

**ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2024/25**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on pupil Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels (ACEL) at Primaries 1, 4 and 7 and Secondary 3<sup>rd</sup> year across Argyll and Bute primary and secondary schools. The report compares the performance of Argyll and Bute schools to the national average and to local authorities in the same Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) group (Highland, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and Stirling, East Lothian, Moray and Angus) and quad group (East Lothian, Moray and Angus). Local Government Benchmarking Framework groups are ‘family groups’ of councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in they cover (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural). Therefore, comparisons between similar authorities are more likely to lead to useful learning and improvement.
- 1.2 Argyll and Bute performance is in line with national performance in Literacy at P1, P4 and S3 Third Level or Better and is ahead of national performance in S3 Fourth Level. Argyll and Bute is behind in P7, with performance impacting the P1,4,7 combined measure, which is also behind the national figure. Argyll and Bute performance is in line or ahead of national performance in almost all measures in Numeracy. P7 Numeracy remains behind national performance. In Listening and Talking, Argyll and Bute is in line with national performance across all stages, except for S3 Fourth level, which is ahead of national performance.

- 1.3 In Reading, Argyll and Bute is ahead of national performance at P4 and S3 Fourth level. Performance is in line with national figures across all other measures. In Writing, Argyll and Bute is ahead of national performance at S3 Level 4, in line at P1, P4 and S3 level 3 or better, and behind at P7 and P1,4,7 combined.
- 1.4 In 2025, Argyll and Bute was in line or ahead of national performance in 83% of all measures. This marks a significant improvement on performance in 21/22, where the authority only matched national performance in 2 out of 30 measures. In recovering from pandemic related disruption, all Primary stages performance has improved by 13.8% points in Literacy and 11.0% points in Numeracy. Argyll and Bute has improved its ranking in the LGBF Family Group  
With regards to its LGBF family group, Argyll and Bute has improved its ranking in 4 of 6 Literacy measures and all 6 numeracy measures over the 2022-2025 period. With regard to its Quad group, Argyll and Bute improved its ranking in 4 of 6 measures for both Literacy and Numeracy.
- 1.5 For the third year in a row, Argyll and Bute is above the National figure for Literacy and Numeracy performance amongst pupils from SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas). Argyll and Bute is 7<sup>th</sup> in Scotland for SIMD Quintile 1 performance in Literacy and 10<sup>th</sup> for Numeracy.
- 1.6 Attainment gaps in Literacy and Numeracy increased very slightly despite performance of Quintile 1 pupils increasing in both Literacy and Numeracy. Quintile 1 performance in Literacy is the highest to date and Numeracy matched the previous high achieved in 2019. Nevertheless, improvements in Quintile 5 performance mean that the attainment gap has extended, whilst remaining significantly smaller than gaps experienced in 2021 and 2022.
- 1.7 Argyll and Bute was ranked in the top half of all local authorities across 30% of possible ACEL measures. Rankings improved in 26 of 30 measures against performance in 2021/22.

## 1.8 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a) Consider the information in this report, relating to the attainment performance of school pupils at Primaries 1/4/7 and Secondary 3<sup>rd</sup> year;

- b) Note the progress that has been made by Argyll and Bute schools in closing the poverty related attainment gap between those residing in Quintile 1 and Quintile 5.
- c) Note the improvement that has been made in all measures when compared to attainment in session 2021/22.

## ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2024/25

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In December 2025, national data was published relating to Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels (ACEL) for pupils in primaries 1, 4 and 7 and pupils in 3<sup>rd</sup> year within secondary schools. This data focusses on attainment levels in numeracy and in literacy: reading, writing, talking and listening.
- 2.2 Data was submitted by all schools in June 2025. In Argyll and Bute, we have a rigorous quality assurance process in place in order to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data that schools submit.
- 2.3 The data contained within this report evidences how Argyll and Bute Schools are performing compared to national averages and to local authorities within the same Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) Group and Local Authority Quad group. Further data and information can be found in appendix 1.
- 2.4 Improving attainment across Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels remains a key focus for the Education Service. All schools are supported and challenged in order to ensure that all children and young people attain and achieve to the highest possible level. Rigorous monitoring and tracking of pupil attainment across all of our schools is central to our work in this area.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- a) Consider the information in this report, relating to the attainment performance of school pupils at Primaries 1/4/7 and Secondary 3<sup>rd</sup> year;
  - b) Note the progress that has been made by Argyll and Bute schools in closing the poverty related attainment gap between those residing in Quintile 1 and Quintile 5.

- c) Note the improvement that has been made in all measures when compared to attainment in session 2021/22.

## 4.0 DETAIL

### 4.1 National Comparison

Comparisons to national performance are given throughout and labelled as follows:

