

# @South-West Connects

## Evaluation Report

### August 2023





# @South-West Connects:



a 'snapshot' of achievements, years 1 and 2...

262 pupils presented for NQs through digital hub

OVER 50% ACHIEVED A or B PASS

34 SWEIC secondary schools have engaged

Offer of 11 Advanced Highers and 2 Highers widening access



34% OF PUPILS FROM SIMD 1 - 4

ROBUST DELIVERY MODEL AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

PARTNERSHIPS WITH BASE SCHOOLS SECURING TRACKING AND INTERVENTIONS

ROBUST SELF EVALUATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS PROVIDING POSITIVE FEEDBACK

STRONG ADVANCED HIGHER ATTAINMENT:  
PASS RATE 76% A-C  
PASS RATE 88% A-D

ATTAINMENT COMPARABLE TO SWEIC AND LA ATTAINMENT STATISTICS

SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY



11 SWEIC TEACHERS DELIVERING SUBJECTS

## Contents

Section 1: Rationale - @South-West Connects .....	1
Section 2: Headlines - executive summary .....	1
Section 3: Focus on Attainment.....	2
Cohort 1 & 2 Attainment Commentary .....	4
2022/23: @South-West Connects comparisons with national / local authority attainment .....	4
Comparison Commentary .....	4
Section 4: SIMD profile of the @South-West Connects Cohort 2 .....	5
Commentary .....	5
Section 5: Focus – Equity of AH offer .....	6
Breadth of offer by NQ Presentations in 2023 .....	6
Dumfries and Galloway:.....	6
East Ayrshire: .....	6
North Ayrshire: .....	6
South Ayrshire:.....	7
Breadth of AH Offer - Commentary.....	7
Section 6: Stakeholder views.....	8
Key messages.....	8
Section 7: Next steps? .....	9
Opportunities to diversify the offer .....	9
Challenges .....	9
Considerations for discussion .....	10
Appendix A – Cohort 2 analysis of attainment .....	11
Appendix B – Year 2 distribution.....	13






## Section 1: Rationale - @South-West Connects

Across the SWEIC secondary schools are charged with ensuring senior phase pupils can access the skills and qualifications they will require to pursue the pathway of their choice. Detailed analysis of the curriculum offers across the 40 schools in 2019 threw a spotlight on the inequity of opportunity available to significant numbers of young people approaching their exit point from secondary education.

In some schools, pupils were only able to access 2 or 3 courses at Advanced Higher (AH) level and the choice of Highers was very traditional and often limited. By contrast, peers in larger schools or in schools geographically close enough to access consortia arrangements were able to choose from up to 14 AHs and a much wider range of qualifications to prepare them for the next stage of their learner journey. Many of the schools across the SWEIC are relatively small and some are geographically remote – the dilemma is to consider how to fund a wide range of options to meet pupil aspiration. In many schools across the SWEIC AH classes will not always run or only run with reduced teaching time, within a bi-level class or as private study. Often schools with a very limited offer have proportionately higher numbers living in SIMD 1 – 4 postcodes. This can have a negative impact on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The SWEIC pilot branded as @South-West Connects aimed to address the inequity of opportunity by offering pupils in all 40 schools access to a digital hub offering a range of Advanced Highers and, in year 2, a number of Highers.

