
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL
EDUCATION

COMMUNITY SERVICES
5 MARCH 2026

FINAL ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT – SESSION 2024-2025

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on final attainment across all Argyll and Bute Secondary Schools.
- 1.2 This update follows the release on 25th February of data on the Scottish Government's Insight tool. The Insight tool is designed to allow fair comparison of a group of pupils in Argyll and Bute with larger groups of pupils taken from all the other 31 local authorities with similar backgrounds (sex, additional support needs, stage, and SIMD band). This is known as the Virtual Comparator (VC) and is a key feature of Insight. It should be noted that the current Virtual Comparator methodology does not incorporate any measure of rurality. Insight also allows comparison of attainment in Argyll and Bute with average attainment nationally
- 1.3 This report focusses on attainment data made available by the Scottish Government in February 2026. Members will recall that data on pupil attainment and wider achievement was shared in the December 2025 paper *Education Performance Data Analysis 2024-25*.

[Education Performance Data Analysis 2024-25](#)

- 1.4 The report offers analysis of attainment levels across Argyll and Bute secondary schools post-SQA appeals, and of the overall success of appeals in the authority.
- 1.5 The report goes on to present updated attainment information from Insight. Presented data incorporates the results of appeals. It also refers to the Insight tariff points allocated to candidates' wider achievement attainment described in December's report. Tariff points are applied by Insight to levels of attainment – for example a Higher A award gains more tariff points than a Higher B award, and both gain more than a National 5 A award. Tariff points allow a score to be calculated for each candidate that summarises a wide range of achievement and awards from a range of providers. Tariff points also allow comparisons to be made between pupil cohorts, schools, local authorities and their virtual comparators.

- 1.6 Analysis of attainment includes that of school leavers, the specific attainment of whom is a feature of the February Insight update.

Specifically, the areas analysed in this report are:

- Leavers cohort trends (stage of leaving)
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Average attainment for all candidates,
- Attainment in the context of levels of deprivation
- Young people's initial destinations on leaving school

- 1.7 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a) Consider the information in this report, particularly as it relates to the attainment performance of school leavers;
- b) Note the increase in attainment brought about by successful appeals, at authority level and school-by-school.
- c) Note that the information contained in this report constitutes all attainment across both National Qualifications and Wider Achievement courses, the latter of which was described in the December report without the associated tariff points having been included in statistics.
- d) Note the difficulty in making meaningful comparisons with leavers cohorts over the last few sessions due to alterations in assessment methods and also shifting patterns of school leaving, which are not unique to Argyll and Bute and have occurred nationally.

FINAL ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT – SESSION 2024-2025

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In August 2025, the Council received notification from the SQA of awards for all pupils in Argyll and Bute entered for National Qualifications in session 2024/25.
- 2.2 In December 2025, the Council received updated attainment data from the SQA, incorporating the results of appeals submitted by or on behalf of candidates.
- 2.3 From 2024 onwards, a return to established awarding procedures for most courses has been established. This followed alternative assessment methods used as a result of the pandemic. This impacts data from 2020 to 2023. The SQA has advised that extreme caution should be applied in comparing 2025 attainment data to data from results produced between 2020 and 2023.
- 2.5 This report is the third report focusing on the attainment of young people to have been brought to Committee in school session 2025-2026. The August 2025 report summarised the initial attainment outcomes immediately following the release of attainment results by the SQA. In December 2025, a report gave an overview of attainment across all ten authority secondary schools, incorporating both authority post-appeal data and data from The Scottish Government's Insight tool.
- 2.6 The data in this report reiterates and further analyses the impact of appeals on attainment. It also presents and evaluates the newly released data on the attainment of young people who left school in 2025. The analysis provided here looks at the attainment and destination outcomes of all of those who left school at the same time. These are therefore understood as cohort analyses.
- 2.7 Whilst being a useful lens for analysis, comparing cohorts of leavers has two key limitations. As mentioned in 2.3 above, alternative assessment methods applied over the last 5 years mean that attainment and achievement have been accumulated under differing circumstances. Therefore, comparing the academic achievements of each cohort is not a perfect like for like measure as the requirements differ between cohorts. Furthermore, changes to the constitution of leavers cohorts and specifically, the proportion of leavers who leave "early", means that cohort to cohort comparison is limited in some measures. For example, an

increase in S4 leavers would mean that the available time to accumulate qualifications is diminished. An increase in early leaving rates would also mean that the average pupil had had relatively less time to complete more advanced awards such as Highers or Advanced Highers.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- a) Consider the information in this report, particularly as it relates to the attainment performance of school leavers;
- b) Note the increase in attainment brought about by successful appeals, at authority level and school-by-school;
- c) Note that the information contained in this report constitutes all attainment across both National Qualifications and Wider Achievement courses, the latter of which was described in the December report without the associated tariff points having been included in statistics.
- d) Note the difficulty in making meaningful comparisons with leavers cohorts over the last few sessions due to alterations in assessment methods and also shifting patterns of school leaving, which are not unique to Argyll and Bute and have occurred nationally.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 SQA Appeals

For the 2022-2023 exam diet onwards the SQA have used an appeals process which differs from previous iterations. In the previous session, 2021-22, evidence of candidate attainment could be submitted, and such information was considered in terms of any change in grade. From 2022/23 onwards, the appeal process was limited to an administrative check relating to the accuracy of the final grade entered, and a check that constituent marks had been totalled correctly. Inherently this appeal process produces less changes in grade as it does not consider any external evidence of pupil attainment. As a result, there has been an overall reduction in the number of appeals submitted and the number of amended grades, both nationally and in Argyll and Bute.

4.2 A-C Pass Rates

The table below details pre- and post-appeals attainment at grades **A-C** for Argyll and Bute in comparison to the national figures (LA schools only).

2025 National Qualifications	Argyll & Bute			National		
	SQA Results August	Post Appeal	Change (% points)	SQA Results August	Post Appeal	Change (% points)
		December			December	
Adv. Higher	74.5%	74.9%	0.4%	73.8%	74.0%	0.2%
Higher	73.4%	73.6%	0.2%	74.8%	75.0%	0.2%
Nat 5	77.2%	77.3%	0.1%	77.4%	77.6%	0.2%

Post-appeals, at Advanced Higher the post-appeal A-C pass rate has increased by 0.4% points and remains ahead of the national post-appeal figure. Two Advanced Higher appeals were successful, with one B grade upgraded to an A and one D grade upgraded to a C.

At Higher, the post-appeal A-C pass rate has risen by 0.2% points, but remains behind the national post-appeal percentage, which also rose by 0.2% points. At Higher, 19 grades were upgraded with four D grades being upgraded to C grades.

At National 5, the post-appeal A-C pass rate has risen by 0.1% and remains in line with the national post-appeal percentage, which also rose by 0.2% points. At National 5, 32 grades were upgraded, with one C grade being upgraded to an A post-review. Seven D grades were upgraded to a C and two No Awards were upgraded to D awards.

4.3 A-D Pass Rates

The table below details pre- and post-appeals attainment at grades **A-D** for Argyll and Bute in comparison to the national figures.

2025 National Qualifications A-D	Argyll & Bute			National		
	SQA Results August	Post Appeal	Change (% points)	SQA Results August	Post Appeal	Change (% points)
		December			December	
Adv. Higher	88.2%	88.2%	0%	88.9%	89.0%	0.1%
Higher	89.9%	89.9%	0%	89.5%	89.5%	0%
Nat 5	89.9%	90.0%	0.04%	89.2%	89.2%	0%

Post-appeals, at Advanced Higher the post-appeal A-D pass rate is unchanged and is still 0.8% points behind the national post-appeal figure.

At Higher, the post-appeal A-D pass rate is unchanged and remains 0.4% ahead of the national post-appeal percentage.

At National 5, the post-appeal A-C pass rate has risen by 0.04% (accounting for the two No Awards that were upgraded as detailed above) and is now 0.8% above the national post-appeal percentage.

4.4 Post Appeal Impact on Schools

The tables below outlines the extent to which attainment at grades A-C and A-D in each of the ten secondary schools increased once successful appeals were taken into account:

School	% (A-C) Change Post Appeal			% (A-D) Change Post Appeal		
	Nat 5	Higher	Adv Higher	Nat 5	Higher	Adv Higher
Campbeltown Grammar School	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Dunoon Grammar School	0.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Hermitage Academy	0.15%	0.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Islay High School	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lochgilphead High School	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%
Oban High School	0.10%	0.58%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Rothesay Academy	0.50%	0.00%	11.11%	0.50%	0.00%	0.00%
Tarbert Academy	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Tiree High School	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Tobermory High School	0.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Argyll and Bute	0.15%	0.16%	0.39%	0.04%	0.0%	0.0%

4.5 Appeal Success by Subject

The table below shows the subjects and levels at which appeals were successful in increasing the mark awarded to the pupil:

Subject	Nat 5	Higher	Adv Higher	Grand Total
Administration and IT	1			1
Applications of Mathematics	2			2
Art and Design	2		1	3
Biology	2	1		3
Business Management	2	1		3
Chemistry	2			2
Design and Manufacture	1	1		2
English	6	5	1	12
English for Speakers of Other Languages	1			1
Geography	2			2
German	1			1

Health and Food Technology		1		1
History	2	1		3
Human Biology		1		1
Mathematics	3	1		4
Physical Education	1	2		3
Physics	1			1
Practical Metalworking	1			1
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies	2	2		4
Spanish		3		3
Grand Total	32	19	2	53

The 53 upgraded awards in 2025 surpasses the 33 successful appeals that occurred in the 2023/24 session. This is, in part, a reflection of increased presentation rates as detailed in previous reports.

Of 53 appeals which led to a revised award, 48 saw the award increase by a single award level (7 to 6 for example). Four appeals were changed by 2 numerical grades (7 to 5 for example), and one appeal saw a grade of 6 (C) change to a 2(A).

Insight Analysis

- 4.6 The Scottish Government's Insight tool allows analysis of attainment from a variety of perspectives. Below, attainment analysis is provided from three such perspectives: attainment in Literacy and Numeracy – a key element of the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework; average attainment of young people in the context of the top 20% of attainers, the middle 60% of attainers and the lowest 20% of attainers; and attainment in the context of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). For each attainment focus, data is supplied for all pupils in S4-S6, and for those who left school in 2025 – data which was unavailable in the October insight update.
- 4.7 Analysis of leavers cohorts is useful as a snapshot to understand attainment and achievement of those who leave school in any given year. However, leavers cohort attainment statistics are also impacted by the constitution of the cohorts – that is, who makes up the cohort and specifically when they have left school. For example, if a leavers cohort has an increased proportion of S4 leavers compared to the previous year, then the percentage of pupils who have achieved a Level 6 award will likely reduce because the majority of S4 pupils do not present for a Level 6 award. This does not mean that Level 6 attainment has declined, but the proportion of pupils who could present for a Level 6 award will have reduced compared to previous cohorts. As such, the constitution of leavers cohorts should be considered alongside any attainment analysis. The table below shows the constitution of Argyll and Bute leavers over the last 6 years:

Leavers Cohort	S4 Numbers	S5 Numbers	S6 Numbers	Total Cohort Size	S4 % of Cohort	S5 % of Cohort	S6% of Cohort
2020	53	190	459	702	7.5%	27.1%	65.4%
2021	62	227	513	802	7.7%	28.3%	64.0%
2022	94	213	531	838	11.2%	25.4%	63.4%
2023	93	225	463	781	11.9%	28.8%	59.3%
2024	105	203	488	796	13.2%	25.5%	61.3%
2025	101	255	495	851	11.8%	29.9%	58.1%

As the table above shows, the percentage of S4 leavers as a proportion of all leavers increased from 7.5% in 2020 to a high of 13.2% in 2024. The S5 leaving percentage hit a 6 year high in 2025 – making up 29.9% of the leavers cohort. Only 58% of the 24/25 leavers cohort were pupils who had left after S6 –7.3% points down on the proportion of S6 leavers in 2020. This has a direct impact on how much time this leavers cohort had collectively to accrue tariff points and on attainment in literacy and numeracy. For example, in the 2025 leavers data, the average S4 leaver left with 162 tariff points, whilst the average S5 leaver left with 461. The average S6 leaver left with 1171 tariff points. As such, staying on to S5 on average gives a pupil an extra 300 tariff points and staying on from S5 to S6 gives the average pupil an additional 700 tariff points.

