

CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to provide the Community Services Committee with an update on actions being taken within the Education Service to support Care Experienced Children and Young People to achieve the best possible educational outcomes.
- 1.2 The report also details the expenditure against the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2023/24 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund.
- 1.3 Recommendations
It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- a) Continues to endorse the work undertaken by Argyll and Bute Education Services as part of the Corporate Parenting Board to improve the educational attainment and life chances of Care Experienced Children and Young People.
 - b) Notes that the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2023/24 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Education Lead for Care Experienced Children and Young People, in consultation with key partners and specifically the Social Work Lead for Care Experience, the Chief Education Officer and Chief Social Worker.
 - c) Agree the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Care Experienced Education Team (Virtual Head Teacher and Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers).
 - d) Agree that the Chief Education Officer continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to the Corporate Parenting Board and /Community Services Committee.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- 3.1 Continues to endorse the work undertaken by Argyll and Bute Education Services as part of the Corporate Parenting Board to improve the educational attainment and life chances of Care Experienced Children and Young People.
- 3.2 Notes that the spending plan for the grant allocated by Scottish Government to Argyll and Bute for session 2023/24 from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund has been produced and monitored by the Education Lead for Care Experienced Children and Young People, in consultation with key partners and specifically the Social Work Lead for Care Experience, the Chief Education Officer and Chief Social Worker.
- 3.3 Agree the attainment funding for Care Experienced Children and Young People will support the continued input from the Care Experienced Education Team (Virtual Head Teacher and Health and Wellbeing Liaison Officers).
- 3.4 Agree that the Chief Education Officer continues to provide updates on the improved outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People to the Corporate Parenting Board and Business Continuity Committee/Community Services Committee.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 In 2018, as part of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education and Attainment Scotland Fund (a targeted initiative focused on supporting young people affected by poverty and deprivation across Scotland), specific funding was directed towards supporting Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP). The term 'care experienced' is now a widely used term within the sector to describe any person who has experience of being in care, regardless of their placement length or type, or their age; this term is used (as opposed to the statutory term 'Looked After Children') to ensure that our practice is inclusive and provides for all groups of young people who experience care.
- 4.2 As at January 2025, we have 289 Care Experienced pupils in our education settings (2-18). 145 are "Currently Looked After". Of those, 101 are looked after by Argyll and Bute and 44 children have been placed in Argyll and Bute from other Authorities. The additional 144 Care Experienced children and young people in our settings have a status of "Previously Looked After".

These figures refer to pupils in Early Years, Primary, Special and Secondary settings. Argyll and Bute Education Service also connects to education providers in relation to any young person placed in other authorities through residential, kinship or foster placements.

- 4.3 Argyll and Bute Council was awarded a specific grant of up to £131,075 payable over the academic year 2023/24. As previously agreed with the Scottish Government, the Council has used earmarked reserves containing underspends from the Care Experienced grant to supplement the 2023/24 specific grant.

Below is a breakdown of the spend for session 2023/24:

ITEM	AMOUNT
Staffing	£136,057
Support Activities/Resources	£779
Travel and Subsistence	£3679
Total expenditure	£140,515
Funded by:	
2023/24 Scottish Government specific grant	£130,432
Earmarked Reserves	£10,083
Total funding	£140,515
2023 – 24 Grant Award	£131,075
Grant underspend	£643

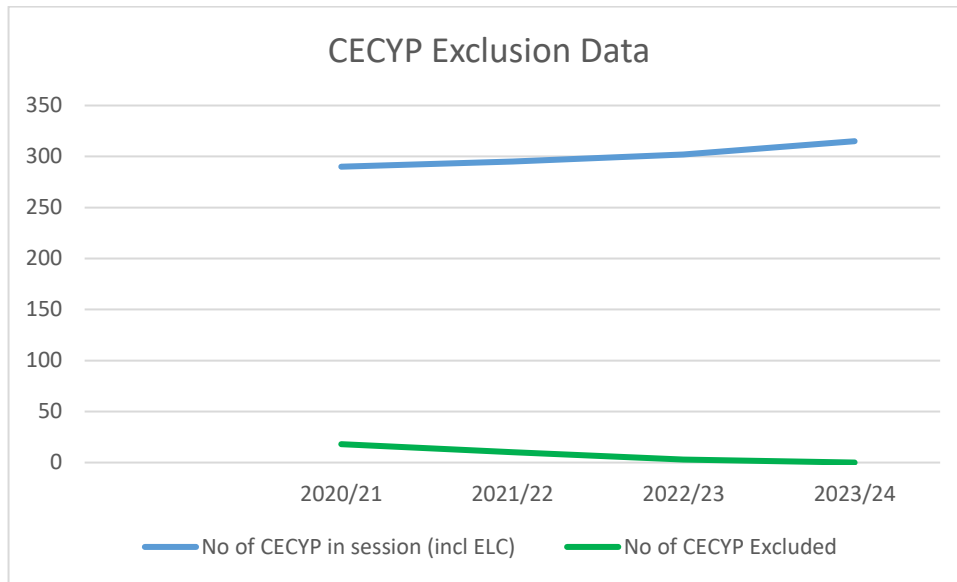
Although our total expenditure exceeded the grant award by £9,440, there is a grant underspend of £643 in financial year 2024 -25. This is due to staffing changes and a short-term reduction in the employer's pension contribution rate. We have requested permission from Scottish Government to carry over this underspend which would be used to continue supporting our CECYP.