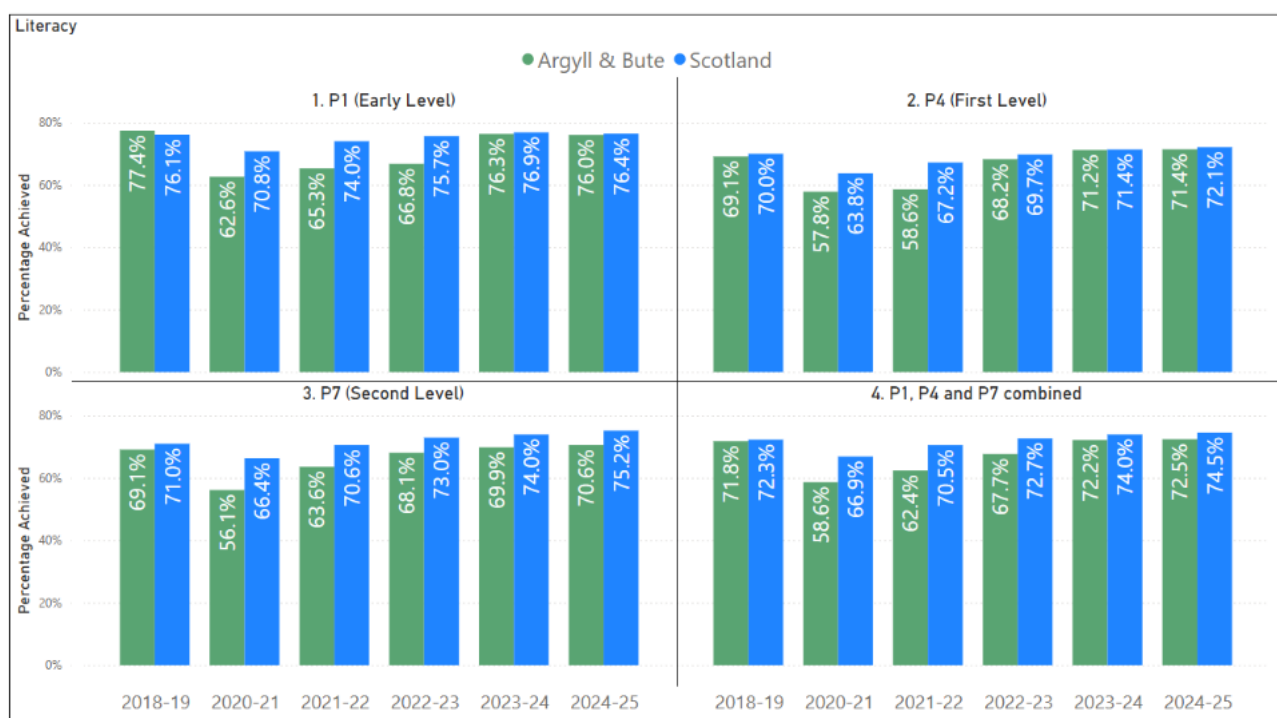
- **Behind** – more than 1.0% point behind the national figure
- **In line** – within 1.0% of the national figure, either ahead or behind
- **Ahead** – more than 1.0% point ahead of the national figure

### 4.2 Literacy

The visuals and analysis below provide a comparison between Argyll and Bute and National performance in Literacy.

#### Primary

The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in each of the Primary measures. Data is provided from the last pre-pandemic session (2018-19) until the last academic session (2024-25).



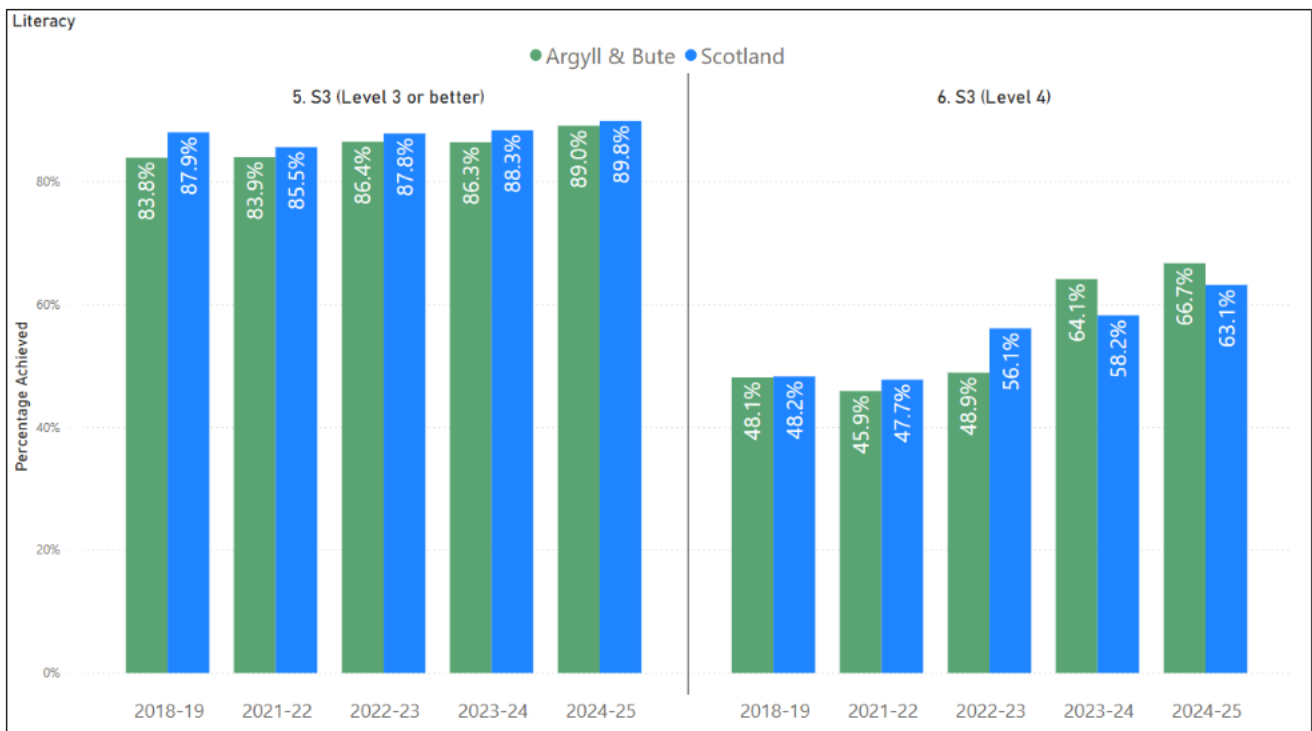
- Literacy performance in P1 is **in line** with national performance. This is in line with last year's performance and continues to build on previous years where Argyll and Bute was behind the national figure (2021-2023).
- Literacy performance in P4 is **in line** with national performance. This is a small improvement on last year.
- Literacy performance in P7 is **behind** national performance. This continues a

trend that has existed in each of the last 6 sessions in which an ACEL collection was completed. Nevertheless, the performance of 70.6% is the highest it has been over the last 6 sessions and marks an improvement of 0.7% points on 2024.

