

<b>Item No.</b> 6b.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 3 September 2014	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub- Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Changes to the curriculum and the exam and testing regime – with specific reference to its impact on disadvantaged & less academically inclined young people	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director of Education	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee is requested to note the report on changes to the curriculum and the exam and testing regime and the impact on disadvantaged and less academically inclined young people.

### Introduction

2. The government has changed the secondary examination and testing regime.
3. These changes will be delivered through a three year implementation programme which began with the National Curriculum in 2014 and will be followed by progressive implementation of new GCSEs and A' levels in 2015/16/17.
4. The key changes are:
  - There will be less scope for young people to follow vocational pathways pre 16.
  - GCSE will remain as the level 2 standard but will be completely revised.
  - There will be more demanding knowledge requirements with more rigorous written examinations at the end of the course.
  - Vocational and work-based learning will be re-defined around applied and tech level routes for 16-19 year olds.
  - There will be a significant reduction in number of qualifications.
5. Traditional structures have been retained so young people will still follow a (revised) National Curriculum, progress through key stages and be assessed at age 16 and 18.
6. The government also intends to change the way in which it judges and ranks schools and colleges:
  - At 16 performance will be judged on the progress young people make across a bundle of 8 good GCSEs.
  - Only the first sitting of a GCSE will count in the league tables up until the

- new examinations are fully introduced.
- At A level more emphasis will be placed on the higher grades and the facilitating subjects. These subjects are English, maths, languages, biology, physics, chemistry, history and geography
- A new performance measure for post 16 vocational studies, the Technical Baccalaureate will be introduced in 2014.
- Learning institutions will also be judged on the progression routes of their students post 16 and post 18.

### **National Curriculum**

7. The National Curriculum has been slimmed down, with some content changes such as the introduction of computer science to replace ICT. The focus is very much on literacy skills with the introduction of testing of spelling, punctuation and grammar at the end of KS2.
8. The new curriculum only applies to maintained schools so academies are exempt. Ofsted however will look for a broad and balanced curriculum.

### **GCSEs**

9. GCSEs will from Sept 2015 very much resemble the old O level qualifications. Assessment will be at the end of the two year course (May or June of year 11) and will be assessed through written examinations that are externally marked by the exam boards. There will also be a greater emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar.
10. Grading will be numerical 1 to 10 with 1 being highest grade. No decision has yet been made as to where the “pass” (currently C or above) boundary will be set.
11. Maths, English Language and Literature will be introduced in September 2015 with the first examinations available in May/June 2017.

### **A/AS levels**

12. A levels will now be assessed at the end of the two year course. AS levels will remain but will be decoupled from the A level and become separate standalone qualifications.
13. The Russell Group will establish an A level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB) to consider subject content and to play a lead role in an annual post-A level review.
14. Most of the facilitating subjects plus six others will be introduced from Sept 2015. Extra time has been allowed to properly develop maths and the sciences and these subjects will be introduced in a second phase in 2016

### **14-19 Framework**

15. The Wolf Review defined a new approach to vocational learning. Key findings which are all being implemented:
  - Vocational qualifications need to lead to clear employment opportunities.
  - Work experience is very important but post rather than pre 16.

- Young people should follow a mainly academic curriculum pre 16. Maximum of 20% vocational studies.
  - Young people should continue to study maths and English post 16 where they have not achieved a good GCSE grade.
16. Post 16 funding has been reformed to allow more flexibility. Young people now follow a study programme that has to include one significant qualification, English and maths to at least level 2 and work experience.
17. Traineeships have been introduced as a pre apprenticeship route.
18. Vocational qualifications have been redefined as Tech levels and Applied General Qualifications. Tech levels will be career specific (e.g. electrician) whilst AGQs will be more general (e.g. business studies)

### **Performance Measures**

#### **End of Key Stage 4**

19. Four key measures will need to be published by schools on their website in a standard format:
- Students' progress across eight subjects between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. This will show how they have performed and the average of all students' progress will create the school's result. This will be called the Progress 8 measure.
  - The school's average grade across the same suite of eight subjects. This will be called the Attainment 8 measure.
  - The percentage of students achieving a C grade or higher in English and Maths
  - The percentage of students gaining the EBacc, which will continue in its current form.

#### **End of Key Stage 5**

20. The reforms will see new performance measures for colleges and school 6th forms that show students' progress from GCSE to age 18 as compared to others with the same GCSE results. They will measure progress in both academic subjects and the new vocational Tech Levels.
21. The new-look post-16 performance measures, which will come into effect from 2016, will also include:
- Students' average grades.
  - The progress made by students who arrived without a C in English and/or maths.
  - The proportion of students who drop-out.
  - The proportion of students who go on to further study, a job or training at the end of their courses (although that DfE has said that destination information will only be published "when the data is robust enough")

## **Technical Baccalaureate**

22. There will be a new progression measure called the Technical Baccalaureate. This will include three elements:
- Level three vocational qualification
  - Level 3 core maths (AS equivalent)
  - Extended project

## **Impact on disadvantaged young people**

23. There is a range of measures used to quantify disadvantage but the most widely accepted measure educationally is the division between those who are entitled to free school meals and those that are not. Most attainment gap measures are based on a comparison of these two cohorts.
24. The government targets support in this area through the pupil premium. Locally we offer a range of support services to disadvantaged young people and our schools have an excellent record in negating the impact of deprivation on attainment outcomes.
25. The Department for Education recently (July 2014) published a report on the impact of the pupil premium. In the report it lists local authorities in rank order for the percentage of young people eligible for FSM who achieved five GCSEs including English and maths. Southwark was ranked third in the country with 60.1% of the cohort achieving this benchmark. The national average was 38%
26. In terms of the gap between the two cohorts nationally there was a 27% difference in 2013 which was unchanged from the previous year. The gap in Southwark was 5.1%.
27. Whilst there are significant changes planned over the next few years we have seen much change over the past four years that that has followed a similar path.
28. The range of vocational options has diminished and schools can no longer count BTECs and other qualifications as equivalent to multiple GCSEs.
29. Assessment only at the end of a two year GCSEs will mean that it is vital for schools to accurately monitor progress and provide structured support and feedback for all pupils but particularly those who are vulnerable and at risk of disengaging.
30. Schools have proved that they are excellent at adapting to change and have continued to ensure that young people improve their outcomes. Whilst we will not be able to measure any impact for at least two years it is safe to assume, based on past performance, our schools will be able to meet the challenges of these changes and ensure that our young people perform strongly.
31. As a local authority we have provided a range of support mechanisms for the most vulnerable that have contributed to this success. These services include:
- Re engaging the disengaged (aged14-19) through European Social Funding and the Youth Contract

- Educational support for looked after children through the Virtual school.
- Support and guidance for those young people who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion
- Support and guidance for those young people post 16 who are not in education employment or training

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

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