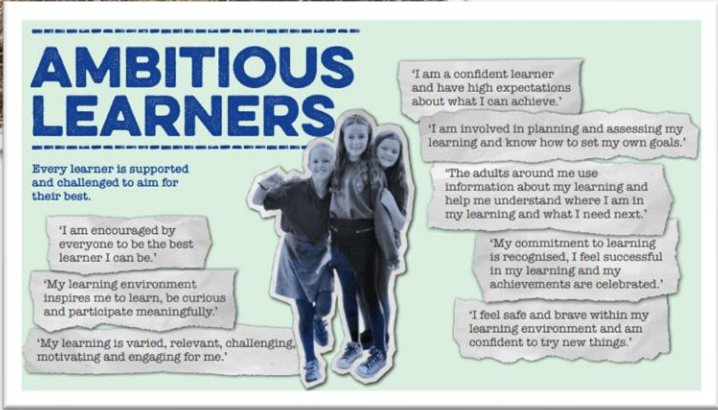




Education Service
Progress and Impact Report 2025-2026 and
Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Table of Contents

Education Service Progress and Impact Report and Strategic Plan 2025–2026Error! Bookmark not defined.

Section 1 – Foreword and Introduction.....	4
Foreword from the Policy Lead for Education	4
Introduction from the Executive Director for Education	5
Background Information	6
Glossary of Terms and Acronyms.....	6
Argyll and Bute – Geography and Demographic Information.....	7
Understanding Deprivation in Argyll and Bute - Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation	7
Argyll and Bute Schools and ELC Overview.....	9
About this document	10
Resourcing Our Plan – The Education Service Budget	11
Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together.....	11
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	13
National Improvement Framework (NIF) Outcomes and Priorities.....	13
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	14
Early Years and Learning for Sustainability	14
Rights, Relationships and Inclusion.....	14
Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Curriculum	16
Inclusion, Equality and Professional Practice.....	17
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	18
Early Years and Early Intervention	18
Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equity.....	19
Attendance, Relationships and Safeguarding	21
Targeted Support and Care Experienced Children and Young People.....	24
Systems, Capacity and Workforce Development.....	25
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	26
Early Years, Early Literacy and Early Intervention.....	26
Literacy, Numeracy and Curriculum Development.....	27
Attainment, Equity and Data-Informed Practice	28
Primary Attainment and Stretch Aims	29
Senior Phase Attainment and Stretch Aims	31
Targeted Support, Wider Achievement and Equity Groups.....	31

Professional Learning, Pedagogy and Leadership of Improvement.....	34
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	35
Senior Phase, Destinations and Learner Pathways	35
Positive Destinations and Partnerships	36
Employability, Work-Based Learning and Partnership Pathways	39
Inclusion, Equity and Transitions	41
Curriculum, Skills Development and Wider Achievement	41
Senior Phase Literacy and Numeracy.....	43
Early Years Workforce, STEM and Career Pathways.....	44
Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026	45
Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Moderation	45
Early Years Pedagogy, Progression and Numeracy	46
Inclusion, Additional Support and Equity in Learning	48
Attainment of Care Experience Children and Young People	48
Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy – National Comparison (Looked After)	50
Languages, Gaelic and Cultural Engagement.....	54
Leadership, System Improvement and Capacity Building.....	55
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	57
Key Messages from Parents and Carers.....	57
Connecting for Success – Shaping the Future	60
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	63
Priority Mapping	64
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	65
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	71
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	75
Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029.....	78
APPENDIX 1: Provisional 3 Year Stretch Aims 2023-2026	82
Stretch Aims 2023-2026.....	82
Stretch Aims 2026-2029.....	85

Progress and Impact Report 2025-2026 and Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Section 1 – Foreword and Introduction

Foreword from the Policy Lead for Education

Councillor Kieron Green



As Policy Lead for Education, I am pleased to introduce Argyll and Bute Council's Education Service Progress and Impact Report 2025–26 and Strategic Plan 2026–2029. Together, these documents set out how we are continuing to improve outcomes for children and young people, while responding thoughtfully and responsibly to the opportunities and challenges facing education across our authority.

Our work is guided by *Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together*, our shared Education Vision and Strategy. This framework reflects our collective ambition to deliver inclusive, nurturing and high-quality learning environments in which all learners are supported and challenged to achieve their full potential. It is firmly aligned with national priorities, the Council's wider ambitions, and the voices and experiences of children, young people and families across Argyll and Bute.

This Progress and Impact Report demonstrates the difference being made across our Education Service over the past year, recognising both areas of strong performance and those where further development is being taken forward. Alongside this, the Strategic Plan sets clear priorities for the next three years, focused on equity, wellbeing, attainment and positive destinations for learners.

The Strategic Plan is informed by the findings of *Connecting for Success – Shaping the Future*, an independent review of Education Services in Argyll and Bute. The review provides a robust evidence base and a clear rationale for strengthening collaboration, sustainability and system-wide improvement. Its themes are reflected throughout this plan, ensuring that improvement activity is purposeful, joined-up and grounded in best value.

Through strong partnership working and a shared commitment to continuous improvement, we remain focused on delivering an education service that supports opportunity, aspiration and inclusion. By working together, we can ensure that education continues to play a vital role in enabling children and young people in Argyll and Bute to thrive now and in the years ahead.

Introduction from the Executive Director for Education Douglas Hendry



As Executive Director for Education, I welcome the opportunity to add a strategic leadership perspective to this Education Service Progress and Impact Report 2025–26 and Strategic Plan 2026–2029. Together, these documents provide clarity on where we are, where we are going, and the collective effort required to continue improving outcomes for learners across Argyll and Bute.

Education is central to our ambition for Argyll and Bute to be a place where people choose to live, learn and build their futures. High-quality early learning, schools and education services are not only vital to improving life chances for children and young people, but also to sustaining resilient communities across our diverse and predominantly rural geography.

Through *Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together*, we are strengthening an education system that is inclusive, responsive and future-focused. This Strategic Plan sets out how we will continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching, develop skills for life, learning and work, and ensure that equity and wellbeing remain at the heart of everything we do.

The plan also reflects the direction set by *Connecting for Success – Shaping the Future*, which highlighted the importance of collaboration, sustainability and shared system leadership in addressing both current pressures and future demand. Acting on this evidence will require strong partnerships across services, with communities and with external partners, as well as a continued focus on best value and long-term impact.

I am proud of the professionalism, dedication and resilience shown by education staff and partners across Argyll and Bute. By working collectively with families, communities and colleagues across the Council, we are well placed to deliver an education service that makes a lasting and meaningful difference to the lives of our children, young people and the places they belong to.

Background Information

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ABEP – Argyll and Bute Employability Partnership

ABSTEM – Argyll and Bute Science Technology Engineering and Maths

ACEL – Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level

ADES – Association of Directors of Education in Scotland

ADP – Alcohol and Drug Partnership

ANA – Addressing Non-Attendance

APM – Annual Participation Measure

ASL – Additional Support for Learning

ASN – Additional Support Needs

BGE – Broad General Education

CECYP – Care Experienced Children and Young People

CfE – Curriculum for Excellence

CLD – Community Learning and Development

CLPL – Career Long Professional Learning

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

DYW – Developing the Young Workforce

ELC – Early Learning and Childcare

ES – Education Scotland

EY – Early years

FLP – Flexible Learning Plan

FSM – Free School Meal

GIRFEC – Getting it Right for Every Child

GM – Gaelic Medium

GME – Gaelic Medium Education

HMIE – His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

HSCP – Health and Social Care Partnership

HWB – Health and Wellbeing

KSB – Keep Scotland Beautiful

LfS – Learning for Sustainability

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

LTA – Learning Teaching Assessment

MCR – Motivation, Commitment, Resilience

NIF – National Improvement Framework

OCTF – Our Children, Their Future

OCTNE – Our Children, Their Nurturing Education

PAG – Parental Advisory Group

PEF – Pupil Equity Fund

PT – Principal Teacher

Q1 – Quintile 1

Q5 – Quintile 5

QS – Qualifications Scotland

QI – Quality Improvement

RRS – Rights Respecting Schools

SAC – Scottish Attainment Challenge

SCILT – Scotland's National Centre for Languages

SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SEF – Strategic Equity Fund

SIMD – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

SPA – Single Point of Access

SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths

TIE – Time for Inclusive Education

UHI – University of the Highlands and Islands

UKSPF – United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Argyll and Bute – Geography and Demographic Information

Argyll and Bute is the second largest local authority area in Scotland, covering approximately 6,900 square kilometres, yet supporting a relatively small and widely dispersed population. The most recent mid-year population estimate places the population at 87,690, continuing a long-term declining trend. Communities are distributed across a large mainland area and 28 inhabited islands, with approximately 17.5% of residents living on islands, and almost half of the population living in rural or remote rural locations, presenting inherent challenges for the delivery of public services, including education. The authority has a highly distinctive age profile, characterised by a shrinking school-age population and a growing older population; since 2001 the number of children aged 0–15 has reduced significantly, while the population aged 75 and over has increased substantially, creating ongoing pressures in relation to sustainability, workforce capacity and long-term planning. Population centres are characterised by small towns and rural settlements, with Helensburgh the largest settlement, and other key centres including Oban, Dunoon, Campbeltown, Lochgilphead and Rothesay, alongside many communities with very small populations. This unique combination of geography, demography and settlement pattern continues to shape the context in which the Education Service operates, influencing access to services, school rolls, staffing, transport and community resilience.

Argyll and Bute: Demographic Snapshot



Understanding Deprivation in Argyll and Bute - Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government’s main way of identifying areas across Scotland that experience different levels of disadvantage. It looks at a range of factors, including income, employment, health, education, housing, crime and access to services, to provide an overall picture of relative deprivation.

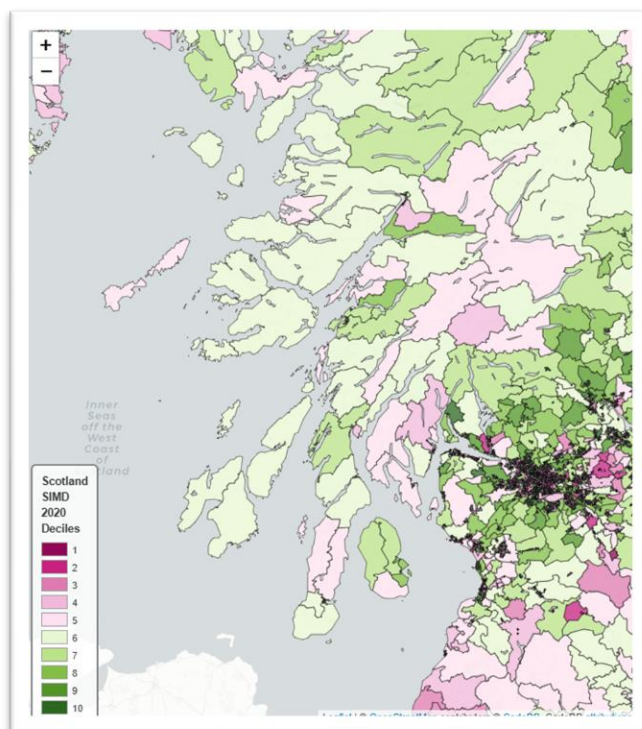
Argyll and Bute is made up of 125 small geographic areas known as data zones. Using the most recent SIMD data, 13 of these areas are classed within the 20% most deprived

areas in Scotland overall. This shows that, while Argyll and Bute is not widely affected by high levels of deprivation, there are pockets of significant disadvantage within some communities.

Because Argyll and Bute has a large rural and island geography, SIMD does not always capture the full picture of deprivation. In rural areas, communities can cover large distances and include people with very different circumstances, which can mask individual or household-level challenges. In particular, many communities experience deprivation linked to distance, travel time and access to services, rather than low income alone. This is reflected in the SIMD access to services domain, where a number of Argyll and Bute areas are among the most access-deprived in Scotland, especially on islands such as Coll and Tiree.

For these reasons, SIMD is used alongside local knowledge and service-level information to ensure that support is targeted fairly and that the needs of children, young people and families in rural and island communities are fully recognised.

SIMD Deciles (2020)



Argyll and Bute Schools and ELC Overview

- **9583 pupils**
 - **5012** primary pupils
 - **4527** secondary pupils
 - **231** pupils at learning centres
 - **348** Care Experienced Children and Young People
 - **53%** of pupils with recorded ASN
 - **450** pupils with English as an additional language
 - **197** learners from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds
- **72 Primary Schools**
 - **7** with Gaelic Medium Education
 - **21** schools on islands
 - **27** with under 20 pupils
- **10 Secondary Schools**
 - **5** schools are 2-18 schools
 - **5** are stand-alone Secondary schools
 - **4** are on islands
- **Provision for pupils with ASN**
 - **1** Special School
 - **12** Learning Centres
- **98 Early Learning and Childcare Settings**
 - **54** settings in schools including
 - **5** Gaelic Medium settings
 - **4** nursery centres
 - **1** local authority outdoor nursery
 - **19** partner provider ELCs including **3** outdoor nurseries
 - **19** funded partner childminders
- **11 settings that deliver Gaelic Medium Education**
 - **7** Primary GME settings
 - **5** Secondary Schools that deliver Gàidhlig as a subject
 - **5** Sgoiltean-àraich (GM ELC)
 - **70%** of schools deliver Gaelic as L2 or L3



About this document

Evidence for this report is gathered through a range of activities designed to provide challenge and support to schools and ELCs.

