

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Key Stage 4 Public Examination Evaluation 2023

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Key Stage 4 public examination evaluation 2023

The Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) subject team has considered the outcomes of each subject against that nationally and that of former years and has reflected some of the key messages and areas of focus.

This should complement schools' own specific subject evaluation and consequent curriculum reviews.

Each subject inspector is following up these areas of improvement with planned network meetings and their commissioned work with schools; please do contact any of the advisers for further information, dates, or advice. Their contacts details are listed below.

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Key messages

- Supporting ideas for raising motivation, increasing resilience, having aspiration, and finding independence.
- Increasing boys' achievement and engagement.
- Challenging performance across all grades.
- Support and challenge achievement of pupils open to Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, Pupil Premium (PP), hard to reach children - absentee children on registers.
- Review planning for timings for coursework and exam to maximise quality of work.
- Moderation/standardisation of work.
- Schools attending standardisation meetings by exam boards is crucial to understand the marking criteria and ensure accurate marking.
- Preparation and practice for exam conditions.
- Sharing of project ideas, techniques, practical skill building.

Aspects to celebrate

- New heads of department appear to be increasing performance.
- Introducing children to the external exam component for the first time after four years successfully.
- Some departments had a high-level of achievement across the grade range 4-7+.
- Departments showed improvement to the higher mark range in a higher number of schools 5+/7+.
- Some departments showed improvement in their achievement at 4+ since 2022 and 2019.
- The rigour by teams to ensure high achievement for all pupils.

Priorities for development

- Challenging 4+ and planning for quality not quantity with coursework.
- Challenging boys' achievement and engagement in art curriculums.
- Support and challenge for PP/SEN children.
- Schools attending standardisation meetings by exam boards is crucial to understand the marking criteria and ensure accurate marking.
- The careful timing for coursework and exam component deadlines and marking.
- 7+ is an area of challenge for schools in Hampshire from national data.

Support available

- Additional support from HIAS is available for Art early career teachers (ECTs).
- Bespoke support for art departments is available, tailored to requirement.
- Support for marking GCSEs is available, book soon to secure help.
- Assistance to challenge and develop skills is available.
- Art and SEN meetings are available - contact for support.

Contact Jayne.Stillman@hants.gov.uk to discuss art education.

Key messages

- Most schools still use OCR - the first exam board to register a computing GCSE.
- Some schools are looking to move to EdExcel that have an on-screen exam.
- Two schools in the county enter pupils through AQA.
- Critical to consider what is best practice for SEN, pedagogy, assessment, preparing pupils for the exam and physical computing.
- It should be an inclusive subject. Please don't select students to go on and take GCSE computing; this subject can be achieved well by many pupils with a wide range of profiles.
- Encouraging more girls into taking computing at KS4 GCSE. How to develop Key Stage 3 (KS3) lessons that can be used to motivate girls into taking computing into Key Stage 4 (KS4).
- A greater understanding of computing pedagogy. Supporting schools in understanding national and international research on pedagogy.
- Physical computing - identifying computing kit that has an accessible price and can be used to support physical computing.
- There are secondary HIAS computing networks available. Network content this year includes the following:
 - encouraging more girls into taking computing at GCSE - how to develop KS3 lessons that can be used to motivate girls into taking computing into KS4
 - a greater understanding of computing pedagogy - supporting schools in understanding national and international research on pedagogy
 - physical computing - identifying computing kit that has an accessible price and can be used to support physical computing.

The Ofsted computing review published in May 2022

- Nearly 80% Year 11 pupils are in schools that offer GCSE in computer science, but ~8% are in schools that offer no KS4 computing qualification.
- Schools with higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils are less likely to offer GCSE computer science.
- Gender imbalance - girls account for 21% GCSE and 15% A-level entries, though girls outperform boys. Both genders underperform in computing compared to other subjects.
- In secondary schools 46% computing teachers have a computing qualification - teachers need access to high quality computing continuing professional development (CPD) and subject communities that can develop their subject knowledge.
- Curriculum should include a breadth of knowledge relating to computer science, information technology and digital literacy. Procedural knowledge - methods and processes that can be performed. Declarative knowledge - for example, knowledge of suitable data types and structures, and suitable key words to use when performing searches. Important to identify and order the underlying knowledge that pupils require to make sense of complex ideas or engage in composite tasks or activities within the subject.

