



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne



Dùbhlán Coileanaidh na h-Alba
Scottish Attainment Challenge

Aithisg Prìomh Amasan
Stretch Aims Report
2023-24



Clàr-innse

Contents

Introduction	2
Context of the Western Isles	4
Core Stretch Aims	
Aim 1 – CFE Attainment	6
Aim 2 – SCQF5 1+ Attainment	9
Aim 3 – SCQF6 1+ Attainment	11
Aim 4 – Participation of 16-19 Year Olds	13
Aim 5 – Health & Wellbeing: Attendance	16
Core Plus Stretch Aims	
Aim 6 – CFE Writing in Primary (Gaelic & English)	18
Aim 7 – SQQF Literacy & Numeracy Attainment	20
Collated Summary of Aims	22



Ro-ràdh Introduction

The Scottish Attainment Challenge refreshed Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress, published in May 2023, updated expectations upon education authorities to report on progress with stretch aims and to review aims for 2023-24 onwards to 2025-26.

The Framework restates the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge:

- use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap, and to;
- support education recovery, increase pace of, and reduce variation in progress.

The Framework has been developed to support the delivery of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and to evaluate the impact of the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), aiming to reinforce the collective commitment to equity in education and to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's outcomes. It recognises the importance of setting high expectations, including the establishment of ambitions locally identified stretch aims to track and evidence the impact of the SAC and the ASF. The Framework aims to maximise the use of existing improvement and quality assurance systems to support the development, tracking and reporting on stretch aims.



The Framework sets out a requirement for each authority to identify, evidence and report upon five **Core Stretch Aims** that are universal to all education authorities across Scotland. In addition, authorities are able to set a number of local **Core Plus Stretch Aims** that recognise and reflect the local context and improvement needs. This document sets out the detail of both groups of stretch aims for the Western Isles for 2023-26 as well as providing information on progress during the previous year.

The Core Stretch Aims relate to:

- Curriculum for Excellence achievement levels – P1, 4, 7 English literacy combined and numeracy combined;
- The proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF level 5;
- The proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more passes at SCQF level 6;
- The proportion of 16-19 years olds participating in education, employment or training based on Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and

- Health and wellbeing, using a local measure/suite of measures, including, for example, attendance. For Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, this Health & Wellbeing aim will focus on attendance in secondary schools.

In considering local **Core Plus Stretch Aims**, the Comhairle has identified the following priority areas:

- The attainment in Gaelic and English writing of learners registered for free school meals at P1, P4 and P7.
- The proportion of school leavers attaining SCQF level 5 in Literacy and Numeracy.

Important Notes:

Poverty Gap Measure

The Framework sets out an expectation to use a comparison between Quintiles 1 and 5 within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as the measure of the poverty gap for each stretch aim. This is not possible in the Western Isles as there are no learners within these quintiles. As the current 'next-best' alternative, a comparison between those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) or not is used as the data measure. This is explained in more detail in the next section, 'Context of the Western Isles'.

Gaelic Medium Literacy Stretch Aims

The Comhairle gave significant consideration to setting a specific **Core Plus Stretch Aim** relating to literacy within Gaelic Medium Education as the Core Stretch Aim for literacy performance relates only to English Literacy. Detailed analysis of Gaelic Medium literacy data indicated two issues that ruled out the creation of specific GME literacy local stretch aims.

- The datasets for children in receipt of Free School Meal within Gaelic Medium Education are very small and are not sufficient to create viable datasets that can be used for percentage comparison do no risk identification of individual learners. The local Core Plus stretch aim for writing encompasses both Gaelic and English learners to create a dataset of suitable size.
- The Gaelic Medium Education literacy data for 2022-23 indicates no attainment gap. This is partly due the very small datasets mentioned in the point, above.

Background Links:

[SAC Framework for Recovery & Accelerating Progress \(May 2023\)](#)