- Literacy performance in P1, P4 and P7 Combined is slightly **behind** national performance. This is due to the performance of the P7 cohort which lowers attainment in this combined measure. Nevertheless, the gap to the national figure remains at 2% points, a marked improvement on the gap of 8.3% points which occurred in 2021.

## Secondary

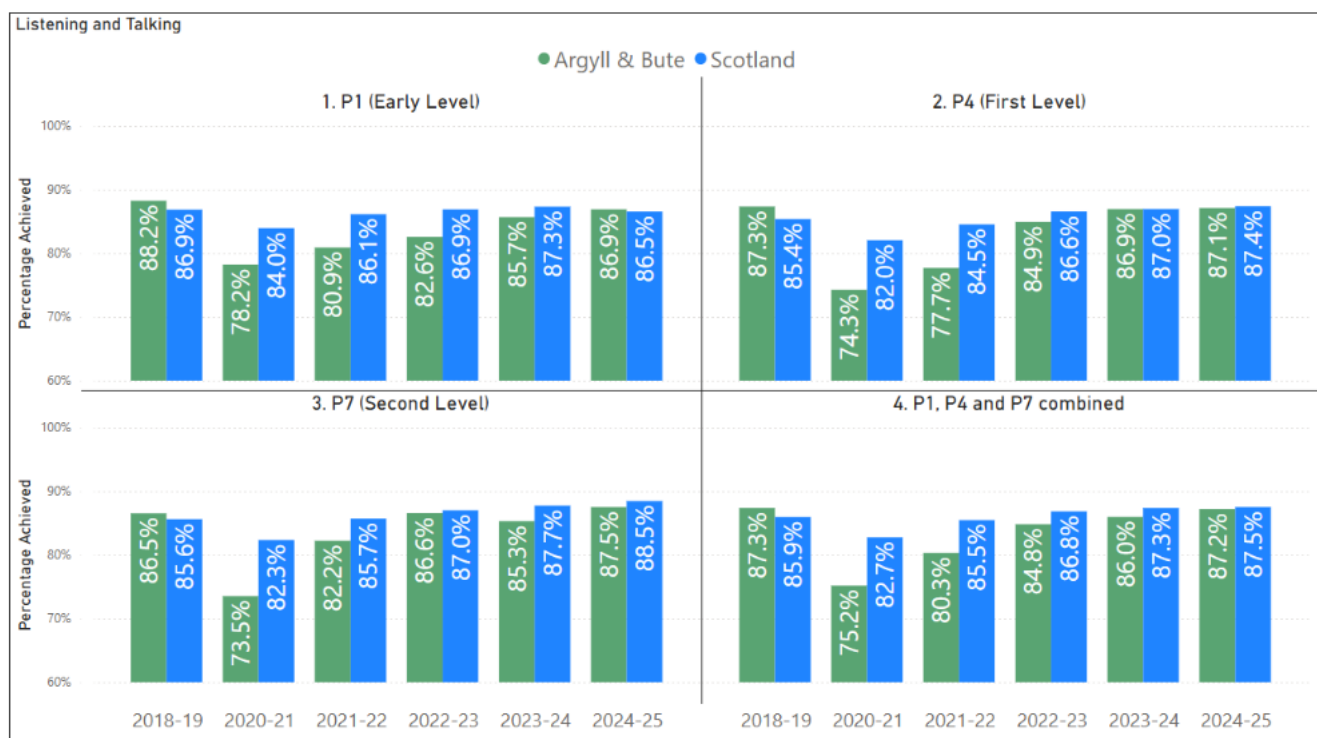
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in both secondary measures.



- Literacy performance in S3 at Third Level or better is **in line** with national performance. This marks a notable improvement on 2024 (+2.7% points) and is the first time Argyll and Bute is within 1% point of the national figure over the last five sessions where data was collected. The 0.8% point gap to the national figure is significantly smaller than the last pre-pandemic session which saw a gap of 4.1% points.
- Literacy performance in S3 at Fourth level is **ahead** of national performance. An improvement of 2.6% points on 2024 performance continues a positive trend which sees Argyll and Bute being ahead of the national figure for a second year in a row. This 5-year high marks a significant improvement (+20.8% points) on the 2022 figure of 45.9%.

### 4.3 Listening and Talking Primary

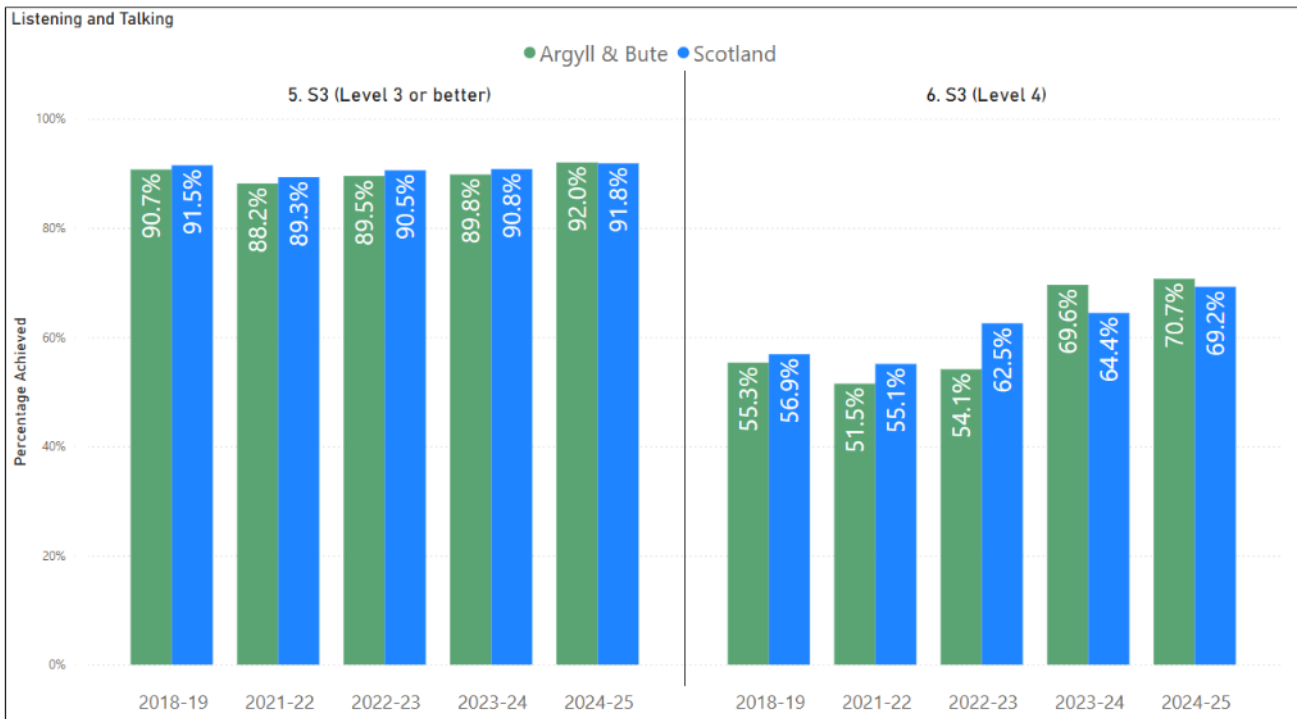
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Listening and Talking across each of the primary measures.