Aspects to celebrate

- Some departments had a high-level of achievement across the grade range 4-7+.
- Departments showed improvement to the higher mark range in some schools - 5+/7+.
- Some departments showed improvement in their achievement at 4+ since 2022 and 2019.

Priorities for development

- Recruitment of subject specialists in the County.
- Encouraging more girls to take the subject to exam level.
- Broadening the pupils base of those encouraged to take the subject.
- Developing a better understanding of pedagogy and effective assessment.

Contact sue.savory@hants.gov.uk to discuss computing education.

Key messages

- AQA is the preferred exam board for most Hampshire schools in D&T. A small number of schools use OCR, Eduqas and Edexcel.

There are Secondary HIAS D&T networks available. Network content this year includes the following:

- supporting ideas for raising motivation, increasing resilience, having aspiration, finding independence
- increasing lower and middle attaining boys' achievement and engagement
- encouraging a greater number of girls to choose D&T
- challenging performance across all grades
- support and challenge achievement of SENK, PP children, hard to reach children (absentee children on registers)
- developing D&T literacy
- moderation /standardisation of work
- KS3 curriculum development
- greater focus on client-based research and innovative design development.

Aspects to celebrate

- Several D&T departments had a high-level of achievement across the grade range 4-7+ in 2023.
- A number of D&T departments showed improvement in the higher mark range 7+ in 2023.
- Several D&T departments showed improvement in their achievement at 4+ between 2019 and 2023.
- Many departments have now embedded the new D&T GCSE and teachers are far more confident in teaching it.
- Departments have been sharing their grade 9 successes in the non-exam assessment (NEA) portfolio during network meetings.
- High levels of engagement by teachers in exam CPD to ensure high achievement for all pupils.
- Work around exam literacy and comprehension.

Priorities for development

- In some Hampshire schools 7+ is an area of challenge based on national data from Fischer Family Trust (FFT).
- Support and challenge for children with SEND/PP.
- Development of KS3 curriculum to support and underpin KS4 – still a disparity in many schools between KS3 curriculum and KS4.
- Development of subject specific vocabulary and D&T literacy throughout KS3
- Supporting writing in D&T.
- Supporting teachers in developing inclusive yet challenging teaching for SEN support pupils.
- Moderation between schools.
- Encouraging more girls into D&T/science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Support available

- Bespoke health and safety training and advice available for schools in all areas - including food and textiles.
- Intensive 3-day top-up training for non-subject specialists in all D&T areas is available.
- Support for developing a rigorous KS3 D&T curriculum.
- D&T ECT meeting and support are available from HIAS.
- Bespoke support for D&T departments is available, tailored to requirement.
- Support for marking GCSEs is available, book soon to secure help.
- Assistance with the moderation of GCSE NEAs is offered.
- Support to challenge and develop skills is available.
- D&T and SEN meetings are available - contact for support.

Contact sarah.pook2@hants.gov.uk to discuss D&T education.

Key messages

- GCSE literature is vital – messaging from all staff must focus on the importance of literature for progress, addressing the lack of value shown for literature GCSE by a proportion of students and families.
- Challenge the narrative that students only really need grade 4+ in language to proceed and ensure that college staff do not give this message to students.
- Where literature outcomes are stronger, pupil progress and progress for PP students are stronger.
- Re-reading is an important strategy for English literature (for securing deeper understanding, rather than for revision) and must be planned for and scaffolded – ensure that revision skills sessions do not pass students the message that re-reading is not a good strategy for revision without making the English literature exception clear.
- Explicit teaching and revision are crucial for success in English. Challenge the narrative that ‘you can’t really revise for English’. Ensure that departments plan and set revision and retrieval tasks in class and for homework on a regular basis and that these are closely monitored at the very least, and marked is better, by teachers.
- Absence - both students and staff appear to hit literature outcomes particularly hard; heads of department (HoD) report that absence from lessons while on site can be a real factor with students avoiding English lessons, particularly those where extended writing is planned. All of English literature is assessed through extended writing with no short-form questions so pupils need to build their stamina and concentration.
- Do not insist on full set of mocks for both subjects at both sets of mocks. Prioritise English Language Paper 2 (especially in Eduqas schools) and plan the sequence of text inclusion across both sets of mocks – do not set students up to fail in mock examinations.
- Plan for prompt attention to appeals and recall of papers in summer 2024 – on results day, ask all students to sign permission slips for the recall and re-use of their papers for training purposes. Departments need to look at samples of their own students’ responses as part of departmental improvement time – opportunities to explore whether students at particular grade points are applying what has been taught under exam conditions are key.
- Anecdotally, schools that submit requests for appeals against inaccurate marking early (in other words, during the last week of the summer break) have been more successful in gaining grade movement, potentially due to the numbers of markers available for appeals and the pressure on the system close to the closure point – it is worth aiming to get appeals in as early as possible.

