patcham High, Falmer High and Dorothy Stringer increased their results markedly. There are individual improvement plans for each school that is of concern and our monitoring shows that we are predicting a better result in 2010.

There was slight decline in the percentage gaining 5+ A*-C grades including English and maths, from 44.5% in 2008 to 44.3% in 2009. This means we are below the national average which increased 2.2 percentage points to 49.7% in 2009. This outcome was unexpected and we failed to meet our target for the year by a considerable margin partly the result of surprisingly low results in two schools, in English at Hove Park and mathematics at Varndean. In both schools immediate action was taken to ensure improvement. Some other schools that did not meet their target and overall we are nearly 2% down on our citywide target.

At Varndean the headteacher undertook a review of the reason for unexpected maths results and we have provided an experienced and effective consultant to support developments in the mathematics department. Likewise in Hove Park analysis of grades and exam answers has led to an action plan which is ably supported by our English consultant. Our monitoring in both schools shows that these problems are being resolved.

Narrowing the gap in educational achievement

This is high priority for the Advisory service and schools are challenged to improve in this regard by their School Improvement Partners.

Free School Meals (FSM) is the proxy indicator for disadvantage and there was a pleasing improvement in the attainment of pupils eligible for Free School Meals by all the main measures and the gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils narrowed from 30.1% to 26% in relation to the percentage gaining 5+A*-C including English and maths

The attainment of statemented SEN pupils improved by all the main measures, though the picture for non-statemented SEN pupils was more mixed. The SEN/non-SEN gap regarding the percentage gaining 5+A*-C including English and maths narrowed in 2009 from 47.3% to 43.8%.

Use of resources

The majority of funding is devolved to schools through a formula which includes numbers of children, their age, the level of need of those pupils (special educational needs and FSM) and the size and nature of the buildings that need to be maintained by the school. Schools with the lowest performance receive additional funding and have support of consults and advisers to accelerate their improvement.

The role of the schools advisory service within Children's Services is to challenge schools where there is underperformance and support them to improve. There is a published strategy for School Improvement which structures the work of the teams working with schools.

The Standards fund resource is allocated to schools to an agreed formula which is based on passed performance. We employ specialist staff who will work with English, mathematics and science teachers. This is a very small team and their time is allocated according to need to improve. One of the difficulties in Brighton & Hove is our rapid turnover of staff especially in mathematics but also in English. We know that the cost of housing is a significant feature in this .

The report from the annual review of our services by senior advisers from the National Strategies states:

'The LA has a clear structure for assigning support for schools' 'The LA knows its schools well and is clear about their strengths' 'The LA supports schools through a wide range of targeted programmes to raise standards and accelerate the rate of progress'

In 2008 there were 3 schools where less than 30% of pupils achieved 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Both Falmer and Patcham High School have made good progress (with Patcham achieving 36%) and both have praised the support they have received.

Portslade Community College did not improve its examination results but a recent Ofsted report says that :
'The newly appointed principal has made a good start in bringing together the senior and middle leaders and has set out a clear direction for improving the school's performance.' Also '...the local authority has provided targeted and appropriate support to the school.'

Each school receiving support from the National Challenge programme has been assigned an experienced adviser and significant funding which has been used mostly for additional staffing in core subjects. Falmer and Portslade CC each have 20 days adviser support and Hove Park and Patcham 12 days. In addition Falmer has a consultant headteacher to support the acting head for 2 days each week and Portslade CC and Hove Park will also have 2 day a week support from consultant headteachers starting this term. The advisory service subject consultants are focussed on supporting English, mathematics, science and ICT teachers in each of the 4 schools and they are in the Supporting Good programme. Each school has had additional Education Welfare Officer support and governors have received training.

All schools in the National Challenge programme have a Raising Attainment Plan which is monitored every 6 weeks and the headteachers and chairs of governors are further challenged and supported at a 6 weekly meeting with the Assistant Director for Learning Schools and Skills and key officers from finance, human resources and school and communities teams.

Redress poor standards of behaviour

There are no schools in which behaviour is less than satisfactory. The statement that the standard of behaviour is poor in our schools is erroneous. The OnePlace report uses a statistic derived from schools Ofsted reports. One of our schools have outstanding behaviour, three good and five are satisfactory. The proportion that are good is less than half which is not acceptable and therefore we have a strategy 'Securing Good' in which all five schools are participating. In a recent inspection of our advisory service this was deemed to be appropriate and the schools are participating well. The criteria for determining a 'good' behaviour judgement have been made more challenging in the revised Ofsted framework so that whilst 2 recently inspected schools have improved they maintain a satisfactory grade.

The key to improved behaviour is good quality teaching that engages pupils and a curriculum that meets their needs. Our schools are making significant changes to the range of courses available from age 14 and the curriculum for the first three years in school is also changing.

We have also published a more general Behaviour Strategy and this has resulted in fewer exclusions, a reducing number of fixed term exclusions and increased attendance at school.

Standards in science

The National Indicator 84 concerns the proportion of young people attaining 2 science grades at A*-C level and in Brighton and Hove this proportion is well below national average. This indicator was included when the National Curriculum changed so that 2 sciences were no longer required but students were *expected* to study **core** science and **additional** science. In Brighton & Hove a significant number of students (540 or 26%) are entered for only one science GCSE. This is much lower than the national picture and certainly does not meet the expectation of the national curriculum. A small number of students 124 across 4 schools are entered for 3 science qualifications. Of those entered for at least 2 sciences, 52% gain an A*-C grade which is close to the national average.

The poor performance in this national indicator is due to the much lower than expected number of students who study 2 science GCSE. Without 2 science qualifications at A*-C grades students cannot study science at a higher level. The advisory service is working with schools on a project to improve the experience that students have in the science curriculum in Years 7-9 so that more young people will opt for the subject in Year 10.