- Listening and Talking performance in P1 is **in line** with national performance. This is an improvement on 2024 where Argyll and Bute was 1.6% points behind the national figure.
- Listening and Talking performance in P4 is **in line** with national performance. The authority figure of 87.1% is a small improvement on 2024 and is only 0.2% points behind the last pre-pandemic session figure of 87.3%
- Listening and Talking performance in P7 is **in line** with national performance. This marks an increase on 2024 performance where Argyll and Bute was 2.4% points behind the national performance. The 2025 figure of 87.5% is the highest it has been over these 6 sessions.
- Listening and Talking performance in P1, P4 and P7 Combined is **in line** national performance. The gap between Argyll and Bute and the national figure has fallen from 7.5% points in 2021 to 0.3% points in 2025.

## Secondary

The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Listening and Talking across both secondary measures.



- Listening and Talking performance in S3 at Third Level or better is **in line** with national performance. This marks a notable improvement on 2024 (+2.2% points) and is the first time Argyll and Bute has exceeded the national figure over the last five sessions where data was collected.
- Listening and Talking performance in S3 at Fourth level is **ahead** of national performance. An improvement of 1.1% points on 2024 performance continues a positive trend which sees Argyll and Bute being ahead of the national figure for a second year in a row. This 5-year high marks a significant improvement (+19.2% points) on the 2022 figure of 51.5%.

### 4.4 Reading Primary

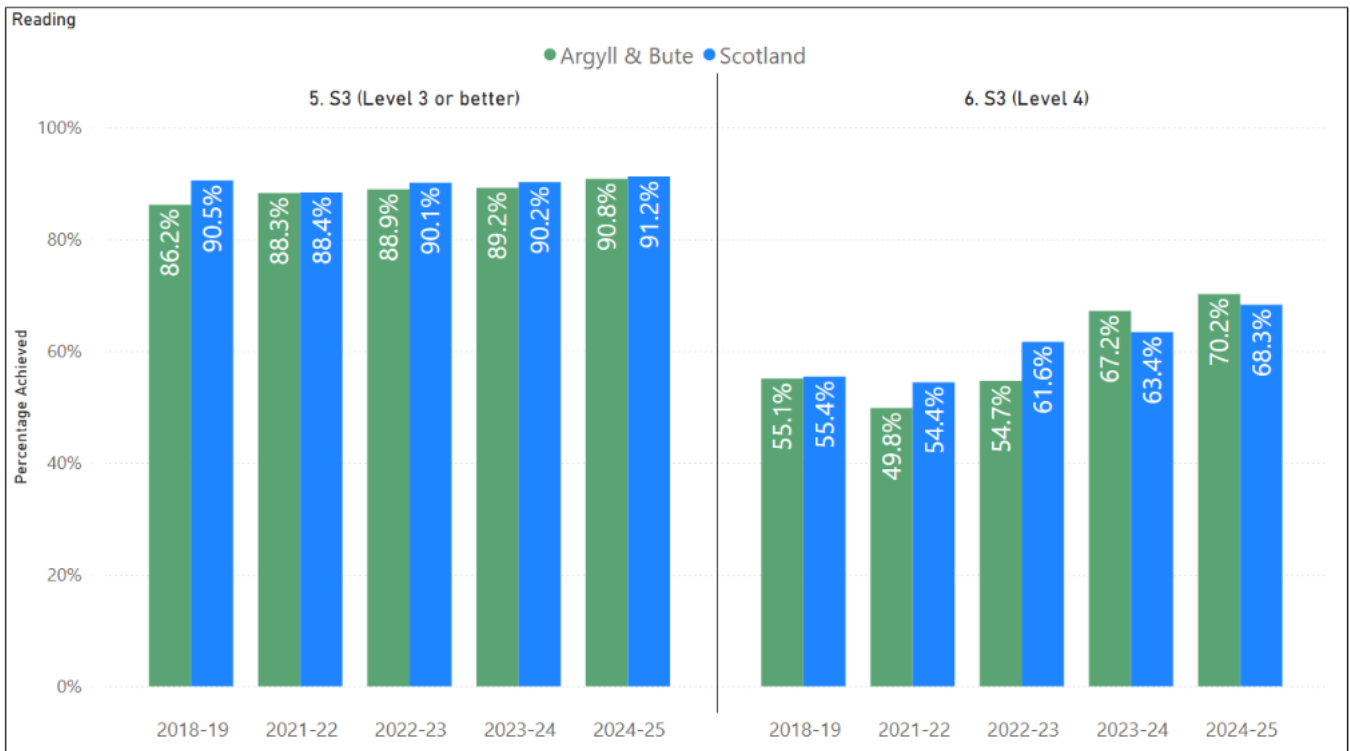
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Reading across each of the primary measures.