Aspects to celebrate

- Language outcomes in Hampshire continue to be in line with national.
- Individual schools bucking trends for their level of deprivation proves it can be done; despite correlation between social advantage and high outcomes, there are some schools that have positively bucked this.

Priorities for development

- Significant underperformance in all areas within English literature – declining trend.
- Correlation between stability of staff and outcomes – how can this be mitigated against.
- Progress for disadvantaged students, particularly at grade 4+ and 5+.

Contact Joanna.Kenyon@hants.gov.uk to discuss English education.

Key messages

- What is disciplinary knowledge in geography and how are you building it over time? Look to see that HoD have built this into their curriculum and an enquiry approach where students interrogate figures, opinions, conclude and evaluate their findings is essential.
- What places do you teach, KS3-4, and why have you chosen these? Look to see clear rationale for places beyond the teacher has visited here, or they have always taught it successfully. For example, Mt St Helens volcano in 1980, it's a powerful and interesting eruption but it is old, and our responses and planning towards volcanoes have changed. How do teachers keep up to date with their knowledge of places? How are they avoiding giving a 'single story of a place' and teaching its diverse background.
- Fieldwork – is it a fieldtrip or fieldwork? How does the process of geographical enquiry run through it? How are students challenged and supported to analyse, conclude, and evaluate findings?
- Non-specialists – how many are teaching geography KS3/4? What is the support for them? How often do they meet with HoD or geographer – is there time for them to meet?
- CPD – what is the geography specific CPD? Are there opportunities for training in areas such as skills, mapping, GIS (geographical information systems)?

Aspects to celebrate

- Entries at GCSE and A-Level continue to rise, and geography continues to perform above history at national and County level.
- More schools reporting improvement in students gaining level 2 tier marks in longer written responses.
- Fewer unanswered questions.

Priorities for development

- Closing the gap disadvantaged to non-disadvantaged.
- Increasing numbers of grades 7-9.
- Improving evaluating skills to secure the top level three scores.
- Support and training for non-specialists teaching geography at KS3.

Contact kate.broadribb@hants.gov.uk to discuss geography education.

Key messages

- Outcomes in line with national although progress is just below.
- History uptake in schools is strong with more timetabled time allocated to the subject.
- Check the depth of history curriculum planning in primary and secondary schools with superficial curriculum progression planning on building conceptual substantive and disciplinary knowledge across the curriculum with a focus on skills rather than knowledge.
- Check that assessment is being used consistently to address gaps in knowledge. There are still teacher misconceptions concerning disciplinary knowledge and children are not learning sufficient accurate knowledge about historical enquiry.
- Recruitment, retention, and staff resilience continues to be a concern in history.
- Bringing the KS3 curriculum up to date with historical scholarship is required to place KS4 history in a stronger position. In particular a more expert teaching of empire, transatlantic slavery, and their legacy.
- Improving transition curriculum planning and knowledge building from the early years foundation stage (EYFS) to KS4 is needed to ensure that sequencing and coverage is consistent.

Aspects to celebrate

- Several schools have performed strongly making progress above national average.
- In a number of schools pupils in receipt of PP or with SEND made positive progress above national average.