- Performance and questionnaire data
- Feedback gathered through the Parental Advisory Group (PAG)
- Intelligence and review reports on schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings from the Central Education Team
- Feedback from our Collaborative Improvement activity
- Feedback from our HMIE
- Inspection reports and triannual reports by Education Scotland
- Responses to our Service Vision and Strategy refresh
- Reports on Early Learning and Childcare settings by Care Inspectorate Scotland
- School and Service Improvement Plans and Standards and Quality Reports
- Engagement groups with children and young people
- Feedback from parental survey

The report and updated plan are also informed by:

- Education service self-evaluation activities and evidence
- [Argyll and Bute Council Corporate Plan 2023-2027](#)

- [Argyll and Bute Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024-2034](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Education Service strategy and vision *Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together*](#)
- [Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#)
- [Scottish Government's GIRFEC wellbeing indicators](#)
- [Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence](#)
- Recent national publications including: [It's Our Future- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment, All Learners in Scotland Matter: Findings from the National Discussion on Scottish Education, Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education, OECD Independent Review of Curriculum for Excellence, Support for Learning: All our children and All their potential, Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation, Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland](#)

Resourcing Our Plan – The Education Service Budget

Service Area	2025-26	2026-27
Additional Support for Learning	13,016,151	15,168,988
Central/Management Costs	2,032,473	2,625,926
Early Learning & Childcare	18,570,560	20,054,464
Primary Education*	43,332,268	42,675,456
Pupil Support	4,407,979	5,322,448
Schools - Central Services	2,510,955	2,741,287
Secondary Education	41,833,086	44,220,760
Grand Total	125,703,472	132,809,329

* The reduction in Primary Education is due to savings and the transfer of the Central Repairs budgets out of individual services

Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together

Scotland's vision for education is a globally respected, empowered and responsive education and skills system, with clear accountability at every level, supporting children, young people and adult learners to thrive. This national ambition is reflected locally through Argyll and Bute's Education Service vision and strategy: [Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together](#).



Across Argyll and Bute, schools and early learning and childcare settings are using *Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together* as a shared framework for improvement, shaping day-to-day practice, improvement planning and collaboration across the system. The vision provides a consistent focus on equity, wellbeing, attainment and positive destinations, while allowing flexibility to respond to the unique contexts of island, rural and remote rural communities.

The strategy is built around five key priorities, which are being actively taken forward by schools and services:

Best Start for Learners

Schools and early years settings are strengthening high-quality learning environments and transitions, ensuring children experience positive, engaging and nurturing starts at every point of their learning journey.

Ambitious Learners

Learners across Argyll and Bute are being supported and challenged to aim high, with a continued focus on improving attainment, developing skills for learning, life and work, and raising aspirations for all.

Nurtured Learners

There is a strong, system-wide emphasis on wellbeing and inclusion, with schools prioritising safe, supportive environments, positive relationships and early intervention to help learners thrive.

Connected Learners

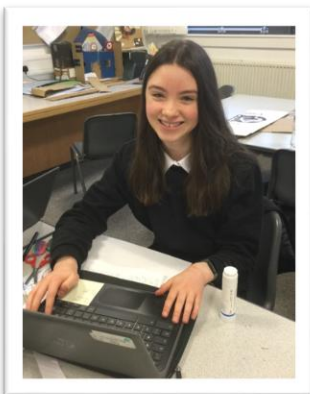
Schools are deepening partnerships with families, communities and external partners, supporting learners to develop a sense of belonging and active citizenship within their local, national and global communities.

Lifelong Learners

Learners are being encouraged to develop curiosity, resilience and adaptability, with schools promoting pathways that support sustained learning and positive outcomes beyond school.

The five priorities provide a clear and shared language for improvement across establishments and services. They support consistency of practice while enabling schools to respond creatively to local need. Importantly, the strategy is expressed through learner-centred statements, ensuring that children and young people remain at the heart of planning and improvement activity.

Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together continues to underpin the Education Service's approach to self-evaluation, improvement planning and partnership working, supporting schools and settings to deliver high-quality, inclusive education and positive outcomes for all learners.



Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Outcomes and Priorities

Scotland’s refreshed National Improvement Framework sets out a bold vision for a world-class, equitable education and skills system. It outlines seven key outcomes and five priorities focused on empowering learners of all ages to thrive through a system that is accountable, inclusive, and responsive. These outcomes and priorities emphasise collaborative working across services.



Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



National Improvement Framework for Scottish education (2025)

OUR VISION

Scottish education should be ambitious, inclusive, and supportive in order to deliver:

EXCELLENCE & EQUITY

for every child and young person

and ensure they achieve the highest standards they can and have the same opportunity to succeed



PRIORITIES

AREAS for IMPROVEMENT

Mental health and wellbeing

Skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations

Achievement with a focus on literacy and numeracy

HUMAN RIGHTS



for ALL children and young people

CLOSING the GAP

between the most and least disadvantaged



OUTCOMES

A GLOBALLY RESPECTED, EMPOWERED, AND RESPONSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM with clear accountability at every level that supports children, young people, and adult learners to thrive.



EXCELLENT PARTNERSHIPS between all involved in a child's development – from schools to children's services, families, and communities



IMPROVING BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE and a culture of kindness, dignity and respect



INCLUSIVE AND RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT which celebrates and supports progression



HIGH LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT across the curriculum



NARROWING of the poverty-related ATTAINMENT GAP



HIGHLY SKILLED TEACHERS and school-leaders driving excellence for all, especially those with additional support needs



DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY enhancing all aspects of learning and teaching.



Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority 1 - Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.

Education Service Strategic Priority 1.1 - We will protect and promote Children's Rights through the promotion of inclusion and celebration of diversity for all of our learners.

Early Years and Learning for Sustainability

There is clear and developing progress in strengthening rights-based practice and Learning for Sustainability across Early Years, with high levels of engagement in professional learning and emerging evidence of changes in practice, although consistency across settings remains variable.

- Targeted and universal CLPL in outdoor learning and rights-based practice has increased practitioner awareness and engagement, with strong participation across localities. This is supporting the increasing use of outdoor family learning approaches and extending learning beyond the setting into communities.
- Evaluation data indicates that almost all practitioners report improved understanding of outdoor family engagement, with early evidence of this translating into practice. However, the extent and consistency of implementation varies across settings.
- Strategic investment in place-based learning approaches is beginning to support a system-wide shift towards family engagement through outdoor learning contexts, although this is at an early stage of development in some areas.
- Partnership working with external research organisations has strengthened the authority's approach, increasing coherence and credibility. This is contributing to the development of a more integrated and evidence-informed model for Learning for Sustainability.
- Across Early Years, there is clear evidence of strong early impact at the level of practitioner awareness and engagement, with a solid foundation established for more sustained system-wide change.

Rights, Relationships and Inclusion

There is strong progress in embedding children's rights and inclusive practice across the authority, with measurable improvements in accreditation, increased participation and clear evidence of impact on school culture.

- The Rights Respecting Schools programme has continued to expand, with significant increases in the number of establishments achieving accreditation. With 100% of schools committed to the Rights Respecting Schools programme

and 72% of schools with Silver or Gold accreditation. This demonstrates sustained progress towards embedding a rights-based culture across all settings.

- Targeted professional learning, including workshops at Silver and Gold level, has strengthened practitioner understanding of how children's rights link to policy, practice and learning. Evaluation evidence indicates consistently high-quality feedback from participants.
- Education Service led workshops on Children's Rights have been delivered to the Corporate Leadership Team and across services, strengthening awareness and understanding of rights-based approaches.
- Inspection and review evidence highlights the positive impact of this work, with strong examples of children's rights being embedded within relationships, school ethos and learning experiences.
- The development of the "Keeping Our Eye on Rights" award, co-produced with young people, will strengthen opportunities to gather and share evidence of impact, while promoting children's rights across the wider community.
- Work to embed LGBTQ+ inclusive education has led to measurable progress through accreditation programmes and partnership networks. This is supporting increased confidence and inclusion, although engagement with national training programmes remains slower than planned.
- Improved identification and recording of young carers is leading to better access to targeted support. Introduction of enhanced data processes and guidance is strengthening system understanding and consistency of response.
- Overall, this work is contributing to more inclusive school cultures where children and young people feel respected, valued and included, although further work is required to ensure consistent implementation across all settings.

Table 1 – Comparison of increase of schools participating in the Right Respecting Schools programme

July 2024	Goal (to have all schools accredited at Bronze or above)	June 2026	Difference
66 schools and partner nurseries registered	78 establishments registered and achieve Bronze	78 establishments registered and achieved Bronze (100%)	No further registrations, as 100% has been achieved
54 establishments achieved Bronze	All establishments achieve Bronze or above	78 establishments achieve Bronze 22 currently at Bronze	Fewer accreditations at Bronze because more are now Silver
26 establishments at Silver	To have 50% of establishments at Silver or Gold	41 establishments at Silver	Increase of 4 establishments at Silver
9 establishments at Gold	To have 50% of establishments at Silver or Gold	15 establishments at Gold	Increase of 6 establishments at Gold

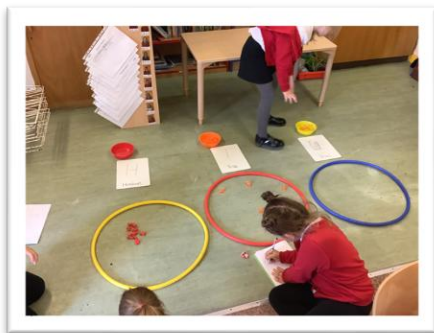
There is increasing emphasis on strengthening children and young people's participation in decision-making at all levels, with developing approaches to pupil voice extending beyond the classroom into school and system-level improvement.

- Schools are increasingly creating structured opportunities for children and young people to contribute to decision-making through pupil councils, focus groups and co-production activities. This is strengthening learner voice and increasing opportunities for children and young people to influence school improvement.
- Participation approaches are being aligned with rights-based practice, supporting children and young people to understand and exercise their rights in meaningful ways. This is contributing to increased confidence, agency and engagement.
- There is emerging evidence that learner voice is beginning to influence wider aspects of school life, including ethos, policy and improvement planning, although practice remains variable across settings.
- Continued development is required to ensure that participation is embedded consistently and that children and young people are able to influence decisions that affect their learning and experiences in a meaningful and sustained way.

Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Curriculum

There is improving consistency in aligning learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design with the rights and needs of children and young people, with increasing focus on learner voice, agency and contextualised curriculum design.

- Professional learning in learning, teaching and assessment has strengthened practitioner focus on learner voice and participation. This is leading to increased pupil engagement, improved ownership of learning and reduced disruption in classrooms.
- Schools are making good progress in co-constructing curriculum rationale with stakeholders, resulting in more context-responsive curricula that reflect local needs, identity and community priorities.
- Education Team engagement, including professional dialogue and collaboration with Education Scotland, is strengthening school leaders' confidence in articulating the link between curriculum design, pedagogy and improved outcomes.
- There is an increasing focus on ensuring that curriculum design is aligned with high-quality pedagogy, effective assessment and meaningful learning experiences, supporting improved coherence across learning and teaching.



- Head Teachers and staff have increased awareness of national developments, including the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, supported through briefing sessions, ongoing updates and professional learning opportunities.
- While awareness and understanding are strong, implementation is at an earlier stage, with variability in how consistently this is being embedded across schools.

Inclusion, Equality and Professional Practice

There is clear progress in strengthening inclusive and equitable professional practice across services, with increasing confidence in addressing inequality and bias, and improved consistency in inclusive approaches.

- Targeted professional learning for Educational Psychology and wider services has strengthened understanding of structural inequality, unconscious bias and anti-racist practice. This is improving confidence in identifying and challenging bias in professional practice.
- Increased engagement in equality-focused training is supporting more consistent consideration of equity and inclusion within professional dialogue, self-evaluation and decision-making processes.
- This is beginning to contribute to more equitable professional judgements and improved outcomes for children and young people, particularly in relation to inclusion and diversity.
- System-wide approaches to inclusion, including guidance, professional learning and partnership working, are supporting greater alignment with national expectations, although further work is required to fully embed these approaches across all settings.

There is growing focus on ensuring that all learners experience a strong sense of identity, belonging and inclusion within their school and community, supported by increasingly inclusive and culturally responsive approaches.

- Targeted work across equality and diversity is contributing to a more inclusive learning environment, where learners are increasingly able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and school culture.
- Professional learning is supporting staff to develop more culturally responsive approaches, improving awareness of identity, diversity and inclusion in both learning and wider school life.
- This is beginning to strengthen learners' sense of belonging, confidence and participation, particularly for those from underrepresented or vulnerable groups.

Overall, there is strong and sustained progress in embedding children's rights and inclusive practice across the authority. There is clear evidence of improved school culture, increased participation and strengthened practitioner understanding, alongside

growing confidence in curriculum design that reflects the needs and contexts of learners. While impact is well established in many areas, variability in implementation across settings means that continued focus is required to ensure consistency and sustain system-wide change.

Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority 2 - Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing.

Education Service Strategic Priority 2.1 - We will support improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing through the use of targeted approaches and understanding of learning and learners to enhance experiences in different contexts, which will support attainment and achievement across the four capacities.

Early Years and Early Intervention

There is clear and developing progress in strengthening early intervention and multi-agency working, with improved consistency in understanding and increasing alignment of approaches, although measurable impact on outcomes is still emerging.

- Multi-agency professional learning linked to GIRFEC has strengthened shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and key processes. This is leading to more consistent use of language and improved readiness for joint planning across services.
- There is emerging evidence of increased willingness to engage in collaborative working, with clearer prioritisation of improvements in planning formats and approaches to support children's needs.
- Targeted inclusion and communication-focused CLPL has been delivered at scale, with high levels of participation and consistently strong evaluation. This is increasing practitioner confidence and supporting more responsive and inclusive learning environments.
- Improved practitioner confidence is beginning to translate into practice, with early evidence of improved learner engagement, participation and regulation, although impact remains variable across settings.
- Strengthened partnership working with Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and allied health professionals is improving the consistency of communication-supportive environments, contributing to more integrated approaches to early intervention.

- The reintroduction of ASN locality networks is beginning to strengthen locality-based approaches to identification and support. However, capacity constraints have limited the pace and consistency of implementation across all areas.