- Reading performance in P1 is **in line** with national performance for the second year in a row. The figure of 80.8% marks a slight decline on 2024 performance – a pattern which also occurred nationally. Nevertheless, performance remains significantly ahead of 2021 (+6.5% points) and 2022 (+6.4% points) figures.
- Reading performance in P4 is **ahead** of national performance. This is the second year in a row that the authority has been more than 1% point ahead of the national figure. The figure of 80.2% is also significantly up (+11.4% points) on a low experienced in 2021.
- Reading performance in P7 is **in line** with national performance. This marks a significant improvement of 3.0% points against 2024 – an increase which saw the gap to national performance drop from -2.8% points to -0.5% points.
- Reading performance in P1, P4 and P7 Combined is **in line** national performance. The gap between Argyll and Bute and the national figure has fallen from -4.9% points in 2022 to +0.3% points in 2025. This is the first time we have exceeded the national figure since 2019.

## Secondary

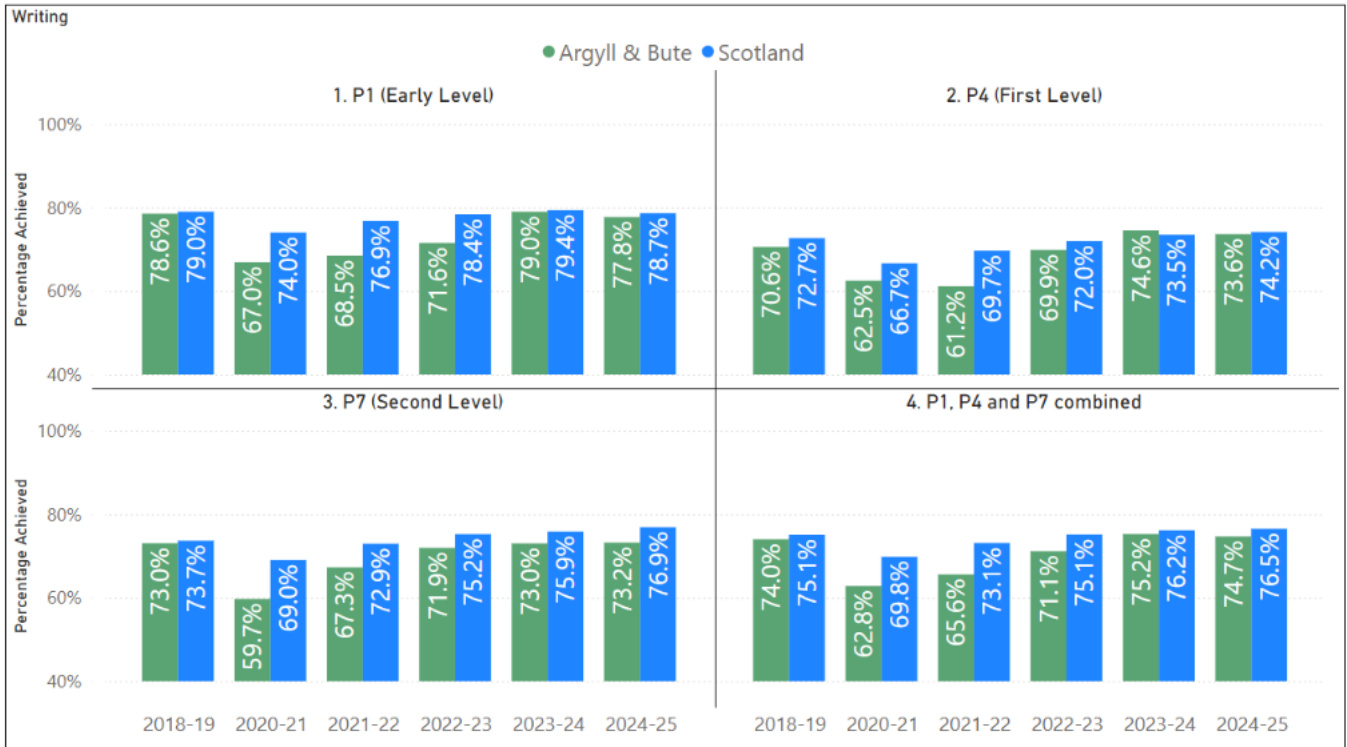
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Reading across both secondary measures.



- Reading performance in S3 at Third Level or better is **in line** with national performance. This marks a notable improvement on 2024 (+1.6% points) and is the highest figure in the last 5 sessions where data was collected.
- Reading performance in S3 at Fourth level is **ahead** of national performance. An improvement of 3.0% points on 2024 performance continues a positive trend which sees Argyll and Bute being ahead of the national figure for a second year in a row. The +1.9% point gap to the national figure marks a significant improvement on performance in 2022 and 2023 where the gap to national was -4.6% points and -6.9% points respectively. This 5-year high also marks a significant improvement (+20.4% points) on the 2022 figure of 49.8%.