Priorities for development

- Scaffolding oracy.
- Supporting schools with the challenge of history exams: high reading age/literacy and inaccessible language in questions/sources/interpretations with no tiered papers.
- Managing the amount of GCSE exam subject content required at GCSE.
- Supporting pupils with the acquisition of knowledge looking after cognitive load.
- Supporting middle prior attainers progress - the challenge of converting 3s to 4s and 4s to 5s while stretching the 7-9 pupils.
- Improving grades for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Attendance issues especially impacting the progress of pupils with SEND/PP.

Contact sarah.herrity@hants.gov.uk to discuss history education.

Key messages

- Throughout sequences of learning, teaching is systematic and clear.
- The teaching of mathematics facts and methods is sequenced to take advantage of the way that knowing those facts helps pupils to learn methods, and vice versa.
- Pupils need regular opportunities to rehearse and apply what they have learned. Assessment focuses on the component knowledge that pupils have learned. This aids pupils' confidence and makes it easier to analyse and respond to gaps.
- Written work is of a high quality - when pupils' calculations are systematic and orderly, they are better able to see the connections of number and to spot errors. Reinforce the need to record legibly.
- School leaders can develop teachers' subject and pedagogic knowledge through opportunities to work with and learn from each other. Build this in as a core elements of teaching time.
- The aim is for pupils to attain proficiency as this leads to motivation and confidence.
- Teachers engineer the best possible start for all pupils by closing the school entry gap in knowledge of basic mathematics facts, concepts, vocabulary, and symbols.

Aspects to celebrate

- English pupils, on average, gain higher attainment in mathematics than pupils in many other countries, and mathematics continues to be the most popular subject to study at A-level.
- There was a national expectation that grades would drop due to the Department for Education (DfE) stated intention to bring results back in line with pre-pandemic 2019 results. This could be considered to have negatively skewed the data for 2023. Despite this many Hampshire schools reported positive results.

Priorities for development

- Variation in the quality of mathematics education is the result of the absence of systems and systems thinking, as well as possible gaps in content, instruction, rehearsal, assessment, and the plans for their evolution over time; revisit the sequence and curriculum programmes.
- Disadvantaged pupils in England are much less likely to achieve a grade 4 at GCSE; plan to mitigate against this issue from the outset.

Contact jo.lees@hants.gov.uk to discuss mathematics education.

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) Inspector/Adviser –

Mark Kingswood

Key messages

- There is a DfE led initiative to reverse the decline of German and this decline is even more notable in Hampshire. Many cohorts are extremely small (around 10 pupils) and may, therefore, be selective in nature.
- Boys appear to have underachieved as a group in Spanish and results in Hampshire were lower than the national benchmarks in Spanish in particular. Anecdotally, schools in the county are struggling to recruit trained Spanish teachers as well as language teachers in general which may be influencing performance. In our network meetings this year, we are focusing on preparing pupils for the speaking and writing exams by reinforcing key structures and vocabulary and highlighting exam technique. The explicit teaching of metacognition and exam technique is just as important as covering the subject content.
- The tiered nature of languages is creating challenge in some schools. Some establishments entered high prior attainment pupils for the higher tier resulting in these pupils not achieving grade 4 and receiving “Us” instead. Most schools teach languages in option blocks, which leads to mixed ability teaching in a tiered subject, thus requiring careful planning and support for students sitting both tiers. Teachers need to be aware of the exam requirements for both tiers and ensure that pupils are sufficiently prepared and entered for the appropriate tier.
- A key focus for many MFL departments currently is the introduction of the new GCSE for first teaching in September 2024. The curriculum needs to include greater coverage of phonics and specific vocabulary starting with a well-planned KS3 curriculum. Many schools have made decisions regarding exam boards following presentations in our network meetings in summer 2023 by AQA and Edexcel. Some schools have asked for extra support, which we will endeavour to provide in the spring term 2024 with ‘Ready to Teach’ training led by the exam boards. It is essential that schools are planning for this significant change already.

Aspects to celebrate

- Across the County, there were strong results at all benchmarks in French. With the 7+, 5+ and 4+ benchmarks exceeding the national data. In the Hampshire County Council (HCC) data collection, heads of MFL indicated strong performances in speaking and writing, in French. Pupils with SEND achieved significantly higher in HCC than nationally at all benchmarks and higher in French than Spanish and German. In German, results for pupils with PP were roughly in line with national data and boys performed slightly better than nationally.
- Spanish results were largely in line with national performance, although grades 7+ were less common. Slightly more pupils with SEND and PP were entered for Spanish than French and German.
- Several schools have made significant progress in at least one language, and some have excelled in all three.