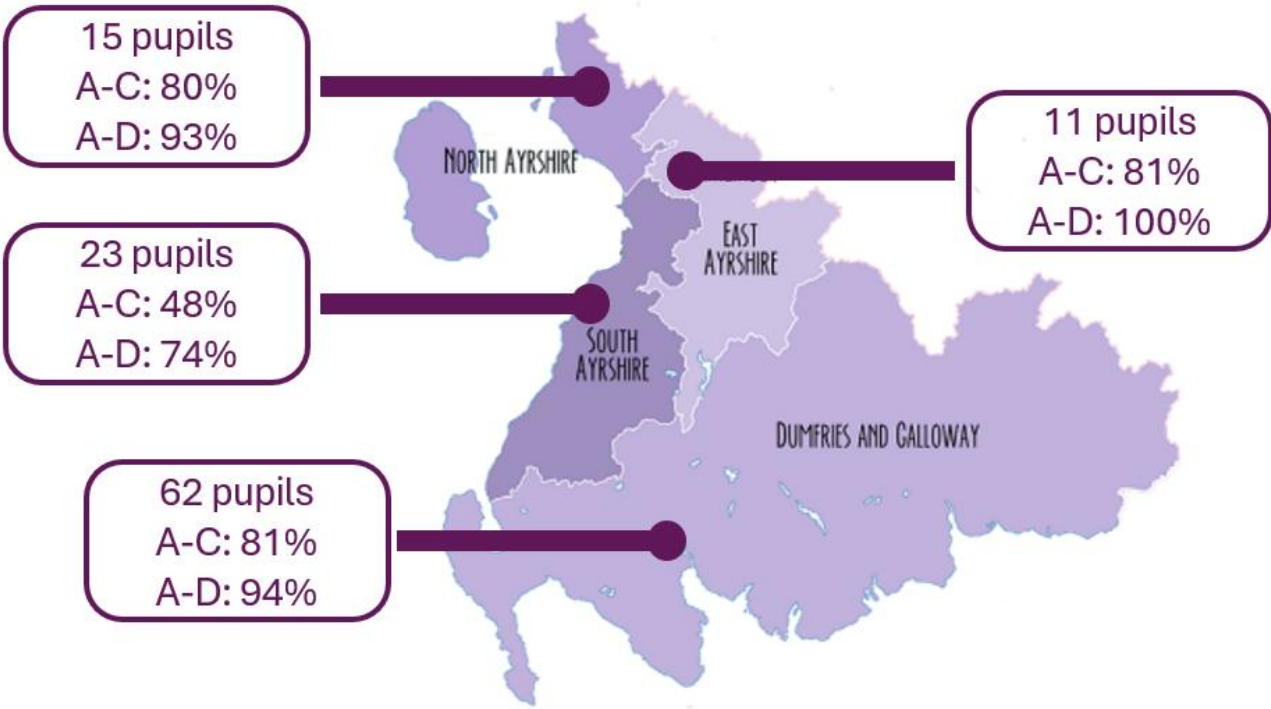
## Section 2: Headlines - executive summary

-  262 senior phase pupils have completed courses with @South-West Connects and been presented for qualifications (111 in 2021/22 and 151 in 2022/23). Most were at Advanced Higher level (SCQF 7). See [Appendix A](#) for details.
-  Both cohorts comprised significant numbers from SIMD 1-4 - around 34% of cohort 2. See [Section 4](#) for authority breakdown.
-  The number of subjects on offer has increased with all SWEIC schools having access to at least 11 AH courses – this goes some way to address the inequity of offer across the SWEIC.
-  34 out of 40 schools engaged with the programme in 2022/23. In some schools a majority of their AH presentations are through @South-West Connects. In others engagement is limited to small numbers. See [Appendix A](#) for schools involved in year 2. [Appendix B](#) shows how schools engaged at the start year 2.
-  11 teachers have been released by schools to deliver courses – many remain with us for 2023/4.

