

Title of Report:	Briefing note on GCSE Maths performance
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	21 st February 2012

Purpose of Report: To clarify to the Commission the previously reported performance information on GCSE maths results in the District's schools

Recommended Action: To note the report

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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Overall, GCSE results in West Berkshire were relatively flat as measured by those achieving 5 + A* - C grades, including English & Maths. 60.10% achieved this measure, in comparison to a national figure of 58.20%. When the measure is reduced to simply 5 + A*-C the West Berkshire figure increases to 60.8%, in comparison to 58.7% nationally.
- 1.2 When GCSE 'equivalent' qualifications are stripped out of the statistics, West Berkshire's GCSE 5 A* - C including English and Maths percentage pass is 58.40%, some 6% above the national figure of 52.40%
- 1.3 As well as absolute score, another key measure is the progress students make i.e. the journey they have made from the end of KS2 to GCSE results at the end of KS4.
- 1.4 Using this measure, 2011 progress in West Berkshire is as set out below in English and Maths.

	% making expected progress	
	English	Maths
England	71.80%	64.80%
West Berkshire	76.30%	68.60%

- 1.5 As can be seen, nationally, progress in Maths is below that in English, though on both measures, West Berkshire scores well above the national average.
- 1.6 Last year's GCSE Maths results varied across secondary schools, with some delivering a significant improvement. Unfortunately however, two larger schools slipped back, which had a negative impact on overall performance.
- 1.7 Key factors identified in both schools as contributing to lower performance include:
- Leadership and management of Maths
 - Quality of teaching and learning in some groups
 - Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of student progress
 - Unreliable data, including weak moderation
 - Lack of appropriate intervention for those students at risk of underachievement

- A significant number of students capable of achieving a C grade actually achieved a D grade

1.8 While Maths remains a shortage subject that is difficult to recruit to, it should be noted that in both the schools cited above the subject was taught by Maths specialists. Not to underplay however, the importance of recruiting high quality Maths teachers and heads of department. In terms of measures taken to address the drop in performance outlined above, these vary depending on the circumstances of each individual school. However, School Improvement interventions include:

- Deployment of the part-time LA Maths Advance Skills Teacher (AST) to support the Head of Department and staff to improve the quality of teaching.
- AST, supported by the School Improvement Partner (SIP) working with staff on tracking, progression and intervention programmes.

1.9 The Government have recognised how important it is to recruit good graduates into teaching maths and has set out incentive measures in its recently published teacher recruitment strategy 'Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers'. Maths is categorised as a 'high priority specialism' with training bursaries on offer from £11,000 to £20,000 depending on class of degree.

1.10 Overall in West Berkshire, support for maths has reduced due to the loss of a full-time Mathematics Consultant post in December 2010 (due to the removal of Government grant). This has had a negative impact on the LA's ability to monitor and evaluate performance and build capacity – particularly for new leaders, and to provide training for maths teachers.

1.11 We recognise the importance of sharing good practice across schools; the AST leads a Head of Maths Network, where the current focus is on Leadership and Management. The most recent meeting included a presentation from Trinity School, to share how did they did so well in last year's KS4 results, and from a Birmingham school who have been doing some intervention work.

1.12 Training for Teaching Assistants (TAs) who support secondary classes, was identified by Maths Heads of Department as a need. The LA is currently in the process of organising this training.

1.13 The importance of a good grounding in Maths at Primary level is key to raising standards in secondary schools. In support of this, West Berkshire has enthusiastically embraced a national programme to train Primary Maths Specialists. The first cohort completed their 18 month training programme in December 2011. This has provided 16 trained specialists, who will now be deployed across primary schools in West Berkshire to champion, inspire and support Maths teaching. A further cohort is currently being trained too, to build even greater capacity.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 While 2011 GCSE maths results were undoubtedly disappointing in a small number of schools, overall West Berkshire maintained positive added value and it is hoped particular issues will have been addressed successfully, reflected in 2012 outcomes.

Appendices

There are no Appendices to this report.