

COMMITTEE	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	19 June 2014
ITEM HEADING	English GCSE Examinations – January 2014
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Gareth Thomas
REPORT BY	Dewi R Jones, Head of Education

.Background

Following your preparatory meeting for this meeting of the Services Scrutiny Committee, I was asked to prepare a report on the difficulties experienced with the English GCSE examinations held in January and the under-performance that was observed both at a national and local level that fell short of expectations.

I was requested to focus on that which occurred at a county level, my assessment of the underlying reasons and then provide guidance/comments on the expected results for Summer 2014.

Comments and response

The following analysis of the situation in Gwynedd schools highlight the problems that arose with the 2014 English GCSE examination where a high percentage of learners were awarded one or more grades that were below expectations. 413 Y11 pupils were awarded at least two grades below their expected results [and 350 a grade below] – these figures are significantly above those seen for English Literature examinations [taught by the same team of teachers] and Welsh Language. It is also important that these span the ability range/grades. The situation in Gwynedd roughly corresponds to that which occurs across all authorities in North Wales.

The evaluations held, that include outcomes of discussions held at a national level, suggest that aspects of assessment [specifically interpretation and application of marking plans) are mainly responsible for the inadvertance, rather than any basic weaknesses in teaching/presentation methods. It is at present totally impossible to try and interpret what impact all this will have on results in Summer 2014 but the WJEC have provided an assurance that no pupil will be disadvantaged.

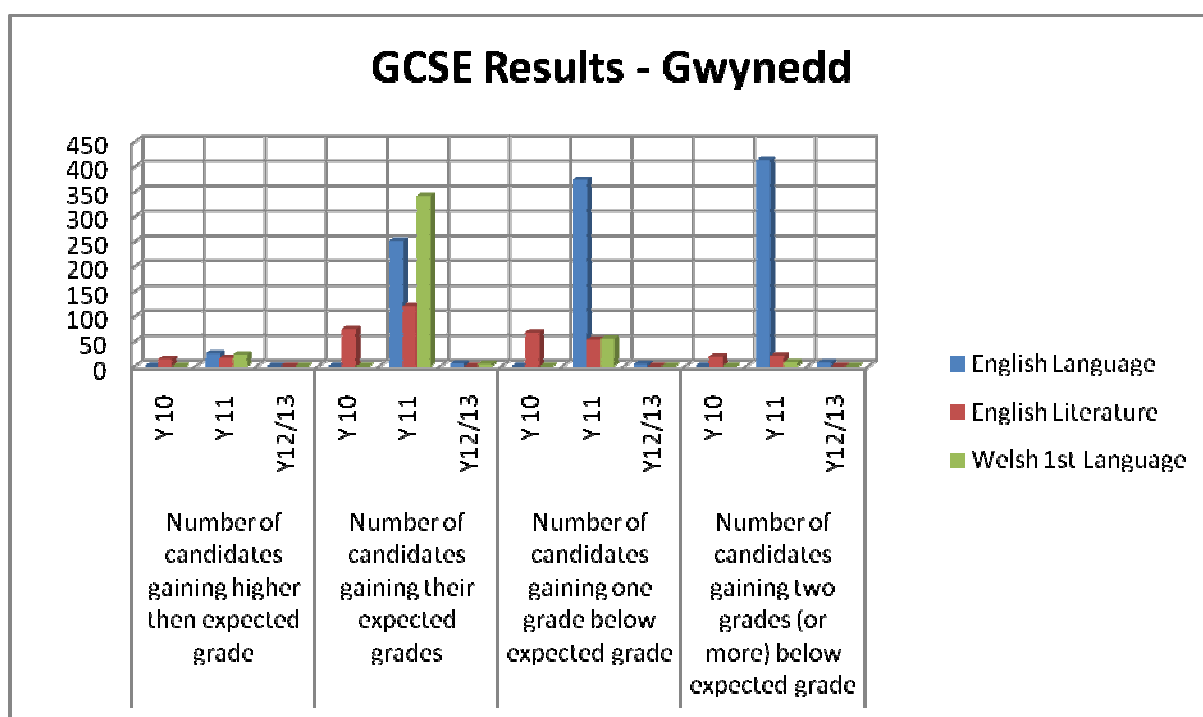
However, these results have had a significant impact on teachers, pupils and parents and has led to all stakeholders having less faith in the system. Those concerns have been clearly conveyed to the Minister for Education by the Chief Executive of GwE and the six Chief Education Officers. As part of the Minister for Education’s response to the situation, a meeting of the national Task and Finish Remit Group was held and two experienced Heads of English Department from Gwynedd represented the region at those discussions. In addition, 32 schools were visited to discover opinions and obtain further information. WJEC have also held their own investigation and collaborate with the Assembly to plan several measures to try and ensure that such a situation does not occur again e.g. provide staff with better

guidance and support; review of standardization and scrutiny procedures; availability of broader exemplar materials etc.

GwE closely collaborate with the Assembly to ensure that local schools receive the most effective guidance and support when planning towards introducing the amended GCSE in 2015. For that purpose, subject-based ‘champions’ have been appointed in Welsh, English, Mathematics and Science and those individuals will co-ordinate local support and guidance through training sessions and through promoting subject-based forums and networks work.

14 Secondary Schools: 10 returned, 1 no candidates, 3 not returned

2 Secondary Schools: 0 returned



	Number of candidates gaining higher than expected grade			Number of candidates gaining their expected grades			Number of candidates gaining one grade below expected grade			Number of candidates gaining two grades (or more) below expected grade		
	Y 10	Y 11	Y12/13	Y 10	Y 11	Y12/13	Y 10	Y 11	Y12/13	Y 10	Y 11	Y12/13
English Language	0	96	0	70	766	5	76	1474	4	238	1967	7
English Literature	138	106	0	328	336	0	174	244	0	61	79	0
Welsh 1st Language	0	23	0	0	419	4	0	112	0	0	12	0

	Number of Entries		
	Y 10	Y 11	Y12/13
English Lang	384	4045	16
English Lit	701	586	0
Welsh 1st Lang	0	566	4