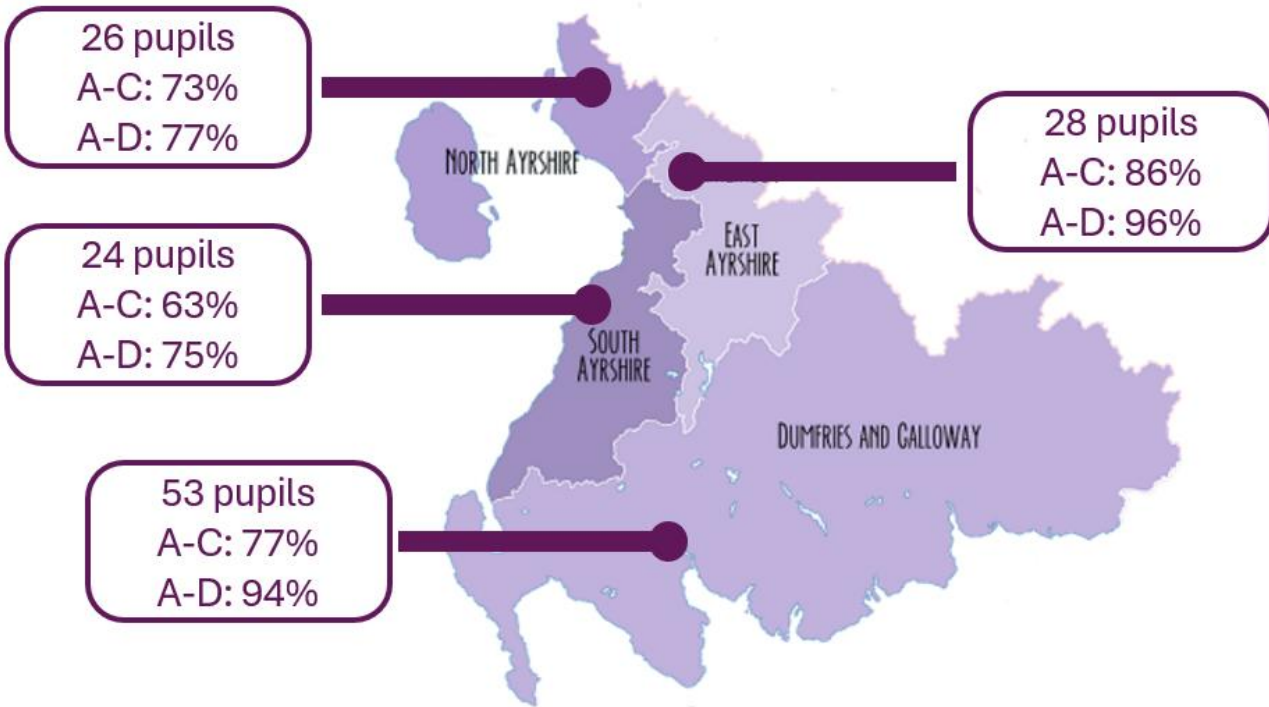
- Stakeholder surveys and focus groups conducted in both years provide positive feedback overall with some suggestions for improvement that have been actioned. See [Section 6](#).
- Attainment is positive and broadly comparable with SWEIC attainment at AH level – A-C AH passes in 2023 is at 76% (pre-appeal) – see tables below.
- In year 2 five pupils achieved units rather than simply withdrawing.
- The quality of passes is strong – in year 1, 23% achieved an A grade and 50% achieved an A or B. In year 2, 24% achieved an A grade with 52% achieving an A or B.
- Cohort 2 data may change as a result of appeals although the change to the appeals processes by SQA is likely to have an impact on numbers upgrading (19 upgrades last year).
- The partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University has been very positive with A – C pass rates above 80%.
- Very positive outcomes are evident in a number of subjects although there are some concerns about a minority of subjects. The suitability of certain subjects for digital delivery needs to be carefully considered moving forward.

