**ATTAINMENT: BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION AND SQA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS 2024**

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide a summary to the Comhairle of attainment performance and outcomes in the Broad General Education (BGE, P1-S3) and Senior Phase (S4-6) in the 2023-24 session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Tracking and reporting of progress in attainment and performance each summer consists of three key areas.
 - 1) The annual survey of teacher judgement in the BGE reporting on performance of learners in P1, P4, P7 and S3 within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).
 - 2) The reporting of the results of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations in the senior phase; the main focus of which tends to be on National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher awards but also includes a number of other course results.
 - 3) The SDS Annual Participation Measure that reports on the participation of 16–19-year-olds in education, training or employment.
- 2.2 Based on the teacher judgement survey of the BGE for 2024, an average of 86.8% of curricular milestones were achieved across numeracy and literacy combined in Comhairle schools for P1, P4, P7 and S3. This compares to 87.5% in 2023, 83.2% in 2022 and 76.2% in 2021.
- 2.3 Following discussions with learners, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, there was a return to full course assessment in 2024 after a three-year period of disruption to the methodologies for examination and certification during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, it remains the case that extreme caution must be taken on making year-on-year comparisons in data from 2019 through to 2024.
- 2.4 Across all SQA awards this year, the pass rate achieved in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was 81.7%, from a total of 2424 presentations. Increases in pass rate and presentations mean that, this year, more young people are successfully achieving more awards. This year's results demonstrate a strong performance overall against a context of decreasing pass rates nationally in 2024. There was an increase of 2.5% in passes at National 5 and an increase of 5.5% in those achieving Advanced Higher across all Comhairle nan Eilean Siar schools. There is, however, a reduction in the pass rate for Highers locally this year in the context of an overall reduction in passes nationally. Comhairle schools will continue to undertake a thorough analysis of results to identify and address issues that contributed to the reduction in Higher passes.
- 2.5 The SDS Annual Participation Measure for 2024 reports that the Comhairle has the third highest participation rate across Scotland at 96.8%. Furthermore, Comhairle schools continue to report some of the highest success rates in Scotland for sustained post-school destinations, with 98.3% of our leavers continuing to be in a positive destination three months after leaving school, another increase on last year of 1.3%.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle note the Report.

Contact Officer: Anne Graham, QIO Attainment and David Downham, QIO Secondary & Digital

Appendix:

Background Papers:

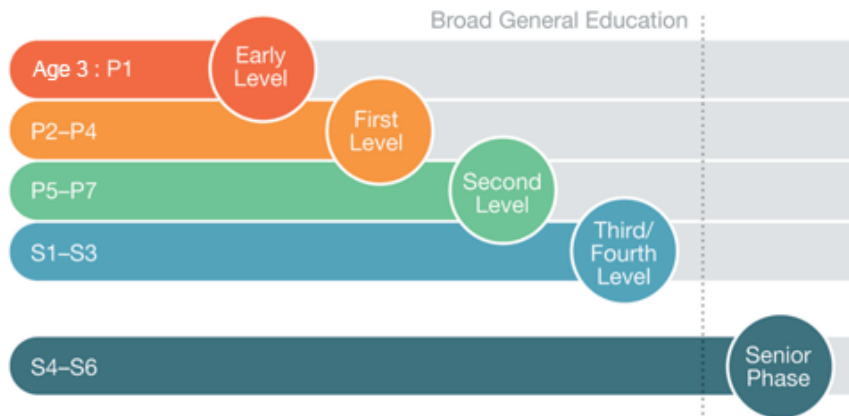
IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	Applicable UNCRC Articles: 28 – A Right to Education 29 – Goals of Education Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017)
Corporate Strategy	Support Children, Families and Young People: - Raise ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Post-Covid, staff continue to develop their use of data to plan and implement a range of interventions to close gaps and accelerate progress. During the 2023-24 academic session, there was disruption to learning time from several days of industrial action and adverse weather conditions. Learners across Uist schools experienced further disruption after local water supply was contaminated in September 2023.
- 5.2 The teacher judgement survey of the BGE is an exercise that is undertaken annually and involves the reporting by all schools of the achievement of levels within CFE. Data is recorded for literacy and English, literacy and Gàidhlig and numeracy for P1, P4, P7 and S3.
- 5.3 In the CFE teacher judgement survey, teachers use professional judgement to determine the level of attainment in literacy and English, literacy and Gàidhlig and numeracy in relation to the milestone years in the national progression pathway, as set out below:



5.4 During this year’s 2024 examination programme most courses that had modifications to assessment during 2021-22 and 2022-23 have now returned to full assessment. The SQA are keeping modifications to assessment in 28 courses where they have seen evidence that they had a positive impact while still allowing learners to show their skills, knowledge and understanding.

DETAIL

Broad General Education (Nursery to S3)

6.1 The table below provides a summary of the percentage of learners at each stage that achieved the typical curricular milestone in June 2024, as set out in the diagram at paragraph 5.3.