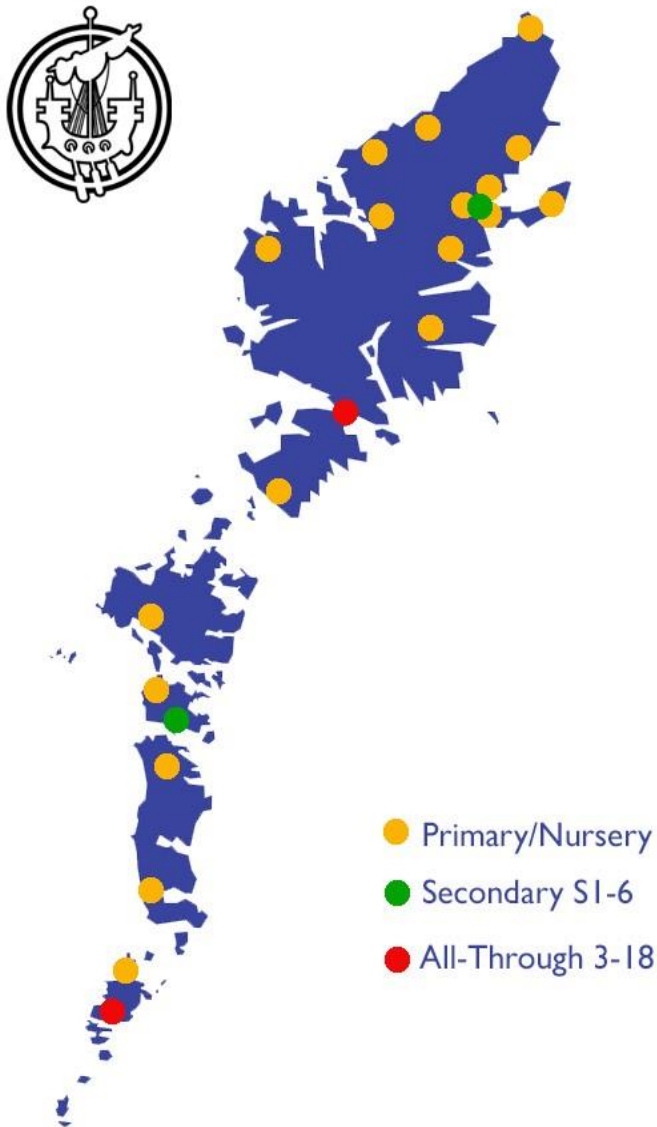
[SAC National Report on Local Stretch Aims 2022-2023](#)

A' Coileanadh Sàr-mhaitheas Còmhla – Achieving Excellence Together

Achieving Excellence and Equity for the Learners of the Western Isles

Suidheachadh nan Eilean Siar Context of the Western Isles

When meeting the requirements of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress in the setting of stretch aims, it is important to consider unique aspects of our context that affect how they are set, evidenced and evaluated.



Authority Size

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is a small rural authority with twenty-two schools and a total pupil population of 3122 in primary and secondary education and 398 in early years settings.

The datasets used to support stretch aims can be small and modest changes can lead to seemingly large statistical variations, particularly when represented as percentages. A typical year group in the authority will have an average of 200 learners.

Impact of Gaelic Medium Education

The positive growth in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Western Isles has now resulted in 47% of pupils in primary schools learning through the medium of Gaelic.

As a result of this, the datasets used to set and monitor stretch aims are affected. Literacy stretch aims must reflect the main language of learning & teaching and take account of the different requirements for recording of achievement of CFE levels for learners in GME. These requirements particularly affect the consistent availability of full-cohort literacy and numeracy data at P1 and P4. With total average year group cohorts of 200 then being subdivided for literacy into Gàidhlig and English, this can result in very small datasets to extract attainment gap information from.

In addition to this, the number of learners in Gaelic Medium Education that are in receipt of Free School Meals (poverty gap measure) is very small; in some cases, as few as one learner. As such it can be very difficult to create meaningful poverty gap datasets in Gaelic Medium Education.

SIMD Validity as a Poverty Indicator

As a small authority with a significantly rural population, SIMD data cannot be reliably used as an indicator of attainment relative to deprivation or poverty. For the purposes of setting stretch aims, the Framework for Recovery & Accelerating Progress advises comparison between SIMD quintiles

one and five. There are no learners in the Western Isles recorded in either quintile one or five. For the purposes of setting our stretch aims, Free School Meal (FSM) data is used as an alternative that gives a more indicative measure of rates of poverty. Although better and more reliable than SIMD, the use of FSM is not a perfect measure either, as registrations in the Western Isles are lower than the indicative levels of poverty in the area, but it continues to be the most accurate indicator available to us that can be cross-referenced with attainment and other performance data in almost all cases.

FSM Registrations

Healthy Living Survey data for 2022, published in September, indicates that registrations for free school meals in Western Isles secondary schools stands at 7.9% compared to an average of 18.6% for secondary schools nationally. The rate is a little higher for P6 & P7 in primary schools but it remains the case that registrations for FSM in the Western Isles is low and is not in line with other data available to us about likely rates of poverty across our area. For example, data from the study conducted by Loughborough University for End Child Poverty, updated in July 2022, indicates that the rate of child poverty in the Western Isles stands at 16.7%. This must be considered in the context using FSM as a poverty indicator.

When taking together the information provided about year group cohort sizes and percentage uptake of free school meals, it must be noted that the FSM comparison data used in this report to identify an indicative poverty-related attainment gap is drawn from approximately 15-25 learners within the cohort, depending on the specific stretch aim. This means that each individual child can affect performance by up to 8% in some cases.

Throughout 2023, the Comhairle has been working with colleagues from Education Scotland, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council with the aim of developing an effective poverty gap measure for rural island communities that creates more sophisticated and granular data. At the time of writing, that was incomplete and FSM was agreed to be used for this year again as the poverty gap measure.