### Section 3: Focus on Attainment

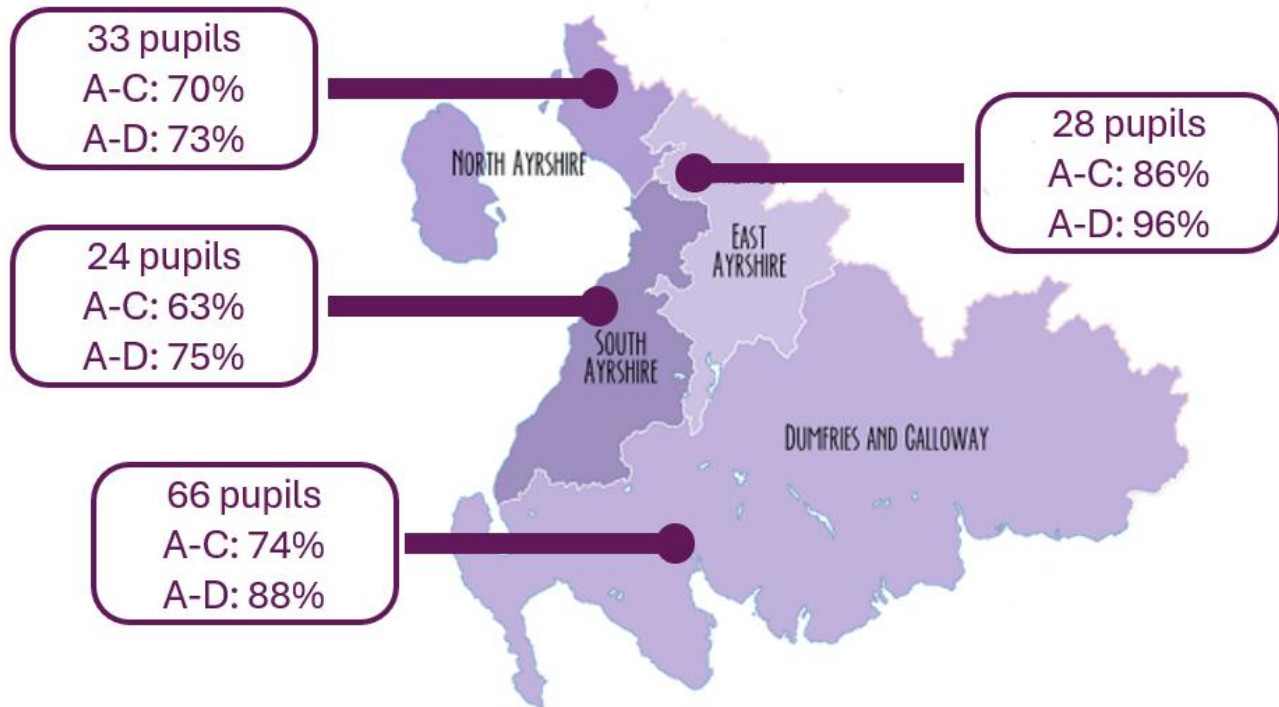
<b>COHORT 1: 2021/22</b>	111 pupils 11 Advanced Highers	A – C: 74% A – D: 84%
--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------



