

# Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	28 February 2024
Title of Report:	<b>Key Stage 4 Outcomes Report</b>
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Jim Barnicott (Head of Education)
Contact Email:	Jim.barnicott@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## **Purpose of Report**

To provide commentary and analysis for the 2022/23 GCSE exam series.  
For councillors to review the key stage 4 GCSE outcomes data for the 2023 examination series, recognise areas of progress and to review the challenges.

## **Recommendations and Reasons**

To note the report.

## **Alternative options considered and rejected**

- I. Not applicable.

## **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

This report has specific links to the fairness aspect of the Corporate Plan. Ensuring that all young people achieve the outcomes they are capable of is key to addressing inequality.

## **Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

No direct implications.

## **Financial Risks**

No direct implications.

## **Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

No direct implications.

**Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

**Evidence shows that educational outcomes of children who experience poverty are disproportionately impacted and that mitigation is required in order to ensure that the attainment gap with all pupils is reduced and removed. For schools, pupil premium funding is the cornerstone strategy for removing inequality of outcomes.**

\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

No direct implications.

**Appendices**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report							

**Background papers:**

\*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Education & Learning Annual Report.							

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Haley											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 20/02/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Cresswell											
Date approved: 20/02/2024											

## Context

There are 17 mainstream secondary schools in the city. One of which, Millbay Academy, is all through. As of January 2024, schools fell into the following inspection categories:

Judgement	Outstanding	Good	RI	Inadequate
Number of schools		14	3	1

The inspection landscape in for Plymouth secondary schools has significantly improved. The number of schools judged either good or outstanding by Ofsted stands at 86.6% (87.6% national) up from 77.1% in the 2021/22 academic year.

The UTC (inadequate in 2019) and Sir John Hunt (requires improvement in 2019) are examples of two schools who have moved to Good Ofsted judgements within this time period.

As of the May 2023 census the Year 11 secondary school population stood at 2854 pupils.

Nationally there has been a 9.1 percentage point (pp) increase in the proportion of secondary pupils eligible for free schools meals since 2018/19 from 15.0% to 24.1% in 2022/23; the increase in Plymouth is higher at 9.5pp (16.1% in 2018/19 to 25.6% in 2022/23). Leaders in Academy Trusts, Public Health and Education Participation and skills have recognised this as an issue to address in order to ensure that more families receive the support they are entitled to.

Nationally, 17.3% of secondary pupils eligible for Free School Meals are taking up their entitlement. This is a 6.3pp increase on 2018/19. In Plymouth, 18.1% of eligible pupils are taking up their Free School Meal entitlement. This is 6.9pp increase on 2018/19.

## How is school improvement convened in Plymouth?

Plymouth City Council and every school in Plymouth has committed to working together to improve outcomes for children and young people across the city. Working closely with key partners such as the Education Endowment Fund, the Regional Schools' Commissioner, the Department for Education, the universities and City College Plymouth; as well as Headteachers, CEOs and their leadership teams there is now a long-standing committed to a collaborative and sustainable approach to ensure rapid school improvement.

[Place-based Plymouth Portal – Place-based School Improvement \(placebasedplymouth.org\)](https://placebasedplymouth.org)

The former Co-ordinator of the Place-Based plan, Anna Mills, stepped down in early February 2024 after 18 months in post. An appointment has been made for a successor. This will be announced by the end of February 2024.

Key education leaders are:

Who	Organisation	Role
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Moira Marder	Ted Wragg Trust (TWT)	CEO of TWT and Chair of the Place-based approach
TBC	TBC	Place-based plan co-ordinator
Shaun Nicholls	Plymouth Association of Primary Headteachers	Headteacher Widey Court Primary & Chair of Plymouth Association of Primary Headteachers
Lisa Linscott	Plymouth City	Director: Education, Participation & Skills

The 2023/24 Place-based plan has three priority areas:

1. Increase school attendance so that the overall school attendance figure is above 96%
2. Put children with SEND at the centre of school improvement plans, ensuring high quality inclusive approaches, strong understanding of SEND by all staff and rapid multi-agency preventative action for pupils at risk.
3. Reduce pupil educational mobility across the city so that all pupils have access to high-quality educational provision all the time.