Use of SSAILD Data

Due to the small size of cohorts, many of the datasets within the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations (SSAILD) for the Western Isles are redacted and, therefore, cannot be used by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to set stretch aims as advised in the SAC Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress. As a result, closely comparable information from Insight is used as an alternative source. Furthermore, SSAILD data is referenced against SIMD quintiles, which cannot be used in the Western Isles, as already described above.



Prìomh Amasan Core Stretch Aims

The setting of **Core Stretch Aims** has been based on the national model but takes account of the local factors described in the previous section.

1

Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7. (English Literacy Combined and Numeracy Combined)

Learners included in the combined literacy data had to achieve the expected level in all three aspects of English literacy. Due to not being able to access nationally published data that includes indicators of the poverty-related attainment gap, local methodologies using FSM data have had to be used.

Gaelic Medium literacy data is not included for the reasons that the FSM cohort in this language stream is very small and not statistically reportable and, in addition, the reporting on the core stretch aim must remain consistent with the other 31 local authorities in terms of specifically being drawn from English literacy statistics. Gaelic Medium pupils have included for English literacy levels at P7. They are not included in English literacy data for P1 and P4.

Numeracy attainment data includes pupils in Gaelic Medium Education at P4 and P7, as per the national requirements for recording numeracy attainment at these stages as judgements are not language dependent. Gaelic Medium P1 is exempt from recording of numeracy attainment data and are not included.

1a

Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 (English Literacy Combined)

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in English literacy across P1, P4, and P7 combined by 3.1% by September 2023.
The attainment gap across P1, P4, and P7 combined for English literacy in 2022 was 10.8% . Learners not in receipt of FSM achieved 75.1% of literacy levels as opposed to FSM learners achieving at a rate of 64.3%.
In 2023, the attainment gap, by the same measure, demonstrated that it had reduced to 7.7% . This is a reduction in the gap of 3.1% . Although the attainment of learners not in receipt of FSM increased to 80.5%, a significant increase in attainment of FSM learners to 72.7% closed the gap by the target amount.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

To assist in setting the stretch aim for 2025-26, the table below sets out the combined literacy attainment data for 2021-23 as a baseline.

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2021-22	74.1%	64.3%	75.1%	10.8pp
2022-23	79.8%	72.7 %	80.5%	7.7pp

Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 – Literacy				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2023-24	79-82%	73-76%	80-82%	7pp-6pp
2024-25	81-84%	75-78%	81-83%	6pp-5pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	84.5%	79.5%	84.1%	5.6pp

The trend data that has been collated to support the setting of the stretch aim and to track progress towards its achievement has only been getting collected in this manner since 2021-22 and it is not possible to track the data further back than this. As each year is completed towards 2025-26, the trend data will be built up.

When considering our longer term stretch aim for 2025-26, the trend data was taken together with tracking information from school that assist in indicating what the expected rates of achievement are at milestones in the years ahead.

Although the overall combined target is to reduce the gap to 5.6pp overall, there is a particularly strong focus on P1 and P4, where the gap is larger and requires more focused intervention to address it. This will include continued engagement with the CYPIC National Writing Programme.

There is also caution that universal improvements in attainment seen over the last two years that are important in themselves, do not inadvertently widen the poverty-related attainment gap.

1b**Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 (Numeracy Combined)**

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in numeracy across P1, P4, and P7 combined by 3.0% by September 2023.
The attainment gap in numeracy across P1, P4, and P7 combined in 2022 was 8.6% . Learners not in receipt of FSM achieved 79.1% of numeracy levels as opposed to FSM learners achieving at a rate of 70.5%.
In 2023, it was positive to note that the attainment of learners in receipt of FSM increased by the target 3%, however, a similar percentage rise in attainment for learners not in receipt of FSM meant that the gap stayed at a fairly static 8.8%, although there was overall improvement in numeracy attainment.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Not Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

The table below sets out the combined numeracy attainment data for 2021-23 as a baseline to predict the trajectory of this aim towards 2025-26. The data does not include P1 GME pupils.

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2021-22	78.3%	70.5%	79.1%	8.6pp
2022-23	81.6%	73.5%	82.3%	8.8pp

Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 – Numeracy				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2023-24	81-83%	74-77%	82-84%	8pp-7pp
2024-25	82-84%	75-79%	82-84%	7pp-5pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	83.7%	79.6%	84.1%	4.5pp

The stretch aim to 2025-26 intends to approximately halve the poverty-related attainment gap in numeracy.

Particular attention will need to be given to strategies within schools that are raising attainment for all. The analysis of progress in 2022-23 indicates that learners in receipt of FSM attainment at a rate of 3% better than the previous year but similar improvement for all resulted in the attainment gap staying static. Improving attainment for all is important but interventions via PEF and CECYP must better target evidencable poverty-related attainment gaps.

Particular attention should be given to P7 where the last two years of data demonstrates that it is at this stage that the largest poverty-related gap is evident.