- 4.4 Data on attendance, progress and achievement and exclusions has been provided throughout the last session to the Corporate Parenting Board. The Community Services Committee summary outline is found below:

4.4.1 EXCLUSIONS

Underpinned by the management circular ‘Managing Exclusions in Schools’ our settings continue to be pro-active and initiate early intervention strategies to reduce exclusions for our CECYP. Robust scrutiny, including from Education Heads of Service, has led to significant improvements resulting in greater inclusion for our CECYP.

During this academic year, zero CECYP were excluded, meeting our target of less than 3 CECYP to be excluded during the 2023-24 academic session.



Data above refreshed in Jan 2025 during enhanced scrutiny procedure.

The target for 2024-25 is to have less than 2 care experienced children and young people excluded.

Through participation in the Corporate Parenting Board, we have increased our partnership working with the Fire Service to enhance our bespoke support approaches for our CECYP. Following a successful pilot project in one area, we now aim to expand the model and continue to build on wider partnership opportunities to help us meet the needs of our CECYP.

We remain committed to finding alternative solutions to exclusion and aim to ensure our CECYP feels included, heard and respected in our settings.

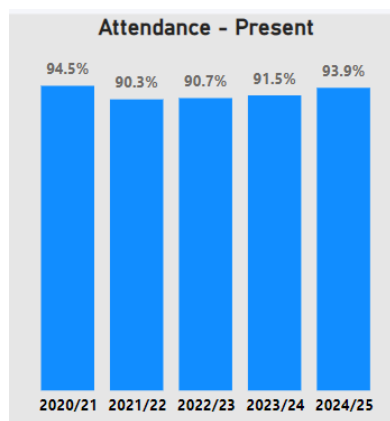
4.4.2 ATTENDANCE

Subject to census checks, our 2023–24 attendance of Primary CECYP was 91.5%, up 0.8% on 2022-23. Secondary attendance for 2023 – 24 was 80.8%, down 1.2% from the previous year. The attendance gap between primary CE and non-CE pupils in 2023-24 was 1.5% and in secondary it was 6.7%.

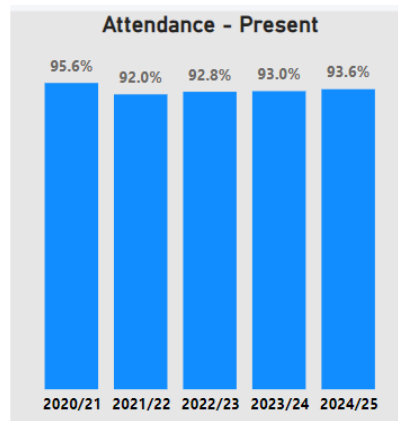
Scottish Government school attendance and absence statistics are collected every two years and the 2022/23 figure of 90.2% attendance is down from 92% in 2020/21. Scottish Government reports that the attendance rate fell between 2020/21 and 2022/23 for every local authority.

The tables below compare our primary and secondary care experienced and non-care experienced attendance since the 2020-21 academic session.

