



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne



Dùbhlán Coileanaidh na h-Alba

Scottish Attainment Challenge

Aithisg Prìomh Amasan

Stretch Aims Report



2024-25

Clàr-innse

Contents

Introduction	2
The context of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	4
Core Stretch Aims	
Aim 1 – CFE Attainment	6
Aim 2 – SCQF5 1+ Attainment	10
Aim 3 – SCQF6 1+ Attainment	12
Aim 4 – Participation of 16-19 Year Olds	14
Aim 5 – Health & Wellbeing: Attendance	17
Core Plus Stretch Aims	
Aim 6 – CFE Writing in Primary (Gaelic and English)	19
Aim 7 – SQQF Literacy & Numeracy Attainment	21
Collated Summary of Aims	23

Ro-ràdh

Introduction

Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), supported by the Attainment Scotland Fund, is a national initiative with the mission defined as 'to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap'. SAC funding is made up of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF), distributed to all local authorities in Scotland based on Children in Low Income Families data; Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), allocated directly to schools based on numbers of children registered for Free School Meals (FSM); and Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding (CECYP), allocated based on numbers of children who are Looked After.

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.

All Scottish Local Authorities were asked to identify core stretch aims for:

- Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (literacy at primary 1, 4 and 7 combined; and numeracy at primary 1, 4 and 7 combined);
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQF Level 5;
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQFA level 6;
- the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland; and
- a locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets. In Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the health and wellbeing measure identified was school attendance for children affected by poverty, in secondary.

In addition, Local Authorities were asked to identify other measures as 'Plus' stretch aims which local data suggest are priority areas for improvement. In considering the local Core Plus Stretch Aims, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has identified the following priority areas:

- The attainment in Gaelic and English writing of learners registered for FSM 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 for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as there are no learners within these quintiles. As the current 'next-best' alternative, a comparison between those in receipt of FSM or not is used as the data measure. This is explained in more detail in the next section, 'The context of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar'.

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 literacy and English. Detailed analysis of literacy and Gaelic attainment data indicated two issues that ruled out the creation of specific literacy and Gaelic local stretch aims.

- The datasets for children in receipt of FSM within Gaelic Medium Education are very small. They are not sufficient to create viable datasets that can be used for percentage comparison and risk identification of individual learners. The local Core Plus stretch aim for writing encompasses attainment in literacy and Gaelic and literacy and English to create a dataset of suitable size.
- The Gaelic Medium Education literacy data for 2023-24 indicates no attainment gap. This is partly due to the very small datasets mentioned in the point above.

Background Links:

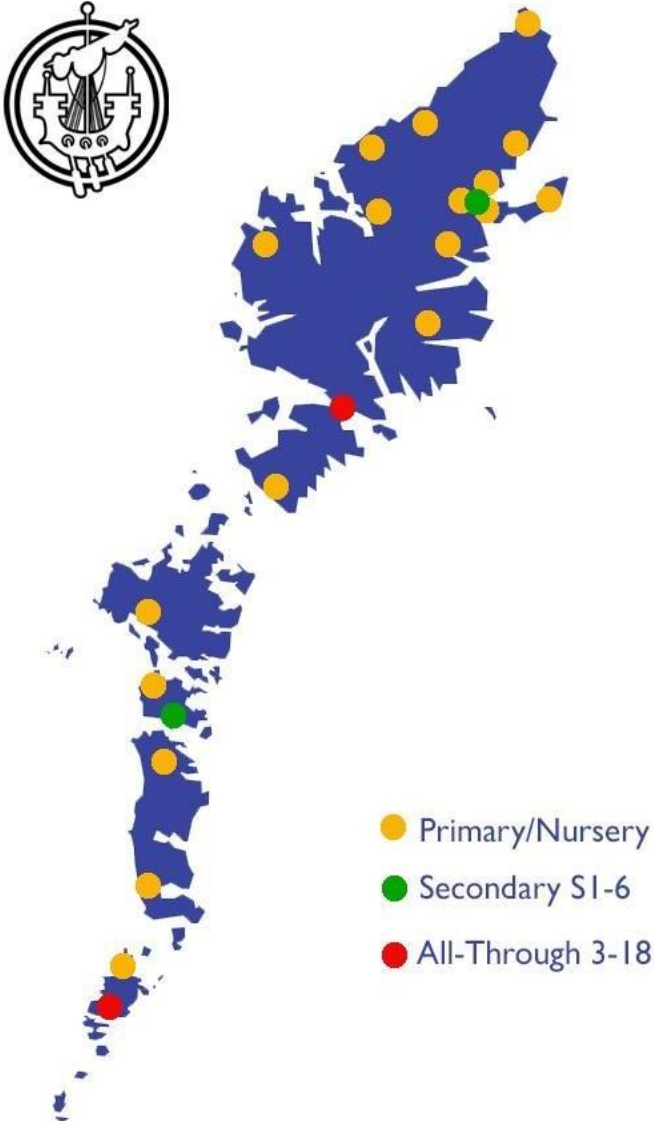
[Scottish Attainment Challenge: framework for recovery and accelerating progress - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