There is growing focus on strengthening transitions across key stages, with increasing recognition of their impact on wellbeing, engagement and continuity of support.

- Schools and services are working to improve the consistency of transitions, particularly from Early Years to Primary and from Primary to Secondary, with a greater emphasis on information sharing and joint planning.
- This is supporting improved continuity of support for learners, particularly those with additional needs or vulnerabilities, and reducing disruption at key points in the learner journey.
- While there is evidence of effective practice in some areas, approaches remain variable, and further work is required to ensure a consistent and coherent approach across all settings.

Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equity

There is strong progress in building system capacity for inclusive and nurturing practice, supported by extensive professional learning, improved data and more consistent approaches across the authority.

- A comprehensive programme of professional learning across key staff groups has significantly increased confidence in inclusive practice, with strong engagement across all sectors.
- This is leading to more consistent approaches to meeting learner needs within classrooms and contributing to reduced reliance on central services over time.
- Authority-wide quality assurance of ASN data has improved the accuracy and consistency of recording across schools. This is enabling more confident and effective decision-making around support, staffing and resource allocation.
- The introduction of a structured request-for-support processes has supported timely responses to schools and contributed to a reduction in demand over time, indicating growing capacity within settings.



- Development and piloting of a self-evaluation framework for specialist provision is strengthening consistency in quality assurance and supporting more systematic approaches to improvement across these settings.
- Professional networks, including Inclusion Champions, peripatetic staff and Specialist Provision Leads, are supporting collaboration, sharing of practice and increased consistency of approach across the authority.
- Increased training opportunities for support staff, probationers and targeted groups are strengthening workforce confidence and contributing to a more skilled and responsive system.
- Consultation with young people using hostel provision has informed targeted investment in upgrading facilities, ensuring that environments better reflect the needs, preferences and wellbeing of those who access them. Feedback from learners highlights the positive impact of these improvements on their experience, comfort and sense of belonging. One young person noted, *“The hostel is a great space to hang out with friends and a community for making friends,”* while another commented, *“Since I first came to now the improvements are astonishing!”* and another said *“The study room is very good because there is also different teachers from the school that come each day.”* This work demonstrates a clear commitment to listening to learner voice and using this to inform improvement, supporting more inclusive and nurturing environments.

There is increasing focus on embedding *Our Children, Their Nurturing Education (OCTNE)* as a whole-system approach to strengthening relational practice, wellbeing and inclusive environments across establishments, with emerging evidence of impact on learner engagement and school culture.

- Development of OCTNE is supporting a stronger, shared understanding of nurturing approaches across schools and services. This is contributing to more consistent relational practice and a greater focus on meeting the emotional and developmental needs of learners.
- Professional learning linked to nurturing approaches and trauma-informed practice is strengthening staff confidence in responding to need within the classroom. This is supporting earlier intervention and reducing reliance on more targeted or escalated support over time.
- Schools are increasingly embedding nurturing principles within their ethos, environment and approaches to behaviour. This is contributing to improved relationships, increased learner engagement and more positive classroom climates.

- OCTNE is helping to align a range of existing approaches, including wellbeing, inclusion and behaviour, within a coherent framework. This is strengthening consistency across establishments, although implementation remains variable.
- Early evidence indicates positive impact on learners' sense of belonging, engagement and readiness to learn. Continued focus is required to ensure consistent application and to further evidence impact across all settings.

Table 2 – Our Children, Their Nurturing Education – Stretch Aim

Source	Overall
Confirmed Data (June 2023)	64.45% (N.B 2023 Stretch Aim = 60%)
Interim Stretch Aim 2023/24	64%
Confirmed Data (June 2024)	66.67%
Interim Stretch Aim 2024/25	67%
Confirmed Data (June 2025)	69.19%
Confirmed Data (June 2026)	85.4%
Final Stretch Aim 2025/26	70%

The 2026 OCTNE readiness-to-learn data indicates that the final 2025/26 stretch aim has been met and exceeded. Across the five core pupil measures, positive responses ranged from 80.0% to 90.0%, with an overall average of approximately 85.4%. This is substantially above the final stretch aim of 70%, suggesting a strong reported pupil experience in relation to readiness to learn, participation, confidence, inclusion and adult support.

Attendance, Relationships and Safeguarding

Systems to support attendance, relationships and safeguarding are strengthening, with improved use of data and partnership approaches supporting earlier intervention, although persistent non-attendance remains a significant area for improvement.

- Implementation of the Addressing Non-Attendance (ANA) framework, supported by targeted professional learning, is increasing school confidence in identifying and responding to attendance concerns using evidence-informed approaches.
- Enhanced use of attendance data, including the introduction and rollout of the attendance dashboard, is improving monitoring and providing earlier insight into patterns of attendance and disengagement.
- Schools are increasingly using this data to target interventions, supporting improved consistency in approaches to attendance. However, persistent non-attendance continues to present a significant challenge across the authority.

- The Anti-Bullying Policy has been refreshed following extensive consultation and aligned with national Respect for All guidance. This is supporting greater consistency in recording, monitoring and responding to bullying incidents.
- Partnership approaches through ADP School Support Services are strengthening community-based responses to wellbeing and behaviour, increasing access to targeted interventions and prevention approaches.
- Engagement in Planet Youth activity has increased significantly, strengthening the data available to inform interventions. Survey findings indicate improvements in young people's reported sense of safety, although variation between groups highlights the need for continued targeted action.
- Early intervention work around gender-based violence and participation in Equally Safe at School is beginning to strengthen awareness and preventative approaches, although this work remains at an early stage in some sectors.

Table 3 – Attendance in Primary Stretch Aim

HWB – Attendance in Primary - Free School Meal registered and Non-Free School Meal Registered

	Overall	FSM Registered	Not-FSM Registered	Gap (FSM/Not-FSM)
Stretch Aims 2024-25	93.7%	90.25%	94.25%	4.00pp
June 2025	93.6%	90.1%	94.3%	4.2pp
Stretch Aims 2025-26	94.0%	91.0%	94.5%	3.5pp
June 2026 (provisional)	93.5%	90.0%	94.4%	4.4pp

Primary attendance remains consistently high across the authority, with overall attendance of 93.5% in June 2026. Attendance for pupils registered for Free School Meals remains strong at 90.0%, while attendance for pupils not registered for Free School Meals is 94.4%. Overall performance is closely aligned to stretch aims, demonstrating sustained engagement in learning. Although a small attendance gap remains between FSM-registered and non-FSM-registered pupils, attendance levels across both groups continue to be positive, providing a strong foundation for improving outcomes and wellbeing for all learners.

Table 4 – Attendance in Secondary Stretch Aim

	Overall	FSM Registered	Not-FSM Registered	Gap (FSM/Not-FSM)
Stretch Aims 2024-25	89.7%	83.5%	90.75%	7.25pp
June 2025	87.3%	81.7%	88.5%	6.8pp
Stretch Aims 2025-26	91.0%	85%	92%	7.0pp
June 2026 (provisional)	87.4%	81.2%	88.7%	7.5pp

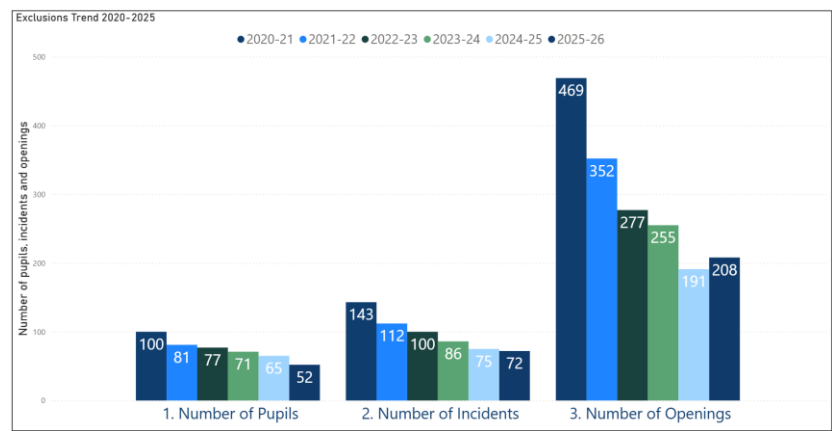
HWB – Attendance in Secondary - Free School Meal registered and Non-Free School Meal Registered

Secondary attendance remains relatively stable across the authority, with overall attendance of 87.4% in June 2026. Attendance for pupils registered for Free School Meals is 81.2%, while attendance for pupils not registered for Free School Meals is 88.7%. While performance remains below stretch aims, attendance levels have been maintained and attendance for FSM-registered pupils has improved compared to the previous year. Although an attendance gap remains between FSM-registered and non-FSM-registered pupils, the continued focus on targeted support, attendance interventions and partnership working is helping to improve engagement for young people most affected by disadvantage.

There is increasing focus on strengthening universal approaches to wellbeing across all establishments, with schools embedding consistent practices to support positive relationships, engagement and behaviour.

- Schools are increasingly adopting whole-setting approaches to wellbeing and relationships, supporting a more consistent focus on creating safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments for all learners. This is contributing to improved classroom climates and more positive relationships between staff and learners, supporting engagement and readiness to learn.
- There is emerging evidence that universal wellbeing approaches are reducing low-level disruption and supporting more consistent expectations across settings, although variability remains.
- Continued focus is required to ensure that approaches are embedded consistently and that impact on learner experience and outcomes is clearly evidenced.

Table 5 –Exclusions Data



Exclusions have reduced significantly over the period shown, indicating improved practice in supporting children and young people to remain engaged in school and a strengthening focus on inclusion and early intervention. The number of pupils excluded fell from 100 in 2020–21 to 52 in 2025–26, while the number of exclusion incidents reduced from 143 to 72 over the same period. The number of exclusion openings remains substantially lower than in earlier sessions, suggesting that overall progress has been sustained. This reflects the positive impact of increasingly consistent approaches to relationships, wellbeing and targeted support.

Targeted Support and Care Experienced Children and Young People

Targeted approaches for vulnerable groups are contributing to improved outcomes, with clear evidence of impact for care experienced children and young people, although variability in implementation remains.

- Strategic interventions, including the work of the Virtual School, are contributing to continued improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for care experienced children and young people, with evidence of a narrowing attainment gap.
- Continued expansion of the MCR Pathways programme is supporting increased confidence, wellbeing and participation, with strong qualitative and quantitative evidence of impact across secondary schools.
- Increased uptake of Designated Manager training and promotion of “We Promise” is improving staff awareness and strengthening consistency of support, although engagement and implementation remain variable across settings.
- Increased identification of care experienced learners and stronger partnership working is leading to more targeted support and improved access to opportunities, as evidenced through feedback and participation data.

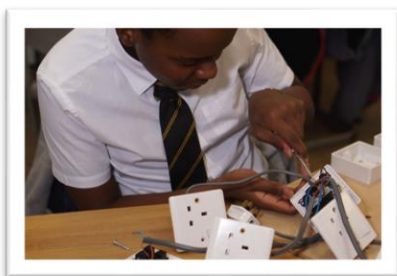
- Early Years interventions are beginning to support improved developmental outcomes and readiness for learning, with strengthened links between health, education and family support.

Systems, Capacity and Workforce Development

There is strengthening system capacity and improving coherence across services, supported by professional learning, partnership working and clearer structures and processes, although further work is required to evidence long-term impact.

- Multi-agency trauma-informed professional learning has been sustained through flexible delivery models, maintaining engagement across education, health, social work and partner agencies.
- This is supporting the development of a shared language and more consistent relational approaches, although there is variability in how this is translating into practice and evidence of impact.
- The Single Point of Access (SPA) is now operating consistently, with increasing demand being managed through structured triage processes. This is improving the timeliness and appropriateness of responses to children's needs.
- Strengthened guidance and communication around referral processes is increasing confidence among schools and partners, supporting more proportionate and needs-led decision-making.
- Ongoing collaboration across services is improving coherence and supporting more joined-up approaches to wellbeing and inclusion, contributing to more equitable access to support.
- Capacity challenges across parts of the system continue to impact pace of implementation, highlighting the need for continued focus on sustainability and workforce development.

Overall, there is strong progress in strengthening inclusive practice, early intervention and partnership working to support children and young people's health and wellbeing. Improved professional learning, better use of data and clearer systems are contributing to more consistent and effective approaches across services. There is emerging evidence of impact for learners, particularly in inclusion and targeted support, although persistent non-attendance and variability in implementation indicate the need for continued focus on consistency, capacity and long-term impact.



Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority 3 - Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

Education Service Strategic Priority 3.1 - We will address disadvantage and deprivation to close the attainment gap by analysing data to inform a strategic overview of attainment for disadvantaged groups across the Local Authority and allow effective, targeted interventions.

Education Service Strategic Priority 3.2 - We will use a data and research informed approach to provide targeted support to establishments across the Authority.

Early Years, Early Literacy and Early Intervention

There is clear evidence of progress in strengthening early intervention and improving practitioner confidence in early literacy and numeracy, with targeted support beginning to translate into measurable gains for identified children. At the same time, there remains a need to strengthen consistency and longitudinal tracking across settings.

- Targeted early literacy interventions, supported by high-quality professional learning, have improved practitioner confidence and strengthened the use of evidence-based approaches in Early Years settings. Tracking information indicates that identified children made measurable progress as a result of this targeted support.
- Professional learning in early literacy, including work on progression in listening and talking, reading and writing, is beginning to strengthen practitioners' understanding of progression at Early Level. This is helping to improve the quality of literacy-rich environments and the use of intentional interactions to support learning.
- Feedback and reconnect sessions show increasing practitioner engagement with evidence-based resources and approaches. This indicates a growing confidence in planning and delivering early literacy experiences, although consistency of practice still requires further development across settings.
- In numeracy, targeted support for key practitioners has strengthened confidence in delivering early numeracy using evidence-based approaches such as the Principles of Counting. Most targeted settings are now providing richer literacy and numeracy environments, with positive impact on children's engagement and learning.
- Early intervention in wider developmental areas is also showing positive impact. Work linked to health and wellbeing, including toilet learning and family

learning, is contributing to improved developmental readiness and stronger parental engagement in supporting children's early development.