PRIMARY DATA

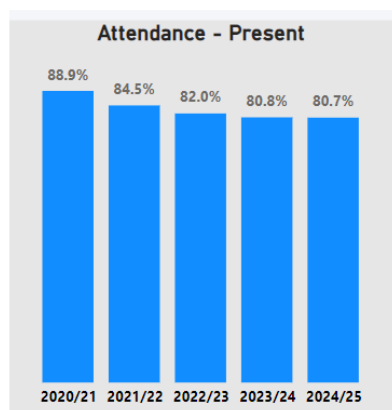


CARE EXPERIENCED

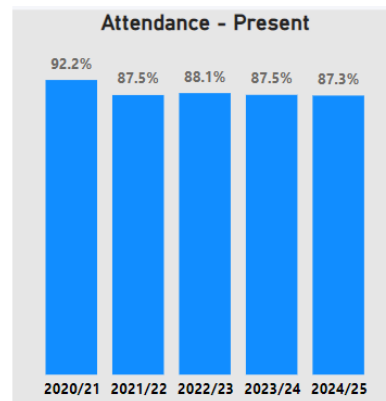


NON-CARE EXPERIENCED

SECONDARY DATA



CARE EXPERIENCED



NON-CARE EXPERIENCED

Please note these figures are subject to change due to the Attendance, Absence and Exclusions census.

Enhanced scrutiny of CECYP attendance in all authority schools is leading to earlier intervention and bespoke support for our young people. This includes support from a Health and Wellbeing Family Liaison Officer (HWBFLO) from the Care Experience Education Team (CEET).

4.4.3 PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA 2023-24 **CECYP, P1 – S3, BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION**

Progress and Achievement data is uplifted at three points across the school year. Care Experience Data is then extracted and used in focused attainment meets.

Progress and Achievement Data in Literacy and Numeracy at June 2024 for pupils between P1 and S3 was as follows:

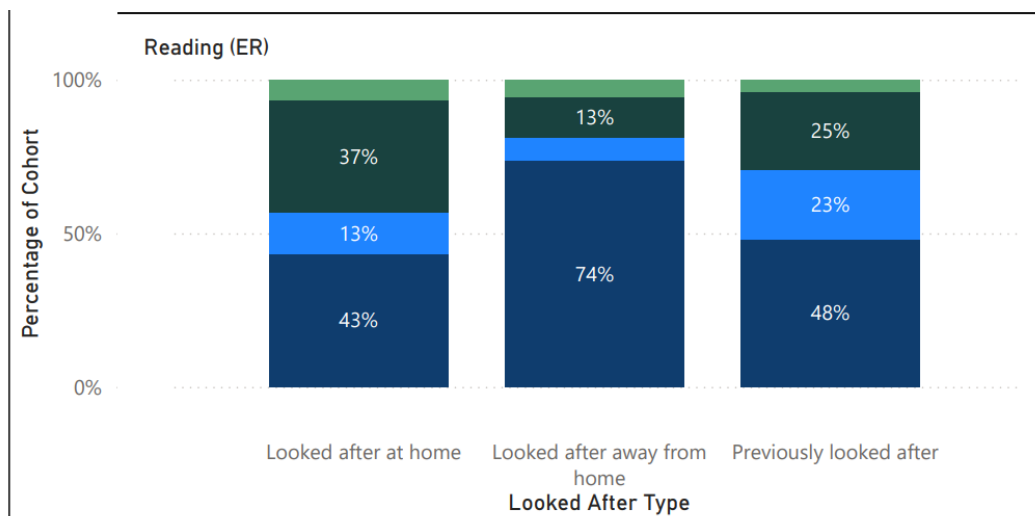
Stage	LT %	Read %	Write %	Numeracy %
P1 achieved early (AE)	71	71	57	71
P4 achieved first (AF)	73	55	55	55
P7 achieved second (AS)	70	50	40	53
S3 achieved third level or above	54	54	54	67

For information: to achieve the level in Literacy 3 components must be achieved at that level – listening and talking/reading/writing.

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT AT OCTOBER 2024

The October 2024 Progress and Achievement data was split to support scrutiny of attainment by care experience type.

As an example, the table below shows the percentage of all pupils on track by curricular area and care experienced type in relation to reading.



● 1. Achieved, Exceeding or Expected to Achieve ● 2. Working towards ● 3. Not on Track ● 4. Milestones/Not Assessed

This data supports evidence driven attainment dialogue with settings and positively contributes to the improvement cycle.

ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVEL (ACEL) 4 YEAR AUTHORITY VIEW

By combining cohorts, we can compare CE and non-CE at authority level. The table below evidences the three-year positive progress for our CE learners.