[Scottish Attainment Challenge - Local stretch Aims: 2023/24 to 2025/26 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Co-theacsa na Comhairle

The context of Comhairle nan Eilean

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 3200 in primary and secondary education and 400 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 in the Western Isles has now resulted in 42% of learners 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 Curriculum for Excellence levels for learners in Gaelic Medium Education. 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 sub-divided 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 FSM (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

It is recognised that SIMD is the National measure for both identifying areas of deprivation and reporting progress against closing the poverty-related attainment gap. However, to compliment this and further understand poverty in rural and remote areas, local authority SAC leads, and Attainment Advisors are keen to explore additional data.

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 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recorded in either quintile one or five. For the purposes of setting our stretch aims, 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. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands are developing an Islands Poverty Index. This is to provide a robust set of poverty measures to be selected for schools that are similar across the three islands. The Index will improve collaborative working between these schools.

FSM Registrations

Registrations for FSM in the Western Isles are low and are 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 2024, indicates that the rate of child poverty in the Western Isles stands at 18.5%. This must be considered in the context of using FSM as a poverty indicator.

When taking together the information provided about year group cohort sizes and percentage uptake of FSM, 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.

Use of Insight SCQF Data

Due to small cohort sizes and the absence of children in SIMD quintiles 1 and 5, it's not possible to use this as a poverty gap indicator for stretch aims two and three. The data used in this report is still drawn from the Insight 'All SCQF' leavers data but the poverty gap measure used is based on Free School Meals.

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. (literacy and English combined and numeracy combined)

Learners included in the combined literacy data had to achieve the expected level in all three organisers of literacy and English. 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.

Literacy and Gaelic attainment data is not included. This is because the FSM cohort in Gaelic Medium Education is very small and not statistically reportable. 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 literacy and English statistics. Learners in Gaelic Medium Education are included for literacy and English levels at P7. They are not included in literacy and English data for P1 and P4.

Numeracy attainment data includes learners in Gaelic Medium Education at P4 and P7, as per the national requirements for recording numeracy attainment. For learners in Gaelic Medium Education at P1, numeracy attainment data is not included.

The tables below indicate the most recently published data, stretch aims which were identified for 2023-24 and updated stretch aims for 2025-26. Percentage points are indicated as 'pp'.

1a CORE

Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 (literacy and English combined)

Summary of Progress Towards the 2023-24 Stretch Aim

Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in literacy and English across P1, P4, and P7 combined to between **7pp and 6pp** by September 2024.

The attainment gap across P1, P4, and P7 combined for literacy and English in 2023 was 7.7pp. 80.5% of learners not in receipt of FSM achieved or exceeded their curriculum level in literacy and English across P1, P4, P7. The literacy and English attainment of learners in receipt of FSM was 72.7%.

In 2024, the attainment gap, by the same measure, demonstrated that it had increased to 14.5pp. Most notable is the 'P4 dip'. The attainment gap is 30.0% in P4 for literacy and English.