Early leaving (leaving prior to S6) has increased within Argyll and Bute and nationally. The table below demonstrates changes for both groups over the last 6 sessions:

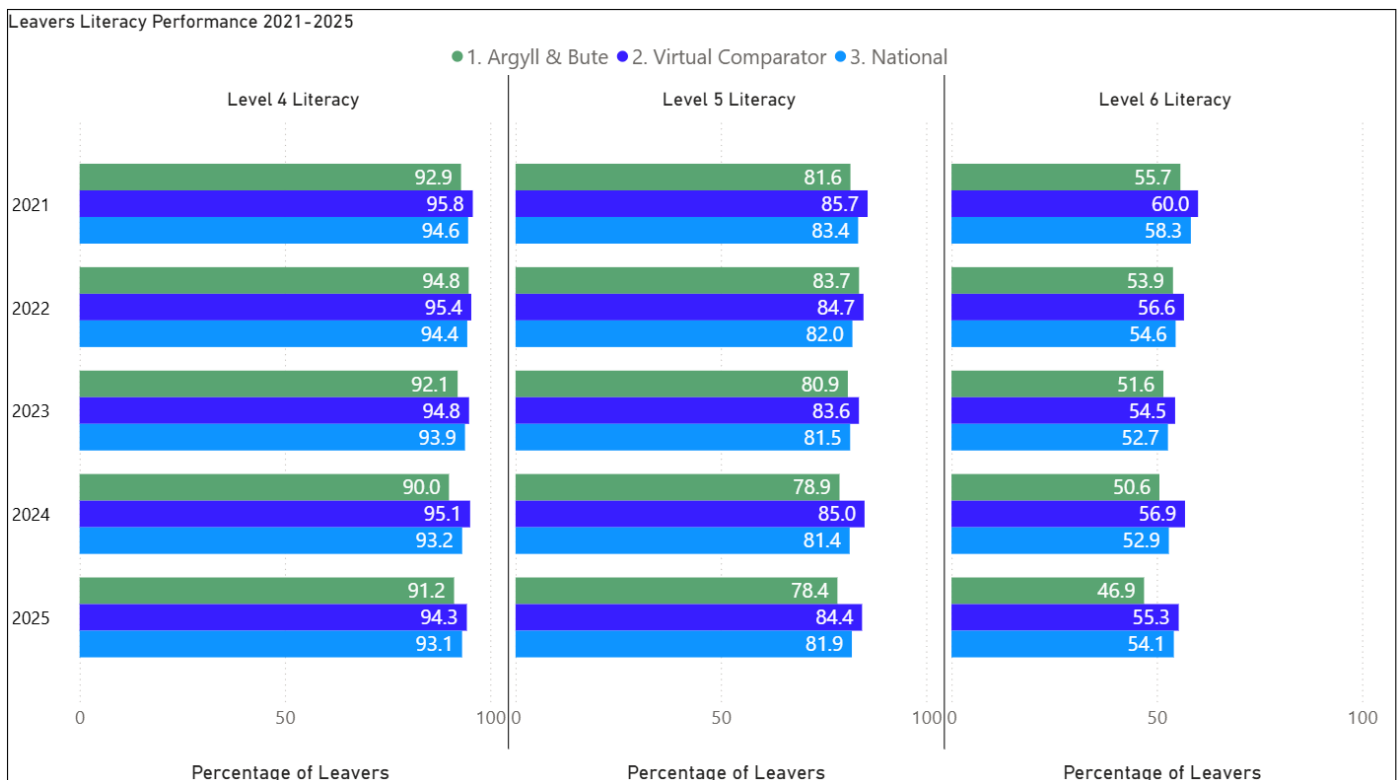
Leavers Cohort	Early Leavers % of Leavers Cohort		
	Argyll and Bute	National	Difference
2020	34.6%	37.2%	-2.5%
2021	36.0%	36.8%	-0.7%
2022	36.6%	40.1%	-3.5%
2023	40.7%	42.9%	-2.2%
2024	38.7%	42.9%	-4.2%
2025	41.8%	41.4%	0.5%

- In Argyll and Bute, the proportion of leavers who left after S4 or S5 has increased from 34.6% in 2019/20 to 41.8% in 2024/25 – an increase of 7.3% points. Nationally, 37.2% of leavers were early leavers in 2019/20 – increasing to a peak of 42.9% in 2023 and 2024.
- In 2025, Argyll and Bute had a higher early leaving rate than the national figure. This marked a strong swing against the previous session where early leavers made up 4.2% points more of the leavers cohort nationally than in Argyll and Bute.

4.8 Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy

SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) levels 4, 5 and 6 Literacy and Numeracy are achieved primarily via the passing of National 4, National 5 or Higher English or Maths. The subject Applications of Maths is also an increasingly accessed means of attaining the above SCQF levels in Numeracy. Additionally, the above SCQF levels can be achieved via the completion of separate Literacy and Numeracy units at levels 4, 5 or 6, which do not require an examination.

Literacy SCQF levels 4, 5, 6 – all Leavers (including post appeal results and wider achievement accreditation)

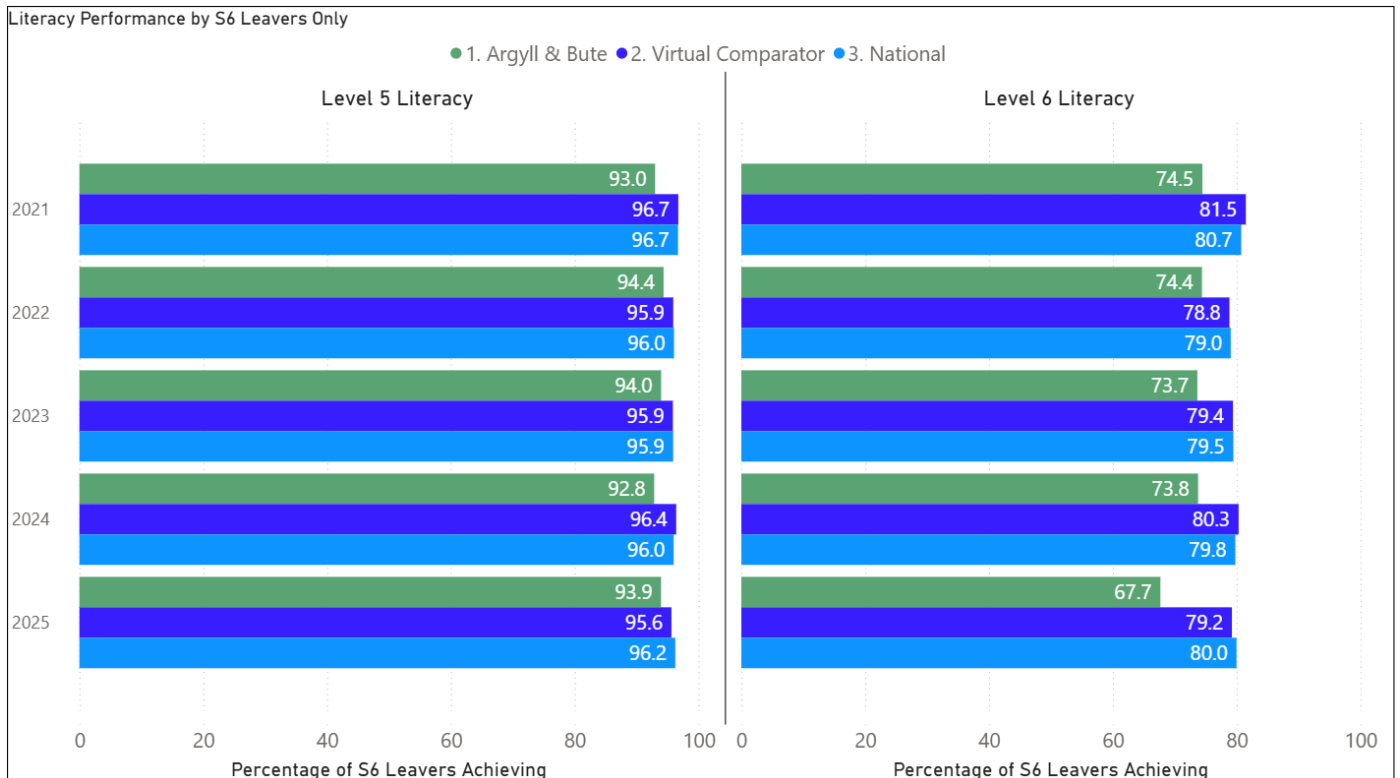


- Attainment of Level 4 Literacy stands at 91.2%, an increase of 1.2% points against 2024. Performance at a national level remained in line with 2024, whilst the virtual comparator fell by 0.8% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 5.1% points in 2024 to 3.1% points in 2025. The gap to the national figure has closed from 3.2% points to 1.9% points.
- Attainment of Level 5 Literacy stands at 78.4%, a decrease of 0.5% points against 2024. Performance in this measure at a national level improved by 0.5% points against the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator performance fell by 0.6% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has stayed the same (6.1% points in 2024 to 6.0% in 2025).

- Attainment of Level 6 Literacy stands at 46.9%, a decrease of 3.7% points against 2024. Performance in this measure at a national level improved by 1.2% points against the previous year. The virtual comparator figure fell from 56.9% to 55.3%. However, the gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has grown from 6.3% points in 2024 to 8.4% points in 2025.
- Caution should be used in comparison to previous years' performance. This is because the constitution of leavers cohorts has changed, with an increase of S4 and S5 leavers. This change in the constitution of the leavers' cohort provides a downward pressure on higher SCQF measures which are often achieved by pupils in their S6 year. Furthermore, alternative methods of assessment, especially between 2020 and 2022, further limits the ability to compare across years in these measures.

Literacy Performance – S6 Leavers Only

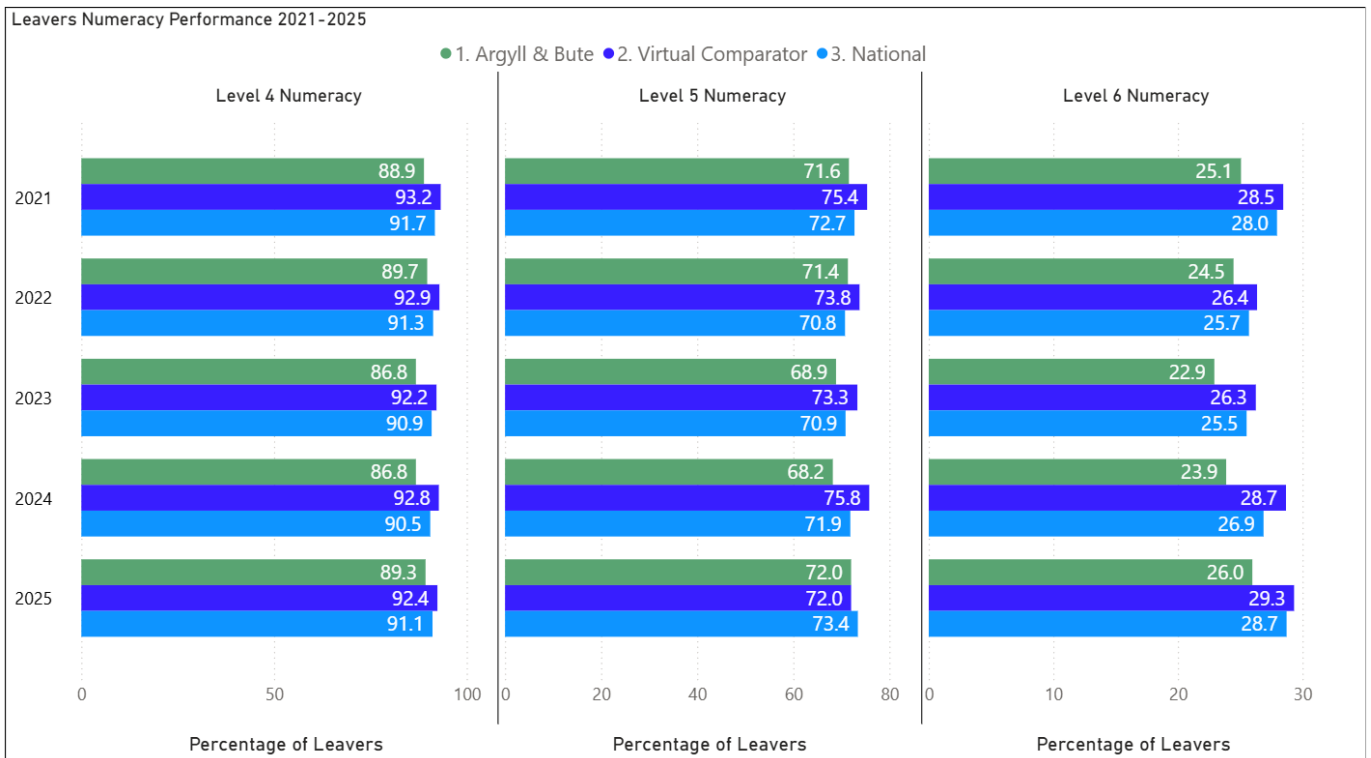
The visual below provides an overview of S6 leavers only. This limits the impact of differing leavers cohort make ups, allowing for a more like for like comparison over the last 5 years. However, differences in assessment models cannot be avoided, and comparison is still limited because of this.