**COHORT 2: 2022/23**      130 pupils      A – C: 76%  
(AH only)      11 Advanced Highers      A – D: 88%



**COHORT 2: 2022/23**      151 pupils      A – C: 74%  
11 Advanced Highers      A – D: 84%  
2 Highers

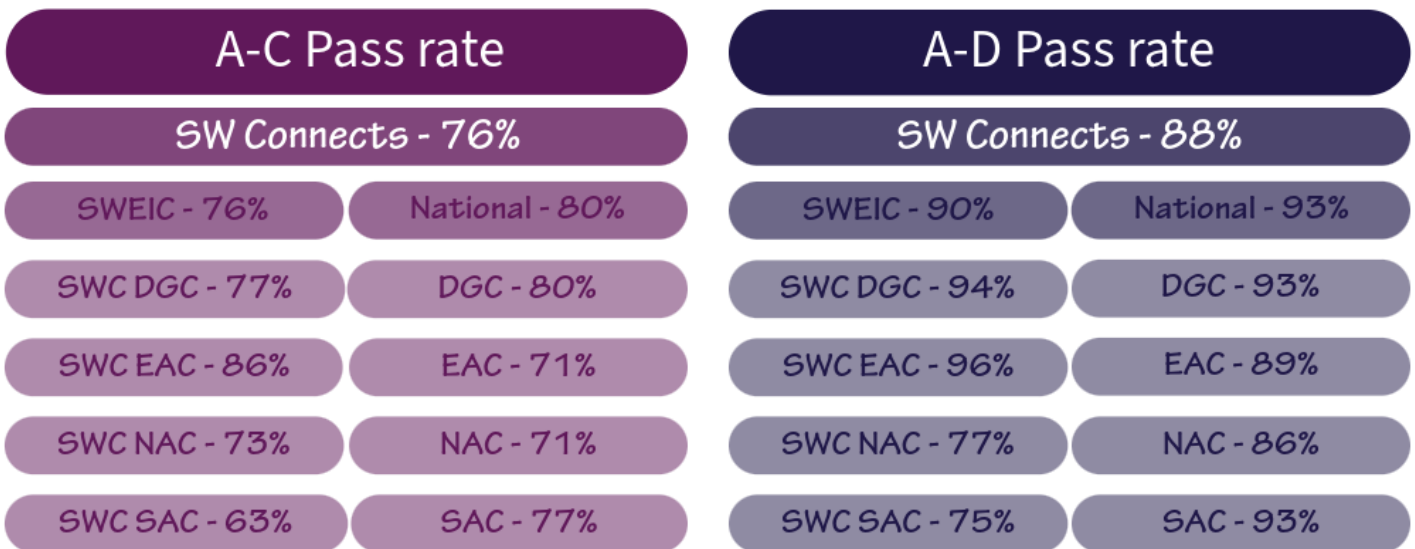


2022/23 results are pre-appeal

## Cohort 1 & 2 Attainment Commentary

- 74% A-C pass rate in year one was a very positive result for the pilot year – especially as this was the first time pupils had experienced formal exams post pandemic. Initial results provided justification for Year 2
- Year 2 continued to build on the success of the pilot year with increased presentation numbers and similar success – see Appendix A for breakdown of subjects by school.
- Analysis of the pupils who did not achieve an A-D pass in year 2 suggested that their prior attainment would always make progression to Advanced Higher very difficult. This has resulted in a stricter approach at the point of application and greater enforcement of required entry levels post results in August 2023.

## 2022/23: @South-West Connects comparisons with national / local authority attainment



## Comparison Commentary

Data suggests that @South-West Connects provides a robust offer. Despite the challenges of a digital delivery model, pupils attainment through @South-West Connects is very similar to the overall performance at Advanced Higher level within each local authority and across the SWEIC.

## Section 4: SIMD profile of the @South-West Connects Cohort 2

A detailed analysis of the year 2 cohort shows that a considerable number of presentations were from pupils living in SIMD 1-4 data zones. There is considerable variation across the four authorities.

	@SWConnects	D&G	EAC	NAC	SAC
<b>SIMD 1 – 2:</b>	12%	3%	25%	16%	13%
<b>SIMD 1 – 4</b>	34%	24%	54%	34%	42%

### Commentary

The cohort as a whole comprised pupils from every SIMD postcode – a truly comprehensive group!

However, it is worth noting the demographic of the group – by design the @South-West Connects cohort comprises many pupils from small rural schools and has a significant proportion from schools in areas of high deprivation where traditional levels of attainment have been lower with a consequence that AHs are not always viable in that school.

Many pupils from SIMD 1 – 4 achieved well with their @South-West Connects qualifications. This may contribute to closing the poverty related attainment gap for some pupils in some schools.



## Section 5: Focus – Equity of AH offer

The charts below show the number of AHs on offer across SWEIC schools.

### Breadth of offer by NQ Presentations in 2023

Dumfries and Galloway:

School	Number of AH subjects presented in base school	Number of AH subjects via @SWConnects	Total number of subjects at AH
Annan Academy	4	5	9
Castle Douglas High School	9	4	13
Dalbeattie High School	5	3	8
Douglas Ewart High School	6	4	10
Dumfries Academy	7	1	8
Dumfries High School	7	1	8
Kirkcudbright Academy	10	1	11
Langholm Academy	4	2	6
Lockerbie Academy	10	0	10
Moffat Academy	3	4	7
North West Community Campus	0	1	1
Sanquhar Academy	2	3	5
St Joseph's College	8	1	9
Stranraer Academy	4	3	7
Wallace Hall Academy	11	2	13