Priorities for development

- The decrease in uptake of MFL in all three languages is a concern and the national increase in pupils taking Spanish is not reflected across HCC.
- The percentage of pupils with SEND/PP entered for MFL is lower in Hampshire than nationally and this should be addressed by supporting schools to make language teaching and learning more accessible to all. SEN support in languages especially involving scaffolding and metacognition is a focus for County network meetings in 2023-24.
- The decline in pupils entering MFL GCSEs suggests that most schools in HCC have languages as an option.
- MFL GCSE entrants constitute less than 30% of the cohort according to the HCC data collection in October 2023.
- Schools need to consider carefully what they are doing to increase uptake in MFL at GCSE. This was a key topic in the summer 2023 secondary network meeting and will continue to be a focus this year.

Contact mark.kingswood@hants.gov.uk to discuss MFL education.

Key messages

- Numbers opting for GCSE music continues to decline, which is a common trend across the country, as is the ascending numbers opting for vocational courses.
- This links with class sizes and qualification offers. For the last two years, we have researched the differing outcomes with schools who offer one or the other of GCSE music or a vocational equivalent, with those who offer both.
- Schools that offer both GCSE and vocational achieve substantially better results. The two types of qualification are very different, with vocational options more accessible to the students from a less traditional music background, and GCSE more appropriate for the more experienced traditional musician. We should encourage school leaders to consider this when planning their KS4 curriculum offer, and how beneficial it would be to their students, when deciding minimum numbers for options classes.
- There are slight variations in outcomes between the GCSE exam boards, with each of the four boards evenly represented in Hampshire. Schools following the AQA syllabus were most successful this year, with Edexcel and OCR falling a little behind.

Aspects to celebrate

- It is important to celebrate the fact that Hampshire remains above national average for GCSE music results, especially given the turbulent times that education (not least music education) is going through. Engagement in the subject remains positive too, with many schools gaining KS4 options numbers substantially above national average.
- Hampshire Music Education Hub retains good working relationships with colleagues and music departments, with the vast majority of schools working with us year on year through peripatetic teaching, network meetings, school improvement visits, conferences, and many other collaborative projects and events. We also benefit from a large team of multi-disciplinary teachers and leaders at Hampshire Music Service, offering a wide range of support to colleagues across the County who have a diverse set of needs and requirements.

Priorities for development

- Support for vocational qualifications - it is unfortunate that there have been further alterations to the three existing vocational qualification options, including increased expectations on written work and more stringent restrictions on what teachers are allowed to do to support this. Also, the qualification that has become the most popular in Hampshire schools (RSL Level 2 Certificate for Music Practitioners) has been removed from performance tables entirely.
- Developing support for composition and music technology - many music teachers feel far more confident delivering performance and theory-based activities but have less experience of composing or using technology. This impacts on teachers' delivery of the curriculum and also impacts their decision making on which vocational course might be better suited to the students at their school.

Contact shaun.riches@hants.gov.uk to discuss music education.

Physical Education (PE)

Inspector/Adviser –
Jodie Bascombe

Key messages

- AQA is the board used by most Hampshire schools for GCSE PE.
- Non-GCSE PE is a mixture of Cambridge National Sports Studies or Pearson BTEC PE.
- Increase in those sitting the GCSE PE examination.
- Downward trend in GCSE outcomes – below national.
- Whilst more boys take the subject, girls perform more highly.
- In non-GCSE achievement has improved and is in line with national.

Aspects to celebrate

- Some schools had a high-level of achievement across the grade range 4-7+.
- Departments showed improvement to the higher mark range in some schools 5+/7+.
- Some departments showed improvement in their achievement at 4+ since 2022 and 2019.
- School area networks work collaboratively to share good practice.
- New heads of department increasing performance.
- Introducing children to the external exam component for the first time after four years successfully.