- Attainment of Level 5 Literacy stands at 93.9 %, an increase of 1.1% points against 2024. Performance in this measure at a national level remained in line with the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator figure fell from 96.4% to 95.6%. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 3.6% points in 2024 to 1.7% points in 2025.

- Attainment of Level 6 Literacy stands at 67.7%, a decrease of 6.1% points against 2024. Performance in this measure at a national level remained in line with the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator figure fell by 1.1% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has grown from 6.5% points in 2024 to 11.5% points in 2025.

Numeracy SCQF levels 4, 5, 6 – all Leavers (including post appeal results and wider achievement accreditation)

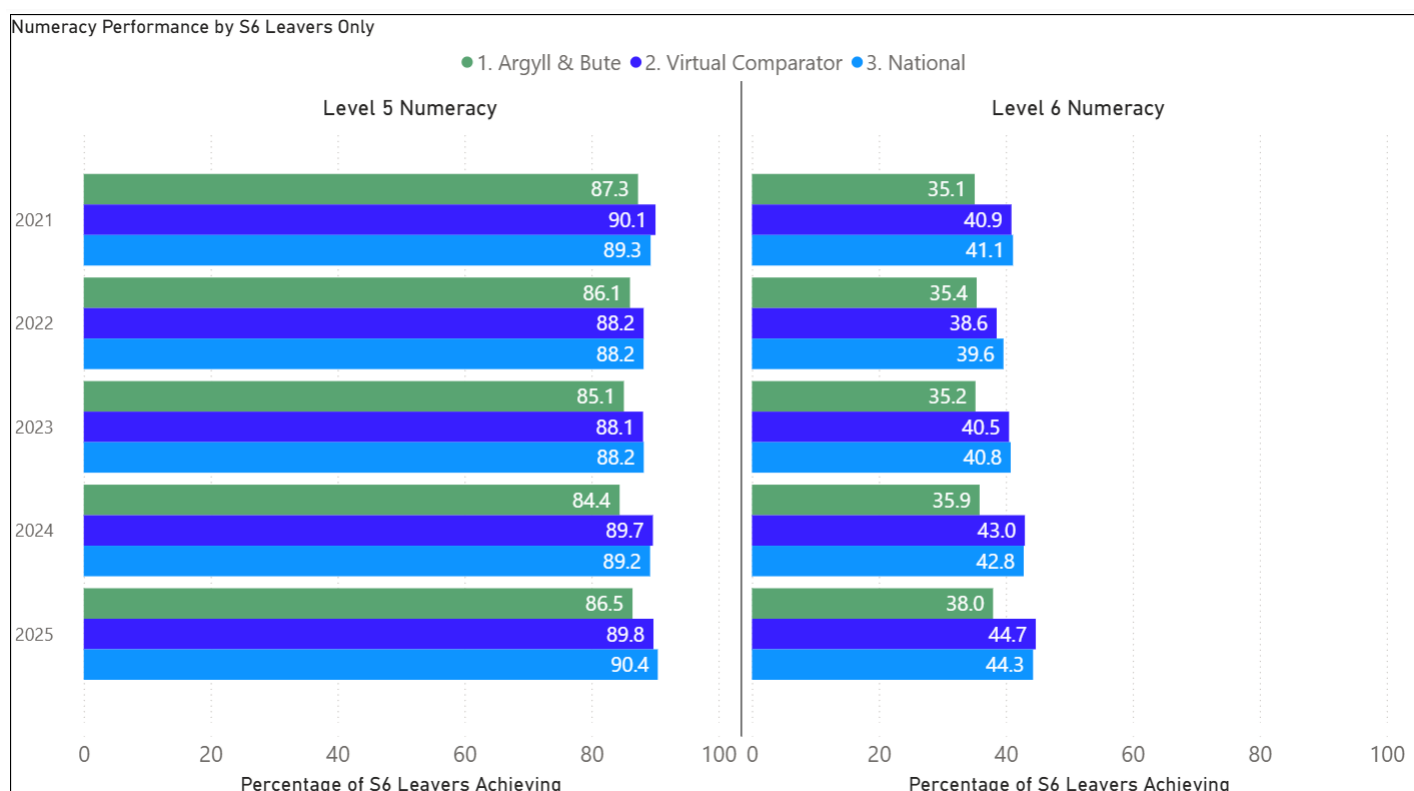


- Attainment of Level 4 Numeracy stands at 89.3%, an increase of 2.5% points against 2024. This is the second highest performance of the last 5 sessions. An increase of 0.6% points in this measure was experienced at a national level, whilst the virtual comparator fell by 0.4% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 6.0 points in 2024 to 3.1% points in 2025.
- Attainment of Level 5 Numeracy stands at 72.0%, an increase of 3.8% points against 2024. This is the highest performance of the last 5 sessions. Performance in this measure at a national level increased by 1.5% points against the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator fell by 3.8% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed entirely from 7.6% points in 2024.
- Attainment of Level 6 Numeracy stands at 26.0%, an increase of 2.1% points against 2024. This is the highest performance of the last 5 sessions. Performance in this measure at a national level increased by 1.8% points against the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator also improved by 0.6% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 4.8% points in 2024 to 3.3% points in 2025.

- As mentioned in the literacy section above, caution should be used in comparison to previous years' performance due to changes in the leavers' cohorts. Statistically significant improvements across the three numeracy measures has occurred despite a falling proportion of the leavers cohort being those pupils who completed all 3 years of senior phase.

Numeracy Performance – S6 Leavers Only

The visual below provides an overview of S6 leavers only. This limits the impact of differing leavers cohort make ups, allowing for a more meaningful comparison over the last 5 years. However, differences in assessment methods cannot be avoided, and comparison is still limited because of this.



- Attainment of Level 5 Numeracy stands at 86.5%, an increase of 2.1% points against 2024. This is the second highest performance in the last 5 sessions. Performance in this measure at a national level improved by 1.2% points against the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator remained in line. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 5.3% points in 2024 to 3.3% points in 2025.
- Attainment of Level 6 Numeracy stands at 38.0%, an increase of 2.1% points against 2024. This is the highest performance in the last 5 sessions. Performance in this measure at a national level remained increased by 1.5% points against the previous year, whilst the virtual comparator also improved by 1.7% points. The gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 7.1% points in 2024 to 6.7% points in 2025.

Raising Literacy and Numeracy attainment in schools

As part of individual Attainment Meetings with secondary Head Teachers, key actions have been discussed to raise literacy and numeracy attainment in all secondary schools.

Effective, high-quality leadership is a research-proven catalyst for raising attainment, and across all our secondary schools, the Principal Teachers/Faculty Heads, who lead learning in subject areas across our schools are being challenged and supported to develop their skills and capacities to raise attainment, and to develop the capabilities of the teachers they lead and manage.

In this context, Principal Teachers/Faculty Heads are developing in their teams, four key drivers in raising attainment:

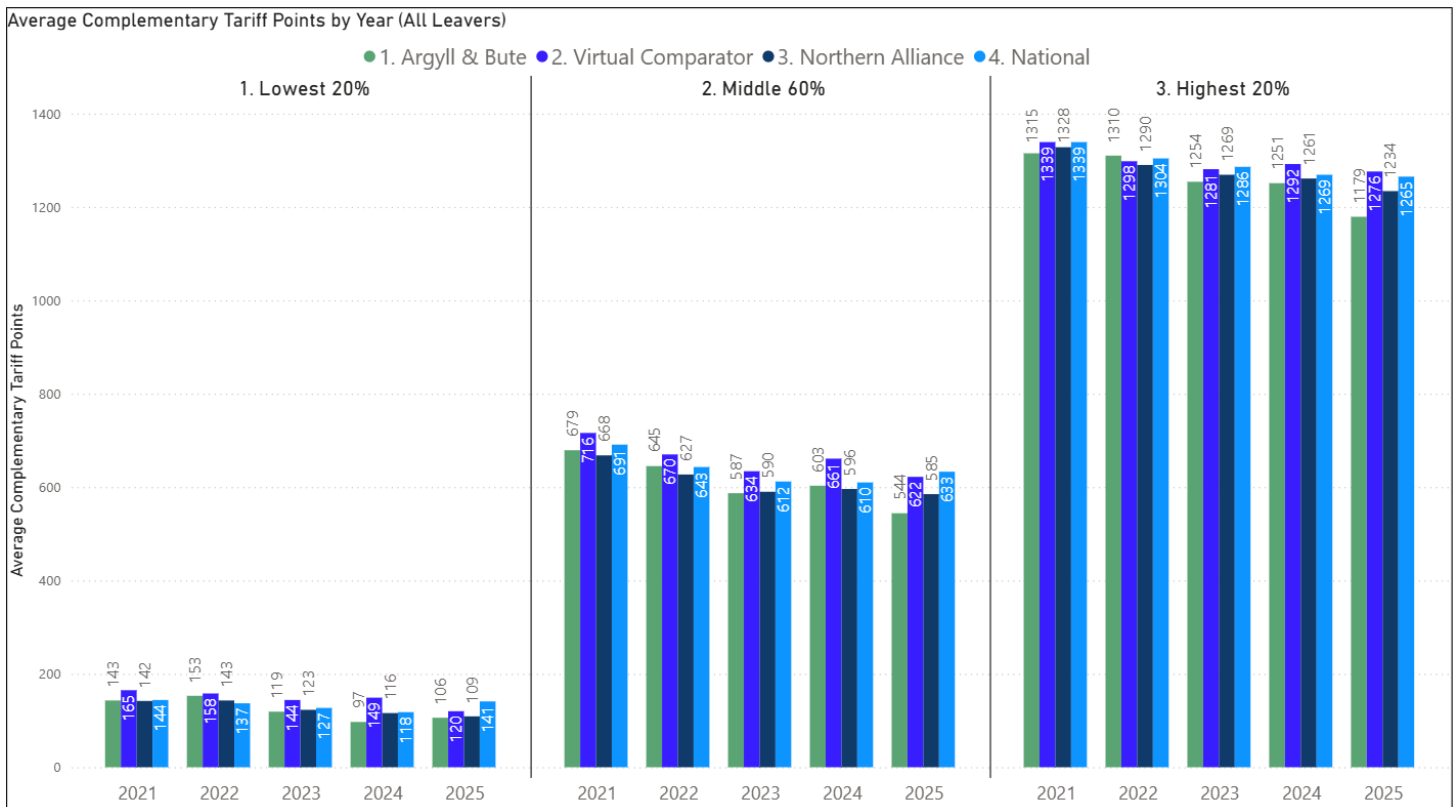
- A culture of high expectations underpinning aspirational presentation policies within schools.
 - Subject Principal Teachers/Faculty Heads are being challenged and supported in relation to their data, ensuring that, as well as monitoring pupils' progress towards success in courses, they are also ensuring that as high a proportion of the relevant pupil cohorts are given the chance to achieve as possible.
Percentage of cohort presented and presentation rates per pupil *are* now key elements of data analysis, and target setting with young people is an important element of the focus on maximised attainment.
- Rigorous tracking and monitoring of pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy at frequent, regular intervals;
 - In both the Senior Phase (S4-S6) and in the Broad General Education (S1-S3), secondary teachers are working to ensure that the ongoing progress of every young person in literacy and numeracy throughout their time in school is understood, and is the central factor in planning next steps in learning for each young person.
- Frameworks of supportive intervention for pupils achieving or at risk of achieving below their potential in literacy and numeracy;
 - As a natural consequence of rigorous tracking and monitoring of attainment, teachers are expanding the number and scope of interventions with young people to address underperformance, and are developing their skills in ensuring interventions are personalised and focused on assessed need.
- High-quality, pupil-centered learning and assessment approaches in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum continuing into the Senior Phase.

- Through the newly introduced programme of focused learning, teaching and assessment support for secondary schools and, in some establishments, through the Guided Approaches to Pedagogical Enquiry (GAPE) programme, an increasing number of teachers across secondary schools are developing their practice in planning and delivering consistently high-quality learning experiences. These ensure that young people know what they are learning, why they are learning it, how they will know they are learning successfully, and how their learning links to the development of their wider skills.

4.9 Improving attainment for all

This measure details the average attainment of pupils in three attainment cohorts – the highest 20% of attainers, the middle 60% of attainers and the lowest 20% of attainers – using the tariff points gained for the passing of courses at different levels.