	Care Experienced Pupils				Non Care Experienced Pupils				Gap Between Care Experienced and Non-Care Experienced			
Curricular Area	P1, P4, P7 and S3 Combined											
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Three Year Change	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Three Year Change	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Three Year Change
Reading	49%	59%	57%	8%	78%	81%	83%	5%	29%	22%	26%	-3%
Writing	36%	49%	51%	15%	72%	76%	79%	7%	36%	27%	28%	-8%
Listening and Talking	59%	67%	65%	6%	83%	86%	88%	5%	24%	19%	23%	-1%
Literacy	33%	48%	48%	15%	69%	73%	77%	8%	36%	25%	29%	-7%
Numeracy	48%	52%	61%	13%	77%	80%	84%	7%	29%	28%	23%	-6%

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATION AUTHORITY ATTAINMENT DATA 2023-24 ALL COURSES

Please note this attainment data is prior to the appeals process and to full attainment data being published by Insight.

The data below represents National Qualification achievements for care experienced young people from S4 – S6 across Argyll and Bute.

National Qualifications Pass Rates

	A	B	C	Pass	D
National 3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
National 4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
National 5	11.1%	12.5%	20.8%	2.8%	27.8%
Higher	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	37.5%
Advanced Higher	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Authority National 4 results for all learners are above the national average by 15.5% and we have maintained a 100% pass rate for this session.

	Literacy	Applications of Mathematics	Mathematics
Level 4	100%	100%	100%
Level 5 A-C	62%	30%	40%
A-D	85%	50%	60%

Literacy combined Level 4 and 5 (A-C) pass rate = 78%. Our target was 68%.

Numeracy combined Level 4 and 5 (A-C) pass rate = 60%. Our target was 62%. (Applications of Mathematics was 56% and Mathematics was 66%)

Numeracy combined Level 5 and 5 (A – D) pass rate = 72%. It is important to note that some of our care experienced young people were able to undertake the coursework and present for examination, despite challenging circumstances.

Across all Nat 4 and 5 literacy and numeracy presentations, the pass rate was 69%

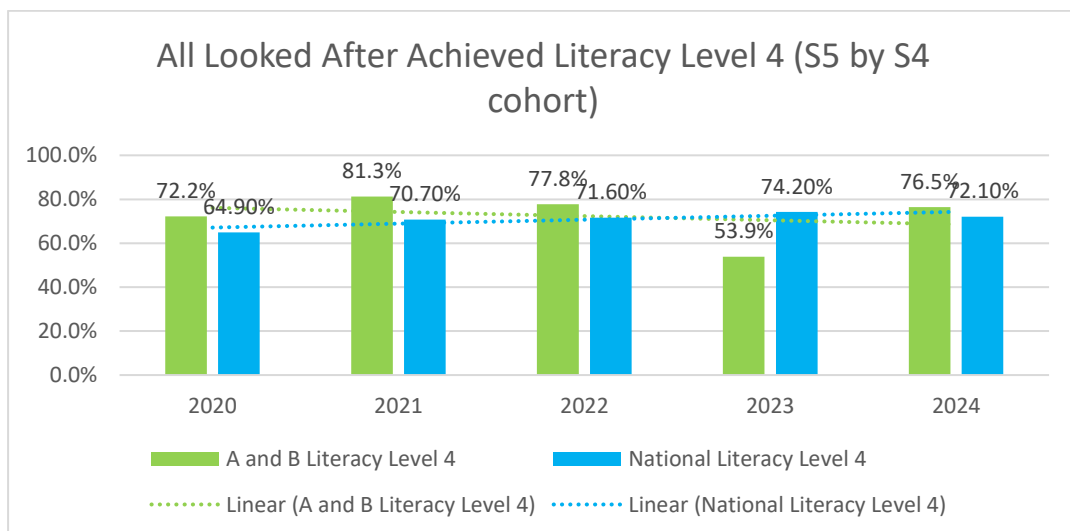
It should be noted that 5 CECYP pupils achieved National 3 level qualifications in Applications of Mathematics.

72% of learners who were presented for Higher/Advanced Higher achieved grades A – D, 32% achieved grades B – C.