Percentage CFE Attainment in P1, P4, P7 and S3 for 2023-24

Stage	English Listening & Talking	English Reading	English Writing	Numeracy	Eisteachd & Labhairt Gàidhlig	Leughadh Gàidhlig	Sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig
P1 Early	83.7	82.7	79.8	81.7	92.5	91.7	90.0
P4 First	86.6	72.3	71.4	75.6	93.1	84.6	83.1
P7 Second	90.7	88.1	83.1	80.2	94.4	85.2	84.3
S3 Third +	94.5	93.3	91.7	92.1	92.4	92.4	92.4

6.2 The table below sets out the percentage change in attainment this year compared to the last recording in 2023 (a positive percentage indicates higher attainment in 2024 than in 2023). At P4, learners’ attainment in leughadh Gàidhlig was 5.5% higher in 2024 than in 2023 and their attainment in sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig was 9.8% higher in 2024 than in 2023. Senior leaders’ analysis of data confirms that this cohort’s attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig has increased over time.

Percentage Change in Attainment from 2023 to 2024

Stage	English Listening & Talking	English Reading	English Writing	Numeracy	Eisteachd & Labhairt Gàidhlig	Leughadh Gàidhlig	Sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig
P1 Early	+1.5	+1.4	-0.6	-5.2	+0.5	-2.7	-1.2
P4 First	+1.9	-4.8	-0.8	-0.7	+6.4	+5.5	+9.8
P7 Second	-0.6	-1.3	-0.6	-4.3	+1.9	+0.2	+4.7
S3 Third +	-1.4	-1.9	-2.8	+0.4	-7.6	-7.6	-6.0

- 6.3 This year, an average of 86.8% of learners achieved or exceeded their curriculum level in numeracy and literacy combined across P1, P4, P7 and S3. This compares to 87.5% in 2023, 83.2% in 2022 and 76.2% in 2021. When observing changes in attainment compared to that of the previous year, there is evidence of important improvements across stages and organisers. For example, in primary settings, staff continue to raise children’s attainment in Eisteachd and Labhairt Gàidhlig following successful use of interventions to reduce gaps from the pandemic. The Comhairle has identified correctly writing (English), numeracy at P1, P4 and P7 and attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig at S3 as areas for improvement.
- 6.4 It is also important to note that the cohort of learners that attained an average 76.2% in 2021 are mainly the same learners that achieved an average of 86.8% attainment in 2024 being measured at their next milestone point. This indicates a significant improvement in attainment with primarily the same cohort of pupils.
- 6.5 In 2023-24, most primary schools engaged in a national improving writing programme with the Scottish Government Children and Young People’s Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC). This programme focused on improving writing attainment at first and second level. Senior leaders report a positive impact on writing attainment at first level. Across Comhairle primary settings, 35% more learners achieved first level in writing than was predicted. This session, all staff who are trained in the programme will continue to implement the quality improvement methodology of CYPIC. Local leads will support the implementation of this programme across all Comhairle primary schools.
- 6.6 The Scottish Government has not yet published national attainment data for P1 to S3 for 2023-24. As a result, comparisons cannot be drawn with national trends at these stages. National data is typically made available in December each year.
- 6.7 Closing the poverty-related attainment gap continues to be a national priority and features strongly in the Scottish Government’s National Improvement Framework. Senior leaders and staff across our schools know learners and families very well and understand the socio-economic factors impacting on families. They continue to take steps to ensure resources are being effectively deployed to reduce the poverty- related attainment gap and raise achievement for learners.
- 6.8 Schools in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar access and use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF); grant funding distributed annually as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Senior leaders and staff use a range of indicators to identify learners in their school who may benefit from targeted interventions and approaches, with the aim of reducing the poverty-related attainment gap. Moving forward, senior leaders should ensure that staff, parents and learners are actively involved in determining the focus of the PEF spend for their school.

- 6.9 Attainment data for learners identified by schools to be in receipt of PEF is included in the table below. Cohort sizes for PEF within subjects in each year group are small and can vary from 40 pupils in the largest classification down to two in the smallest. This can result in significant variations in data when expressed as percentages. Collectively across literacy and numeracy, the attainment gap between learners in receipt of PEF compared to those that were not, was 25.8%. The attainment gap for last year's P1, P4, P7 and S3 was 21.4%, indicating that factors relating to poverty significantly impact on attainment and that the gap locally has widened in the last year.

Percentage CFE Attainment in P1, P4, P7 and S3 for Pupils in Receipt of PEF 2023-24

Stage	English Listening & Talking	English Reading	English Writing	Numeracy	Eisteachd & Labhairt Gàidhlig	Leughadh Gàidhlig	Sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig
P1 Early	50.0	43.8	50.0	81.3	88.9	77.8	77.8
P4 First	42.9	21.4	21.4	40.0	54.5	36.4	45.5
P7 Second	73.7	73.7	65.8	65.8	100	100	100
S3 Third +	65.2	65.2	65.2	78.3	*	*	*

* Data suppressed due to cohort size of five or less.