Average cumulative attainment of all leavers (after appeals and Wider Achievement Accreditation)

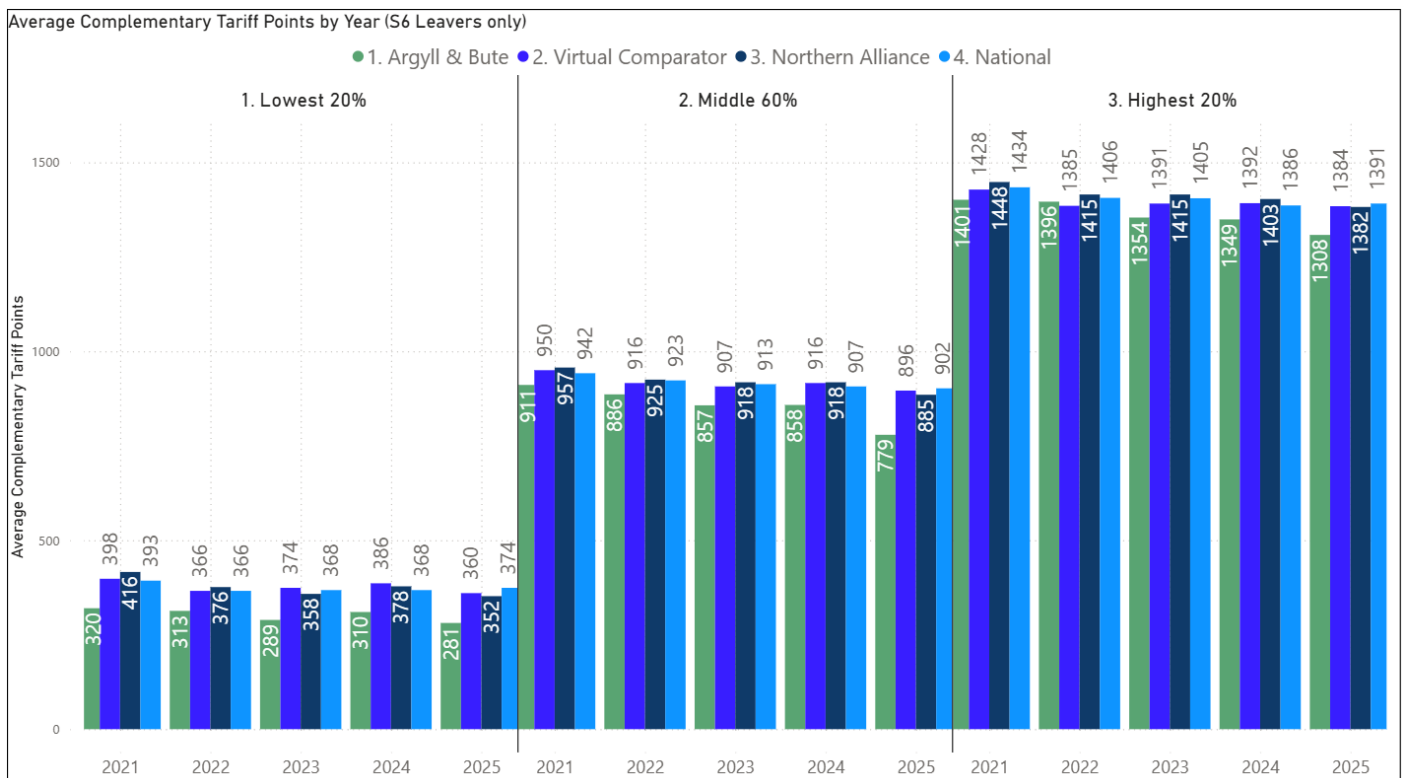


- Performance in the Lowest 20% of the leaver's cohort increased from an average of 97 tariff points to 106. A decrease was experienced by the virtual comparator and Northern Alliance, whilst nationally the figure increased from 118 to 141. The virtual comparator decreased from 149 to 120, meaning the gap between Argyll and Bute and its virtual comparator has closed from 52 to 14 tariff points.

- Performance in the Middle 60% of the leaver’s cohort decreased from an average of 603 tariff points to 544 – a decrease of 59 tariff points. Decreases also occurred within the virtual comparator (down 39 tariff points), and the Northern Alliance (down 11 tariff points). An increase of 23 tariff points occurred nationally. The gap to the virtual comparator has grown from 58 to 78 tariff points.
- Performance in the Top 20% of the leaver’s cohort decreased from an average of 1251 tariff points to 1179 – a decrease of 72 tariff points. Small decreases also occurred in the virtual comparator (down 16 tariff points), the Northern Alliance (down 27 tariff points) and nationally (down 4 tariff points). The gap to the Virtual Comparator has grown from 41 to 97 tariff points.

Average cumulative attainment of S6 leavers only (after appeals and Wider Achievement Accreditation)

The visual below provides an overview of S6 leavers only. This limits the impact of differing leavers cohort make ups, allowing for a more like for like comparison over the last 5 years. However, differences in assessment method cannot be avoided, and comparison is still limited because of this.



- Performance in the Lowest 20% of the leaver’s cohort decreased from 310 to 281 – a decrease of 29 tariff points. The virtual comparator average decreased by 26 tariff points, meaning the gap between Argyll and Bute and its VC grew from 76 points in 2024 to 79 points in 2025. The Northern Alliance figure also decreased by 26 points, whilst the national figure improved by 6 tariff points.

- Performance in the Middle 60% of the leaver's cohort decreased from 858 in 2024 to 779 in 2025 – a decrease of 79 points. The virtual comparator average decreased by 20 points, meaning the gap between Argyll and Bute and the VC grew from 58 in 2024 to 117 in 2025. Decreases were also seen within the Northern Alliance (down by 33 tariff points), and nationally (down by 6 tariff points).
- Performance in the Top 20% of the leaver's cohort decreased from 1349 in 2024 to 1308 in 2025 – a decrease of 41 points. The virtual comparator average decreased by 8 tariff points, meaning the gap between Argyll and Bute and its VC grew from 43 points in 2024 to 76 points in 2025. The Northern Alliance figure also decreased by 21 points, whilst the national figure improved by 5 tariff points.
- One contributing factor to changes in S6 performance relates to the volume of Advanced Higher presentations in 2025 compared to 2024. Advanced Higher awards provide significantly more tariff points than Higher awards. As detailed in the November Education Performance Data Analysis committee report, the advanced higher presentations per pupil figure fell from 0.77 in 2024 to 0.60 in 2025. In numerical terms, Argyll and Bute had 66 less advanced higher presentations in 2025 compared to 2024 – with presentation cohorts of a similar size.

Raising Attainment for all in schools

Head Teachers in all secondary schools are being challenged and supported to continually examine and, where appropriate, refresh their curriculum structures and options frameworks to ensure that they allow all young people to attain and achieve their maximum potential. This includes planning future learning and attainment pathways with pupils and their families at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that, as well as the required breadth of the S1-S3 Broad General Education here is also a focus on depth of learning, specialisation and coherent progression in S1-S3 which reflects each young person's aspirations and interests and prepares them for high levels of Senior Phase attainment.

Secondary Head Teachers are also being challenged and supported to ensure their Senior Phase curricula are wide and dynamic. This will ensure that there are meaningful attainment and achievement opportunities for all young people – not only in the traditional academic context, but also in terms of vocational and skills-focused courses and certification. In line with clear national thinking, schools are also working to develop a culture where there is parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways and attainment, where all young people have access to relevant, stimulating courses which take them towards their preferred post-school positive destination.

By ensuring these types of wide, accessible and equitable senior-phase curricula are in place in our schools, the attainment and achievement of all

young people will increase, regardless of their academic ability or to which percentage of attainers they belong.

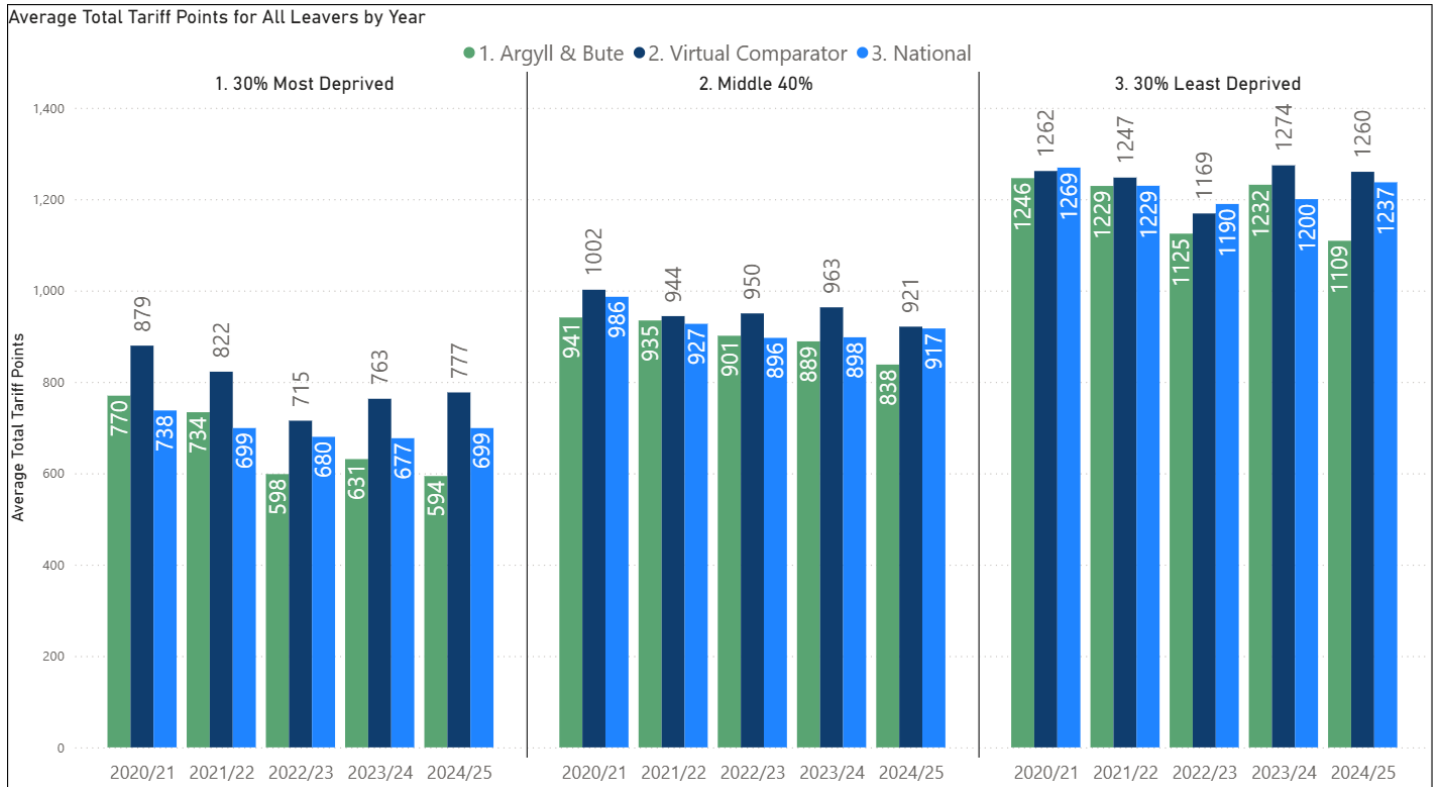
4.10 **Attainment in Context of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)**

In interpreting the graphs below, it is helpful for members to acknowledge that the mechanism nationally for defining the SIMD status of young people from decile 1 (the most disadvantaged) to decile 10 (the least disadvantaged), based as it is on post codes, is not always helpful in categorising families in this way. In predominantly rural regions such as Argyll and Bute, such a mechanism may not be effective in defining the actual level of poverty experienced by a young person, as the rural environment and large areas covered by a single data zone can lead to many different levels of advantages and disadvantage existing side by side. Schools in Argyll and Bute ensure they know every young person's situation individually, regardless of SIMD level ascribed by post code, and work to meet their individual needs on that basis.

One limitation of exploring attainment via SIMD data is that the SIMD profile of Argyll and Bute is skewed to the middle deciles. For example, last year's secondary cohort had 10% of its pupils from Deciles 1 and 2 (20% most deprived), and a further 7% from Deciles 9 and 10 (20% least deprived). Therefore, 83% of all pupils came from the 6 deciles between 3 and 8. At a national level, the use of SIMD to report attainment gap statistics frequently uses Quintile 1 (20% most deprived) versus Quintile 5 (20% least deprived). Whilst this undoubtedly has statistical value at a national level, for Argyll and Bute this essentially compares the performance of two very small groups. Small sample sizes are open to natural variation as the under/overperformance of a small number of pupils can skew significantly the performance of the entire group.

To overcome this limitation, the visuals below look at Argyll and Bute performance using an alternate SIMD grouping split. To better capture the relationship between SIMD and attainment, the data has been split into three groups; 1) 30% most deprived, 2) 40% middle and 3) 30% least deprived. Whereas quintile 1 and 5 covered only 17% of last year's secondary cohort, comparing the least and most deprived 30% covers 33% of all pupils. This limits the impact of year-on-year natural variation through increasing the size of each sample group.

