

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Review of Summer 2012 GCSE Results</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	30th October 2012

**Purpose of Report:** To update OSMC on the 2012 GCSE results

**Recommended Action:** For information

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<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	18/10/12

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# Executive Report

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## 1. Summer 2012 GCSE Results

- 1.1 National and local results for secondary schools at this stage are provisional. School performance tables and other national comparative data with local authorities will not be available until January 2014. This briefing paper is supported by Appendix A which provides headline results for West Berkshire secondary schools.
- 1.2 Overall, GCSE results in West Berkshire remain broadly in line with national expectations at 56.7% of students achieving 5+A\*-C grades including English and mathematics, although this is a dip on 2011 results result of 60.08%. Provisional national results report that 58.1% achieved this measure nationally. The West Berkshire headline figures mask the fact that there has been a good improvement in mathematics at GCSE A\*-C but a significant drop in English GCSE A\*-C.
- 1.3 Due to the depression in English results, 7 out of 10 schools performed less well than 2011 against the key indicator of 5\*A-C grades including English and mathematics. However, 2 schools which had lower than expected results last year made good gains this year. The third school is rapidly improving and for the second consecutive year has shown gains against all GCSE indicators.
- 1.4 No West Berkshire secondary schools are currently below the government's floor standard. This is the national minimum standard of fewer than 40% of pupils achieving English and mathematics and less than the national average progress measures.
- 1.5 Performance at 5+ A\*-C, (unqualified) another important indicator, remains just below national expectations at 76.6% compared to 82% nationally. This is a slight rise on 2011 figure of 75% and shows a steady trend of improvement as does the national.
- 1.6 As well as attainment, another key measure for schools is the progress which is made from the end of KS2 to GCSE results at the end of KS4.
- 1.7 Using this measure, 2012 progress is as set out below in English and mathematics. 2011 progress results are in brackets.

% Making Expected 3 levels of Progress		
	English	Mathematics
Provisional National	67.7% (71.8%)	68.5% (64.8%)
West Berkshire	61.6% (76.3%)	71% (68.8%)

- 1.8 As can be seen, progress measures in mathematics have improved by 3% on 2011 results and continue to be above national expectations. In English, there has been a significant decline of 14% to 61.6%. National progress measures in English have also declined but not as significantly as in West Berkshire.
- 1.9 West Berkshire attainment in GCSE English A\* to C has declined from 72% in 2011 which was above the national expectations of 68% to 62.8% in 2012. This is now just below the national expectations of 66%. This drop in performance has been unexpected by schools as, over time, performance in English has been consistently strong.
- 1.10 In West Berkshire, 8 out of 10 schools dipped in performance in English GCSE. Generally, the greatest dips were from previously very high performing English departments. The most significant drop was 23% in one school from well above average in 2011 to below average in 2012. Two other schools had dips of over 10%.
- 1.11 The dip in English has therefore had an adverse impact overall on the key indicator of 5A\*-C English and mathematics combined. With only 10 schools, the result of the larger schools having significant dips have reduced the overall West Berkshire scores more disproportionately than it has nationally.
- 1.12 The majority of West Berkshire secondary schools report that the dips have fallen very short of schools' predictions. Headteachers have expressed considerable dissatisfaction citing that the lower results have a range of implications including:
- Putting schools due to be inspected at risk of a lower grade due to poor performance in English, a core subject, which will also affect the key indicator of 5A\* to C English and mathematics combined
  - Affecting the life chances of students who have left school, now not able to secure a college place, and at risk of being Not in Education or Employment (NEET)
  - Lowering the aspirations and confidence of students who failed to reach their predicted grade
  - Demoralising English teachers and Heads of English who have worked hard for their pupils
  - A loss of confidence in the robustness and equity of the examinations system
- 1.13 The dip in GCSE English results have been the subject of national controversy due to the mid year changes in mark schemes and grade boundaries which has resulted in students who would have achieved a GCSE C pass in English in January 2012, with the same mark, achieving a D pass in English examinations in June 2012. There have been national protests made by headteachers and teaching unions to Ofqual, the examination regulator, about the inequity of this approach.
- 1.14 Ofqual's response has been to allow students to resit the GCSE English examination in November 2012 at no cost to schools. Ofqual has not proposed a regrade of the original scripts. In Wales, however, the Welsh government regraded English scripts resulting in students receiving raised grades.