## 4.5 Writing Primary

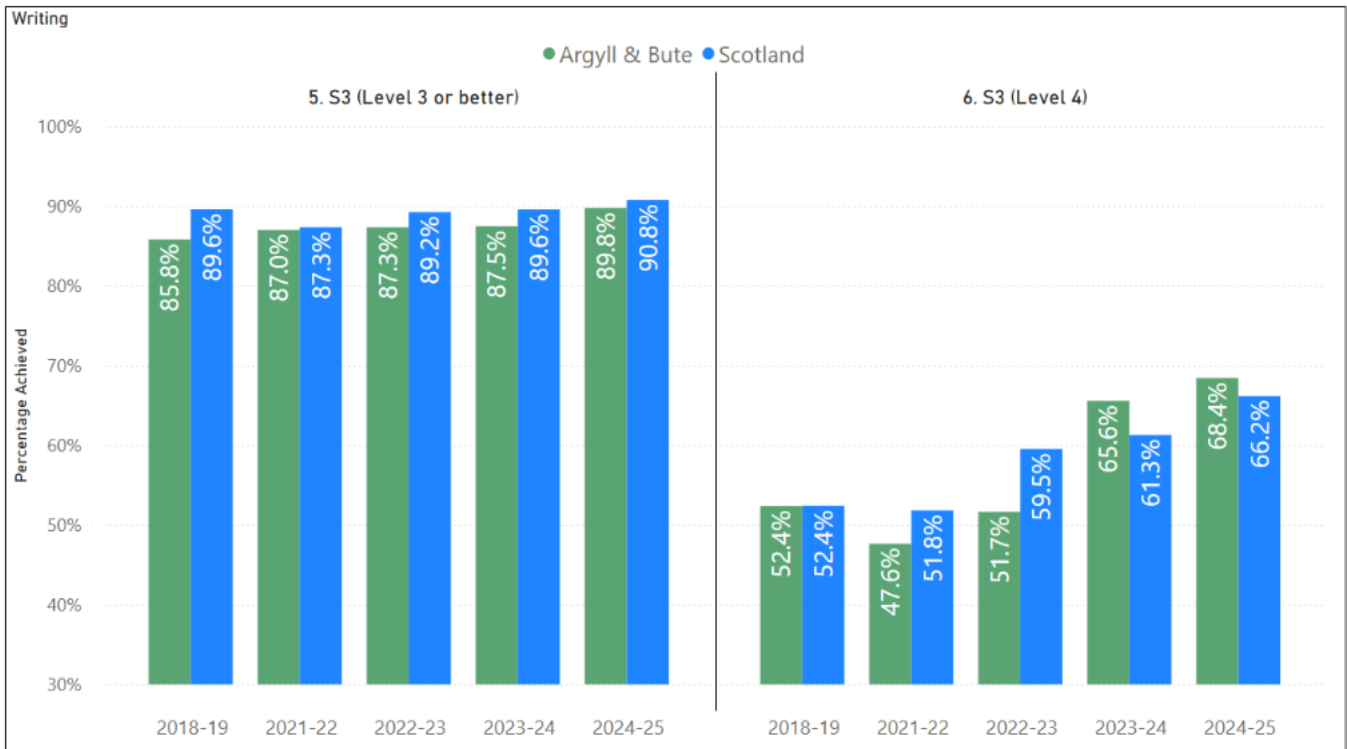
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Writing across each of the primary measures.



- Writing performance in P1 is **in line** with national performance. The figure of 77.8% marks a small decline against 2024 – a pattern that was also experienced nationally. Nevertheless, performance remains significantly above the figures achieved in 2021 (+10.8% points) and 2022 (9.3% points).
- Writing performance in P4 is **in line** with national performance. The figure of 73.6% marks a small decline against 2024. Nevertheless, performance remains above the last pre-pandemic session and significantly up on a low of 61.2% achieved in 2022.
- Writing performance in P7 is **behind** national performance. This has occurred in five of the last six sessions where data was collected. Performance against 2024 has improved slightly (+0.2% points) but the gap to the national figure has grown from 2.9% points to 3.7% points.
- Writing performance in P1, P4 and P7 Combined is **behind** national performance. This is driven primarily by performance in P7. Nevertheless, the gap of -1.8% points remains significantly down on gaps experienced in 2021 (7.0% points) and 2022 (7.5% points) respectively.

## Secondary

The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Writing across both secondary measures.



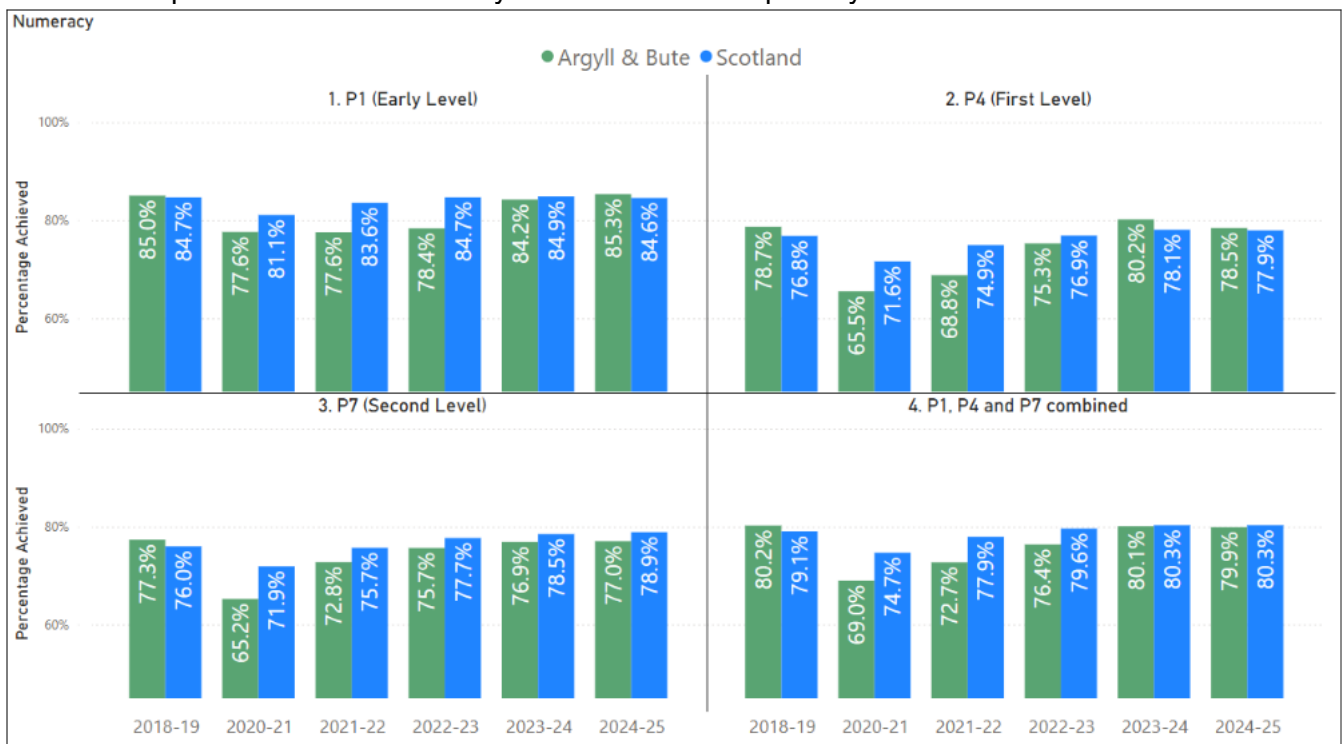
- Writing performance in S3 at Third Level or better is **in line** with national performance. This marks a notable improvement on 2024 (+2.3% points) and is the highest figure in the last 5 sessions where data was collected. Performance in 2025 is only the second session of the last 5 where Argyll and Bute has been in line with national performance.
- Writing performance in S3 at Fourth level is **ahead** of national performance. An improvement of 2.8% points on 2024 performance continues a positive trend which sees Argyll and Bute being ahead of the national figure for a second year in a row. The +2.2% point gap to the national figure marks a significant improvement on performance in 2022 and 2023 where the gap to national was -4.2% points and -7.8% points respectively. This 5-year high also marks a significant improvement (+20.8% points) on the 2022 figure of 47.6%.