Average Total Tariff Points by All Leavers (after appeals and including Wider Achievement)



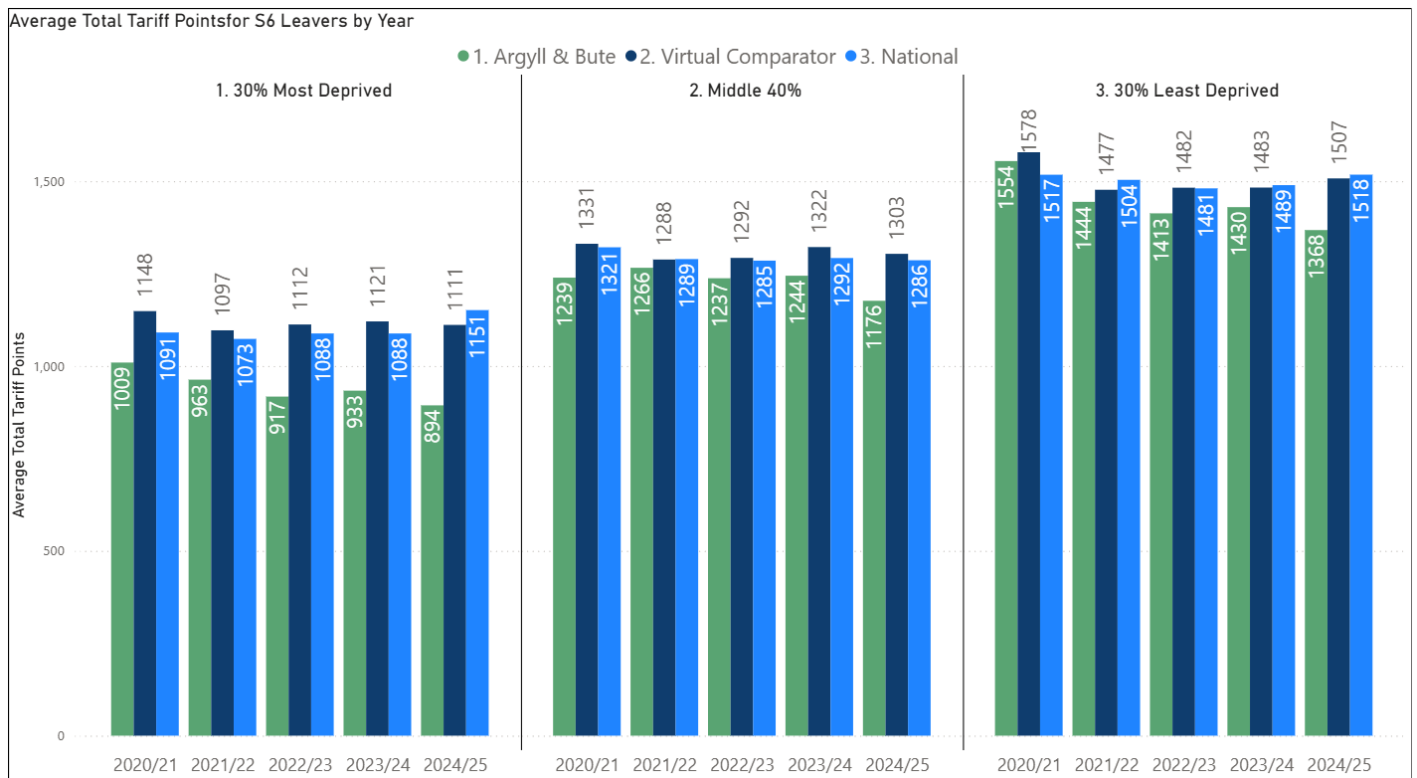
- Performance amongst leavers from the 30% Most Deprived SIMD areas declined against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing from 631 to 594 in 2025. Nationally, performance increased by 22 points compared to the previous year meaning that the gap between Argyll and Bute SIMD 1-3 pupils and National SIMD 1-3 pupils grew from 46 points in 2024 to 105 points in 2025. The gap to the virtual comparator increased from 132 points in 2024 to 183 points in 2025.
- Performance amongst leavers from the 40% middle SIMD areas (deciles 4-7) decreased against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing from 889 to 838 in 2025. Nationally, performance increased by 19 points against the previous year meaning that Argyll and Bute performance is now behind national performance by 79 tariff points. The gap to the virtual comparator increased from 74 points in 2024 to 83 points in 2025.
- Performance amongst leavers from the 30% least deprived SIMD areas (deciles 8-10) decreased against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing to 1109 from 1232 the previous year. The virtual comparator figure also decreased by 16 tariff points. Meanwhile, the national figure increased by 37 points.
- Despite performance in both the 30% most and least deprived groups declining, because the decrease was greater in the 30% least deprived group, the Argyll and Bute attainment gap measured by tariff points has

decreased from 601 in 2024 to 515 in 2025. This gap of 515 tariff point is smaller than the gap experienced nationally (538).

- Caution should be exercised in interpreting the data provided here. As discussed in previous sections, the constitution of leavers cohorts has had a greater proportion of “early leavers”, which means that the average leaver has had less time to accumulate tariff points. Furthermore, changes in assessment models between 2020 and 2022 mean that comparison between cohorts has significant limitations.

Average Total Tariff Points by S6 Leavers only (after appeals and including Wider Achievement)

The visual below provides an overview of S6 leavers only. This limits the impact of differing leavers cohort make ups, allowing for a more like for like comparison over the last 5 years. However, differences in assessment methods cannot be avoided, and comparison is still limited because of this.



- Performance amongst S6 leavers from the 30% Most Deprived SIMD areas decreased against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing from 933 to 894 in 2025. Nationally, performance improved by 63 tariff points against the previous year, meaning that gap between Argyll and Bute SIMD 1-3 pupils and National SIMD 1-3 pupils grew from 115 points in 2024 to 257 points in 2025. The gap to the virtual comparator also grew from 188 points in 2024 to 217 in 2025. The gap to the virtual comparator is equivalent to a single Higher at grade B.

- Performance amongst S6 leavers from the 40% middle SIMD areas (deciles 4-7) decreased against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing from 1244 to 1176 in 2025. Nationally, performance fell by 6 tariff points, meaning the gap between Argyll and Bute and national performance expanded to 110 points. The gap to the virtual comparator increased from 78 points in 2024 to 127 tariff points in 2025. The gap to the virtual comparator is equivalent to a single Higher at Grade D.
- Performance amongst S6 leavers from the 30% least deprived SIMD areas (deciles 8-10) decreased against the previous year, with the average total tariff points of these leavers decreasing from 1430 to 1368 in 2025. Argyll and Bute performance remains behind the virtual comparator and national figure for the fourth consecutive year. The gap to the virtual comparator is now 139 points. The gap to the virtual comparator is equivalent to a single Higher at grade D.
- Despite performance in both the 30% most and least deprived groups decreasing, the decrease was greater in the 30% least deprived group, meaning that the Argyll and Bute attainment gap measured by tariff points closed from 497 from 474 in 2025. This remains bigger than the attainment gap experienced nationally (367 tariff points).

Raising attainment and achievement for our most disadvantaged young people

As part of the annual school improvement planning and reporting cycle, all secondary schools complete detailed analysis within their Standards and Quality report to illustrate the impact that the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) allocation has had on identified groups of the least advantaged young people. In their School Improvement Plans, Head Teachers present detailed planning of how their PEF allocation will be spent in the coming year to reduce inequality and support the wellbeing and progress of pupils from the most deprived backgrounds. Additionally, Head Teachers must account for the attainment and achievement of the most disadvantaged pupils in their schools as part of the annual Attainment Meeting with the Executive Director, Heads of Service, Education Manager and Education Data Lead.

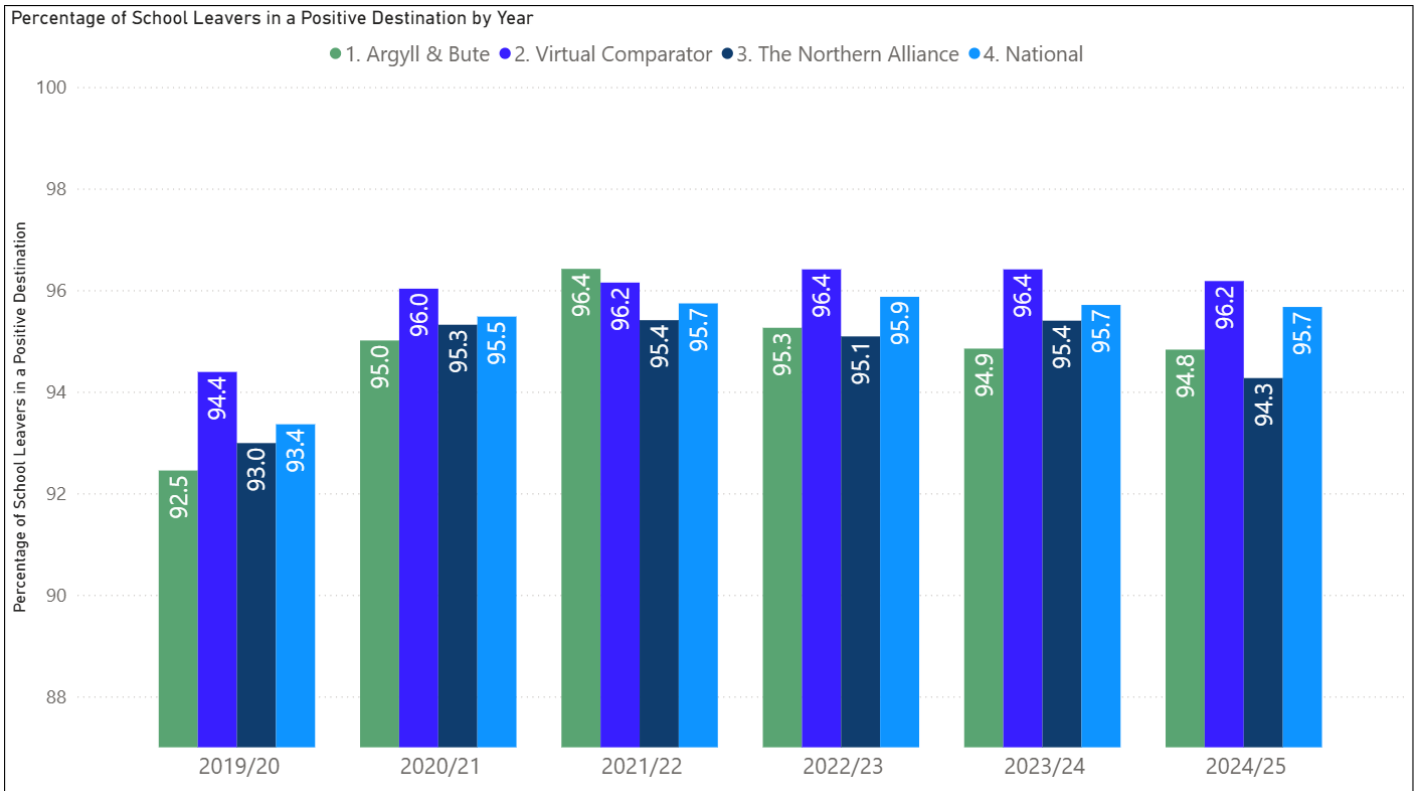
The Mentoring Programme established in four of our secondary schools in partnership with MCR Pathways is targeting our care experienced and most disadvantaged young people in Argyll and Bute. The programme seeks to empower the young people, develop their confidence and broaden their horizons through being paired with a volunteer mentor from their community. The programme has already had a positive impact in Argyll and Bute and has now been extended across all secondary schools.