East Ayrshire:

School	Number of AH subjects presented in base school	Number of AH subjects via @SWConnects	Total number of subjects at AH
Doon Academy	tbc	0	tbc
Grange Academy	8	1	9
Kilmarnock Academy	9	4	13
Loudoun Academy	tbc	1	tbc
Robert Burns Academy	11	4	15
St Joseph's Academy	10	2	12
Stewarton Academy	12	2	14






North Ayrshire:

School	Number of AH subjects presented in base school	Number of AH subjects via @SWConnects	Total number of subjects at AH
Ardrossan Academy	7	1	8
Arran High School	10	0	10
Auchenharvie Academy	5	3	8
Garnock Campus	7	1	8
Greenwood Academy	9	2	11
Irvine Royal Academy	6	0	6
Kilwinning Academy	9	4	12
Largs Academy	11	7	18
St Matthew's Academy	12	0	12

## South Ayrshire:

School	Number of AH subjects presented in base school	Number of AH subjects via @SWConnects	Total number of subjects at AH
Ayr Academy	8	1	9
Belmont Academy	11	2	13
Carrick Academy	4	2	6
Girvan Academy	6	1	7
Kyle Academy	14	2	16
Marr College	13	1	14
Prestwick Academy	9	1	10
Queen Margaret Academy	7	5	12

### Breadth of AH Offer - Commentary

-  @South-West Connects enables pupils across the SWEIC to have access to at least 11 Advanced Highers in the Senior Phase, a significant increase for many schools.
-  @South-West Connects provides greater flexibility by reducing potential ‘column clashes’ within base schools.
-  Stakeholder surveys suggest that more pupils may have accessed @South-West Connects courses had information been made more readily available to pupils/parents/carers.
-  A review of options information on school websites showed different approaches to sharing the offer by schools – this makes it difficult for pupils, parents, and guidance staff to really understand what is on offer to them.
-  Data from 2023 shows that in many schools discrete AH classes with very small numbers continued to be accommodated within base schools – it may be pupils were taught on reduced teacher time or that they were accommodated within bi-level classes.

## Section 6: Stakeholder views

The full stakeholder survey report can be viewed [here](#).

### Key messages

- Feedback suggests that there is considerable anxiety about the digital delivery model at the outset – it is understandable that pupils and parents are concerned about how the model will work. However, the view of key stakeholders taken around December show very positive feedback about the experience.
- In addition to the positive attainment picture, all stakeholder groups make reference to upskilling learners and helping to prepare them for their post school destination.
- Most agree that Microsoft Teams is a suitable platform to facilitate delivery and teachers are using this effectively to provide positive experiences.
- Learners and base schools are generally satisfied with the timetabling structures in place and the tracking and monitoring processes in place.
- Almost all stakeholders would recommend @South-West Connects to others – but it does not suit everyone.
- Schools are looking for information re any offer and decisions on places offered/rejections as early as possible.
- Base schools would like to see the offer expanded as there are other gaps in their curriculum that they cannot fill in-house (including AH Sciences).
- Feedback from pupils and parents suggest that communication and active engagement with base schools continues to need improvement – the pupil experience is diminished in a small number of schools.
- All of the @South-West Connects teachers endorsed the suitability of the model to deliver their subject.



## Section 7: Next steps?

Two years on the evidence gathered from the pilot indicates that:

- a. The digital offer can greatly enhance the Senior Phase curriculum across all schools in the SWEIC by ensuring a minimum number of AHs are available.
- b. The online delivery method can yield positive attainment results for appropriately qualified pupils.
- c. The majority of stakeholders find the experience rewarding and value the skills developed in working this way.

### Opportunities to diversify the offer

SWEIC have delivered a proof of concept – and the proven infrastructure can readily be shared and developed at authority level as well as SWEIC level.

The potential offers that the digital platform could support could be greatly extended – for example to include more niche Highers, vocational courses (e.g., the theory components of Foundation apprenticeships), some college courses, programmes for interrupted learners, pupils in hospital or long-term illness, pupils unable to access school due to exclusion etc.