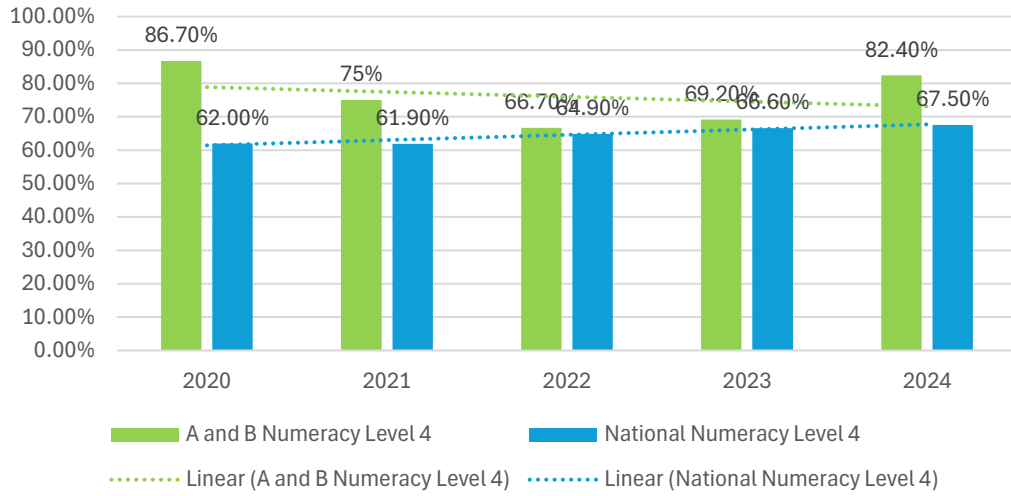
Positive feedback has been shared with our CECYP from the VHT as appropriate. This includes learners who may not have achieved the results they hoped for but were recognised for their determination.

ACIEVEMENT IN LITERACY / NUMERACY - NATIONAL COMPARISON

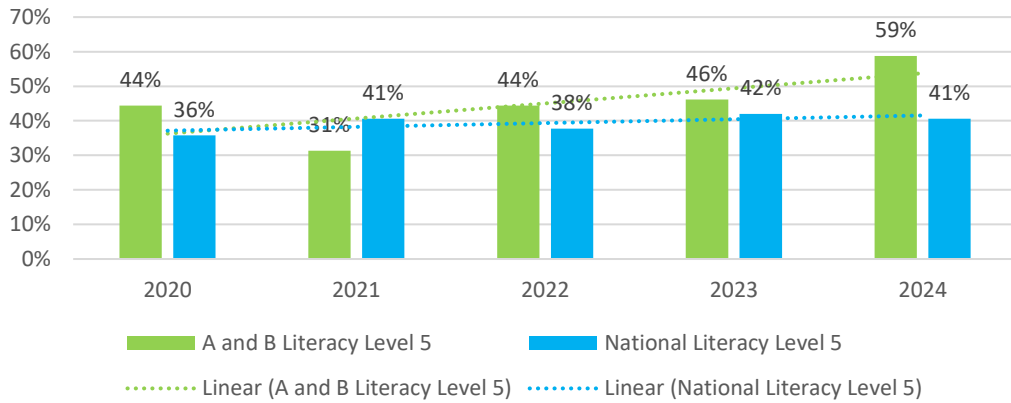
The tables below evidence a national comparison of 'looked after' learners in S5 in relation to literacy and numeracy at SCQF levels 4 and 5, cumulative attainment by the end of S5 based on original S4 roll. They present a positive picture for most years, rather than a singular year. Caution should be given due to the extremely small cohort numbers in the authority.



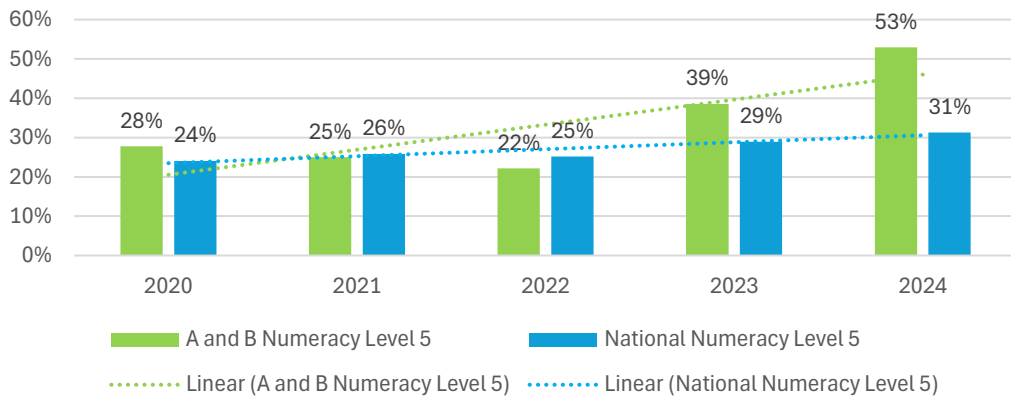
All Looked After Achieved Numeracy Level 4 (S5 by S4 cohort)