Our Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) for Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) ensures a sharp, increased the focus on the wellbeing, achievement and attainment of this cohort of young people. As part of her

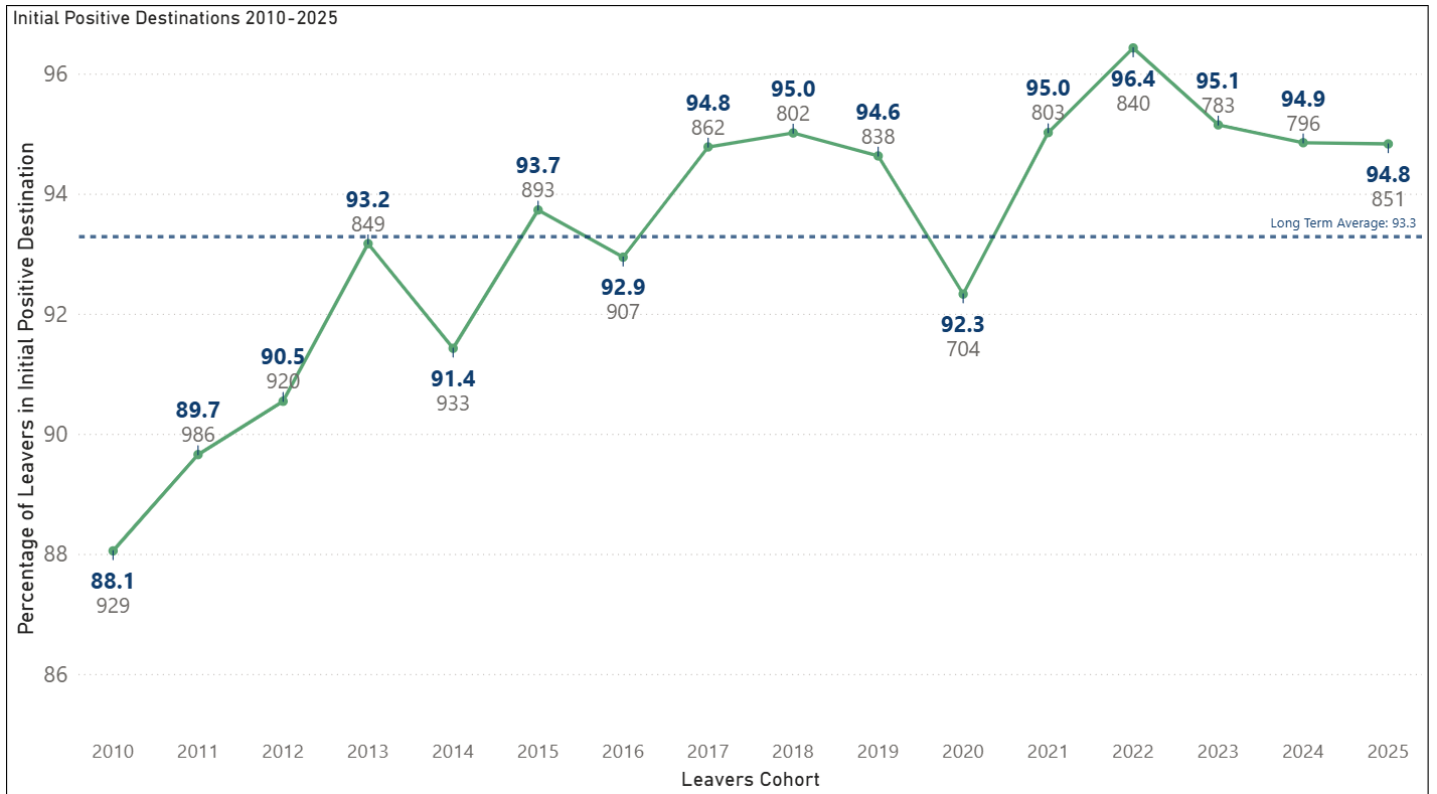
role, she undertakes detailed tracking of both progress and wellbeing, with targeted interventions which are central to ensuring they attain their potential

4.11 Initial Destinations of young people in Argyll and Bute

The visual below provides an overview of performance in initial destinations for all school leavers in the last 5 leaving cohorts.



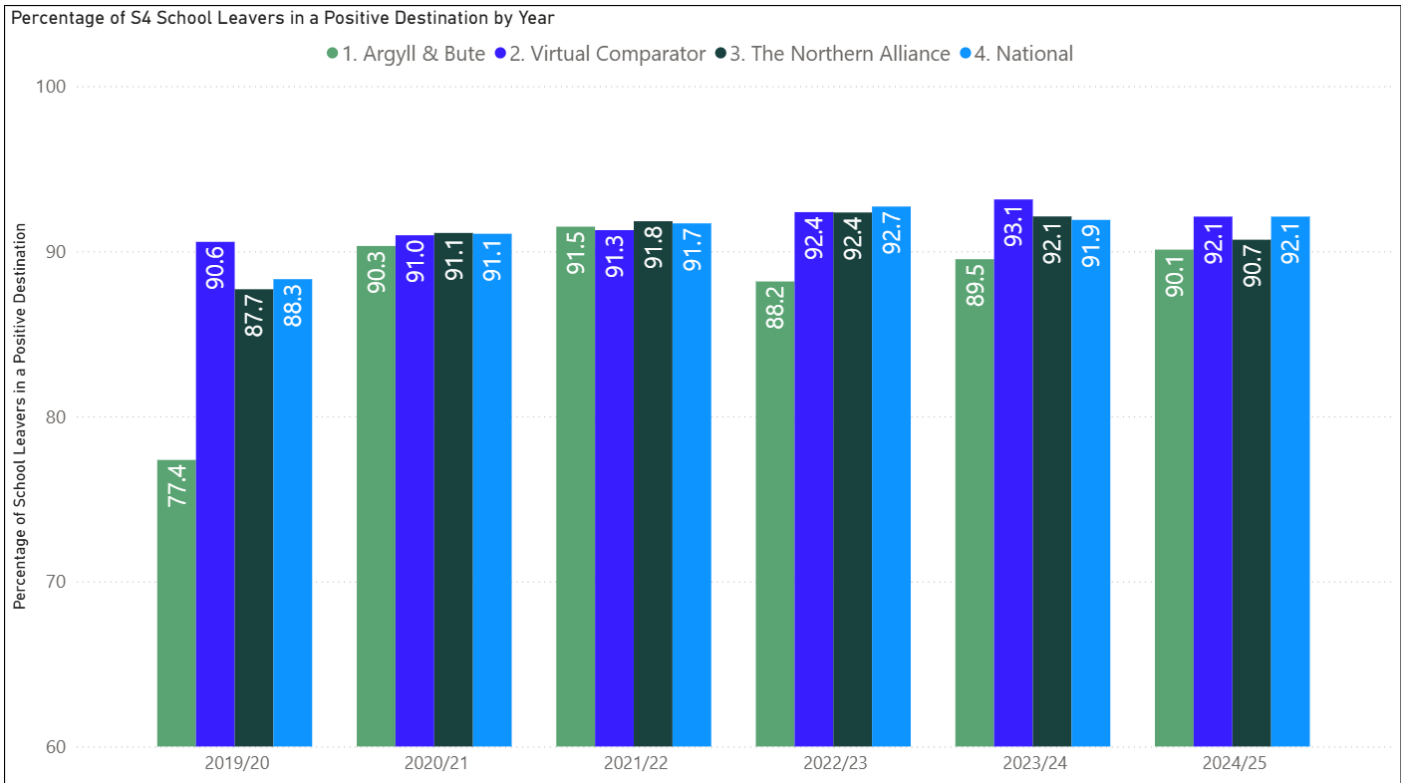
- Of those young people who left school in 2024, 94.8% moved into a positive destination. Argyll and Bute performance continues to be behind the virtual comparator and the national figure. The Northern Alliance figure decreased by 1.1% points against 2024. This means Argyll and Bute is now ahead of the Northern Alliance, as it was in 2021/22 and 2022/23. The national figure remained the same as 2024, some 0.9% points ahead of Argyll and Bute performance.
- Performance in 2025 was 2.4% points ahead of 2020, when 7.5% of the cohort had left at the end of S4. This compares to 11.9% of the cohort leaving in 2025. Furthermore, 2025 had 41% of its leavers being “early leavers”, whereas 2020 had 35%.
- The table below provides the long term wider context to initial destinations data:



- The figure of 94.8% in 2024 has only been exceeded five times in the last 16 years and remains well above the figures experienced prior to 2017. The 16-year average, presented by the horizontally running dashed line, stands at 93.3%. Performance in 2025 remains above this long term average.

S4 Leavers Trends

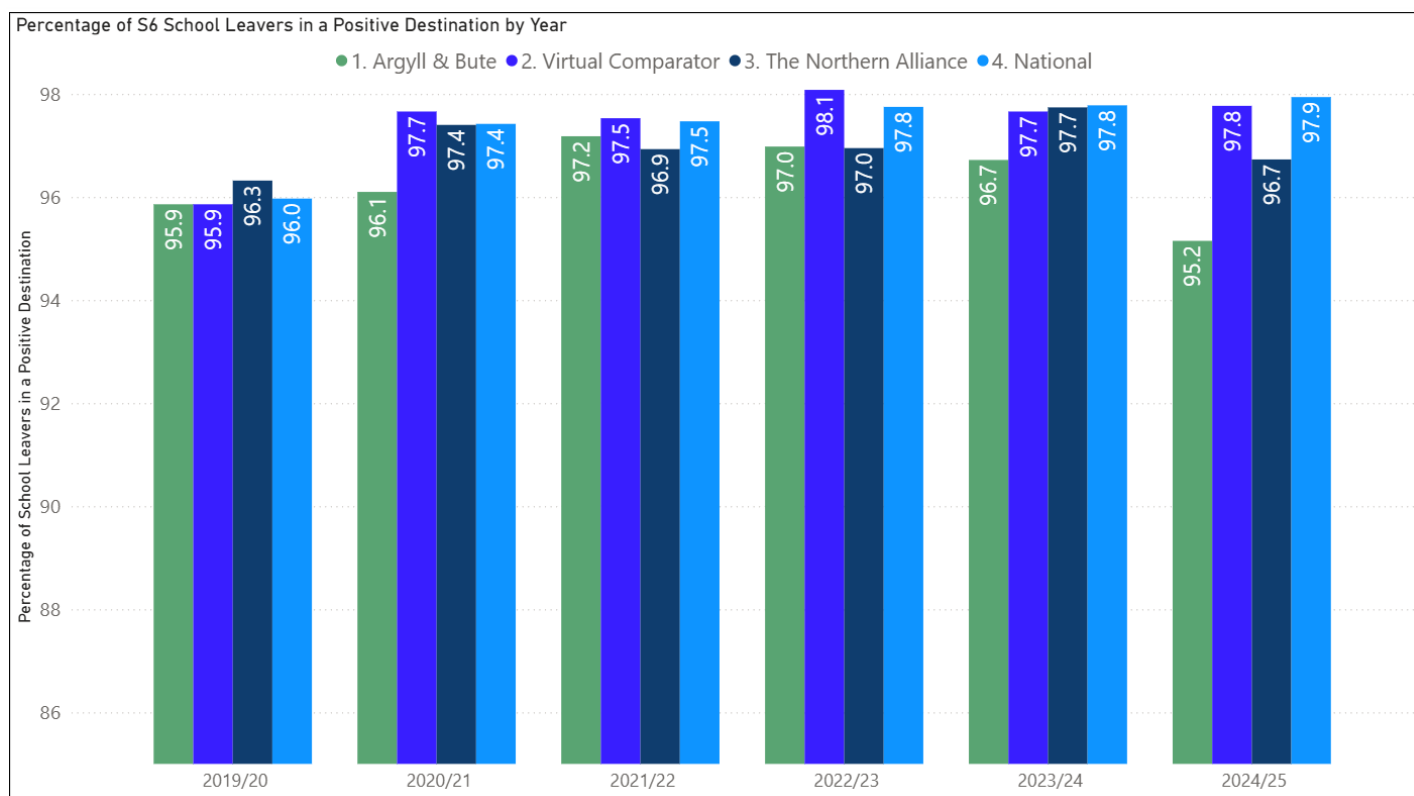
- As mentioned previously, the rates of S4 leaving have increased within Argyll and Bute and nationally over the last 5 years. The visual below provides an overview of initial destination data for those who have left school at the end of S4:



- The percentage of S4 leavers entering a positive destination has increased slightly against 2024 figures, but remains behind the virtual comparator, Northern Alliance and national figure.
- It should be noted that the 2020 figure represented only 53 pupils, whilst the 2025 pupil represented 101 S4 leavers. As the number of S4 school leavers has almost doubled, rates of positive initial destinations have not been negatively impacted.
- Performance in 2025 is higher than that experienced in 2020, 2023 and 2024.

S6 Leavers Trends

- The visual below provides an overview of initial destination data for those who have left school at the end of S6:



- The percentage of S6 leavers entering a positive destination has decreased slightly against 2024 figures, and remains behind the virtual comparator, Northern Alliance and national figure.
- Performance in 2025 is the lowest of the last 6 sessions, but remains the overall positive destinations figure of 94.8%.

The Education and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) teams continue to extend their work with schools, establishing and developing school-employer partnerships to allow meaningful work-based vocational learning for young people. Bespoke and individualised curricula are in place for many pupils, contextualised by their own interests and professional aspirations. There is particular focus on this type of engagement with young people who are disengaged or disadvantaged, and who would otherwise be least likely to attain a positive post-school destination.

Schools are also working closely with further and higher education establishments, to ensure all those who wish to pursue such a pathway are able to do so, regardless of situation or place. Additionally, Education has partnerships with a range of third sector agencies, and work closely with them to develop in young people the key skills for life and work required to attain and sustain positive destinations.