There are important priorities to be addressed within this stretch aim going forward to reduce this attainment gap. In 2023-24, most primary schools engaged successfully in a National Improving Writing Programme with the Scottish Government Children & Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC). Across Comhairle primary settings, 26% more learners in receipt of PEF were on track to achieve or had achieved first level in writing than was predicted. When planning and undertaking engagement in the CYPIC programme, LA officers and our Attainment Advisor worked together using data and quality assurance information to prioritise engagement from specific schools where support from the programme was most required.

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 2021-24 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
2023-24	78.5%	64.9%	79.4%	14.5pp

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 been collected in this manner since 2021-22. It is not possible to track the data further than this. As each year is completed towards 2025-26, the trend data will be evident.

When considering our longer-term stretch aim for 2025-26, the trend data was taken together with tracking information from schools. This was to 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 P4 and P7. At these stages the attainment gap is larger and requires more focused intervention to address it. In the coming year, the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment toolkit will be introduced in targeted establishments, supported by the Northern Alliance funded Quality Improvement Officer. In 2024/25, all staff who are trained in the CYPIC National Writing 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.

1b**Curriculum for Excellence Achievement Levels for P1, P4 and P7 (numeracy combined)**

Summary of Progress Towards the 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in numeracy across P1, P4, and P7 combined to between 8pp and 7pp by September 2024.
The attainment gap in numeracy across P1, P4, and P7 combined in 2023 was 8.8pp. Learners not in receipt of FSM achieved 82.3% of numeracy levels as opposed to FSM learners achieving at a rate of 73.5%.
Overall, in 2024, learners' attainment in numeracy decreased by 2.9pp. The attainment of learners in receipt of FSM decreased by 6.8pp. As a result, the attainment gap has increased by 4.1pp to 12.9pp.
Our Northern Alliance funded Quality Improvement Officer has been recruited for the session 2024-25 to support schools on the delivery of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. This includes use of the self-evaluation 'Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment' toolkit and delivery of professional learning for staff. Our Attainment Advisor will continue to work with and provide support to schools in refining tracking and monitoring processes. This will strengthen the ability of senior leaders to analyse data at regular intervals and report robustly on progress towards reducing their poverty-related attainment gaps.

Revised Stretch Aim for 2025-26.

The table below sets out the combined numeracy attainment data for 2021-24 as a baseline to predict the trajectory of this aim towards 2025-26. The data does not include learners in Gaelic Medium Education at P1.

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
2023-24	78.7%	66.7%	79.6%	12.9pp

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. The attainment gap stands at 11.0% in P1, 14.1% in P4 and 13.24% in P7. We are committed to raising attainment for all learners. Improvement work is identified to target universal improvement as well as having an enhanced focus on learners living in poverty.

Numeracy and mathematics working groups (early to second level) have led the review and further development of our numeracy pathways and associated professional learning opportunities. The implementation of the pathways is resulting in improvements in learner experiences and increased expectations for progression in numeracy. Executive headteachers delivered professional learning to teachers in the areas of pace, challenge and assessment at the planning stages. This was identified as an area for improvement in inspections in our schools by Education Scotland. We will continue to embed our refreshed pathways to improve further the quality of the experiences we provide for all our learners. We will continue to prioritise action on raising attainment of learners affected by poverty.

A working party was established to create a tracking and monitoring system for all primary schools in the authority. The tracking document will replace the current systems across all primaries and ensure there is a consistent approach to gathering and tracking data. It will ensure robust monitoring and tracking of individual learners and specific groups (FSM and care-experienced). The refreshed literacy and numeracy progression pathways are linked to the system. This will allow senior leaders to moderate, and quality assure data. The tracking and monitoring system is nearing completion and will be in operation from January 2025.

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 FSM data within that measure.

This measure was previously based on SQA attainment only and has now been extended to recognise achievement across a range of SCQF qualifications, which include a wider range of awards at this level. For this reason, caution should be applied when making any comparison with previous data.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related gap in the attainment of one or more passes at SCQF level 5 to between 13pp and 12pp by September 2024 (Data published Feb 2024).
During the pandemic, where Alternative Certification Measures were in place, the poverty-related attainment gap reduced significantly. It 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 2023 leavers, the attainment gap had risen to 33.3%.
Attainment at level 5 is a priority in each of our secondary schools. Internal monitoring of achievement in the National Progression Awards and Skills for Work courses will be strengthened. Senior leaders and staff will track robustly their FSM learners across S4-6 that are likely leavers and plan appropriate interventions to improve their awards. They will increase the range and level being offered across our schools in order to meet the needs and aspirations of our learners. This includes increasing awareness of the variety of qualifications, awards and formal recognition schemes available to learners through the medium of Gàidhlig.
It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 7.7% of leavers in 2023. This has an impact on the percentage variation in statistics.