### Outcomes for young people

Key stage 4 data in the Education and Learning Annual Report is taken from the DfE's release updated on 1 February 2024. The 2023 exam year saw the return of pre pandemic grading. As a result, the DfE have indicated that it is most meaningful to compare results to 2018/19, the last exam series before the pandemic. Nationally, GCSE results are similar to 2018/19. For example, the average attainment 8 score for all pupils in 2018/19 was 46.8 points compared with 46.4 points in 2022/23; and the average progress 8 score in both 2018/19 and 2022/23 was -0.03.

What are the key measures at GCSE?

**Attainment 8** measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list. Each individual grade a pupil achieves is assigned a point score, which is then used to calculate a pupil's Attainment 8 score (see second step below).

**Progress 8** is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight government approved school subjects. While these numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score.

**The Basis measure** provides the percentage of children achieving either grades 4 – 9 or grades 5 – 9 in both English and maths. A pass at grade 4 or higher is considered a standard pass, a pass at grade 5 or higher is considered a strong pass.

### Attainment 8

In line with the national picture, the average attainment 8 score for all pupils in Plymouth has returned to being slightly above those outcomes seen in 2018/19 (43.7 points to 45.0 points in 2022/23). However, the gap between the Plymouth and national average has closed from 3.1 points to 1.5. Since 2018/19, there has been a significant focus on raising attainment through the city's place-based approach. An example of this has been by driving up the standard of numeracy and literacy through a focus on professional development, for example, subject hubs for teachers in key curriculum areas. School leaders are confident that greater co-ordination and collaboration across the city across multi-academy trusts has led to improved results for young people.

### Basics measure

In line with the Attainment 8 picture, the number of children achieving a **standard pass** (grades 9-4) in English and maths has increased from the 2018/19 exam series by 4.2 percentage points (pp) to 60.9%. This is against a national benchmark of 65.4%. Over the same time period the national rate of increase was 0.5pp; should this rate be maintained the gap for Plymouth children against the national benchmark is likely to close for the 2027/28 exam series.

In raw numbers, 1774 of 2912 pupils achieved this measure. Whilst the gap between Plymouth and national stood at 8.2pp in 2018/19, in this last exam series it had closed to 4.5pp.

The number of children achieving a **strong pass** (grades 9-5) in English and maths has increased by 4.1pp to 41.7% from the 2018/19 exam series (37.6%).

This equates to 1214 children. Using this measure, performance over time in Plymouth, when comparing 2018/19 to 2022/23, is again better than that national. Nationally, the rate of increase is 2.3pp and in Plymouth it is 4.1pp.

### Progress 8

In 2018/19 exam series the gap between Plymouth and the national benchmark was 0.25 of a grade equating to approximately a quarter of a grade. In the last exam series 2022/23 this gap closed to 0.13 of a grade. Importantly the gap between Plymouth and our statistical neighbours has closed significantly from 0.14 of a grade to 0.02 of a grade. This indicates that progress rates should at least draw level with statistical neighbours for the 2023/24 exam series.

### Performance by gender

Across all progress and attainment measures, girls out-perform boys in the city. This gap is reflected in national data. In terms of standard passes (Grades 9-4) in English and maths between the 2018/19 and 2012/23 exam series; boys in Plymouth have made a gain of 5.2pp (1.7pp nationally) whilst girls have made a gain of 4.7pp (0.9pp nationally). In terms of a strong pass (Grade 9-5), boys have made a gain of 2.9pp (3.2pp nationally) whilst the gain of girls is 5.4pp (0.8pp nationally).

In terms of the overall Attainment 8 score, the performance of boys in Plymouth has improved by 0.9pp from the 2018/19 exam series compared to there being no movement nationally. The performance of girls in Plymouth has improved by at 1.5pp. This is better than national performance when girls saw a -0.9pp decline on 2018/19 exam series. There remains an overall performance gap for the 2022/23 exam series of 3.4pp between the genders in Plymouth compared to a gap nationally of 4.5pp.

In terms of Progress 8, in the 2022/23 exam series the progress of both boys and girls was below that of national comparator data; although the gap has closed in for both genders and improved in comparison to the 2018/19 exam series. The gap with national data has reduced to 0.14 of a grade for boys from 0.2; and 0.32 of a grade for girls to 0.13. In addition, for both genders, the gap with statistical neighbours has closed to 0.03 for girls and 0.03 for boys. Should the same rate of improvement be maintained, the gap with statistical neighbours will close for the 2024 exam series.