4.12 Attainment of Looked After Young People

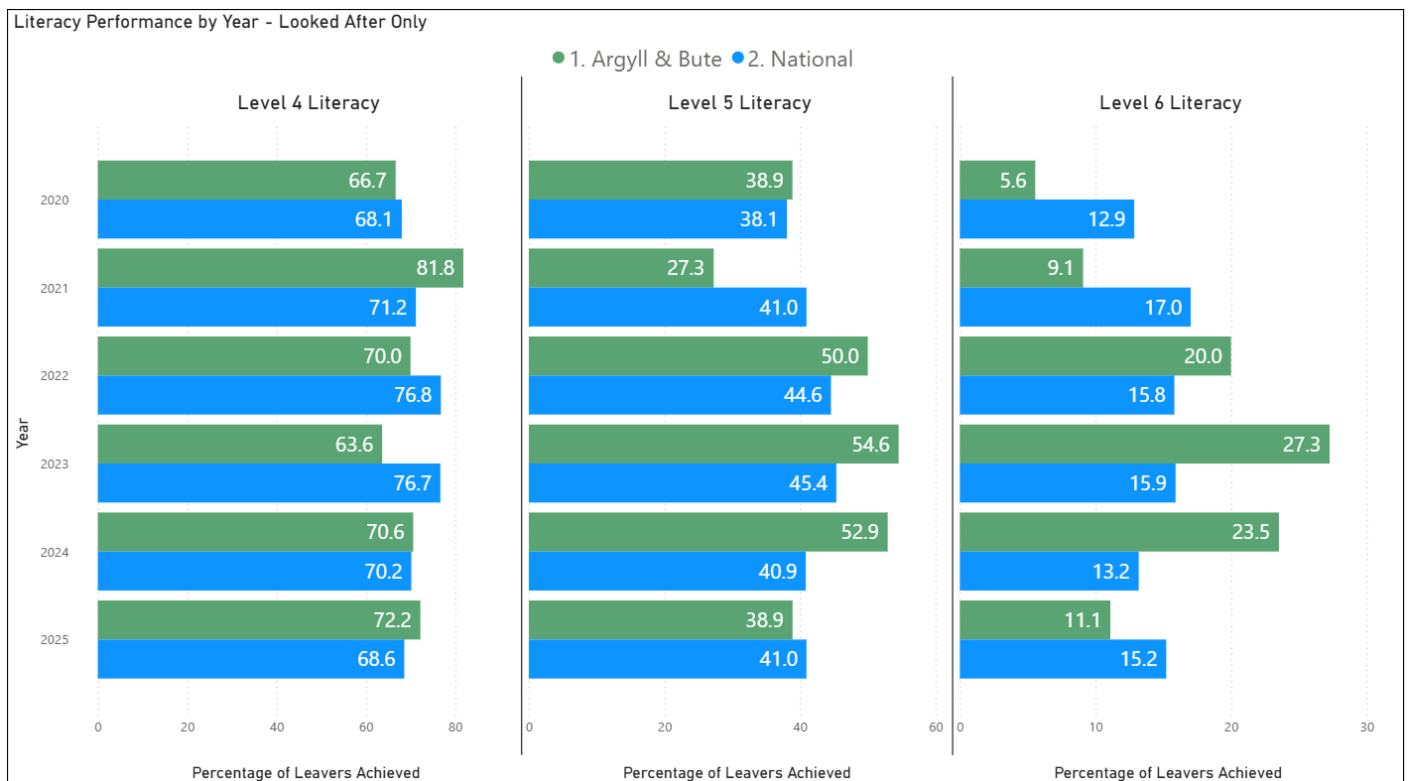
The very small size of the Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) cohort, and the often challenging situations they face, means that year-on-year tracking of attainment trends is difficult, and attainment can fluctuate from

year to year. Furthermore, the Scottish Government’s Insight tool uses Census Data which captures only those pupils who are looked after at home or away. Previously care experienced young people are excluded from their analysis. As such, Insight data can provide analysis for looked after pupils but not for the wider encompassing care experienced group. Comparison with looked after pupils nationally is possible via the Insight tool, but we need to be cautious around the small numbers which limit the statistical meaningfulness of the data. For example, the visual below shows how many looked after pupils were included in leavers’ cohorts over the last 5 years:

Year	Number of Looked After Pupils in Leavers Cohort
2020	18
2021	11
2022	10
2023	11
2024	17
2025	18

Literacy

The visual below shows the literacy performance of looked after school leavers at both an authority and national level:

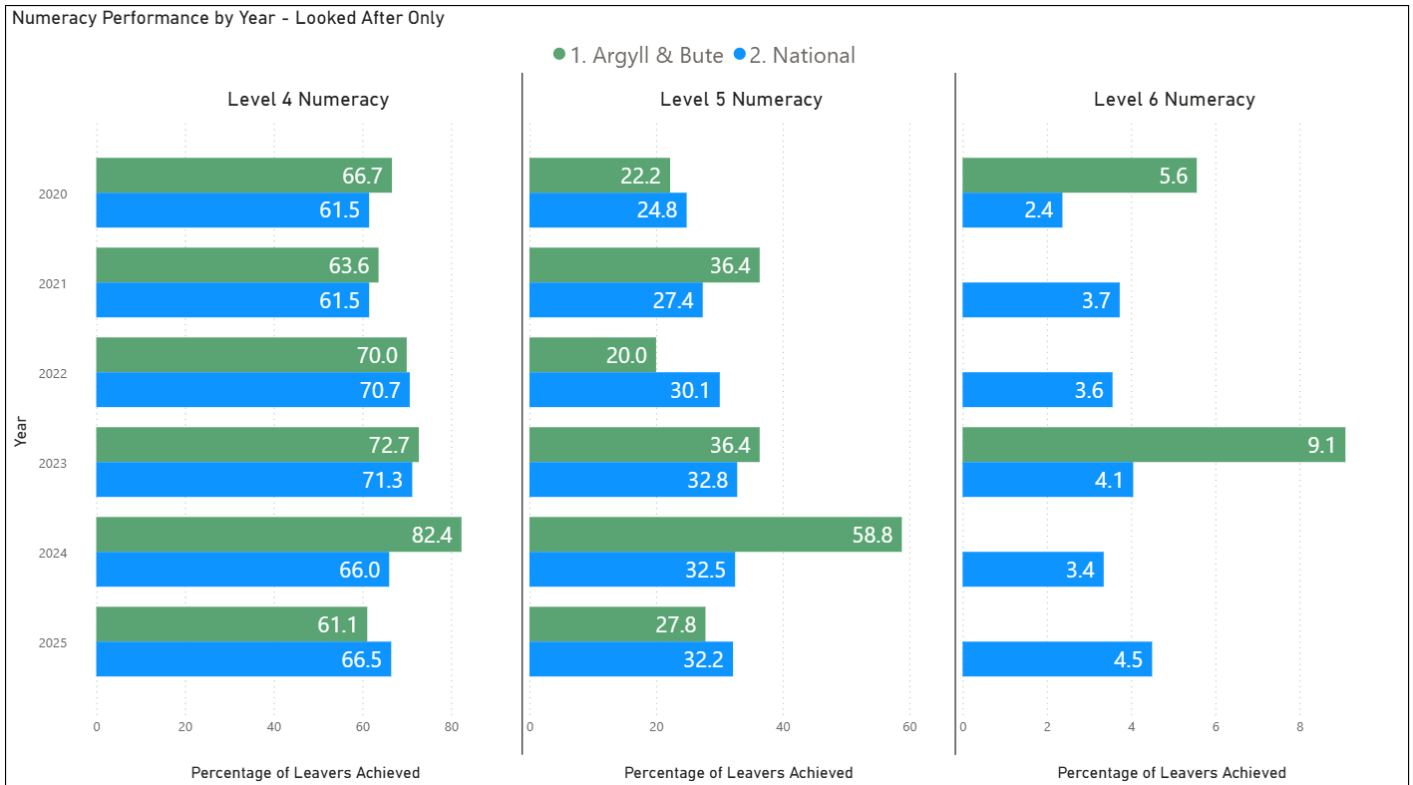


- Performance in Level 4 literacy increased against 2024 figures and is ahead of national performance levels.
- Performance in Level 4 literacy is greater than in four of the last five years.

- Performance in Level 5 and Level 6 literacy is behind the previous years figures and is now behind the national figure.

Numeracy

The visual below shows the numeracy performance of looked after school leavers at both an authority and national level:

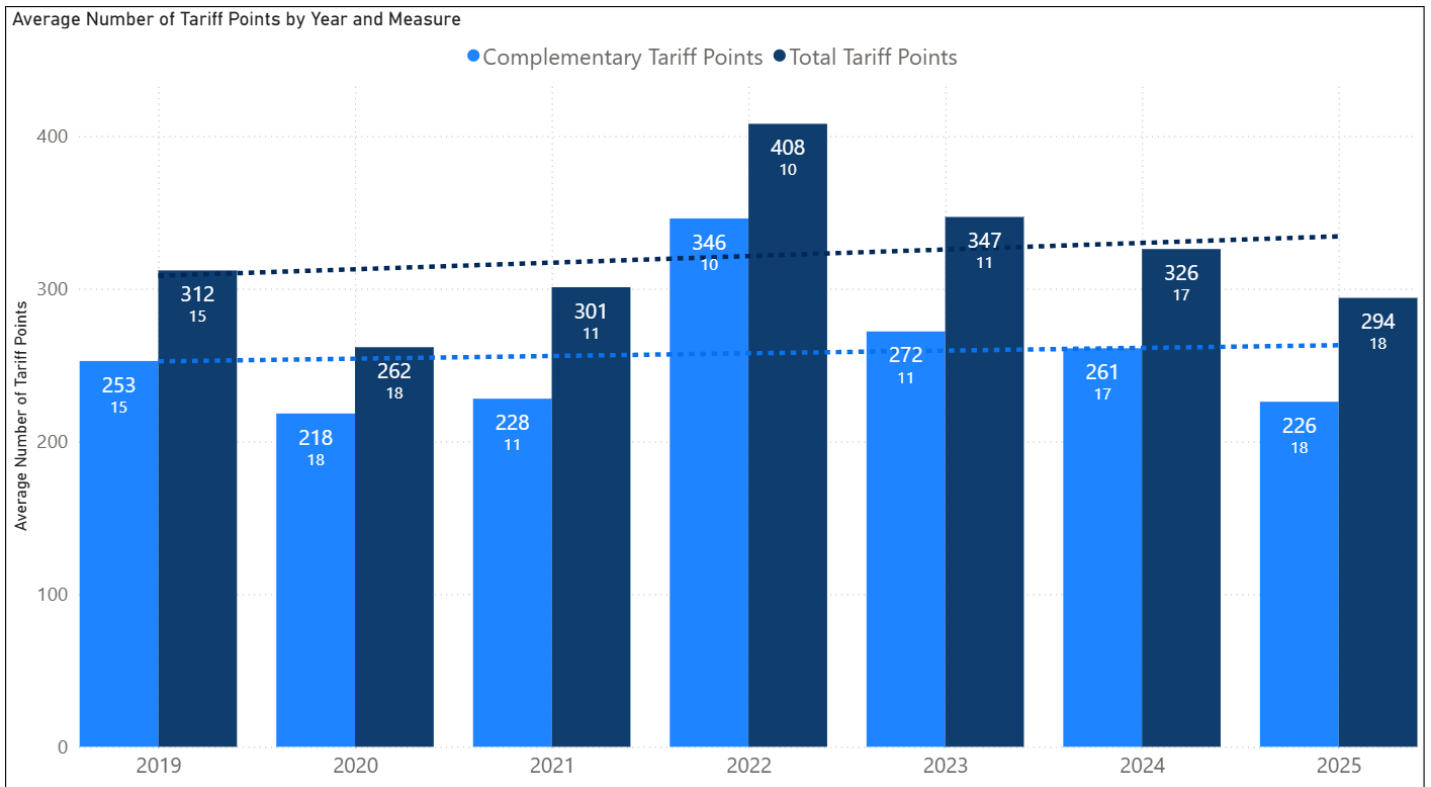


- Performance in Level 4 numeracy decreased against 2024 figures and is behind national performance levels.
- Performance in Level 5 numeracy is behind the previous year's figures and is now behind the national figure.
- No looked after pupil who left school in 2024 achieved a Level 6 qualification in numeracy. Only 4.5% of all looked after leavers in the country achieved this. This is the third time in four years that this has occurred.