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

Using the data for 2020-23 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
2023	87.3%	56.5%	89.8%	33.3pp

The information in the table suggests that the attainment of 1+ SCQF 5 award was significantly higher for all learners during the period when 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

This stretch aim intends to reduce the gap to 9.2pp. We have had to reevaluate the improvement trajectory for this measure, using the Insight (All SCQF) data. This is in recognition of a spike in performance during the Alternative Certification Measures used in the pandemic years,

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 important to consider this when measuring progress towards this stretch aim and other stretch aims drawn from leaver data.

We will continue to support our secondary schools to ensure robust monitoring and tracking of individual learners and specific groups (FSM and care-experienced). This will evidence better the impact of interventions on attainment and achievement. Senior leaders should intervene as early as possible in accreditation pathways to give learners 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. Senior leaders should consider what awards can be achieved for learners 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 FSM.

This measure was previously based on SQA attainment only and has now been extended to recognise achievement across a range of SCQF qualifications, which include a wider range of awards at this level. For this reason, caution should be applied when making any comparison with previous data.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related gap in the attainment of one or more passes at SCQF level 6 to between 13pp and 10pp by September 2024 (Data published Feb 2024).
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. The impact of this was not sufficiently factored into the 2022-23 stretch aim. For the 2023 leavers, the attainment gap had risen to 30.3%.
Attainment at level 6 is a priority in each of our secondary schools. Internal monitoring of the range of courses available at level 6 and achievement at this level will be strengthened to evaluate the impact of the curriculum offer. Senior leaders and staff will track robustly their FSM learners across S4-6 that are likely leavers and plan appropriate interventions to improve their awards. They will develop the range of SCQF qualifications available at level 6 across our schools to meet the needs and aspirations of our learners. This includes increasing awareness of the variety of qualifications, awards and formal recognition schemes available to learners through the medium of Gàidhlig.
It is important to note that those in receipt of FSM only made up 7.7% of leavers in 2023. This has an impact on the percentage variation in statistics.

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

The table below provides information about 1+ SCQF Level 6 attainment from 2020-23 using Insight (All SCQF) data to assist in predicting the trajectory of this aim for 2025-26. The leaver cohort in receipt of FSM 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
2023	54.0%	26.1%	56.4%	30.3pp

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 reevaluate the improvement trajectory for this measure. This is in recognition of a spike in performance during the Alternative Certification Measures used in the pandemic years when there were no external examinations.

This stretch aim is intended to reduce the attainment gap 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 senior leaders. This is 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 is maintained regularly within the 16+ datahub. The Comhairle has implemented weekly interventions to ensure information within the 16+ Data Hub is current and responsive.