2

The Proportion of School Leavers Attaining One or More Passes at SCQF Level 5

The data for the stretch aim for this category has been drawn from the national Insight Breadth & Depth measure and the information about the indicative poverty gap is based on Free School Meals data within that measure.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related gap in the attainment of one or more passes at SCQF Level 5 by 4.5% by September 2023 (Data published Feb 2023).
<i>Note: The measurement of the progress towards achieving the 2022-23 stretch aim is based on the Insight SCQF data from SQA National awards to allow for consistent comparison. The new stretch aims draw from the Insight All SCQF measure.</i>
The attainment gap in 2021 was 9.6% in this measure; 92.9% for non-FSM as opposed to 83.3% for FSM pupils. During the pandemic, where alternative certification measures were in place, the poverty-related attainment gap reduced significantly but then returned to pre-pandemic levels in the 2022 leaver data and the impact of this was not sufficiently factored into the 2022-23 stretch aim. As a result, the attainment gap for the 2022 leavers stood at 17.7% , a few percentage points higher than the last pre-pandemic cohort.
In addition, there was a reduction of 34% in the numbers of leavers in receipt of Free School Meals between the 2021 data and that published in 2022 and this had an impact on the percentage variation in statistics. This group forms only 5.9% of the total leaver cohort.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Not Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26 (Insight All SCQF Awards Measure).

Using the data for 2020-22 from Insight (All SCQF Awards), trend information can be drawn to assist in setting the projected improvement targets for 2025-26.

Leaver Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2020	95.0%	90.9%	95.4%	4.5pp
2021	93.2%	83.3%	94.1%	10.8pp
2022	86.5%	68.8%	87.7%	18.9pp

The information in the table suggests that the attainment of 1+ SCQF 5 award was significantly higher for all learners during the period where Alternative Certification approaches were deployed but, importantly, it disproportionately benefitted leavers in receipt of FSM, where their attainment increased by about 10%. The reinstatement of external exams in 2022 has resulted in attainment falling to, or in some cases, below that seen pre-pandemic. The setting of the previous 2022-23 stretch aim did not take enough account of this adjustment and has to be factored into a revised improvement trajectory through to 2026.

Proportion of School Leavers Attaining One of More Passes at SCQF Level 5				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2022-23	86-88%	73-75%	86-87%	13pp-12pp
2023-24	88-90%	76-80%	88-91%	12pp-11pp
2024-25	90-91%	79-81%	90-91%	11pp-10pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	89.9%	81.3%	90.4%	9.2pp

Taking into account the need to reset the improvement trajectory for this measure, using the Insight (All SCQF) data, in recognition of a spike in performance during the Alternative Certification Measures used in the pandemic years, the aim intends to close the gap from 19% down to 9%.

Across this stretch aim and others in this report drawn from leaver data, it has to be recognised that the cohort of leavers in receipt of FSM, is small and can vary each year between 15 and 24 (5-9% of the total leaver cohort). This presents some challenge in the percentage variation that one learner can bring to the dataset.

It is essential to addressing improvement in this stretch aim that schools have strong identification and tracking systems in place for pupils in receipt of FSM and intervene as early as possible in accreditation pathways to give the best opportunity to achieve at least one award at SCQF5. This should also include exploration of online and digital course delivery where that is appropriate. It is also important to consider what awards can be achieved for pupils leaving school at earlier stages at the end of S4 or S5.

3

The Proportion of School Leavers Attaining One or More Passes at SCQF Level 6

The data for the stretch aim for this category has been drawn from the Insight Breadth & Depth measure and the information about the indicative poverty gap is based on Free School Meals.

For this measure, there has been a historic large attainment gap that had been closing during the pandemic years under Alternative Certification Measures and, as of 2021, the FSM cohort had outperformed those not in receipt of FSM, creating a negative attainment gap. It must be noted that this cohort is very small, at 5.9% of the total number of leavers in 2022. In this year's FSM data, each learner equates to over 6% of the cohort.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related gap in the attainment of one or more passes at SCQF Level 6 by 2.2% by September 2023 (Data published Feb 2023).
<i>Note: The measurement of the progress towards achieving the 2022-23 stretch aim is based on the Insight SCQF data from SQA National awards to allow for consistent comparison. The new stretch aims draw from the Insight All SCQF measure.</i>
The attainment gap in 2021 was -6.5% in this measure. The cohort of leavers in receipt of FSM had outperformed those not in receipt of FSM. (75.0% FSM against 68.5% non-FSM). During the pandemic, where Alternative Certification Measures were in place, the poverty-related attainment gap reduced significantly but then returned to pre-pandemic levels in the 2022 leaver data and the impact of this was not sufficiently factored into the 2022-23 stretch aim. For the 2022 leavers, the attainment gap had risen to 18.4%, approximately half of that seen before the pandemic.
It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 5.6% of leavers in 2022, a reduction of 34% compared to 2021. This had an impact on the percentage variation in statistics.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Not Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26 (Insight All SCQF Awards Measure).