As confidence in the robustness of the model develops it may be possible to increase interaction with other online providers e.g., e-Sgoil, Edinburgh College Modern Languages offer etc.

### Challenges

- a. Developing a sustainable funding model at local authority level remains the biggest challenge.
- b. Agreeing a common schematic/common times to facilitate a future offer remains an obstacle for some schools who do not wish to align.
- c. Reassuring parents and some school staff remains challenging.
- d. GCU funding is prohibitive despite positive outcomes for learners.
- e. Accessing AH sciences and some other courses may need in person contact to complete lab work- with the return of SQA projects this will have a bearing on future plans.
- f. Some schools have yet to engage on any level ... it may be that they are self-sufficient, but this is likely to be at a cost financially. It is feasible that some pupils continue to be unaware of the suite of qualifications on offer to them. How actively the offer is promoted at school level remains inconsistent.
- g. Partnership with base schools? Stakeholder feedback continues to suggest varying degrees of support for pupils from their own base school. In some schools the pupil experience is enhanced through timely interventions and ongoing monitoring/support and challenge – however, this is not universally offered.

- h.** It is important to consider whether we are giving the right pathway advice. In cohort 2 many pupils who did not complete courses or achieved a D or No award did not have the recommended entry requirements from the outset (20% of the Ds and NAs) – in some ways they were set up to fail as converting to an AH through a digital medium is likely to be even harder when delivered remotely. It may be useful to ensure all pastoral staff are aware of the @South-West Connects offer.
- i.** The number of withdrawals/changes to the cohort is significant – especially after recoursing post results in August (although this is also true in school settings).

## **Considerations for discussion**

- Authority priorities within the SWEIC may differ as to future development of the model – engagement in some of our authorities is limited. What does each local authority plan next? What is the role of the SWEIC? What may be available via other partners?
- Progressing the model for the future requires early decisions about the direction of travel at authority and SWEIC level and robust timelines need to be developed if continuity of a digital offer is to be maintained.
- Future management of the programme needs to be planned and agreed.
- Digital pedagogy / digital skills – how are we training staff? How are we ensuring pupil skill level to enable access to digital courses?
- ICT, infrastructure, and software licenses etc. – what is required and how will this be funded.
- Accommodation - what can we do to ensure learning spaces are conducive for pupils accessing online courses? What would this look like in our new builds or refurbishment plans?

## Appendix A – Cohort 2 analysis of attainment

Attainment by subject %	A	B	C	D	NA	A-C	A-D
H Accounting	-	25%	-	-	75%	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>
AH Biology (GCU)	25%	38%	13%	13%	13%	<b>75%</b>	<b>88%</b>
AH Business Management	-	50%	25%	-	25%	<b>75%</b>	<b>75%</b>
AH Computing Science	-	33%	17%	-	50%	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>
AH English	14%	-	43%	43%	-	<b>57%</b>	<b>100%</b>
AH English (GCU)	15%	38%	31%	15%	-	<b>85%</b>	<b>100%</b>
AH Graphic Communication	17%	50%	8%	15%	8%	<b>75%</b>	<b>92%</b>
AH History Germany	38%	38%	25%	-	-	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
AH History USA	21%	32%	36%	11%	-	<b>89%</b>	<b>100%</b>
AH Maths	11%	33%	33%	22%	-	<b>78%</b>	<b>100%</b>
AH Modern Studies	33%	25%	17%	17%	8%	<b>75%</b>	<b>92%</b>
AH Physical Education	-	33%	-	33%	33%	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>
AH Physics (GCU)	50%	25%	13%	-	13%	<b>88%</b>	<b>88%</b>
H Politics (GCU)	58%	17%	8%	-	17%	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>
AH Spanish	23%	8%	15%	-	54%	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>83%</b>