Priorities for development

- Performing below national average for GCSE PE and in line for non-GCSE.
- Support and challenge for PP/SEN children.
- 7+ is an area of challenge for schools in Hampshire from national data.
- Encourage greater uptake of girls into the subject.
- Targeted support sessions.
- Preparation and practice for exam conditions.
- The careful timing of timing for coursework and exam component deadlines and marking.

There are Secondary HIAS PE networks available. Network content this year includes the following:

- support underachieving schools
- increasing boys' achievement
- increase girls' uptake
- support and challenge achievement of SENK, PP children, hard to reach children (absentee children on registers)
- sharing of teaching strategies for all aspects of the courses.

Secondary support is available via Hampshire Outdoors.

Contact jodie.bascombe@hants.gov.uk to discuss PE education.

Religious Education (RE)

Inspector/Adviser – Justine
Ball and Chris May

Key messages

- Attainment in Hampshire RE is in line with the national average, although marginally below. The average point score (APS) nationally was 5.1, compared to 4.9 for Hampshire, and the percentage achieving 4+ was 71% nationally and 70 for Hampshire. This is in line with the difference in 2022 and reflects an equal drop in attainment at 4+ of 5% for both Hampshire and nationally.
- 2939 students sat GCSE religious studies (RS) in Hampshire, a drop of students from 2019. This represents a decrease in entries of 19% from 2019. This fits with data from National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) which places Hampshire (geographical County, not Local Authority (LA)) as 37th out of 47 counties for percentage uptake at GCSE.
- AQA continues to be the exam board used by most schools (approximately two thirds of schools using this board followed by Eduqas).
- Entries continue to decline.
- Achievement in pupils with SEND/PP are areas to address with below national attainment and this gap with national data is not closing.

Aspects to celebrate

- A number of schools have strong achievement for pupils with SEND needs.

Priorities for development

- Improving outcomes.
- Raise levels of progress and attainment for boys, PP and SEND students in GCSE RS.
- Identify departments where teachers with other specialisms are teaching the GCSE to target for support.
- Increase GCSE entry numbers.
- Increase the level of depth and nuance when exploring religious texts, avoiding the use of 'proof texts.'
- Developing the quality of the evaluation element of questions to move beyond developed points.

Contact chris.may@hants.gov.uk to discuss religious studies education.

Key messages

- Tight focus on the correct tier of entry (higher or foundation), and the course (combined or triple). A focus on schema development - linking ideas together across the three disciplines.
- Focused intervention in combined science of those close to grade boundaries (4-3, 5-4, 7-6).
- In triple science, nationally chemistry was the subject with the highest proportion of 9-7 grades of all subjects (43.8%), followed by physics (43.2%) and then biology (42.8%) with the next closest being RS (30.5%).
- Chemistry (-12.2%) and physics (-13.6%) both saw some of the smallest drop in top grades nationally.
- Chemistry was also the top subject for the smallest rise in top grades since 2019 (-0.7% change).
Hampshire either significantly above or in line with national averages for attainment and progress in all grade brackets, with physics being the standout for this. Entries stayed consistent compared with 2022 for all three subjects in Hampshire.
- Data for SEN and PP for triple science is limited due to the very small numbers of these groups who are entered for triple in Hampshire. The schools which did well with these pupils are the same schools that did well with all their pupils, again suggesting that effective strategies for all pupils are in place in these departments.

Aspects to celebrate

- In combined science, nationally the overall results saw the biggest increase in top grades since 2019 of all (13.3%) indicating that combined science must be strongly regarded as an effective choice for many pupils.
- In Hampshire, entries in combined science increased by 11%.
- 4-4 grades were above national, and 5-5 grades were very close to national.
- For attainment the average point score is significantly above national (4.2 - 4.1) and percentage grade at 4% is also significantly above national (66%- 63%).

Priorities for development

- The higher grades in combined science are lower than national and this is something that needs to be addressed as the focus of departments in combined is always aimed at the lower end and not enough attention is given to teaching the higher-grade material or enough exam question practice at those grade ranges. This focus tends to come in triple science and needs to be revisited by schools.
- SEN and PP need more focus both nationally and locally in science. These will be a focus for future HoDs network meetings as well as an SEN project which will be continuing this year looking at effective approaches for SEN support in science.

Contact kevin.neil@hants.gov.uk to discuss science education.