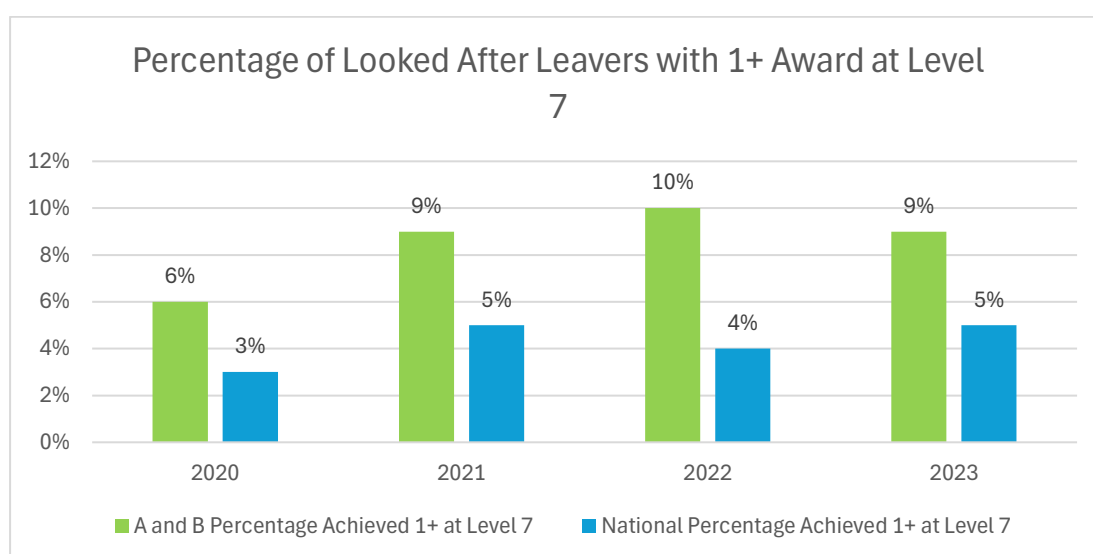
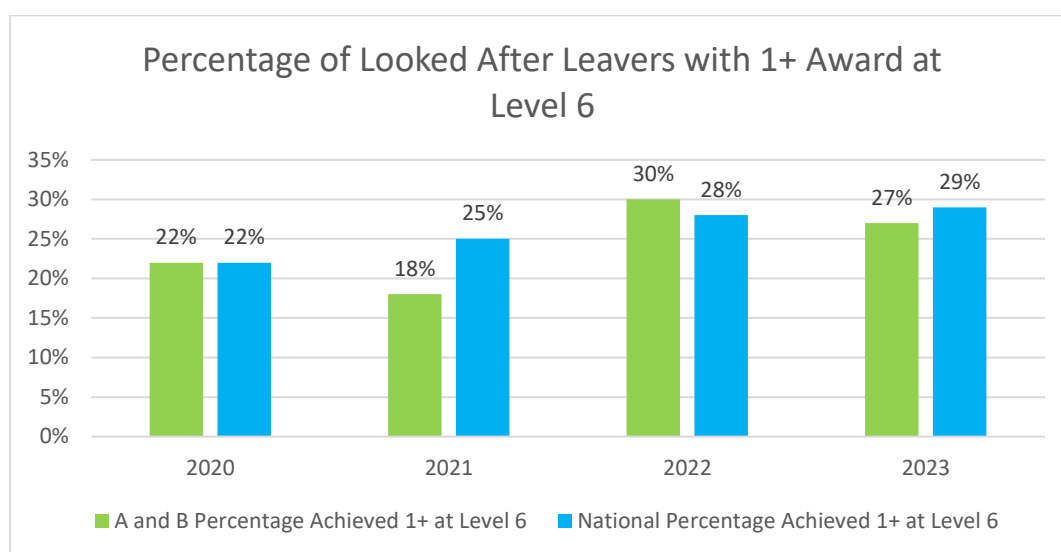
All Looked After Achieved Literacy Level 5 (S5 by S4 cohort)



All Looked After Achieved Numeracy Level 5 (S5 by S4 cohort)



The tables below show a national comparison of 'looked after' school leavers in S5 in relation to achievement of SCQF Level 6 (Higher) and Level 7 (Advanced Higher) Awards.



By engaging with pupils beyond school leaver age, pupils can be supported to achieve national qualifications and build on their progress over time.