- The expansion of Play on Pedals has exceeded rollout targets and demonstrates strong strategic delivery, with qualitative evidence of improvements in children's gross motor development, confidence and independence, alongside high levels of sustained family participation.

Literacy, Numeracy and Curriculum Development

There is strong progress in developing pedagogy and professional learning in literacy and numeracy, with evidence of measurable gains in attainment and increased practitioner confidence. This work is beginning to strengthen consistency of approach across the authority, although some areas remain in the early stages of implementation.

- The Quality Improvement Programme for writing continues to demonstrate strong impact on attainment, particularly for lower-attaining cohorts and in schools with historically weaker performance. Cohorts 7 and 8 have engaged substantial numbers of teachers, and evidence from Cohort 7 indicates clear and measurable improvement in pupils achieving "on track" for age and stage.
- Significant gains in attainment have been reported across almost all participating schools, with several schools showing improvements of between 15 and 56 percentage points. This demonstrates that the approach is delivering measurable value and has strong potential for wider implementation.
- Wider literacy CLPL has also had positive impact, with all staff attending the authority's literacy sessions reporting increased confidence following training. This includes work on talking, reading and writing, alongside participation in Education Scotland's Learning to Read pilot.
- In numeracy, Counting on Excellence has now established direct engagement with all secondary mathematics departments and all Principal Teachers. This represents the first structured authority-wide introduction of the framework at secondary level and is strengthening cross-sector professional dialogue, particularly around transition and progression.
- Initial implementation of authority-wide numeracy CLPL is laying the foundation for greater consistency in broad general education practice across secondary settings. This is expected to improve teachers' understanding of progression and support greater continuity in learning from primary into secondary.
- Work to support parental engagement in numeracy has developed further through the creation of dedicated parent/carer resources and a new webpage. This is an important step in strengthening consistency between approaches used in school and those shared with families, although this work remains at an early stage and evaluation is ongoing.

Attainment, Equity and Data-Informed Practice

There is improving use of data and evidence to identify gaps and target support, with positive trends in attainment across a number of measures. This is strengthening the authority's ability to take a more strategic and targeted approach to reducing the poverty-related attainment gap, although variation in outcomes remains.

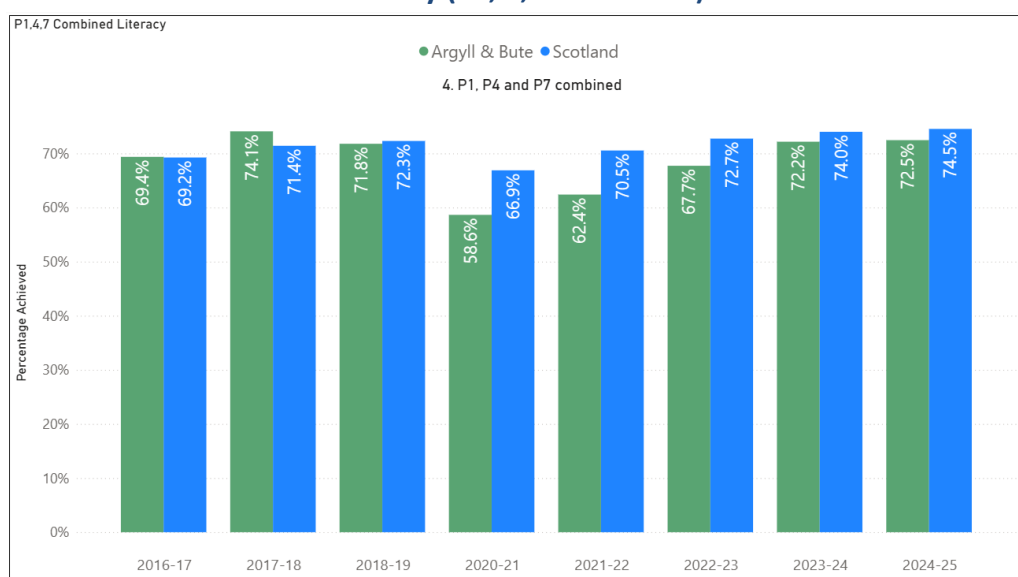
- The Performance and Improvement team has delivered a broad programme of professional learning to support Head Teachers and senior leaders in gathering, analysing and using attainment data more effectively. This is helping schools identify gaps, plan interventions and improve the quality of professional dialogue around attainment.
- Primary literacy attainment has increased slightly and is now at its highest level since 2017/18, while combined numeracy remains among the strongest levels recorded over the last five sessions despite a slight year-on-year reduction. These trends point to improving overall performance at authority level.
- There is also evidence of improvement in performance for learners in the most disadvantaged groups. Quintile 1 performance in both literacy and numeracy is reported as the highest on record, and there has been a slight improvement in the numeracy attainment gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5.
- In the senior phase, improvement is evident in both attainment and presentation rates. A-C and A-D pass rates have improved at National 5 and Higher, and more young people are being presented for qualifications than in the previous year.
- Outcomes for young people in receipt of free school meals have also improved, with stronger A-C pass rates at Higher and Advanced Higher, increased presentation rates and improved attendance. This indicates that targeted interventions are beginning to have measurable impact for learners affected by poverty.
- Schools in receipt of Pupil Equity Funding are now receiving more targeted guidance on identifying and tracking children and young people affected by poverty. As a result, the majority of schools are now monitoring the progress of their PEF cohort more systematically, and this is linked to reported improvements in literacy and numeracy for most targeted pupils.
- Bespoke support from the Performance and Improvement Team is increasing schools' confidence and capacity to use a wider range of data, including tracking systems adapted for specialist provision and very small schools. This is helping develop a more nuanced and context-responsive approach to improvement planning.

Primary Attainment and Stretch Aims

Table 6 – Primary – Literacy (P1, 4, 7 Combined) and Stretch Aims

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
ACEL June 2023	67.7%	67.7%	80.6%	13.9pp
ACEL June 2024	72.2%	67.6%	82.6%	15.0pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	73.5%	72.5%	83.0%	10.5pp
ACEL Data June 2025	72.5%	69.5%	86.6%	17.1pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	76.0%	75.0%	85.0%	10.0pp

Table 7 – Primary – Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level Literacy (P1, 4, 7 Combined)



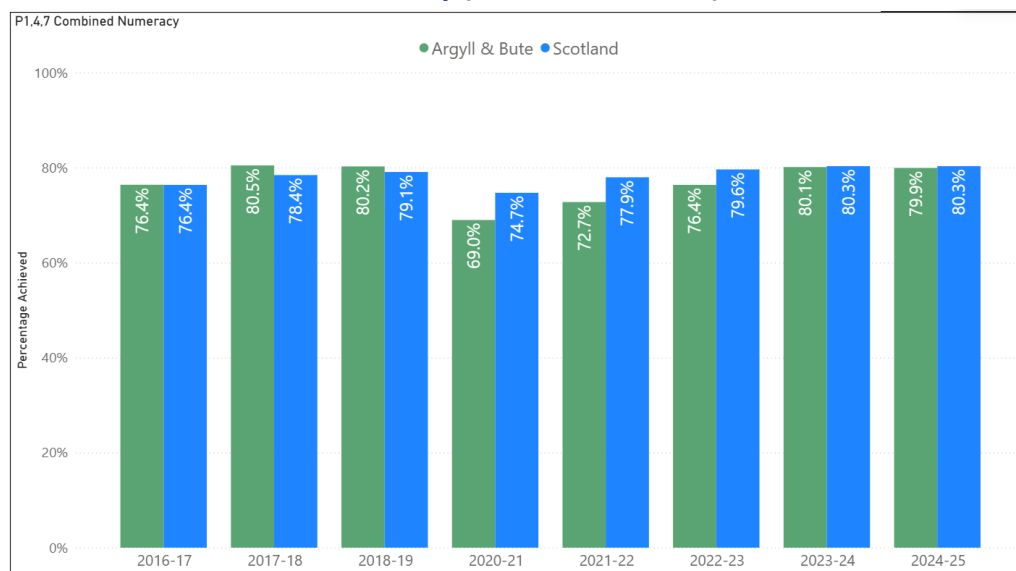
Overall literacy attainment has improved over time, increasing from 67.7% in June 2023 to 72.5% in June 2025. Comparison of Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 Performance for learners in SIMD Quintile 1 has also improved, rising from 67.7% to 69.5% over the same period. However, attainment for learners in SIMD Quintile 5 has increased at a faster rate, reaching 86.6% in June 2025. As a result, the attainment gap has widened from 13.9 percentage points in June 2023 to 17.1 percentage points in June 2025. While comparisons between SIMD Quintile 1 and SIMD Quintile 5 remain helpful, the small number of learners within Quintile 1 can result in greater fluctuation in percentage outcomes and should be considered when interpreting data. June 2025 outcomes remain below the 2025–26 stretch aims, particularly for SIMD Quintile 1, indicating the

need for continued focus on targeted improvement and accelerated progress for learners most affected by disadvantage.

Table 8 – Primary – Numeracy (P1, 4, 7 Combined) and Stretch Aims

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
ACEL June 2023	76.3%	75.6%	90.3%	14.7pp
ACEL June 2024	80.1%	73.1%	87.5%	15.4pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	80.5%	75.5%	90.25%	14.75pp
ACEL Data June 2025	79.9%	75.7%	91.0%	15.3pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	83.0%	78.0%	91.0%	13.0pp

Table 9 – Primary – Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level Numeracy (P1, 4, 7 Combined)



Overall numeracy attainment remains strong, increasing from 76.3% in June 2023 to 79.9% in June 2025. There has been modest improvement for learners in SIMD Quintile 1, from 75.6% to 75.7%, while performance for learners in SIMD Quintile 5 has remained consistently high, increasing to 91.0% in June 2025. As a result, the attainment gap has remained broadly static, at 15.3 percentage points in June 2025 compared to 14.7 percentage points in June 2023. June 2025 performance is just below the 2025–26 stretch aims and highlights the need for continued focus on improving outcomes for learners in SIMD Quintile 1 to secure greater equity in attainment.

Senior Phase Attainment and Stretch Aims

Table 10 – School Leavers with 1 or more pass at SCQF level 5

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Leavers Cohort 2022-2023	89.1%	80.0%	96.4%	16.4pp
Leavers Cohort 2023-2024	85.7%	81.7%	95.3%	13.6pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	92.25%	87.0%	99.25%	12.25pp
Leavers Cohort 2024-2025	87.0%	76.6%	96.7%	20.1pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	93.0%	89.0%	100.0%	11.0pp

SCQF Level 5 attainment remains strong overall; however, outcomes for learners in SIMD Quintile 1 fell in 2024–25, while SIMD Quintile 5 performance remained high. This has resulted in a widening attainment gap to 20.1 percentage points, indicating that progress in improving equity has not been sustained and requires continued targeted focus.

Table 11 – School Leavers with 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 6

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Leavers Cohort 2022-2023	62.6%	38.8%	85.7%	46.9pp
Leavers Cohort 2023-2024	66.7%	47.9%	90.6%	42.7pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	67.75%	60.0%	86.5%	26.5pp
Leavers Cohort 2024-2025	62.2%	45.5%	86.7%	41.2pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	72%	64%	89%	25pp

SCQF Level 6 attainment shows variability over time, with a decline in overall performance in 2024–25 following earlier improvement. While attainment for SIMD Quintile 1 improved initially, this was not sustained, and the attainment gap widened to 41.2 percentage points. This highlights ongoing challenges in improving higher-level attainment for disadvantaged learners and the need for continued targeted focus.

Targeted Support, Wider Achievement and Equity Groups

There is strong evidence that targeted support for specific equity groups is improving participation, confidence and outcomes, with partnership approaches playing an important role in widening access and reducing barriers.

- Expansion of the MCR Pathways programme has significantly increased the number of young people receiving support across secondary schools. This is contributing to improved confidence, engagement and participation, with evidence of positive impact drawn from evaluation of young people's experiences.
- Strategic interventions for care experienced children and young people are contributing to continued improvements in literacy and numeracy and to a reduction in the ACEL attainment gap between care experienced learners and all pupils (See Tables 25-32). This indicates that targeted authority support is having measurable impact.
- Continued promotion of "We Promise", increased Designated Manager training and improved partnership working are helping to strengthen awareness and support for care experienced children and young people, although the level of implementation remains mixed across settings.
- Wider participation opportunities and enhanced partnership working are also increasing inclusion and reducing barriers to education, particularly for vulnerable children and young people. This is evidenced through increased communication with the Virtual School and more bespoke approaches to support within settings.
- Work through Skills Development Scotland and DYW has improved the tracking of young people's intended destinations and career pathways. This is helping to target support more effectively for those at risk of a negative post-school destination and contributing to the maintenance of positive school leaver destination figures and improved participation rates.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) activity is contributing to reducing barriers to learning and supporting equity of access for children and families.

- CLD partnerships are supporting engagement with learners and families who may be less connected to school-based approaches, providing additional support and alternative pathways to re-engagement.
- This is contributing to improved participation and engagement for some learners, particularly those experiencing barriers linked to rurality, access or disadvantage.
- While there is evidence of positive impact in specific contexts, further work is required to ensure that CLD approaches are integrated consistently within wider educational improvement activity.