4

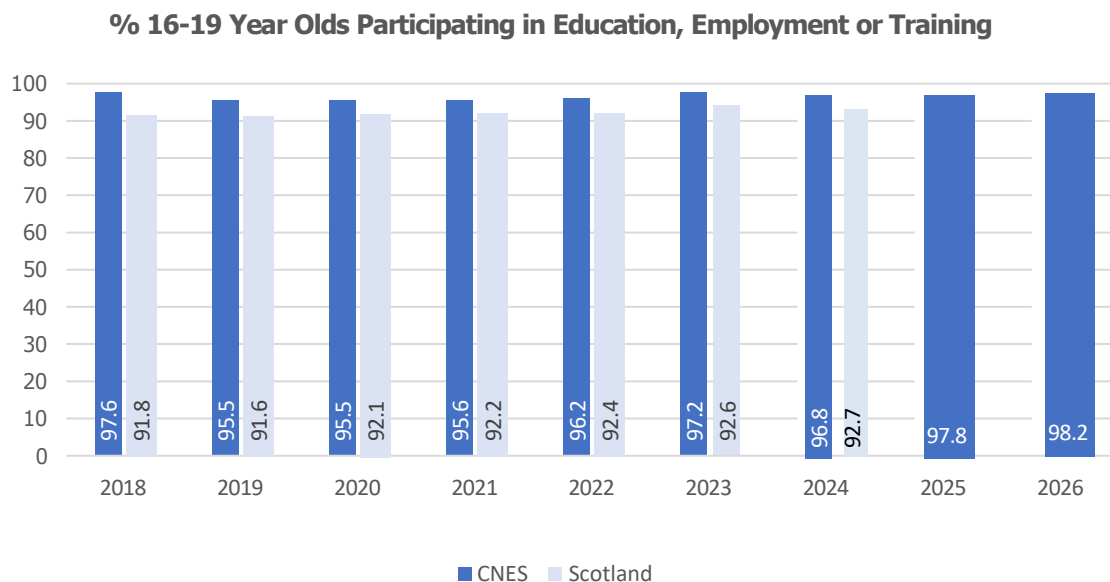
The proportion of 16-19 year olds participating in education, employment or training

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 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Increase the number of 16-19-year-olds participating in education, employment and training by 0.4pp by September 2024.
The Annual Participation Measure is published in September each year. The data for 2023-24 indicates that in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 97.6% of young people aged 16-19 were participating in education, employment, or training. This represents a slight decrease by 0.4% from 2023 (97.2%) but compares favorably to a national average of 92.7%. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was the 3 rd highest ranking local authority in Scotland, a slight increase was observed in the number entering employment.
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar continues to report some of the highest success rates in Scotland for sustained post-school destinations. 98.3% of our leavers continue to be in a positive destination three months after leaving school. This is a 1.3% increase on last year.

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.



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	97.2	65.8	29.9	1.5
2024	96.8	65.4	30.0	1.5

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 FSM, 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	Other	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
2023-23	98.3%	95.7%	98.6%	2.9pp

Initial analysis of this data indicates that the attainment gap strongly evident in 2018-19 reduced significantly into a negative gap during the pandemic years. This gap 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 7.7% of the total cohort of leavers being in receipt of FSM. 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 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 school more disproportionately affect young people registered for FSM.

Summary of Progress Towards the 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Increase the average attendance of learners registered for FSM in Secondary and reduce the attendance gap to between 8pp and 7pp , by September 2024.
Analysis of attendance across our four secondary schools evidenced an attendance gap in 2023 of 8.9pp for learners in receipt of FSM. The stretch aim for 2024 aimed to reduce this gap to between 8pp and 7pp. Attendance data for 2023-24 indicates an overall increase in attendance in secondary schools. The average attendance for secondary learners in receipt of FSM increased by 3.0% to 82.7%. This gain resulted in an overall decrease in the attendance gap to 6.3pp by June 2024.
Although the decrease in the attendance gap is positive, improvement work has been identified to target universal improvement as well as having an enhanced focus on learners living in poverty. Throughout 2024-25, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's attendance guidance will be refreshed to help schools work more closely with families to implement a range of supports that address individual barriers to school participation.

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. Individual information can be made available for each school.

Data overtime 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
2023-24	88.5%	82.7%	89.0%	6.3pp

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 8.9pp to 5.3pp. Tracking and monitoring more vulnerable groups of children is key to early identification and early intervention. 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 remain a focus of particular attention.

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 continue to have a specific focus on tracking attendance of those in receipt of FSM.