## 4.6 Numeracy

The visuals and analysis below provide a comparison between Argyll and Bute and National performance in Numeracy.

### Primary

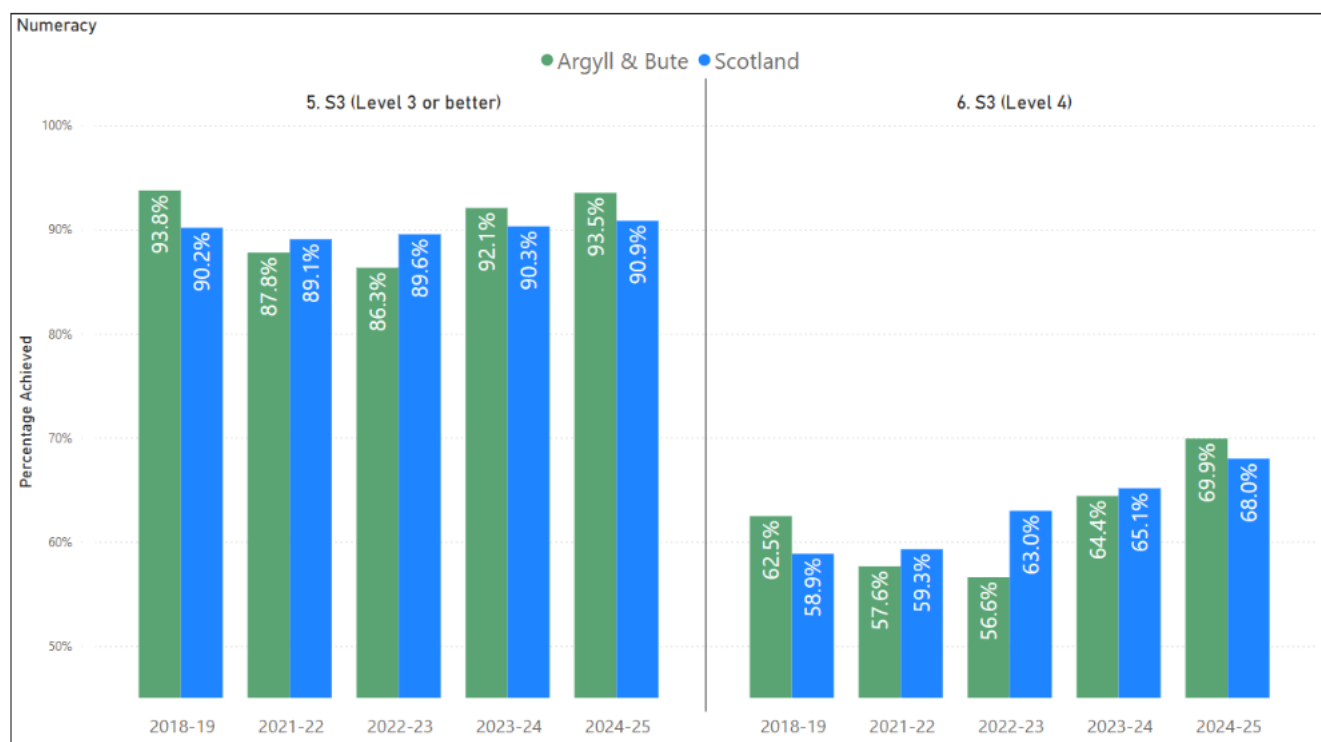
The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in Numeracy across each of the primary measures.



- Numeracy performance in P1 is **in line** with national performance. The 2025 figure of 85.3% marks the highest performance over the last 6 sessions and an improvement of 1.1% points on 2024. The figure is 0.7% points ahead of the national figure – a significant turnaround on 2022 when the national figure was 6.0% points ahead of Argyll and Bute.
- Numeracy performance in P4 is **in line** with national performance. The 2025 figure of 78.5% marks a small decline on the 80.2% achieved in 2024. Nevertheless, this is the second year in a row in which Argyll and Bute has been above the national figure. The 2025 figure also maintains a level of achievement which far exceeds that of 2021(+12.0% points) and 2022 (+9.7% points).
- Numeracy performance in P7 is **behind** national performance. Performance is in line with 2024 and remains significantly above the 5-year low of 65.2% achieved in 2021.
- Numeracy performance in P1, P4 and P7 Combined is **in line** national performance. The gap between Argyll and Bute and the national figure has fallen from -5.7% points in 2021 to -0.4% points in 2025.