Attainment by subject total	A	B	C	D	NA	TOTAL
Accounting	-	2	-	-	6	8
Biology (GCU)	2	3	1	1	1	8
Business Management	-	2	1	-	1	4
Computing Science	-	2	1	-	3	6
English	1	-	3	3	-	7
English (GCU)	2	5	4	2	-	13
Graphic Communication	2	6	1	2	1	12
History Germany	3	3	2	-	-	8
History USA	6	9	10	3	-	28
Maths	1	3	3	2	-	9
Modern Studies	4	3	2	2	1	12
Physical Education	-	1	-	1	1	3
Physics (GCU)	4	2	1	-	1	8
Politics (GCU)	7	2	1	-	2	12
Spanish	3	1	2	-	7	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>153</b>

## Attainment by school for each Local Authority

<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Annan Academy	2	2	-	3	3	10
Castle Douglas High School	2	1	3	2	-	8
Dalbeattie High School	-	2	-	1	-	3
Douglas Ewart High School	6	2	1	1	1	11
Dumfries Academy	1	4	4	-	-	9
Dumfries High School	-	1	1	-	-	2
Kirkcudbright Academy	-	1	-	-	-	1
Langholm Academy	-	-	3	-	-	3
Moffat Academy	5	1	-	1	-	7
North West Community Campus	-	-	-	1	-	1
Sanquhar Academy	-	1	-	-	1	2
St Joseph's College	-	-	-	-	1	1
Stranraer Academy	1	3	-	-	1	5
Wallace Hall Academy	-	2	-	-	1	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>66</b>

<b>East Ayrshire</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Grange Academy	-	1	-	-	-	1
Kilmarnock Academy	2	2	1	1	1	7
Loudoun Academy	1	-	-	-	-	1
Robert Burns Academy	2	5	4	2	-	13
St Joseph's Academy	-	1	1	-	-	2
Stewarton Academy	-	4	-	-	-	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>

<b>North Ayrshire</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Ardrossan Academy	1	-	-	-	-	1
Auchenharvie Academy	1	1	3	-	-	5
Garnock Campus	1	-	-	-	-	1
Greenwood Academy	-	1	-	-	2	3
Kilwinning Academy	2	1	2	1	-	6
Largs Academy	5	3	2	-	7	17
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>

<b>South Ayrshire</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Ayr Academy	-	-	-	1	-	1
Belmont Academy	-	-	2	-	-	2
Carrick Academy	-	-	1	1	-	2
Girvan Academy	-	1	1	-	3	5
Kyle Academy	1	1	-	-	3	5
Marr College	-	-	1	-	-	1
Prestwick Academy	1	-	-	-	-	1
Queen Margaret Academy	1	3	2	1	-	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>

## Appendix B – Year 2 distribution

Number of pupils per school and Local Authority to take up an initial place.

<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>North Ayrshire</b>	<b>45</b>
Annan Academy	13	Largs Academy	22
Douglas Ewart High School	13	Kilwinning Academy	8
Castle Douglas High School	11	Auchenharvie Academy	7
Dumfries Academy	9	Greenwood Academy	6
Moffat Academy	9	Ardrossan Academy	1
Sanquhar Academy	8	Garnock Campus	1
Langholm Academy	7	Arran High School	0
Stranraer Academy	6	Irvine Royal Academy	0
Wallace Hall Academy	4	St Matthews Academy	0
Dalbeattie High School	3		
Dumfries High School	2	<b>South Ayrshire</b>	<b>28</b>
St Joseph's College	2	Girvan Academy	7
Kirkcudbright Academy	1	Queen Margaret Academy	7
NorthWest Campus	1	Kyle Academy	6
Lockerbie Academy	0	Belmont Academy	3
		Carrick Academy	2
<b>East Ayrshire</b>	<b>32</b>	Ayr Academy	1
Robert Burns Academy	13	Marr College	1
Kilmarnock Academy	8	Prestwick Academy	1
Stewarton Academy	7		
St Joseph's Academy	2		
Grange Academy	1		
Loudoun Academy	1		
Doon Academy	0		