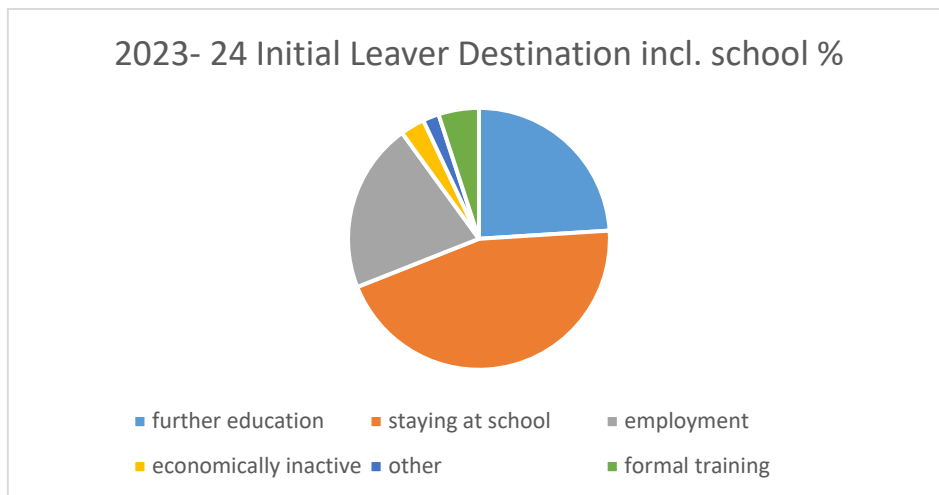
The Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) established a Promise Group to support in the testing phase of The Promise in Education framework. Argyll and Bute Education Service are delighted to be part of this project.

We continue to be academically ambitious for our CECYP.

DESTINATIONS

The data below represents care experienced young people who were eligible to leave school between the census dates (13/9/23 – 11/9/24).

Overall, 97% of care experienced young people were in an initial positive destination, surpassing our Corporate Parenting Board target of 90%. Removing those who stayed at school from the data set shows that 94% of care experienced young people were in an initial positive destination. National comparison figures for 2023-24 are not yet available.



Less than 5 young people are receiving specific support in relation to next steps. For some, this is directly related to health issues and partner agencies are making every effort to offer tailored support.

It should be noted that amongst the cohort there can be young people who found school attendance challenging but were supported by a range of partners to achieve a positive destination on leaving school.

The Virtual School continues to work alongside school colleagues, Skills Development Scotland and Developing the Young Workforce to ensure that each care experienced young person is aware of their options.

- 4.5 The profile of our CECYP continues to be raised across the Education Service and wider colleagues in the authority. Argyll and Bute were one of the first authorities to deliver Education Scotland's Keeping The Promise Award. This professional learning programme is designed to support anyone working with children and young people, particularly those who are care experienced.

Our Chief Officers Group were the first local authority senior leadership team in Scotland to receive the We Promise Award. This Award is given when 70% of a team have successfully completed 'I Promise' training. This Award programme is being embraced across settings and four schools have also achieved 'We Promise.'

During Care Experience Week in October 2024, daily 'info-mails' were sent to all education staff, which were warmly received.

The Virtual School continues to attend a range of education meets and deliver training. This helps to ensure CE wellbeing and attainment is considered across all aspects of improvement, including the inspection process.

- 4.6 The Virtual School continues to build and strengthen their inter-agency links, particularly with Health and Social Work. Working partnerships continue to evolve and this includes with the third sector and private business as we work together to meet each young person's needs. The child/young person's views and that of their family/carer/guardian are essential and considered during any planning process.

MCR Pathways support our CECYP across four secondary schools. Just under 50 care experienced young people receive weekly 1:1 mentoring session. This is resulting in a range of benefits including positive impacts on self-esteem, confidence and real-life knowledge of career pathways. The Virtual School links with MCR when specific or bespoke interventions may be beneficial.

The Virtual Head Teacher represents the Education Service/Care Experience Education Team by reporting and participating in working groups directly related to CECYP or the services around them. This includes the Corporate Parenting Board, Kinship Panel, Keeping the Promise Strategy Group and CELCIS Virtual Head Teacher Network.

The Virtual School embraces opportunities to raise awareness of our care experienced young people and has delivered awareness training to the University of the Highlands and Islands student teachers, Fire Service, Police Scotland and The Refugee Resettlement Team. We frequently gather feedback to ensure the information and support we offer remains relevant and supportive to the audience.