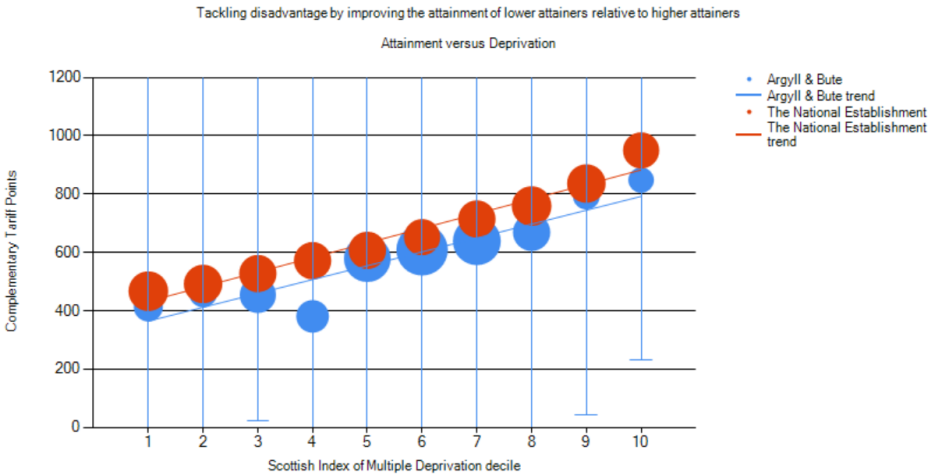
Table 12 – Participation Measure – 16-19 Year Olds
in Education, Training and Employment

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
APM August 2023	94.4%	88.4%	97.8%	9.4pp
APM August 2024	94.3%	91.5%	97.1%	5.6pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	94.25%	91%	96.5%	5.5pp
APM August 2025	94.6%	92.2%	96.8%	4.6pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	95%	92.5%	97%	4.5pp

Participation rates remain high overall, with improved outcomes for learners in SIMD Quintile 1 contributing to a significant reduction in the participation gap. The gap has narrowed from 9.4 percentage points in August 2023 to 4.6 percentage points in August 2025, indicating strong progress in improving equity, with performance now closely aligned to stretch aims.

Table 13 – Attainment versus Deprivation

The selected year is 2024/25



Attainment increases steadily as levels of deprivation decrease, with Argyll and Bute broadly reflecting the national pattern. While there is some evidence of strong performance in more deprived deciles, the overall gradient remains, indicating that further progress is required to reduce the impact of deprivation on attainment and improve equity across the system.

Professional Learning, Pedagogy and Leadership of Improvement

There is improving confidence among practitioners and school leaders in using a wider range of evidence to inform pedagogy and improvement, with increased emphasis on data literacy, classroom evidence and professional judgement. This is strengthening the quality of professional dialogue and helping schools take a more informed approach to raising attainment.

- Education Officer and Manager support has challenged and supported teachers and school leaders to move beyond reliance on quantitative data alone. Increasing use is being made of jotters, pupil voice, classroom observation, assessment information and tracking data to build a more rounded picture of learner progress.
- As a result, teachers are becoming more confident in identifying strengths and gaps in learning and using this information to adapt planning, pace, differentiation, questioning and feedback. This is improving the quality of pedagogical decision-making in classrooms.
- School leaders are increasingly confident in using evidence-informed professional dialogue to support challenge conversations, identify targeted interventions and better align pedagogy with learner need. Evidence of progress includes stronger tracking conversations, closer scrutiny of classroom evidence and greater use of pupil voice.
- Support for STEM has continued through professional learning, digital resources and partnership working. Engagement in STEM opportunities across early years and school sectors is broadening access to high-quality learning experiences.
- Overall, this work is strengthening the authority's capacity to take a more evidence-informed and professionally confident approach to raising attainment and reducing inequity, while also highlighting the ongoing need for consistency in implementation and evaluation.

Overall, there is clear progress in improving attainment and strengthening data-informed practice, with positive trends evident across literacy, numeracy and senior phase outcomes. Targeted interventions and professional learning are beginning to deliver measurable improvements for key equity groups, including care experienced learners and those affected by poverty. While the poverty-related attainment gap shows signs of narrowing, variability in outcomes and consistency of implementation across settings highlight the need for continued focus on sustaining and accelerating improvement.



Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority 4 - Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.

Education Service Strategic Priority 4.1 - Through partnership working we will promote the development of skills, knowledge and understanding of learners to widen learning opportunities and career pathways for learners.

Education Service Strategic Priority 4.2 - We will further enhance our partnership with Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) to ensure all young people have the opportunity and successfully develop the skills for life and work required to attain sustained, positive destinations post-school.

Senior Phase, Destinations and Learner Pathways

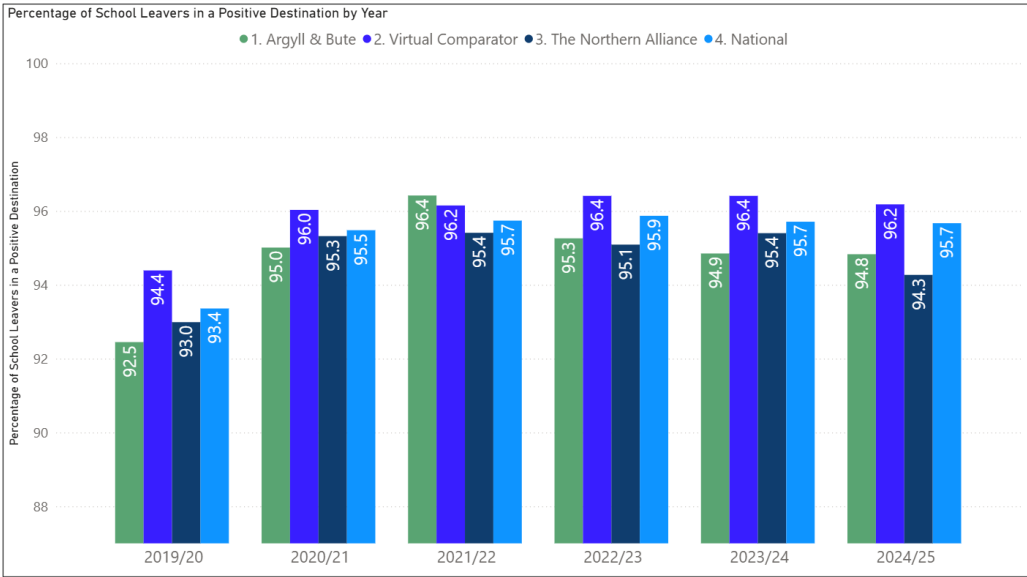
There is strong progress in sustaining positive destinations and strengthening targeted support for young people at risk of disengagement, with partnership working playing a central role in improving planning, intervention and outcomes.

- Regular 16+ meetings between Education, DYW and Skills Development Scotland are now embedded across all schools, strengthening the planning and implementation of interventions for young people at risk of a negative post-school destination or who have not sustained their destination. This is improving the consistency and timeliness of targeted support.
- Positive destination rates have been maintained in the context of wider economic and societal pressures. The authority's initial school-leaver destination figure remains at 94.8%, while the Annual Participation Measure for 16–19 year-olds increased to 94.6% in 2025. This indicates that targeted partnership work is helping young people to access and sustain appropriate pathways.
- Flexible Learning Plans are being used increasingly well as a targeted intervention for vulnerable and disengaged young people. The number of plans increased from 33 to 50 in 2024–2025 and rose again to 55 in 2025–2026, with evaluative evidence showing that almost all participating young people re-engaged in school or moved into positive destinations.
- There is also evidence of improved outcomes for young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The proportion of learners from SIMD deciles 1–3 who entered a positive initial destination reached 93.8%, representing the highest figure achieved in the last seven sessions. This suggests that targeted interventions are beginning to have measurable impact on equity of outcome.
- Work through DYW and Skills Development Scotland to track anticipated leave dates, preferred routes and preferred occupations is improving the quality of

information available to schools. This is enabling more targeted support for young people at risk of a negative destination and strengthening planning for individual pathways.

Positive Destinations and Partnerships

Table 14- Percentage of School Leavers in a Positive Destination



There is strong and sustained progress in supporting young people to achieve and sustain positive destinations, underpinned by effective partnership working and a more coordinated approach to planning pathways and tracking outcomes.

- Education, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), third sector partners and employers continue to work in close collaboration to support young people in developing skills, shaping personalised learning pathways and sustaining positive destinations.
- This partnership approach has contributed to 94.8% of school leavers in 2024–2025 entering a positive destination, demonstrating continued strong performance at authority level.
- The Annual Participation Measure (APM) shows that 94.6% of all 16–19-year-olds in Argyll and Bute were participating in education, training or employment, representing an increase of 0.3 percentage points from 2023–2024 and placing the authority 10th in Scotland.
- It is important to note the distinction between measures. The Annual Participation Measure reflects the activity of all 16–19-year-olds over the academic year (April 2024 to March 2025), while School Leaver Initial Destination figures represent a snapshot of leavers’ destinations in October 2025.
- Despite national challenges, including an increase in youth unemployment and reduced recruitment capacity among employers, Argyll and Bute has maintained

stable levels of young people entering employment. Nationally, there has been a 4% decrease since 2022–2023 in the number of school leavers entering employment.

- In contrast, Argyll and Bute continues to demonstrate a consistently higher proportion of school leavers entering employment, with, on average, 15% more young people entering employment than the national figure, reflecting both local labour market context and effective partnership working.
- The rural and remote context of the authority continues to influence destination patterns, with employment forming a significant and sustained pathway for young people.
- Schools, alongside SDS and DYW, are working closely with young people and their families to support informed decision-making and ensure that as many learners as possible not only enter, but sustain positive destinations.
- Tracking systems are now extending beyond initial destinations, with young people being monitored for 12–18 months post-school. This enables timely intervention where young people are at risk of disengaging, supporting re-engagement in employment, education or training.
- MCR Mentoring, led locally by MCR Pathways Co-ordinators, is having a measurable impact on engagement and attainment, resulting in improved and sustained destinations for our most vulnerable learners.

Table 15 – Wider Achievement – SCQF Level 4-7

SCQF Level	Awards 2023/2024	Awards 2024/2025
Level 4	285	300
Level 5	645	725
Level 6	377	328
Level 7	8	44
All Awards	1251	1397

Table 16 – Non-Qualifications Scotland Wider Achievements

Provider and Course	SCQF Level			Grand Total
	5	6	7	
Open University (OU)			6	6
Engineering: origins, methods, context			1	1
English for academic purposes online			1	1
Law making in Scotland			2	2
Making your learning count			1	1
Spanish Studies 1 (intermediate)			1	1
Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)	16			16

Elementary Food Hygiene Course (SCQF 5)	16			16
Sports Leaders UK (SLUK)	31			31
Qualification in Community Sports Leadership	31			31
Young Enterprise Scotland (YES)		20		20
Unit 1 – Setting Up A Company		6		6
Unit 2 - Developing a Business Idea and Launching the Company		6		6
Unit 3 – Running the Company		5		5
Unit 4 - Winding Up The Company		3		3
Grand Total	47	20	6	73

Table 17 – Wider Achievement Level 4

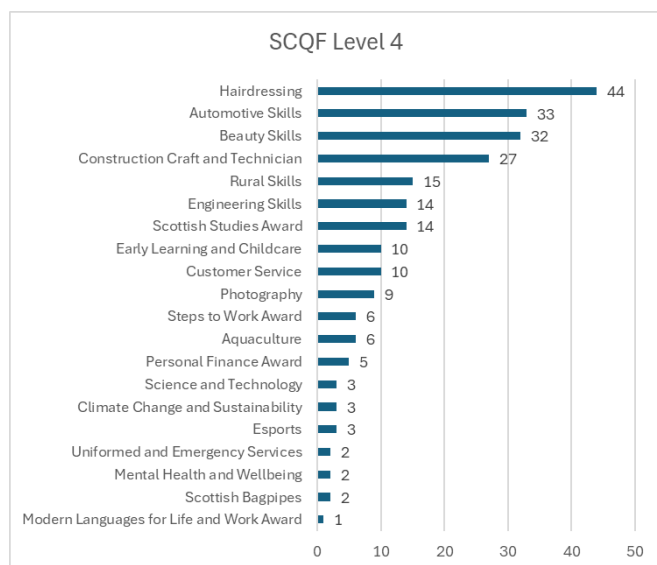


Table 18 – Wider Achievement Level 5

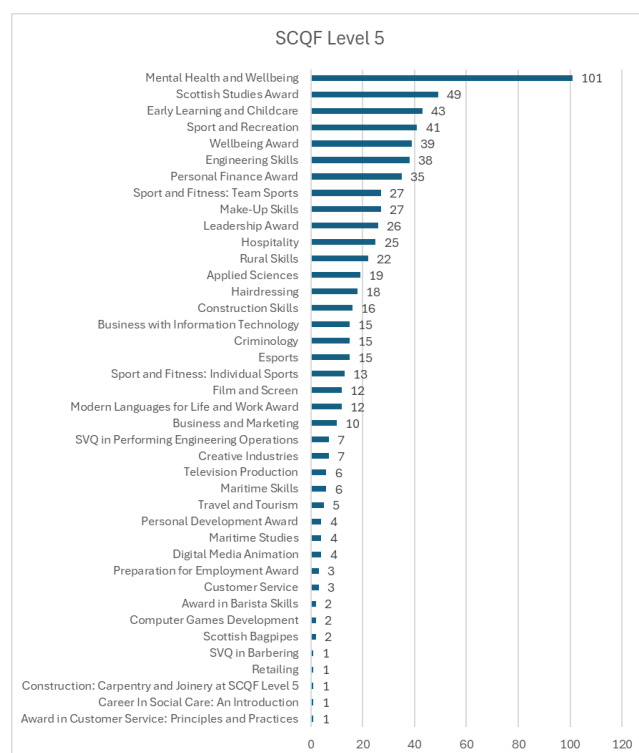
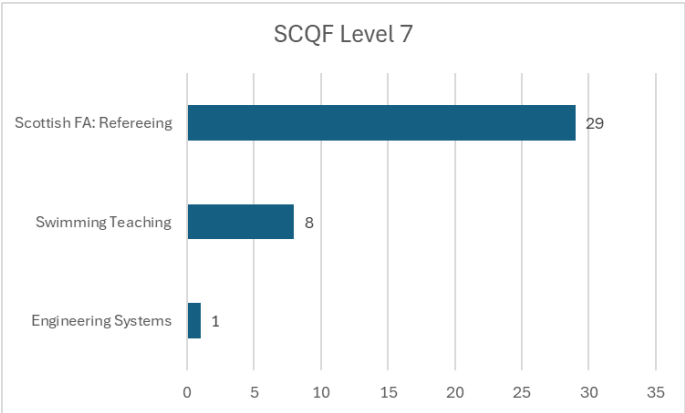


Table 19 – Wider Achievement Level 6



Table 20 – Wider Achievement Level 7



Employability, Work-Based Learning and Partnership Pathways

There is clear progress in expanding employability opportunities and vocational pathways through strengthened partnership working, with increased access to work placements, college learning and wider achievement helping young people develop the skills and experience needed for positive destinations.