- 1.15 This context places West Berkshire schools and English departments in an uncertain position for future target setting. West Berkshire continues to provide support to English teachers through the English Subject Leaders network and schools are also able to broker support through the School Improvement Service Level agreement.
- 1.16 Support for schools has also been provided through LA dialogue with Her Majesty's Inspectors(HMI) to clarify the position regarding English results for schools due to be inspected and through the arrangement of HMI briefings for headteachers and governors.
- 1.17 It is not yet clear what the implications are for predicted standards in English going forward. The response from government is that there are plans to radically reform GCSEs in England with a single end of course examination and one examination board for core subjects.
- 1.18 Performance in GCSE mathematics at A\*-C has improved from 66.9% to 71.64% which is above national expectations and which has increased the gap to national from 2011 results. Provisional national results report a rise from 64.8% to 68%.
- 1.19 Although results across the secondary schools are variable, 9 out of 10 secondary schools increased their performance in GCSE mathematics on 2011 results. Three schools made increases of over 10%. Improving achievement in mathematics has been a focus in most West Berkshire secondary schools in line with last year's report to OSMC and this is reflected in the good gains achieved.
- 1.20 To improve the overall performance in mathematics in West Berkshire, standards need to rise in 2 schools in particular. One of these schools has had difficulties in recruiting mathematics teachers as well as a head of department though results are now expected to rise in 2013. The other school is already a designated school causing concern with a Notice to Improve from Ofsted. For this school, an improvement has already been achieved with increase of 3% on last year's mathematics results.
- 1.21 The performance of pupils with Free School Meals (FSM) in West Berkshire achieving the key indicator of 5A\*-C including English and mathematics at 21% is below national figures of 35.8%. Three out of 10 secondary schools are achieving better than national figures. This remains an area of focus.
- 1.22 Schools have pupil premium funding to support improving the performance of FSM pupils. The monies allocated to secondary schools are substantial at £600 per pupil.
- 1.23 Local authority support to secondary school subject leaders has reduced significantly over the last three years and this has resulted in some loss of influence on provision in core subjects. However, 8 out of 10 secondary school headteachers have retained an LA School Improvement Adviser to advise the headteacher on key aspects of school improvement, including analysis of results and setting future school priorities.
- 1.24 Five out of 10 West Berkshire secondary schools are currently academies. Overall, there are no marked differences across the GCSE performance of these schools in 2012. The 2 highest performing schools are maintained schools.

1.25 The school now closest to the government floor target is an academy and this school has declined in performance in 2012 in both mathematics and English. This presents a challenge for the local authority in that the school does not use an LA school improvement adviser and therefore we have limited influence on the school's practices.

## **2. Conclusion**

2.1 GCSE results remain broadly in line with the national average, but results have been adversely affected by the depression in GCSE English results which has had a disproportionately marked impact on West Berkshire schools than nationally. However, 2 schools which had disappointing results last year overall have managed to secure good gains this year.

2.2 It is difficult for schools to predict at this stage what are the implications for GCSE English results going forward. It is hoped that 2013 English results will not have the detrimental impact of this year for West Berkshire schools.

2.3 2012 GCSE results are a reversal on 2011 in that the performance of mathematics is now stronger than English. Performance in mathematics has improved on 2011 results. This is as a result of concerted efforts in a number of schools.

2.4 The gap between the highest and lowest performing secondary schools continues to close.

2.5 We will continue to support schools to ensure that pupil premium monies impact favourably on the GCSE performance of FSM pupils and will therefore contribute to an overall rise in standards.

2.6 There will be continued implications for converter academies which have not bought back into West Berkshire school improvement services but who may be at risk of being judged by Ofsted as needing improvement. We continue to work well with the 7 out of 10 secondary schools who use the school improvement service.

2.7 More significant change for schools linked to GCSE exams and the curriculum is to be expected.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A –West Berkshire Schools – Headline Results 2012

## **Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** West Berkshire secondary schools

**Officers Consulted:** Ian Pearson

**Trade Union:** N/A