Senior Phase (S4-S6)

- 6.10 Senior Phase (S4-6) attainment performance is indicated below using the results of awards in SQA National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. Significant caution must still be taken when drawing comparisons between performance in 2024 and other years. With no examinations in 2020 or 2021 and changes made to course delivery, internal assessments, exam content and grade boundaries in 2022 and 2023, the data for each of the last five years stands alone in terms of seeking trends and patterns.

2019 – Full traditional SQA exam timetable for all courses

2020 – Exams cancelled: Awards submitted by schools and then adjusted using an SQA algorithm. Scottish Government then adjusted awards lowered by SQA again post-release.

2021 – Exams cancelled: All awards made based on teacher judgement of evidence and subject to local moderation and quality assurance checks.

2022 – Full diet of SQA examinations but with important changes to course delivery, assessments, exams and grade boundaries.

2023 – Full diet of SQA examinations but with adjustments to courses and grade boundaries but not to the same extent as in 2022.

2024 – Most courses that had modifications to assessment during 2021-22 and 2022-23 have now returned to full assessment.

- 6.11 The percentage of A-C passes at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in Comhairle schools is shown below, with comparison provided to the Scottish average pass rate.

2024 SQA course Level	CNES Presentations	CNES A-C Passes	Scotland A-C Pass Rate
National 5	1544	82.3%	77.2%
Higher	765	71.9%	74.9%
Advanced Higher	115	72.2%	75.3%
Combined	2424	78.5%	76.3%

6.12 The attainment in SQA courses for 2023 is provided below.

2023 SQA Course Level	CNES Presentations	CNES A-C Pass Rate	Scotland A-C Pass Rate
National 5	1482	79.8%	78.8%
Higher	800	78.3%	77.1%
Advanced Higher	84	66.7%	79.8%
Combined	2366	78.8%	78.5%

6.13 Increases in pass rate and presentations mean that, this year, more young people have successfully achieved more awards. This year's results demonstrate a strong performance overall against a context of decreasing pass rates nationally in 2024. We record an increase of 2.5% in passes at National 5 and an increase of 5.5% in those achieving Advanced Higher across all Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar secondary schools. There is, however, a reduction in the pass rate for Highers locally this year in the context of an overall reduction in passes nationally. Schools will undertake a thorough analysis of results to identify and address issues that contributed to the reduction in Higher passes.

6.14 At this stage, only headline attainment data for S4-6 has been published. In late September, the Insight SQA Benchmarking tool will be updated to include 2024 results, and a deep and detailed analysis will be undertaken across schools and courses. Schools will then use this information to recognise success, identify priorities and plan for improvement.

Annual Participation Measure

6.15 Each year, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) works with Scottish Government to collate and report on participation of all young people aged 16 to 19. The measure is defined as the percentage of young adults aged 16-19 participating in education, training or employment. It is a key national measure of the success of participation and outcomes for young people.

6.16 For young people in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the Annual Participation Measure reports for 2023-24 that 96.8% of 16–19-year-olds are participating in education, training or employment. This represents a slight decrease by 0.4% from 2023 (97.2%). This compares positively to the national participation rate of 92.7%.

6.17 The tables below provide a summary of current and historic data from the Annual Participation Measure, including a breakdown by each category.

Year	CNES % Participation Total	National % Participation Total
2024	96.8	92.7
2023	97.2	92.6
2022	96.2	92.4
2021	95.6	92.2
2020	95.5	92.1
2019	95.5	91.6

Year	CNES % in Education	CNES % in Training	CNES % In Employment	National % in Education	National % in Training	National % in employment
2024	65.4	1.5	30.0	71.2	1.9	19.6
2023	65.8	1.5	29.9	71.4	1.7	19.6
2022	63.8	1.8	30.6	73.1	1.7	17.5
2021	70.2	2.6	22.9	74.8	1.8	15.5
2020	69.9	2.0	23.7	72.0	1.8	18.3
2019	69.9	1.4	24.3	71.5	2.0	18.2

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In 2023-24, across the stages of Curriculum for Excellence, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar saw important success and improvement in learners' attainment and achievement. Our learners' success goes far beyond the attainment data listed in this report. We continue to celebrate and value our learners' achievements in and out of school. Our learners continue to develop a range of skills and attributes because of participating in an increasing range of opportunities for achievement. They are successful in national and local opportunities in the fields of music, sport, culture, leadership and community activity. They are experiencing an increased range of opportunities to achieve and use Gàidhlig through partnerships such as Film G, Feisean nan Gàidheal, Mòds, An Deasbad Nàiseanta and e-Sgoil. We also recognise the high percentage rate of participation in the SDS Annual Participation Measure and sustained positive post-school destinations as other indicators of the success of the outcomes of our service.
- 7.2 Whilst there are improvements in learners' attainment across our schools, the Comhairle has identified writing (English), numeracy at P1, P4 and P7 and attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig at S3 as areas for improvement.