The table below provides information about 1+ SCQF Level 6 attainment from 2020-22 using Insight (All SCQF) data to assist in predicting the trajectory of this aim for 2025-26. The leaver cohort in receipt of Free School Meals over the last four years has varied in size between 5% and 9% of the total cohort.

Leaver Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2020	74.1%	68.2%	74.7%	6.5pp
2021	71.6%	75.0%	71.3%	-3.7pp
2022	64.8%	50.0%	65.7%	15.7pp

The Proportion of School Leavers Attaining One or More Passes at SCQF Level 6				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2022-23	64-65%	51-55%	64-65%	13pp-10pp
2023-24	65-66%	54-58%	65-66%	11pp-8pp
2024-25	65-67%	57-61%	66-67%	9pp-6pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	67.9%	62.7%	68.1%	5.3pp

As with the second stretch aim, there is a need to reset the improvement trajectory for this measure in recognition of a spike in performance during the Alternative Certification Measures used in the pandemic years when there were no external examinations.

Although the data for 2022 shows that the poverty-related attainment gap had risen to 15.7%, it is still at approximately half of the rate seen in the last year before the pandemic. The performance over the intervening years has demonstrated that there is significant potential to close this gap.

The stretch aim intends to close that gap from 15% in 2022 down to 5.3% by 2026. Whilst it seems like there are large percentage improvements shown in the trajectory of this aim, the high percentage value that each learner has means that gain of a level six award by one additional learner can increase performance by several percentage points.

Similar to the actions for level five awards, success in this measure will require robust tracking and interventions by schools to ensure that leavers in receipt of FSM have a pathway towards a level six award. It is also important that the information about planned leaver dates are maintained within the 16+ datahub.

4

The proportion of 16-19 years olds participating in education, employment or training

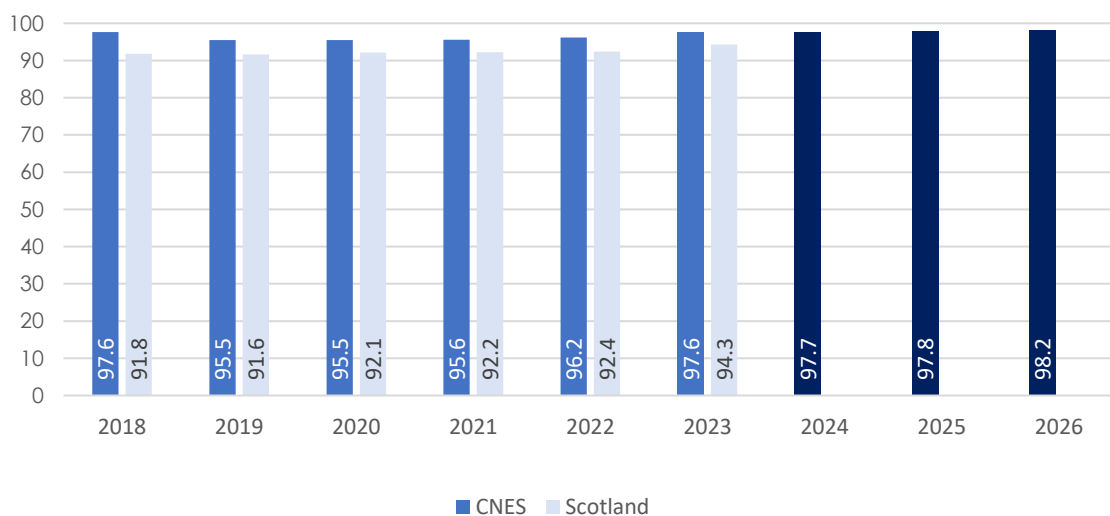
The data for the stretch aim for this category has been informed by the Annual Participation Measure data produced annually by Skills Development Scotland.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar schools have performed consistently well in this measure and have reported amongst the highest participation rates in Scotland for the last number of years. Whilst this is a positive picture, it does limit the scope for improvement to small increments.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Increase the number of 16-19-year-olds participating in education, employment and training by 0.4% by September 2023.
There is no poverty-related data available to us in the Annual Participation Measure as SIMD quintiles are not applicable and the data does not reference FSM. In the interests of improving outcomes for all, the stretch aim set to increase the number in education, employment and training by 0.4% in 2023, from the total the previous year of 96.2% . This may seem like a modest rise, but the starting baseline was already at a high point.
The data published in September 2023 confirmed that the number had risen to 97.6% , a rise of 1.4% . This rise came from increased numbers in education and employment. A slight decrease was observed in the number entering training.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Achieved and Surpassed.

The graph below shows a trend comparison for the Annual Participation Measure data between CNES and Scotland and includes the target improvements through to 2026.

% 16-19 Year Olds Participating in Education, Employment or Training



Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

The table below provides information about the total participation rate and how percentages break down for each contributing element for the last six years.