Our CECYP focused transition project is now feeding into an authority workstream to share good practice. This includes our current project of a welcome pack for each CECYP who starts a new education setting in the authority. This project was made possible by a successful grant application to Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA).

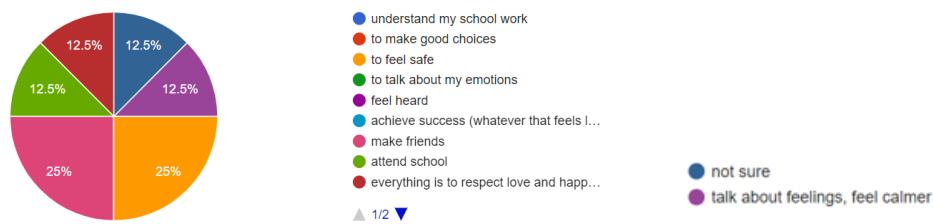
- 4.7 The Care Experienced Education Team currently consists of the VHT and four Health and Wellbeing Family Liaison Officers (HWBFLO) – one of whom is currently on secondment. The HWBFLO work operationally across the authority on a referral basis, working directly with our CECYP. The team continually show their commitment and dedication to Keeping the Promise and are highly adaptive whilst working towards defined outcomes.

During the course of this academic year over 25 CECYP have benefited from the Care Experienced Education Team input. Interventions have included wellbeing support, emotional regulation, whole family support, transitions planning and consistency, positive role modelling and connection to school community. This input has resulted in increased school attendance, creation of friendship groups, safeguarding and emergency supports to reduce distress in times of crisis.

Learner feedback remains essential to informing our approach. We support our CECYP to complete feedback formally and informally and tailor our support to their voice. Headline findings for 2023- 24 were:

- 100% of learners look forward to working with their HWBFLO
- 83.7% strongly agreed their adult listens and they have the right to be listened to *
- Learners felt happy/relaxed/joyful after working with the team
- Majority of young people want their support to continue

When asked what they liked about working with their HWBFLO:

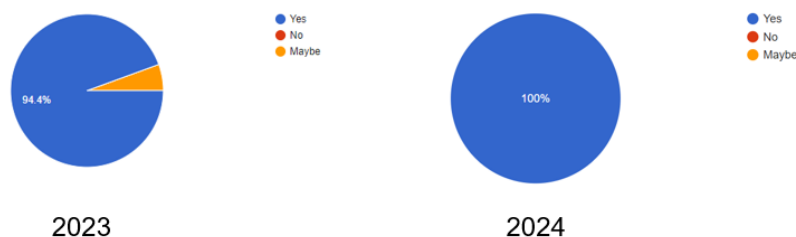


*100% of authority schools have registered for the Rights Respecting Schools Award. At January 2025, 9 had achieved Gold, 25 Silver and 39 Bronze.

4.8 Argyll and Bute Education Service have demonstrated their continued commitment to Keeping the Promise through creation and continued support of the Virtual School. The authority is one of 20 with a Virtual Head Teacher in post.

Evidence strongly suggests that this intervention is positively contributing to success for our CECYP and ensuring their profile is raised across our settings.

Q: Are you aware of who is care experienced in your setting?



5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The Education Service continues to maintain momentum and make significant improvements for our Care Experienced Children and Young People across Argyll and Bute in line with our Corporate Parenting Board and Education Service targets. Our commitment to ensuring all our CECYP have what they need to thrive is unwavering. We will continue to address raising attainment and

closing the gap for Care Experienced Children and Young People in session 2024/25.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – None

6.2 Financial – Appropriate allocation of the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund Grant

6.3 Legal – The statutory duties of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 and all previous relevant acts will be met.

6.4 HR – None

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: Providing equity and inclusion to meet the needs of all young people.

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – All legislative requirements will be met

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – N/A

6.5.3 Islands – No differentiated impact.

6.6 Climate Change - None

6.7 Risk – Ongoing scrutiny and audit will provide better outcomes for Care Experience Children and Young People. Sustainability and future-planning will mitigate future risk.

6.8 Customer Service – Improvements in service to meet individual needs are being sought

6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – This report links to Article 29 (goals of education).

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Councillor Audrey Forrest, Policy Lead for Education

Jen Crocket, Head of Education: Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement (Chief Education Officer)

For further information contact:

Jen Crocket, Chief Education Officer/Head of Education: Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement jennifer.crocket@argyll-bute.gov.uk