Breadth and Depth of Learning – Accumulation of Tariff Points

The visual below provides an overview of total and complementary tariff points accumulated by looked after leavers in the last five sessions. Total tariff points are accumulated from all attainment and achievement, whilst complementary tariff points are the tariff points attached to your best 120 SCQF credit points. The 120 credit points are often made up of only 5 qualifications and is thus more a measure of quality of achievement than quantity. As complementary tariff points are limited by the credit points, they are almost always lower than the total tariff points. For example, a pupil with 10 Nat 5 qualifications can only use 5 for their complementary tariff points, whereas all 10 qualifications would count within the

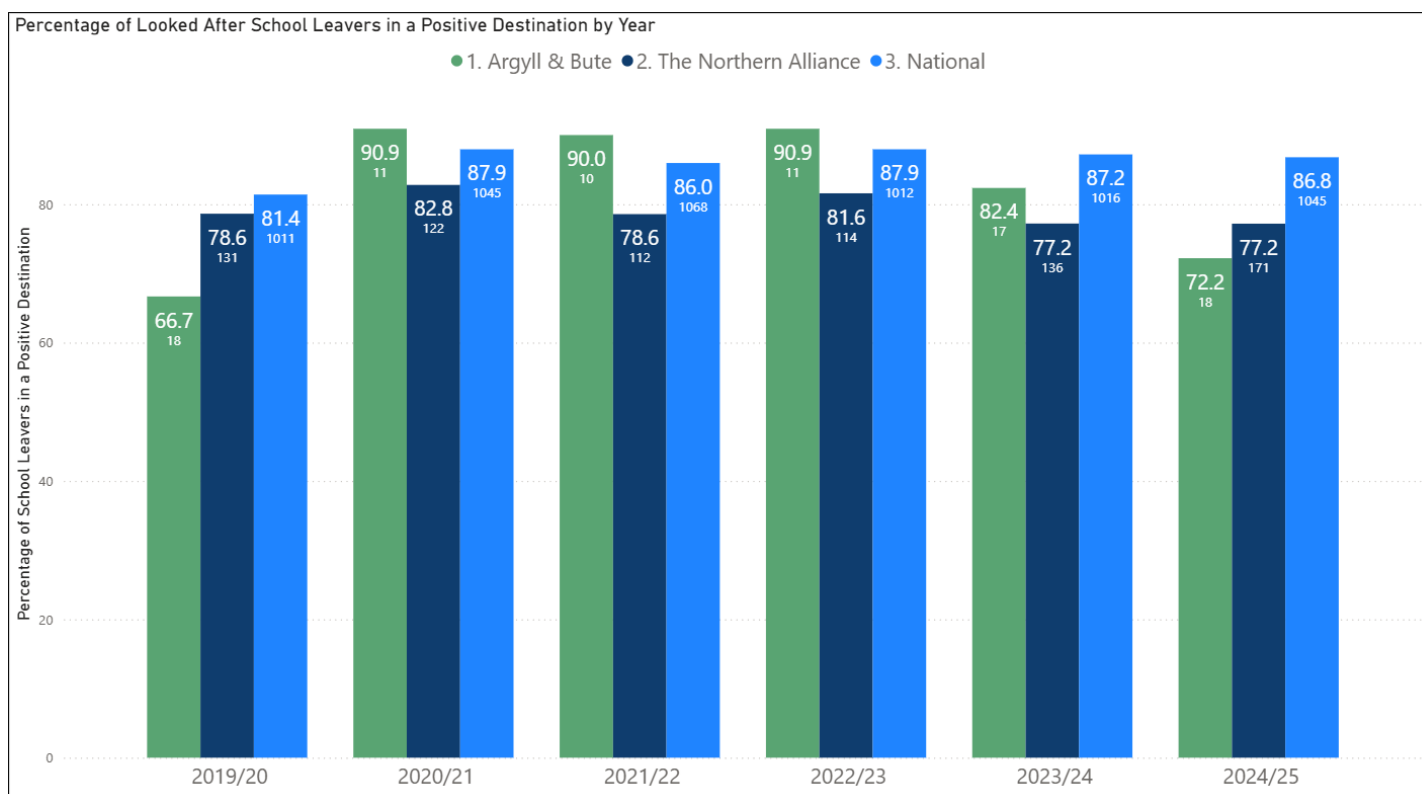
total tariff points. The visual below shows averages for looked after leavers since 2019:



- The average number of complementary tariff points dropped against 2024 figures but remains above the pandemic figure of 218.
- The drop of 35 tariff points is equivalent to 2 grades within a National 5 qualification.
- The average number of total tariff points dropped against 2024 figures but remains above the pandemic figure of 262.
- The trend line for total tariff points continues with a slight positive gradient, whilst the trend line for complementary tariff points has flattened.
- Caution should be taken in interpreting the data for this measure. Firstly, the cohort sizes are very small, and the performance of an individual pupil can impact the group significantly. Secondly, the changes to assessment implemented between 2020 and 2022 limit the validity of comparing cohorts.

Looked After School Leaver Initial Destinations

The visual below provides an overview and comparison of leaver destinations for looked after pupils spanning the last 6 sessions:



- Of 18 leavers, 13 entered a positive initial destination, accounting for 72% of all looked after leavers. This is below the 77% of comparable leavers from the Northern Alliance, and below the 87% experienced nationally.
- As the Argyll and Bute cohort size is small (each pupil accounted for 5.6% in 2025 data), then only one pupil extra entering a positive initial destination would have meant the figure exceeded the Northern Alliance figure.

Narrowing the Attainment Gap and Ensuring best outcomes for Looked After and CECYP

The Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) for CECYP has created a framework to rigorously address the needs and fulfil the entitlements of all such young people. This demonstrates how the service has prioritised equity for all CECYP, and has an unrelenting focus on their wellbeing and attainment.

The VHT for CECYP tracks and monitors a range of data for this cohort, including attendance and attainment. Settings are both supported and challenged by the Virtual School to ensure their care experienced learners receive personalised interventions to maximise their success whilst in school and continue into a positive destination.

This enhanced scrutiny supports settings to identify those most at risk of not attaining in literacy and numeracy. Bespoke support approaches can then be identified to support the young person to achieve success which is personal to them, whilst maintaining high aspirations. Supports can include utilising the

authority Staged Intervention Framework, nurture spaces and personalised curriculums.

As a result, the attainment in Literacy and Numeracy of CECYP is maximised in terms of what they are able to achieve at this time in their lives and they are able to achieve success.

The VHT works alongside school colleagues and wider partners to support our CECYP to obtain a positive destination when they choose to leave school. This includes ensuring Skills Development Scotland are aware of who our care experienced learners are, allowing the maximum level of support to be offered. Working alongside the Corporate Parenting Board has been beneficial in opening up a range of opportunities and work experience placements for our young people, alongside reducing the stigma of care experience.

It is recognised and agreed that the attainment of young people is underpinned by their physical and emotional wellbeing. This is particularly true for CECYP, where challenges out with the young person's control, such as trauma and change of home, can be more prevalent and require additional support.

A skilled team of Health and Wellbeing Family Liaison Officers works across the authority to support the wellbeing of CECYP. They work alongside the young people, schools, families/carers and wider partners to offer a range of supports. Our young people voice how welcome this support is and how it positively impacts their attendance, self-esteem and resilience, further evidenced by data.

The Virtual Headteacher continues to raise awareness of our CECYP by delivering training to settings and partner agencies and ensuring as policy and guidance is reviewed, it reflects our CECYP and their needs. The voice of our CECYP remains paramount in shaping our improvement priorities.

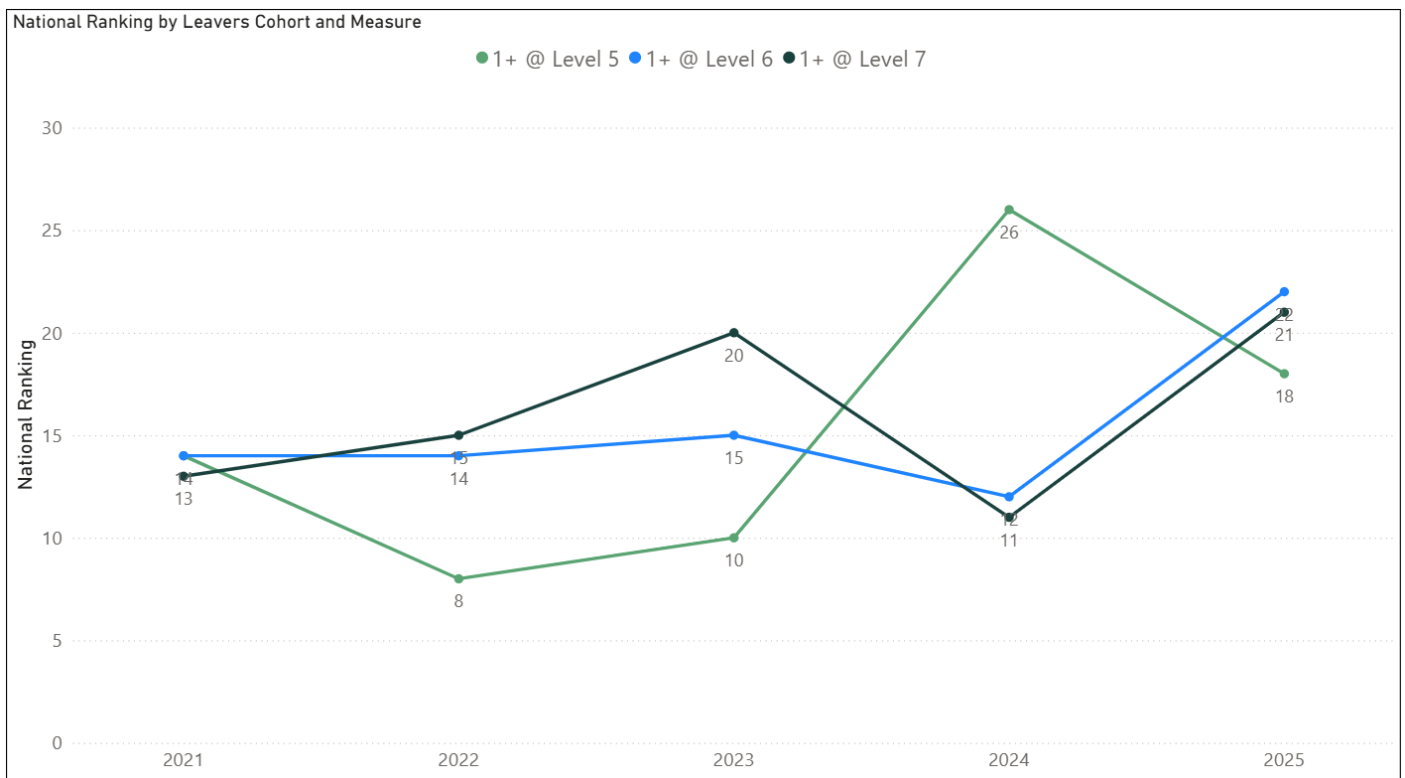
4.13 Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations

On 24th February 2026, the Scottish Government published the annual Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations. The document provides information on the attainment and initial destinations of school leavers in Scotland and reports on school leavers' attainment in National Qualifications. Among key information contained within the report relevant to this paper are the following:

- Of all 32 local authorities in Scotland, Argyll and Bute is placed 18th for school leavers having achieved at least one Level 5 Qualification, with 87.0% of our school leavers having done so. This is up from 85.7% in the 23/24 leavers cohort. The National Average is 88.0%, which is slightly ahead of 23/24 performance.
- Argyll and Bute is placed 22nd for young people having achieved at least one Level 6 Qualification (Higher or Higher Skills for Work), with 62.2% of our school leavers having done so. This is down from 66.7%

in 2024 and reflects the narrowing contribution of S6 leavers to the leaver cohort. The national average is 68.3%, up slightly from 66.5% in 2024. It should be noted that at a national level, the proportion of the cohort who were S6 leavers increased against the 23/24 cohort.

- Argyll and Bute is placed 11th for young people having achieved at least one Level 7 Qualification, with 21.6% of our school leavers having done so. This is down from 26.1% in 2024. The national average is 26.2%, which is up from 25.4% in 2024.
- The visual below shows Argyll and Bute’s long-term performance over these measures:



- Argyll and Bute’s national ranking has improved in the level 5 measure. Rankings have fallen for Level 6 and Level 7 – two measures which are more likely to be impacted by early leaving rates.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report updates previous reports to committee on key attainment performance data. It incorporates data from the Scottish Government’s Insight tool, which was most recently updated in late February 2026 to include all post-appeal attainment, accreditation for wider achievement qualifications and attainment data relating to all 2025 school leavers.
- 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 examination attainment and accredited wider achievement outcomes for young people.

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 that 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 Northern Alliance group of local authorities and the Association of Directors 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 secondary Head Teachers take place in November/December, at which all aspects of attainment from S1-S6 are analysed and key improvement strategies to raise attainment are discussed and agreed. Follow up meetings will take place in March in order to maintain a sharp focus on attainment and achievement for all young people.
- 5.5 Secondary school Head Teachers will present individual school performance analysis for session 2024-2025 at Local Area Committees in June 2026. Additionally, in May 2026 young people will speak personally to elected members about their own educational journeys and pathways, illustrating the many personalised pathways to attainment which are available to young people in Argyll and Bute's secondary schools. Invitations for members to visit schools to meet young people will be issued in coming weeks.

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
- 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 Service Performance.
- 6.6 Risk: The performance of Argyll and Bute schools in national examinations and wider achievement qualifications 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: – This report links directly to NIF Priority 3: Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- 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)

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Jennifer Crocket

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5 March 2026