- The number of young people participating in work placements has increased significantly. Across all secondary schools, 469 work placements were undertaken in 2024–2025, an increase of 124 from the previous year, and the 2025–2026 total had increased further by the time of reporting. This reflects growing school capacity to negotiate more bespoke placements with young people and families.
- Increased access to work-based learning is strengthening young people’s skills for life and work and helping them prepare more effectively for employment. This is reflected in authority data showing that, over the last five years, Argyll and Bute has had an average of 16% more school leavers entering employment annually than the rest of Scotland.
- Community Learning is working in partnership with all secondary schools, where CLD staff are in place, to broaden and personalise the curriculum.
- Partnership working with UHI Argyll has also strengthened. The refreshed Schools/College Partnership Agreement has supported bespoke face-to-face

course offers in all secondary schools, and 568 young people accessed courses through this arrangement in 2025–2026. This is increasing curriculum breadth, personalisation and choice for learners.

- The virtual course offer has expanded from five to eleven courses, increasing access to networked and online college learning opportunities. This is helping ensure that young people can access courses not available in their base school and is strengthening progression pathways, particularly in more rural contexts.
- Partnership working with employers and DYW to deliver work inspiration activities is also broadening young people's understanding of the local labour market and helping them make more informed decisions about career pathways. Evidence indicates that this area of activity has increased and is supporting greater learner agency and employability awareness.
- Engagement at strategic level with UHI Argyll has improved, including increased collaboration on pedagogy and review of provision. This is strengthening communication and joint planning and is helping to ensure that college provision is more coherent and responsive to the needs of learners.

There is growing evidence that curricular employability activity is helping young people to develop a stronger understanding of local labour market opportunities and to make more informed decisions about their future pathways.

- Alongside work placements, schools have worked with DYW and employers to deliver Work Inspiration activities as part of the employability curriculum. This is widening young people's exposure to different sectors and helping them better understand the opportunities available within Argyll and Bute.
- This work is contributing to increased learner agency in planning post-school pathways and is helping young people and families develop a broader understanding of routes into employment, training and further learning.
- While comparative activity data is still being finalised, submitted evidence indicates that this aspect of partnership working has increased and is making a positive contribution to employability learning.

There is strengthening strategic collaboration with UHI Argyll, supporting a more coherent approach to college provision and improving alignment between school, college and post-school pathways.

- Partnership with UHI Argyll has developed significantly through increased education representation at Board and sub-committee level, strengthening communication and joint planning around learner pathways and provision.
- The extension of the Council's learning, teaching and assessment professional learning offer to UHI Argyll staff is increasing shared understanding of high-

quality pedagogy across school and college contexts. This is helping to improve coherence in learners' experiences as they move between settings.

- An Education-led review of UHI Argyll provision is also supporting greater focus on relevance, quality and responsiveness in college pathways, with positive feedback from college leadership indicating strengthening partnership and shared ambition.

Inclusion, Equity and Transitions

There is emerging progress in strengthening post-school transition planning for learners with additional needs and vulnerable young people, with improved partnership structures beginning to support more equitable pathways and earlier planning.

- The Inclusion and Equality team is contributing to a reformed cross-agency transitions working group, with an initial focus on ensuring that post-school transitions for disabled young people are more equitable across the authority. This is beginning to strengthen early identification and improve the time available for transition planning.
- The increasing use of Flexible Learning Plans for vulnerable young people is improving access to tailored pathways and targeted intervention. This is creating more flexible opportunities for young people who are at risk of disengaging from education and supports better progression into training, employment or sustained learning.
- Expansion of MCR Pathways across secondary schools is improving support for care experienced and other vulnerable young people, helping to strengthen wellbeing, confidence and participation. This is contributing to more equitable access to sustained positive destinations.
- Overall, there is growing evidence that more targeted and personalised transition planning is helping to reduce barriers for young people who may previously have been at higher risk of disengagement, although this area remains developmental and will require continued focus.

Curriculum, Skills Development and Wider Achievement

There is strong progress in widening the curriculum and increasing access to skills-based learning, with partnership activity making the curriculum more relevant, personalised and responsive to young people's future pathways.

- Secondary schools are increasingly drawing on partnership working to enrich the curriculum and provide meaningful opportunities linked to employability, wider achievement and vocational learning. This is strengthening the relevance of the senior phase offer and helping young people connect learning to future pathways.

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment has supported a range of broader achievement opportunities and curriculum experiences, including college access, outdoor expedition learning, film-making, Duke of Edinburgh, bikeability, leadership, citizenship and STEM. These experiences are helping young people develop confidence, resilience, problem solving, teamwork and sustained participation.
- Continued use of networked and virtual learning is broadening curriculum choice and improving access to specialist subject pathways that schools cannot offer alone. This is particularly important in ensuring that young people across the authority can access a wider range of qualifications and experiences.
- Work to strengthen partnership approaches to the curriculum is also contributing to more coherent progression into employment, training and further learning. Across the submitted evidence, there is a clear emphasis on widening opportunities in ways that are both personalised and responsive to local labour market needs.

Table 21 – Third and Fourth Level Literacy

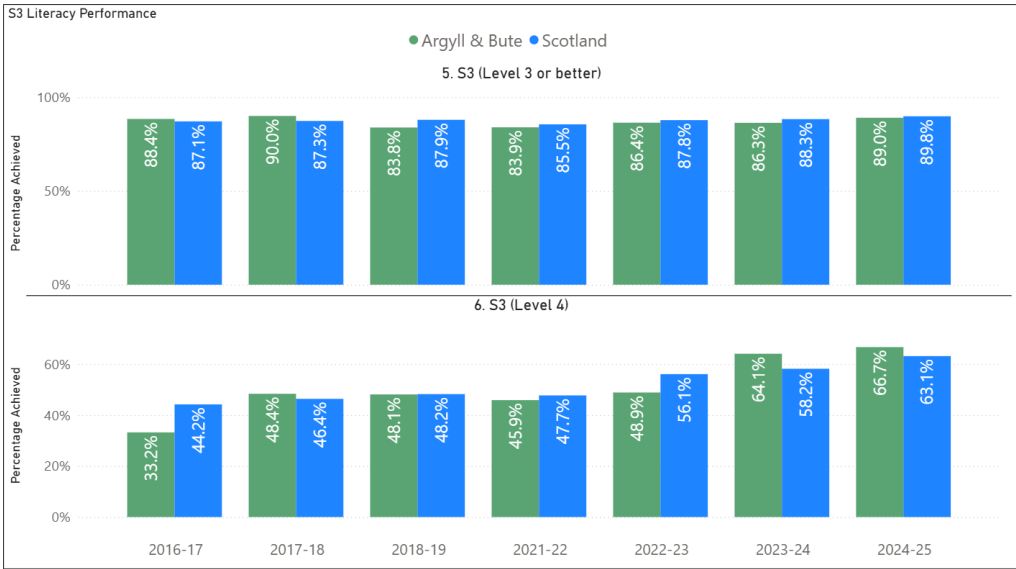
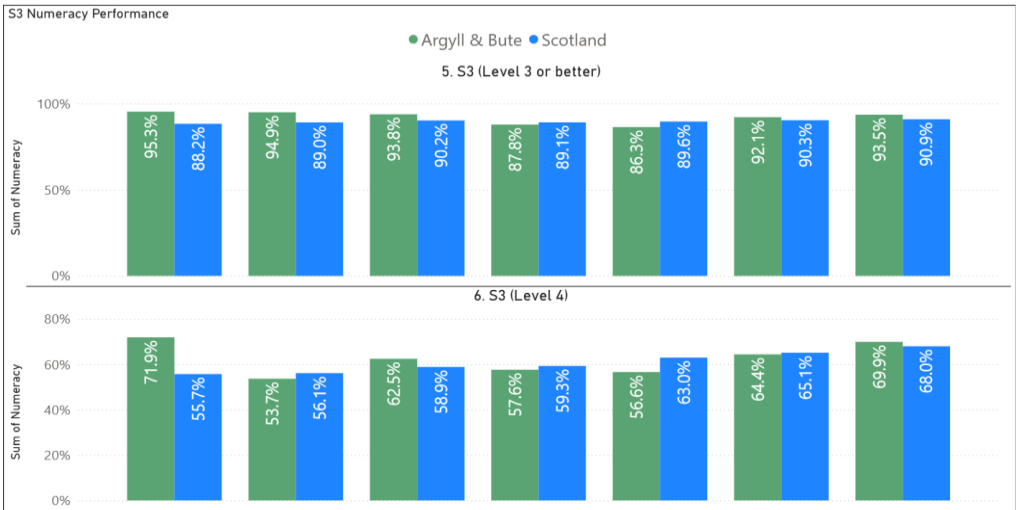


Table 22 – Third and Fourth Level Numeracy



Attainment at third level across literacy and numeracy remains consistently high, with numeracy a particular strength and performance frequently exceeding national averages. At fourth level, attainment shows a clear improving trend, particularly in recent years, with increasing proportions of learners achieving expected levels by S3. The overall direction of travel is positive, reflecting the impact of targeted interventions and an increased focus on progression across the BGE.

Senior Phase Literacy and Numeracy
Table 23 – All Leavers Literacy and Numeracy Performance

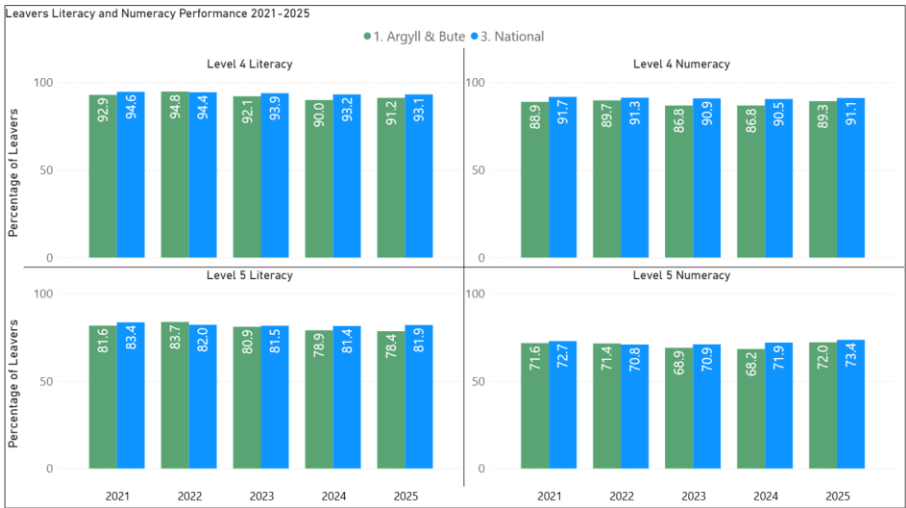
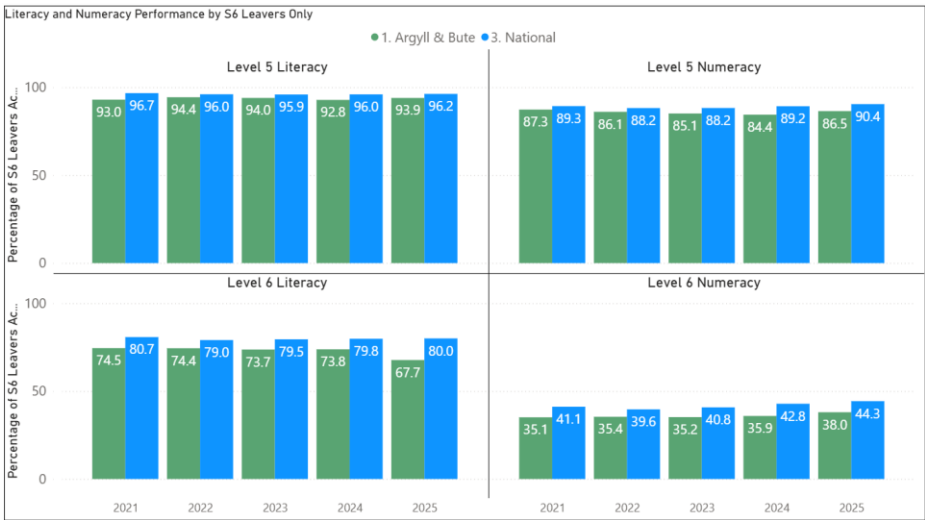


Table 24 – S6 Leavers Literacy and Numeracy Performance



Across both all leavers and S6 leavers, attainment in literacy and numeracy is consistently strong, particularly at Levels 4 and 5, demonstrating that the majority of young people leave school with secure and well-developed core skills. There is also evidence of attainment at higher levels, including Level 6, although this shows some variability and remains an area where outcomes are still consolidating. The emerging focus is therefore on further strengthening progression to higher-level qualifications, particularly in numeracy, while building on the already strong foundation evident at Level 4 and sustained performance at Level 5.