Year	% in Education, Employment or Training	% in Education	% in Employment	% in Training
2018	97.6	71.2	24.6	1.7
2019	95.5	69.9	24.3	1.4
2020	95.5	69.9	23.7	2.0
2021	95.6	70.2	22.9	2.6
2022	96.2	63.8	30.6	1.8
2023	97.6	65.6	30.8	1.2

Due to the rounding of raw data used in collating the above table, there may be very slight differences if totals are taken from the contributing elements.

As there is no SIMD quintile one or five data available and the measure is not calculated using receipt of Free School Meals, it is not possible to provide a poverty gap measure for this stretch aim.

The proportion of 16-19 years olds participating in education, employment or training				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2023-24	97.6-97.9%	*	*	*
2024-25	97.8-98.1%	*	*	*
Stretch Aim 2025-26	98.2%	*	*	*

The stretch aim for this measure may seem modest but, when there is already relatively high performance from a cohort of this size, there are smaller margins for improvement. The projections are based on current cohort information and past performance trends.

As an alternative measure, and to provide some sense of a potential poverty-related attainment gap, information is provided below on percentages of leavers in a positive destination sourced from the Initial Leaver Destinations National Benchmarking Measure in Insight.

Positive Destinations: Insight Initial Leaver Destination National Benchmarking Measure

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2018-19	98.4%	88.2%	99.2%	11.0pp
2019-20	98.7%	95.5%	99.1%	3.6pp
2020-21	97.8%	100%	97.6%	-2.4pp
2021-22	97.0%	87.5%	97.6%	10.1pp

Initial analysis of this data indicates that an attainment gap strongly evident in 2018-19 reduced significantly into a negative gap during the pandemic years but has risen again in 2022 close to that seen in 2018-19. As with stretch aims two and three, the sample size is very small at 5.9% of the total cohort of leavers being in receipt of Free School Meals. Whilst attainment gap information continues to be unavailable for the Annual Participation measure, the authority will monitor the information from Insight Initial leaver Destinations as a proxy indicator of a poverty-related attainment gap.

Whilst headline results are very strong from the SDS Annual Participation Measure, the leaver destination data from Insight does indicate an attainment gap that our schools must monitor and aim to reduce.



5

Health and wellbeing: The Attendance of Learners in Receipt of Free School Meals in Secondary Schools

Analysis of attendance information has identified a concern around a specific gap for learners in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) in secondary. When considering the health and wellbeing of learners and the impact of absence from school, this has been identified as a priority for this stretch aim. Trend data suggests that absences in secondary more disproportionately affected young people registered for free school meals.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Increase the average attendance of learners registered for Free School Meals in Secondary by 3.2% by September 2023.
Analysis of attendance across our four secondary schools evidenced an attendance gap in 2022 of 8.0% for learners in receipt of Free School Meals in secondary. This had been steadily increasing from a lower point of 5.5% in 2019-20. The stretch aim for 2023 aimed to reduce this gap by 3.2%. Although there was an overall increase in attendance in secondary schools across 2022-23 of 1.0%, the increase came from pupils not in receipt of Free School Meals. Whilst the percentage attendance for FSM pupils stayed fairly static at 79.7%, this gain across all learners resulted in an increase of the gap to 8.9% by June 2023. Two schools did see a reduction in the attendance gap for those in receipt of FSM but this positive gain was cancelled out by reductions in the other two schools. This increase in the gap identifies that this stretch aim is an even greater priority for the next period of target setting.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Not Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

For the purposes of this stretch aim, raw attendance 'openings' data for each school has been collated into an authority figure and then represented as a percentage. Drill-down information can be made available for each school individually.

Data over time for secondary attendance is provided below in support of the setting of a stretch aim for 2025-26

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2018-19	91.6%	86.3%	92.0%	5.7pp
2019-20	90.1%	85.1%	90.6%	5.5pp
2020-21	93.7%	88.4%	94.4%	6.1pp
2021-22	87.1%	79.8%	87.8%	8.0pp
2022-23	88.1%	79.7%	88.6%	8.9pp

It is concerning to note the general trend of the gap increasing for those in receipt of FSM, apart from a small blip in 2019-20, which is likely due to the impact of the pandemic in that year.

The Attendance of Learners in Receipt of Free School Meals in Secondary Schools				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2023-24	89-92%	79-82%	87-89%	8-7pp
2024-25	91-93%	81-84%	88-90%	7-6pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	93.3%	84.7%	90.0%	5.3pp

The stretch aim intends to reduce the poverty-related attendance gap from 8.9% to 5.3%. With work being undertaken to improve attainment in the secondary sector for all learners after the pandemic, it is important that the cohort of learners in receipt of FSM as a focus of particular attention.

Although two schools did record an improvement in the attendance gap during 2022-23, this was offset by widening of the gap in the other two. In one school, there was a negative gap last year, where FSM pupils attended at a higher rate than the rest of the cohort. In the other three schools, the gap ranges from 3.7% to 10.4%. This variation requires individual school plans to address the particular attendance issues and patterns within that establishment.