### Free school meals

Across all measures the attainment and progress of young people who are in receipt of free school meals has improved between the 2018/19 and 2022/23 exam series. In 2018/19 young people in Plymouth achieved almost an entire grade below their predicted outcome. However, in 2022/23 this had improved (albeit from a very low baseline) to approximately two thirds of a grade below predicted outcomes. Whilst these outcomes continue to present a very challenging picture, young people in Plymouth performed better than those in statistical neighbour authorities, and the gap in the Progress 8 measure with the national benchmark closed to 0.08 in 2022/23 from 0.4 in 2018/19.

Data indicates that the most significant challenge is raising the number of children achieving a strong pass in the basics. Against the measure the gap between national (6.5 percentage points (pp)) and statistical neighbours (3.2pp) has increased between the 2018/19 and 2022/23 exam series.

### **Pupils with SEND**

Currently 14.1% of pupils in Plymouth receive SEN Support. This is above the national benchmark of 13% and above the statistical neighbour benchmark of 13.5%.

The progress of young people significantly improved between 2018/19 and 2022/23 from almost a whole grade below predicted outcomes to under two thirds, which is broadly in line with the statistical neighbour benchmark. Should this improvement continue into the 2023/24 exam series, young people in Plymouth should draw level with the national benchmark of -0.45.

In terms of Attainment 8, young people in Plymouth achieved better than the statistical neighbour and on par with the national benchmark in 2022/23. This is a significant improvement from 2018/19 when Plymouth sat below both these benchmarks. Whilst Plymouth is now broadly in line with the statistical neighbour benchmark for the standard and strong basics measure and the gap in 2022/23 has significantly improved from 11.1pp in 2018/19 to 0.4pp in 2022/23 for strong pass; the standard pass gap has increased from being 0.8pp better than the statistical neighbour benchmark in 2018/19 to 0.7pp lower in 2022/23.

The overall picture for young people in Plymouth with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) is positive when compared to statistical neighbour benchmarks for Attainment 8 and the basics standard pass. Of particular note, more young people in Plymouth achieve a strong pass in English and maths with the rate in Plymouth doubling between the 2018/19 and 2022/23 exam series to 8.2% (6.9% national).

However, the rate of progress for this group was lower than the national benchmark and this has continued into the 2022/23 exam series standing at -0.25 of grade.

### **Summary**

The progress and attainment of all pupils has improved between 2018/19 and 2022/23, the two most comparable exam series. Against some measures, for example, those achieving a standard pass in English and maths; the rate of improvement has been greater than the national benchmark. In addition, the progress made by pupils in Plymouth has improved more rapidly than all pupils nationally – the gap is closing.

However, for some cohorts of pupils, for example, those in receipt of free school meals achieving a strong pass in the basics measure, significant gaps remain with key benchmarks. This gap is likely to be more marked when gender and attendance data is taken into consideration.

These gaps are recognised in the city's place-based plan and a number of strategies are being implemented to raise attainment and to provide specific support to vulnerable cohorts and those with SEND.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Target cohort</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
Vulnerable pupils panel	Persistent/severe absence/at risk of permanent exclusion/complex needs without an EHC plan	May 2024 in conjunction with health and school leaders
Early years to reception transition portal	Persistent/severe absence/SEND/known to a social worker	September 2024
Primary to secondary transition portal	Persistent/severe absence/SEND/known to a social worker	Evaluation for the 2022/23 cohort underway through the Ted Wragg Trust
Ordinarily available provision/graduated approach to inclusion	Persistent/severe absence/SEND/known to a social worker	Launch May 2024
Minimising in-year mobility	Persistent/severe absence/SEND/known to a social worker	Common transition and information offer for families to be launched May 2024
Development of vocational curriculum with City College Plymouth	Persistent/severe absence/in danger of permanent exclusion	September 2024 (school and College timetabling to be aligned)

## **ACTIONS**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>
Share data headlines with the Plymouth Education Board	Jim Barnicott	8 March 2024
Work with the place-based co-ordinator and MAT CEOs to ensure that the place-based plan continues to reflect city priorities in light of exam results, for example, increasing the number of boys achieving a good basics pass.	Jim Barnicott	31 April 2024
Ensure that all key plans and strategies, such as the attendance strategy and Send	Jim Barnicott	31 April 2024

improvement plan have actions linked to raising progress and attainment at KS4, particularly for vulnerable groups.		
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