## Secondary

The visual below provides an overview of Argyll and Bute attainment against National performance in both secondary measures.



- Numeracy performance in S3 at Third Level or better is **ahead** of national performance. The 2025 marks an improvement of +1.4% points against 2024 performance – the highest figure since the last pandemic session of 2018/19. The gap to the national figure has grown again. Performance in Argyll and Bute was 2.6% points higher than national figures, an improvement on the + 1.8% point gap that occurred in 2024.
- Numeracy performance in S3 at Fourth level is **ahead** of national performance. This is a significant improvement on 2023 performance, where Argyll and Bute was 6 percentage points behind. An improvement of 7 percentage points in 2024 means that Argyll and Bute is now 1 percentage point behind the national figure.

## 4.7 Overall Comparison

The tables below provide a qualitative overview of performance against the national figure for each curricular component and all possible measures. As in earlier sections of this report, the following qualitative labels have been applied to all comparisons with national figures:

- **Behind** – more than 1.0% point behind the national figure
- **In line** – within 1.0% of the national figure, either ahead or behind
- **Ahead** – more than 1.0% point ahead of the national figure

The table below shows how Argyll and Bute compared against the national figures using the same criteria in the 2021/22 session:

### 2021/22 Data

Stage	1. Listening and Talking	2. Reading	3. Writing	4. Literacy	5. Numeracy
1. P1 (Early Level)	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind
2. P4 (First Level)	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind
3. P7 (Second Level)	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind
4. P1, P4 and P7 combined	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind
5. S3 (Level 3 or better)	Behind	In Line	In Line	Behind	Behind
6. S3 (Level 4)	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind	Behind

The table below shows how Argyll and Bute compared against the national figures using the same criteria in the 2024/25 session:

### 2024/25 Data

Stage	1. Listening and Talking	2. Reading	3. Writing	4. Literacy	5. Numeracy
1. P1 (Early Level)	In Line	In Line	In Line	In Line	In Line
2. P4 (First Level)	In Line	Ahead	In Line	In Line	In Line
3. P7 (Second Level)	In Line	In Line	Behind	Behind	Behind
4. P1, P4 and P7 combined	In Line	In Line	Behind	Behind	In Line
5. S3 (Level 3 or better)	In Line	In Line	In Line	In Line	Ahead
6. S3 (Level 4)	Ahead	Ahead	Ahead	Ahead	Ahead

- In 2024/25, of 30 attainment measures, 5 were behind the national figure, 18 were in line and 7 were ahead.
- 83% of all measures were in line (60%) or ahead (23%) of national figures.
- All measures at S3 were in line or ahead of national figures, whilst P7 was behind in 60% of all measures.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report provides a summary of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) for pupils at Primaries 1,4,7 and Secondary 3<sup>rd</sup> year. It evidences progress made against national averages across a number of literacy and numeracy measures and highlights improvement that has been made in all measures when compared to attainment in session 2021/22. It also highlights the fact that combined attainment averages for Argyll and Bute schools are either in line or ahead of the national averages in 25 out of a possible 30 measures; demonstrating an improving picture. We commend the hard work of learners, school staff and the central team in securing progress in attainment across the Broad General Education (BGE) from P1-S3
- 5.2 Central Officers continue to take forward the programme of support and challenge with schools across the authority, involving a range of actions and measures to support schools to secure further improvement in attainment and achievement. Increasing attainment and achievement, and ensuring that all young people achieve to their potential, regardless of location, circumstance or potential barriers, is at the heart of the work of the Education Service.
- 5.3 Heads of Service and Managers continue to meet regularly with Head Teachers to ensure appropriate levels of both scrutiny and collaboration are in place in relation to performance and securing positive outcomes for young people. This work is reinforced and enhanced by central staff through their involvement with national performance networks, such as the Local Authority Quad group (partnership with Angus, Moray and East Lothian) and the Association of Directors (ADES) which allows them to share best practice with wider Local Authority colleagues.
- 5.4 Additionally, the Education Service has reviewed and improved the process for analysis and evaluation of attainment data. Attainment Meetings with individual Primary and 2-18 Head Teachers take place in April/May and with secondary Head Teachers in November/December. All aspects of attainment are analysed and key improvement strategies to raise attainment are discussed and agreed.
- 5.5 Two Primary Head Teacher representatives will present their locality attainment overview at Local Area Committees in March 2026. Secondary school Head Teachers will present individual school performance analysis for session 2024-2025 at Local Area Committees in June 2026.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy: This report links directly to Education in the Argyll and Bute Corporate Plan 2023-2027 (Attaining and achieving at all stages). NIF: Priorities 3 and 5 and Argyll and Bute Education Service plan and strategy.
- 6.2 Financial: None
- 6.3 Legal: None
- 6.4 HR: None
- 6.5 Customer Service: This report provides elected Members with an overview of an aspect of service performance.
- 6.6 Risk: The performance of Argyll and Bute schools can significantly enhance or detract from the Council's reputation and attractiveness as an area to work and live in.
- 6.7 Climate Change: None
- 6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty: None
- 6.9 Equalities – Protected Characteristics: This report links directly to NIF Priority 3: Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people and NIF Priority 5: Improvement in attainment and achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- 6.10 Consumer Duty – None
- 6.11 Island Communities – None
- 6.12 Children's Rights and Wellbeing – This report links to Article 29 (goals of education)

**Douglas Hendry - Executive Director with responsibility for Education**

**Kieron Green - Policy Lead for Education**

29<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**For further information contact:**

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**Jennifer Crocket** - Chief Education Officer/ Head of Education – Wellbeing, Inclusion and Achievement

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**APPENDICES** - Appendix 1 ACEL Report 24-25