Improvement measures will include review and updating of attendance recording systems in schools; better procedures for tracking and reducing unauthorised absences for holidays and other activities; improved monitoring systems for attendance patterns at least monthly and using Staged Assessment & Intervention procedures to address persistent low attendance issues at source, particularly through PST and TATC meetings in schools. The above measures must have a specific focus on tracking attendance of those in receipt of FSM.

The stretch aim was calculated on the basis of an improvement in attendance for the general secondary school population but with a greater rate of improvement for those in receipt of FSM.

Prìomh Amasan Ionadail

Core Plus Stretch Aims

The Comhairle has determined two **Core Plus Stretch Aims** based on priorities for improvement identified locally.

6

The Attainment in Gaelic and English Writing of Learners Registered for Free School Meals at P1, P4 and P7.

Local attainment datasets indicate a particular issue with progress in writing in both Gàidhlig and English across P1, P4 and P7. This does echo patterns of attainment in full cohort of learners but there is also a clearly evidenced poverty-related attainment gap. This stretch aim is a drill-down of a specific aspect of core stretch aim 1A.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Close the poverty-related attainment gap in Gaelic and English writing at P1, P4 and P7 combined by 2.5% by September 2023.
In September 2022, the attainment gap in primary writing for Gaelic and English combined stood at 14.0% and this stretch aim intended to reduce that gap by 2.5% within a year. At that time, pupils in receipt of FSM attained at a rate of 70.5% compared to 84.5% for those not in receipt of FSM.
Analysed data from the 2023 ACEL census confirms that the attainment gap in primary writing had reduced to 11.0%, a three percentage points improvement compared to the 2.5% being aimed for.
There are still challenges to be addressed within this stretch aim going forward so as to reduce that gap further. Most notable is the 'P4 dip'. That is observed in writing in both language streams. The attainment gap stands at 16.8% in P4 for Gaelic and English combined but is most evident in English.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Achieved and Surpassed

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

To assist in setting a trajectory for this stretch aim forwards to 2025-26, the available trend data for 2021-23 is provided below.

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2021-22	83.5%	70.5%	84.5%	14.0pp
2022-23	87.6%	77.4%	88.4%	11.0pp

The Attainment in Gaelic and English Writing of Learners Registered for FSM at P1, P4 and P7				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2023-24	87-88%	77-79%	87-88%	10-9pp
2024-25	88-89%	80-82%	89-90%	9-8pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	88.9%	82.3%	89.4%	7.1pp

When considering the combined attainment for P1, P4 and P7 Writing in Gàidhlig and English, data indicates scope to make reasonable but ambitious estimates of where improvement can be made. This is supported by the 3% improvements observed in 2023.

It is important to note that the cohort that recorded the 3% improvement in 2023 are broadly the same children that will contribute to the census in 2026 that will confirm progress in achievement of the stretch aim. The 2023 P1 and P4 will be in P4 and P7 in 2026. Analysis of this cohort show scope for significant potential to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in English writing at P4 (16.7%) and Gaelic writing at P1 (5.7%) and P7 (13.8%).

The data for Gàidhlig and English writing has been aggregated together to form a common improvement aim due to the small number of GME learners registered for FSM. The issues identified in writing attainment are equally evident in both language streams, but at different stages, as detailed above. It should be noted that Gàidhlig Medium Education pupils have literacy levels recorded in both Gàidhlig and English and data for both is included in this analysis of writing at P7. At P1 and P4, literacy levels are only recorded for the relevant medium of education.

The combination of improvement across these language streams and year groups indicates that the target reduction of the attainment gap to 7.1% is achievable by 2026. The most significant intervention being used by schools is the CYPIC National Writing Programme. More schools will be joining this programme in 2023-24 and all schools should be on board by 2025. The first pilot cohort of two schools demonstrated an improvement in writing attainment at P4 of an average 16% compared to teacher estimates at the beginning of the programme.

7

The Proportion of School Leavers Attaining SCQF Level 5 in Both Literacy and Numeracy

This stretch aim uses the Insight national benchmarking measure for literacy and numeracy that reports on the rate of leavers receiving awards for both literacy and numeracy at SCQF Levels 4 and 5. Our particular focus is on performance at SCQF Level 5 and aims to increase the rate of learners achieving both literacy and numeracy and particularly those in receipt of FSM.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2022-23 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Close the poverty-related gap in attainment of SCQF Level 5 Literacy and numeracy for leavers by 3.8% by September 2023 (February 2023 data).
In 2021, the poverty-related gap in attainment for achievement of SCQF level five awards in literacy and numeracy for leavers stood at 16.1% but had decreased from 21.0% in 2020 and 37.5% in 2019. It is important to note that the FSM cohort size for leavers in 2022 is very low at 5.9% of the total number of leavers.
The target reduction of the gap by 3.8% was not fully achieved but there was a positive impact with a reduction of 2.1% , bringing the difference in 2022 down to 14.0%.
Although it's a positive picture in terms of closing the gap between those in receipt of FSM and those that are not, this has occurred in the context of an overall reduction in attainment of this measure across the whole leaver cohort, as demonstrated in the table below.
Conclusion: Stretch Aim Partially Achieved