Prìomh Amasan Ionadail Core Plus Stretch Aims

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

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 (Gaelic) 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 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related attainment gap in Gàidhlig and English writing at P1, P4 and P7 combined to between 10pp and 9pp by September 2024.
In September 2023, the attainment gap in writing for Gàidhlig and English combined was 11.0pp. This stretch aim is intended to reduce that gap by 2.0pp within a year. In 2023, 77.4% of learners in receipt of FSM achieved nationally expected CFE levels for writing. 88.4% of learners not in receipt of FSM achieved nationally expected CFE levels for writing.
Data from the 2024 ACEL census confirms that the attainment gap in writing at P1, P4 and P7 has increased to 14.2pp. The attainment gap is 19.6% in P1 and 25.2% in P4 for Gàidhlig and English writing combined. There are important priorities to be addressed within this stretch aim to reduce the attainment gap.
In 2023-24, most primary schools engaged successfully in a National Improving Writing Programme with the Scottish Government Children & Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC). Across Comhairle primary settings, 26% more learners in receipt of PEF were on track to achieve or had achieved first level in writing than was predicted. In 2024-25, all staff who are trained in the programme will support its implementation across all Comhairle primary schools.

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 2021-24 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
2023-24	82.3%	69.0%	83.2%	14.2pp

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. 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. This is supported by the improvements observed in learners' attainment in writing through engagement with CYPIC. All schools will be participating in this writing programme in 2024-25.

The data for Gàidhlig and English writing has been aggregated together to form a common improvement aim due to the small number of learners in Gaelic Medium Education registered for FSM. The issues identified in writing attainment are equally evident in both English and Gàidhlig, as detailed above. It should be noted that learners in Gaelic Medium Education have literacy levels recorded in both literacy and Gaelic and literacy and English. Learners' attainment 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.

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 2023-24 Stretch Aim
Stretch Aim: Reduce the poverty-related gap in attainment of SCQF Level 5 Literacy and numeracy for leavers to between 14pp and 13pp by September 2024 (February 2024 data).
In 2022, the poverty-related gap in attainment for achievement of SCQF level five awards in literacy and numeracy for leavers was 14.0pp. This decreased from 16.1pp in 2021. As with stretch aims two and three, there is a need to reevaluate the improvement trajectory for this measure. This is in recognition of a spike in performance during the Alternative Certification Measures used in the pandemic years when there were no external examinations.
For the 2023 leavers, the attainment gap had risen to 41.9pp. It is important to note that the FSM cohort size of leavers in 2023 is very low at 7.7% of the total number of leavers.

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
2022-23	60.4%	21.7%	63.6%	41.9pp

Over the previous four years, the poverty-related attainment gap for this measure had reduced year-on year. The 2023 data published in February 2024 shows a significant increase in the attainment gap.

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 important that schools ensure they are operating at the level of individual learners. This is to ensure they have plans in place that provide leavers with 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 prioritise further 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%
2022-23	80.9%	63.1%	60.4%

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 impact on the overall achievement of both areas. Senior leaders need to monitor learners' attainment in literacy and numeracy to identify correctly individuals at risk of not achieving a level five award in both literacy and numeracy. They should ensure that appropriate support is identified to support achievement in both areas. 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 literacy and English of learners registered for FSM in P1, P4 & P7	Current 2024	78.5%	64.9%	79.4%	14.5pp
		Stretch Aim 2025	81-84%	75-78%	81-83%	6-5pp
		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 2024	78.7%	66.7%	79.6%	12.9pp
		Stretch Aim 2025	82-84%	75-79%	82-84%	7-5pp
		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 2023	87.3%	56.5%	89.8%	33.3pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	88-90%	76-80%	88-91%	12-11pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	89.9%	81.3%	w90.4%	9.2pp
	3 Number of leavers registered for FSM achieving 1+ passes at SCQF Level 6	Current 2023	54.0%	26.1%	56.4%	30.3pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	65-66%	54-58%	65-66%	11-8pp
		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 2024	96.8%	*	*	*
		Stretch Aim 2025	97-98%	*	*	*
		Stretch Aim 2026	98.2%	*	*	*
5 Attendance of learners registered for FSM in secondary	Current 2024	88.5%	82.7%	89.0%	6.3pp	
	Stretch Aim 2025	91-93%	81-84%	88-90%	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 2024	82.3%	69.0%	83.2%	14.2pp
		Stretch Aim 2025	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	60.4%	21.7%	63.6%	41.9pp
		Stretch Aim 2024	67-70%	57-63%	68-71%	11-8pp
		Stretch Aim 2026	70.4%	62.5%	70.9%	8.4pp



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