Early Years Workforce, STEM and Career Pathways

Workforce development in Early Years remains a notable strength, with strong participation in qualifications, clear evidence of career pathway development and increasing alignment between learning, recruitment and service capacity.

- High levels of engagement in STEM transition professional learning and workforce pathway initiatives are improving practitioner confidence and supporting richer STEM experiences for children. This is helping to strengthen continuity in learning and improve the quality of curriculum experiences at an early stage.
- Strategic collaboration with DYW and other partners has increased awareness and uptake of Early Years career pathways, supported by strong application rates and successful recruitment aligned with national expectations. This indicates that partnership work is beginning to improve the attractiveness and visibility of the sector.
- The Modern Apprenticeship programme shows positive early outcomes, including sustained engagement, progression into employment and a strong completion trajectory. This suggests that local approaches to “grow your own” workforce development are beginning to deliver sustainable benefits.
- Workforce development routes remain well established, with 29 staff engaged in SVQ pathways and 13 undertaking degree-level study. This reflects strong commitment to progression and leadership capacity building within the sector.
- Structural developments, including the transition to the Training Centre model, are improving alignment between professional learning and service delivery. This is enhancing system capacity and placing the authority in a stronger position to sustain workforce growth over time.

Overall, there is strong progress in developing skills, widening pathways and sustaining positive destinations through effective partnership working. Increased access to work-based learning, college provision and wider achievement opportunities is supporting young people to develop relevant skills and transition successfully into employment, training or further learning. Targeted interventions for vulnerable learners are showing

clear impact, although aspects of transition equity and consistency of provision remain developmental and require ongoing attention.

Section 3: Report on Progress and Impact 2025-2026

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priority 5 - Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Education Service Strategic Priority 5.1 - We will provide targeted support to schools to improve learning and teaching in order to improve outcomes for children and young people and develop systematic evaluation and sharing of high-quality materials and resources to support continuing professional development to support practitioners in addressing barriers and raising attainment in Literacy and Numeracy for our children and young people.

Education Service Strategic Priority 5.2 - We will track and monitor children and young people's Literacy and Numeracy attainment, build capacity of senior leaders and practitioners in order to further develop their skills in data analysis to inform improvement. We will increase the use and range of data to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Education Service Strategic Priority 5.3 - We will respond to and embrace educational reform in relation to approaches to inspection, curriculum development and qualifications.

Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Moderation

There is strong progress in improving the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across schools, supported by a more coherent professional learning offer, increased targeted support and stronger use of shared frameworks and moderation activity.

- Authority-wide improvement in learning, teaching and assessment has been supported through an expanded programme of professional learning, including twelve twilight sessions for teachers. Improved communication has contributed to attendance increasing by more than 200% on the previous year, indicating stronger engagement with the central offer.
- Increased participation in professional learning is contributing to stronger planning and delivery of learning experiences, particularly through greater attention to effective pedagogy and differentiation. This is helping learners to be challenged more appropriately and to make progress at a better pace.

- A more systematic approach to recording and analysing information from school visits has improved the authority's ability to identify areas for development and target support. Coordinated visits focused on learning, teaching and assessment increased from 31 in 2024–2025 to 51 by May 2026, showing a stronger and more targeted support model.
- Evidence from school visits, learner conversations, school review activity and HMIE outcomes indicates that this support is having a positive impact on the quality of provision. The average HMIE evaluation for QI 2.3 in Argyll and Bute was reported as 3.86, higher than the Northern Alliance average of 3.44 and slightly above the Scotland average of 3.82.
- The Argyll and Bute Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework is increasingly being applied as a shared model for effective pedagogy across schools. Continued revision of the framework, aligned to national guidance and wider research, is strengthening consistency in how learning and teaching are planned, observed and evaluated.
- Moderation remains a key area of progress. Inter-school collaborative planning, joint assessment activity and cluster moderation are supporting greater consistency in professional judgement across stages and sectors, including at key transition points from Early Years to P1 and from P7 to S1.
- QAMSO training is helping to build sustainable leadership for moderation within schools and clusters. This is strengthening teachers' confidence in assessment and increasing consistency in the interpretation of national standards.
- Survey evidence suggests that in most schools there is now regular collegiate work on improving learning, teaching and assessment, and that enquiry-led professional learning is becoming more central to school improvement. This points to improving staff ownership and stronger professional agency, although the depth of impact will still vary across schools.

Early Years Pedagogy, Progression and Numeracy

There is developing and increasingly coherent progress in Early Years pedagogy and curriculum understanding, with strong engagement in professional learning and improving confidence in literacy and numeracy, although tracking and monitoring remain areas requiring further development.

- Widespread engagement in literacy and numeracy CLPL has strengthened practitioner confidence, reflective practice and pedagogical understanding. Practitioners are becoming more confident in articulating how learning can be applied within their own context and in understanding the knowledge and skills that underpin progression in these areas.

- There is growing evidence that curriculum thinking in Early Years is becoming stronger, with practitioners demonstrating increased clarity about curriculum rationale and making more informed, context-responsive decisions about planning for learning. This suggests improving professional judgement, although the evidence base for impact is still developing.
- Collaborative delivery models involving Early Years Teachers and lead practitioners have improved consistency in understanding and using progression frameworks. This is contributing to more coherent approaches to planning and moderation, although further embedding is still required across the system.
- In numeracy, the maths lead has delivered targeted CLPL across Early Level, Primary and Secondary contexts, including twelve central sessions for 46 practitioners and bespoke support for twelve schools and settings. This is strengthening awareness of Counting on Excellence and increasing consistency in planning and assessment.
- Additional digital resources have broadened access to support. On-demand CLPL videocasts had been accessed 348 times since January 2026, indicating strong practitioner interest and extending the reach of the authority's professional learning offer.
- Evaluation of numeracy CLPL is very positive. All returns were reported as positive in relation to impact on professional development, with practitioners identifying increased confidence, improved awareness and greater clarity in planning next steps in learning.
- There is increasing evidence that staff are beginning to use frameworks more diagnostically and that Early Years practitioners are starting to embed more consistent shared language and approaches. However, the collated evidence also identifies that tracking and monitoring progress over time in literacy and numeracy remains underdeveloped and requires further system focus.

There is strengthening leadership of learning within Early Years, supported by targeted professional learning, quality assurance activity and an increasing focus on curriculum rationale and pedagogy.

- Delivery of the Pedagogical Leadership Programme is supporting practitioners and leaders to strengthen their understanding of play, pedagogy and curriculum design, contributing to greater confidence in leading learning within Early Years settings.
- Collaboration with external experts on play as curriculum is helping to deepen professional understanding of high-quality Early Level pedagogy and is supporting more informed, reflective approaches to curriculum design.

- Continued development of quality assurance and scrutiny processes is strengthening oversight of Early Years provision and supporting settings to evaluate and refine their curriculum offer more effectively.
- Support for context-specific curriculum rationales is contributing to improved clarity about why and how children learn within different settings, although implementation remains variable and will require continued support.

Inclusion, Additional Support and Equity in Learning

There is clear progress in strengthening inclusive approaches to learning, with improved capacity to assess, track and support learners with additional and complex needs through targeted professional learning and better use of specialist knowledge and tools.

- The Inclusion and Equality team has worked with specialist provision leads and partners to develop more effective systems for tracking the progress of learners with complex needs. Pilot work in Parklands indicates that these approaches are helping staff to recognise incremental and non-academic progress more effectively and are supporting stronger target-setting through the child's planning process.
- Work with Speech and Language Therapy and digital partners has strengthened staff confidence in using alternative and augmentative communication and assistive technology. Hands-on training is leading to more appropriate referrals and helping staff respond more effectively to the communication needs of learners.
- Targeted training on dyslexia and dyscalculia pathways has been delivered to all peripatetic pupil support teachers. This is increasing the authority's capacity to support schools locally and is helping to build more consistent approaches to identifying and responding to barriers in literacy and numeracy.
- More broadly, this work is contributing to a stronger understanding of how progress can be identified for learners whose achievements are not always captured through standard academic measures. This is supporting more valid planning, more inclusive learning pathways and a more evidence-informed approach to improvement for some of the authority's most vulnerable learners.

Attainment of Care Experience Children and Young People

There is sustained and strengthening progress in improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people, with a clear strategic commitment across the Education Service and emerging evidence of positive impact on wellbeing and attainment.

- The Promise sets a clear national ambition that by 2030 all education establishments will provide the conditions for care experienced children and

young people to thrive. The Education Service remains strongly aligned to this ambition, with ongoing commitment reflected through sustained investment in the Virtual School.

- The Promise Plan 2024–2030 provides a dynamic framework for improvement, and local approaches continue to adapt to reflect this, ensuring that support for care experienced learners remains responsive to emerging need and national direction.
- Targeted support for care experienced children and young people is well established and includes one-to-one support, bespoke curriculum pathways, enhanced nurture approaches and targeted attendance interventions. This is enabling many learners to achieve in literacy and numeracy despite significant barriers.
- The Care Experienced Education Team provides targeted support and challenge to settings, working alongside staff to improve planning, monitoring and intervention. This is strengthening the consistency and quality of support across schools and contributing to improved outcomes.
- All settings have a Designated Manager for care experienced learners. Ongoing training and participation in focus groups are strengthening their understanding of the role and supporting a more consistent approach to advocacy, planning and support.
- Stronger links between Designated Managers and the Virtual School are improving oversight, scrutiny and targeted intervention for this cohort. This is contributing to a more shared understanding across the system of how to support care experienced learners effectively.
- There is emerging evidence of improved wellbeing, engagement and attainment for care experienced children and young people. While this impact is increasingly visible, continued focus is required to ensure consistency of practice and to sustain improvement across all settings.

The following attainment data relates to care experienced learners across Argyll and Bute for the 2024-2025 academic session (55 pupils in this cohort).

Table 25 – National Qualifications Pass Rates (CECYP)

Presentation Type	A	B	C	D	No Award	A-C Pass	A-D Pass
National 5	10.6%	34.8%	16.7%	19.7%	18.2%	62.1%	81.8%
Higher	12.5%	33.3%	25.0%	4.2%	25.0%	70.8%	75.0%
Adv Higher	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%
All Graded NQs	10.9%	33.7%	18.5%	16.3%	20.7%	63.0%	79.3%

There is clear evidence of improved attainment outcomes for care experienced young people across National Qualifications, with a notable increase in attainment at both National 5 and Higher levels.

- The data in Table 25 shows attainment outcomes for care experienced learners across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. A number of young people were able to complete coursework and present for examinations despite experiencing significant barriers.
- At National 5, strong progress is evident, with the A–C pass rate increasing to 62.1% from 45.7% in the previous year. This indicates a significant improvement in attainment for this cohort.
- At Higher, attainment has improved substantially, with the A–C pass rate increasing to 70.8%, compared to 33.3% in the previous year.
- The current A–C pass rate at Higher equates to the previous year’s A–D performance, demonstrating a notable shift in attainment from lower grades into higher attainment bands.

Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy – National Comparison (Looked After)

Table 26 – National Comparison – Literacy Level 4 (CECYP)

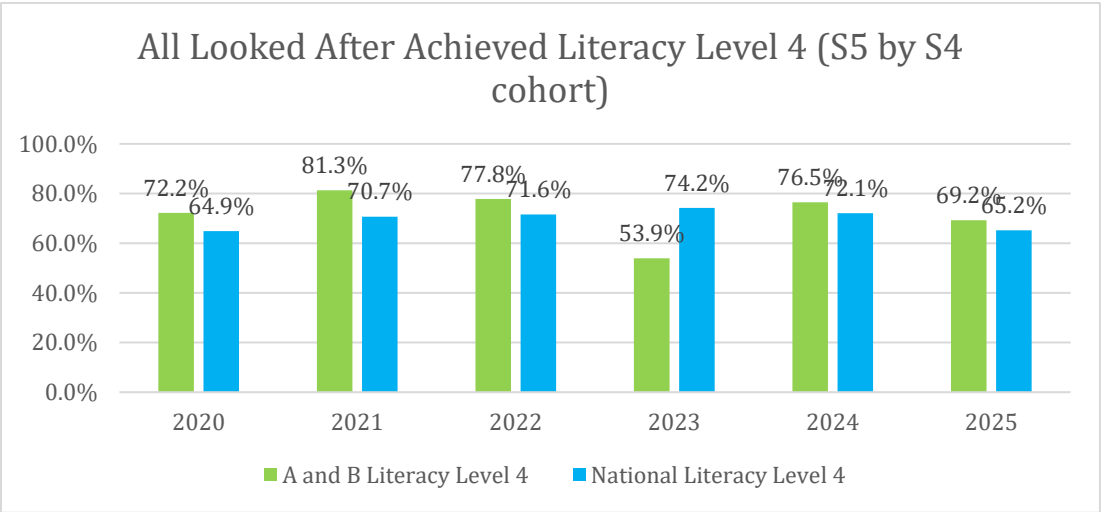


Table 27 – National Comparison – Numeracy Level 4 (CECYP)