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

Year	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Indicative Gap
2018-19	62.7%	29.4%	65.1%	35.7pp
2019-20	69.0%	50.0%	71.0%	21.0pp
2020-21	73.0%	58.3%	74.4%	16.1pp
2021-22	56.9%	43.8%	57.8%	14.0pp

Over the last four years, the poverty-related attainment gap for this measure has reduced year-on-year but is still high and must be reduced. It is concerning to note that the 2022 data published in February 2023 shows significant overall decrease in attainment compared to 2021, although the gap actually reduced.

The Proportion of School Leavers Attaining SCQF Level 5 in Both Literacy and Numeracy				
Annual Trajectory	Overall Level (Full Cohort)	FSM	Not FSM	Attainment Gap
2022-23	60-62%	46-50%	60-63%	14-13pp
2023-24	65-67%	49-57%	61-66%	13-9pp
2024-25	67-70%	57-63%	68-71%	11-8pp
Stretch Aim 2025-26	70.4%	62.5%	70.9%	8.4pp

With a relatively small cohort of learners registered for FSM in this cohort, it is critical that schools ensure that they are operating at the level of individual learners to ensure that they have plans in place to ensure that leavers have opportunities to achieve SCQF 5 awards in both literacy and numeracy.

When considering how progress can be made in ensuring leavers achieve SCQF level 5 awards in both literacy and numeracy, it is important to consider the performance in each of the two areas to further prioritise areas of focus.

Year	% L5 Literacy	% L5 Numeracy	% Both
2018-19	81.8%	64.7%	62.7%
2019-20	87.5%	70.3%	69.0%
2020-21	85.6%	74.8%	73.0%
2021-22	77.9%	58.1%	56.9%

The above data continues to show that overall attainment in literacy is stronger, although it did decrease in 2022. There is greater concern at the lower rates of attainment in numeracy, which will be pulling down the overall achievement of both areas. Schools will need to cross reference the attainment in literacy and numeracy to identify the learners looking likely to only achieve a level five award in one of the areas and make sure support is in place to improve likelihood to achieve the other. All of the above is particularly important for learners registered for FSM in terms of closing the attainment gap.

Geàrr-chunntas de na h-Amasan Collated Summary of Stretch Aims

	Stretch Aim Statement	Performance	Full Cohort	FSM	Not FSM	Gap
Core Stretch Aims	1a Attainment in English literacy of learners registered for FSM in P1, P4 & P7	Current 2023	79.8%	72.7%	80.5%	7.7pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	79-82%	73-76%	80-82%	7-6pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	84.5%	79.5%	84.1%	5.6pp
	1b Attainment in numeracy of learners registered for FSM in P1, P4 & P7	Current 2023	81.6%	73.5%	82.3%	8.8pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	81-83%	74-77%	82-84%	8-7pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	83.7%	79.6%	84.1%	4.5pp
	2 Number of leavers registered for FSM achieving 1+ passes at SCQF Level 5	Current 2022	86.5%	68.8%	87.7%	18.9pp
		Stretch Aim 2023	86-88%	73-75%	86-87%	13-12pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	89.9%	81.3%	90.4%	9.2pp
	3 Number of leavers registered for FSM achieving 1+ passes at SCQF Level 6	Current 2022	64.8%	50.0%	65.7%	15.7pp
		Stretch Aim 2023	64-66%	51-55%	64-65%	13-10pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	67.9%	62.7%	68.1%	5.3pp
	4 Number of 16–19-year-olds participating in education, employment or training	Current 2023	97.6%	*	*	*
		Stretch Aim 2024	97-98%	*	*	*
		Stretch Aim 2026	98.2%	*	*	*
5 Attendance of learners registered for FSM in secondary	Current 2023	88.1%	79.7%	88.6%	8.9pp	
	Stretch Aim 2024	89-92%	79-82%	87-89%	7-6pp	
	Stretch Aim 2026	93.3%	84.7%	90.0%	5.3pp	
Core Plus Stretch Aims	6 Combined attainment gap in writing at P1, 4 & 7 for learners registered for FSM in Gaelic and English	Current 2023	87.6%	77.4%	88.4%	11.0pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	88-89%	80-82%	89-90%	9-8pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	88.9%	82.3%	89.4%	7.1pp
	7 Number of leavers registered for FSM attainment SCQF5 in both literacy & numeracy	Current 2023	56.9%	43.8%	57.8%	14.0pp
		Stretch Aim 2023	60-62%	46-50%	60-63%	14-13pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	70.4%	62.5%	70.9%	8.4pp



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

Department of Education & Children's Services

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Rathad Shanndabhaig
Steòrnabhagh
Eilean Leòdhais
HS1 2BW

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Sandwick Road
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
HS1 2BW