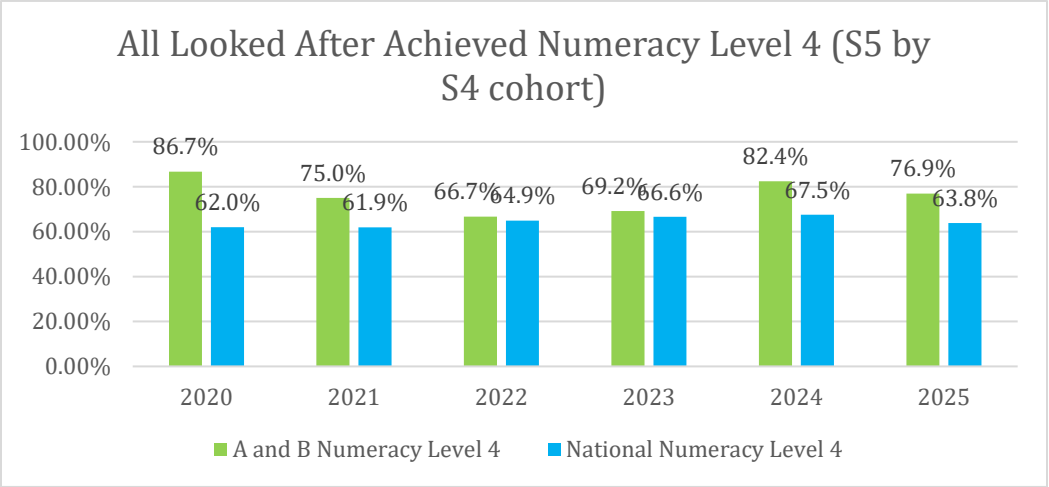


Table 28 – National Comparison – Literacy Level 5 (CECYP)

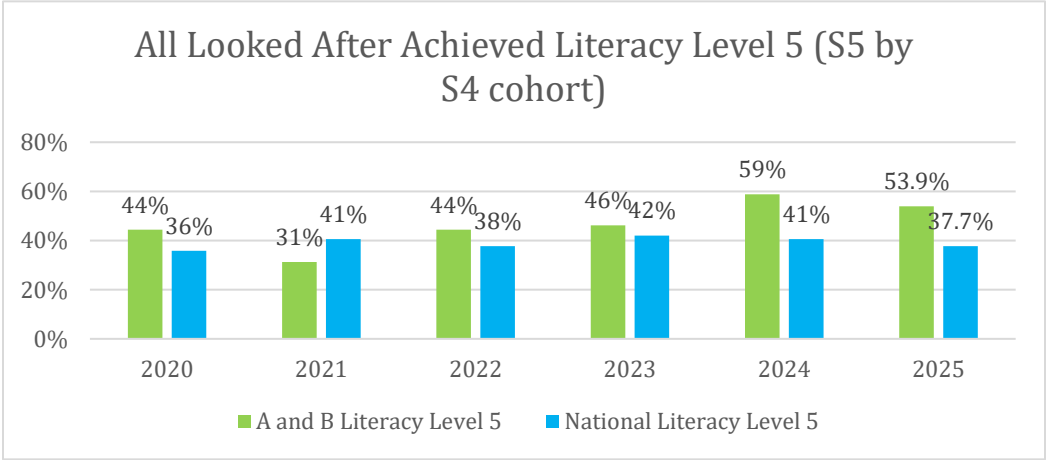
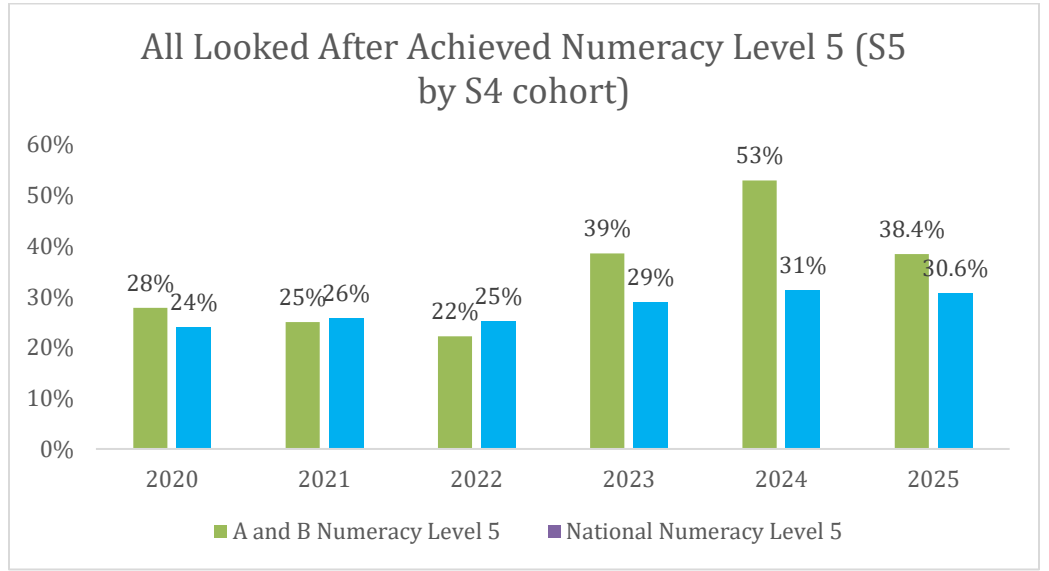


Table 29 – National Comparison – Numeracy Level 5 (CECYP)



There is consistent evidence over time that attainment for looked after learners in Argyll and Bute compares positively to national performance across literacy and numeracy, although caution is required due to the small cohort size.

- Tables 26, 27, 28 and 29 present cumulative attainment for looked after learners in S5 at SCQF Levels 4 and 5, based on the original S4 roll, and provide a multi-year comparison rather than a single-year snapshot.
- At Level 4, performance in literacy has exceeded the national average in five of the last six sessions, while performance in numeracy has exceeded the national average in all of the last six sessions.
- At Level 5, performance in literacy has exceeded the national average in five of the last six sessions, and in numeracy in four of the last six sessions.
- This indicates a strong and sustained pattern of positive performance relative to national comparators across both literacy and numeracy for this cohort.
- Due to the small number of looked after learners within the authority, year-on-year variation should be interpreted with caution, and trends over time provide a more reliable measure of performance.

Table 30 - Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy – Local Comparison (Looked After)

Year	Looked After			All Pupils			Difference between All and Looked After	
	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy	% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy	Number in Cohort	% Level 4 Literacy and Numeracy	% Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy	Number in Cohort	Level 4	Level 5
2025	50	27.78	18	85.66	67.8	851	35.66	40.02
2024	70.59	52.94	17	83.29	64.82	796	12.7	11.88
2023	63.64	36.36	11	85.66	67.09	781	22.02	30.73
2022	70	20	10	88.42	68.62	838	18.42	48.62
2021	63.64	9.09	11	86.66	68.08	802	23.02	58.99
2020	55.56	22.22	18	87.46	68.66	702	31.9	46.44

There is clear evidence of improvement over time in reducing the attainment gap between looked after learners and all leavers at Level 5 in both literacy and numeracy, although recent performance at Level 4 shows some variability.

- Table 30 presents a comparison between looked after young people and all leavers from 2020 to 2025 for attainment at SCQF Levels 4 and 5 in literacy and numeracy, alongside the attainment gap at authority level.
- At Level 5, the gap between looked after young people and all leavers has reduced over the last five sessions across both literacy and numeracy. This indicates sustained progress in improving higher attainment outcomes for this cohort.
- At Level 4, there had been a pattern of improvement over time, with the attainment gap reducing across previous sessions.
- However, in 2025 there was an increase in the gap at Level 4 compared to all pupils, indicating some regression in lower attainment levels.

Overall, the data shows a positive long-term trend, particularly at Level 5, while highlighting the need for continued focus on consistency and earlier attainment to sustain improvement across all levels.

Table 31 - Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) – 5 Year Authority View
P1, 4, 7 combined

	Care Experienced Pupils						Non Care Experienced Pupils						Gap Between Care Experienced and Non-Care Experienced					
Curricular Area	P1,4,7 Combined Percentaged Achieved the Level																	
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Five Year Change	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Five Year Change	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Five Year Change
Reading	35%	47%	53%	58%	69%	34%	72%	74%	77%	81%	81%	9%	37%	27%	24%	23%	13%	-25%
Writing	30%	27%	37%	49%	56%	26%	63%	67%	72%	76%	75%	12%	33%	40%	35%	27%	19%	-14%
Listening and Talking	39%	60%	65%	71%	77%	38%	76%	81%	85%	86%	88%	12%	37%	21%	20%	15%	11%	-26%
Literacy	28%	25%	37%	49%	55%	27%	59%	62%	68%	72%	73%	14%	31%	37%	31%	23%	18%	-13%
Numeracy	41%	44%	43%	59%	64%	23%	70%	74%	77%	81%	80%	10%	29%	30%	34%	22%	16%	-13%

Table 32 - Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) – 5 Year Authority View
P1, 4, 7 and S3 combined

	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	2024-25	Four Year Change	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Four Year Change	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Four Year Change
Reading	49%	59%	57%	68%	19%	78%	81%	83%	84%	6%	29%	22%	26%	16%	-13%
Writing	36%	49%	51%	59%	23%	72%	76%	79%	80%	8%	36%	27%	28%	20%	-16%
Listening and Talking	59%	67%	65%	74%	15%	83%	86%	88%	89%	6%	24%	19%	23%	15%	-9%
Literacy	33%	48%	48%	58%	25%	69%	73%	77%	78%	9%	36%	25%	29%	20%	-16%
Numeracy	48%	52%	61%	69%	21%	77%	80%	84%	84%	7%	29%	28%	23%	15%	-14%

There is clear evidence of sustained improvement in attainment for care experienced learners across primary and early secondary stages, with a consistent pattern of closing the attainment gap over time.

- Table 31 presents combined cohort data for care experienced and non-care experienced pupils at authority level across P1, P4 and P7, showing attainment trends over a five-year period.
- Across all stages and areas, attainment for care experienced pupils has improved over time, with increases evident in literacy and numeracy outcomes.
- This improvement has been accompanied by a consistent reduction in the attainment gap between care experienced and non-care experienced learners, with both cohorts showing improvement over the period.
- Table 32 also presents a four-year attainment trend for learners across P1, P4, P7 and S3. This further supports the positive picture, demonstrating improving outcomes across stages and sustained progress as learners move through the Broad General Education.

Overall, the data indicates a strengthening trajectory for care experienced learners, with both improved attainment and narrowing gaps, although continued focus is required to sustain this progress across all stages.

Languages, Gaelic and Cultural Engagement

There is positive progress in strengthening language learning, Gaelic education and cultural engagement, with increased access to high-quality professional learning, wider use of partnership support and improving practitioner confidence in language delivery.

- Online team teaching for languages continues to provide strong support for practitioners. Authority participation is significant, with 43 Argyll and Bute primary practitioners in the French Team and 28 in the Gaelic Team. Feedback from participants indicates high levels of satisfaction and strong evidence of improved confidence in teaching languages.
- Teacher feedback indicates that learning alongside specialists is improving both practitioner confidence and pupil engagement. Approaches are described as interactive and well structured, and schools report positive effects on pupil confidence, participation and progression in language learning.
- Awareness of language resources has been raised through Head Teacher meetings, and all Head Teachers have received updates on the resources available through Glow. This is helping improve visibility of support materials, although no evaluative outcome is yet provided on the extent of school-level uptake.
- In Gaelic learner education, the online team-teaching model is contributing to increased capacity to deliver Gaelic as L2 and L3. Gaelic is now reported as being delivered as L2 or L3 in 70% of primary schools, and eight practitioners successfully completed the national GLPS course to support Gaelic delivery in classrooms.

- Gaelic settings continue to benefit from strong partnership support. The Gaelic Administrator in Furan has provided direct support to schools, while online Bookbug sessions and Mòd tuition are enabling pupils across dispersed settings to learn with peers, build confidence and engage in Gaelic cultural activity.
- Cultural engagement is being strengthened through participation in local Mòds, Gaelic Week activity and projects such as Aiseag. Teacher feedback indicates that these experiences are motivating for pupils and are supporting fluency, confidence and a stronger sense of Gaelic identity.
- Professional learning specific to Gaelic medium education has also expanded. Education Scotland delivered in-service support for nearly all settings on literacy, Gàidhlig, moderation and interdisciplinary learning, and six Gaelic-specific CLPL opportunities were delivered online. This is strengthening practitioner understanding, supporting moderation and contributing to improvement in Gaelic settings.
- Secondary settings offering Gaelic Fluent pathways are now giving greater attention to Gaelic attainment and progression into the Senior Phase. Quality improvement conversations are beginning to focus more explicitly on Gaelic learner pathways, although this remains an area for further development.

Leadership, System Improvement and Capacity Building

There is developing progress in strengthening system leadership and improvement capacity, with strong early evidence from collaborative improvement models and more strategic use of support systems.

- The pilot of Self-Improving Schools' Groups has produced positive early evidence of impact. Post-pilot feedback indicates that participating school leaders reported increased professional trust, stronger collaboration and improved understanding of wider school improvement priorities. This suggests that the model has strong potential to strengthen system leadership and collaborative improvement.
- The first implementation phase of the Self-Improving Schools' Groups is scheduled to begin in August 2026, indicating that the pilot findings are already informing next steps in authority-wide improvement planning.
- Use of the support matrix has developed further through automation. Link Managers and school leaders now use a shared process to agree risk levels, and this information populates a School Improvement Dashboard. This is strengthening the authority's ability to allocate support and deploy resources more strategically.
- Through collaboration with our partner Quad Local Authorities, the development and use of the QI 1.1 rubric is strengthening system leadership by supporting a

shared approach to self-evaluation for self-improvement. This is improving the quality of professional dialogue and increasing consistency in self-evaluation across authorities. The Quad secondary Head Teachers' conference has complemented this work by providing a focused space for collaborative reflection and challenge, supporting leaders to engage more confidently with improvement priorities and contributing to a more aligned and coherent leadership culture across the system.

- There is developing progress in strengthening leadership capacity and system coherence across the authority. The centrally available suite of professional learning for Head Teachers and System Leaders has been refreshed using PRD data from SEEMiS, strengthening alignment with identified leadership needs. This has highlighted the need to continue to promote and tailor central leadership learning to maximise engagement across all groups.
- There has been increased engagement with the professional learning offer across a number of leadership pathways, particularly in Middle Leadership and Aspiring to Headship programmes. This is strengthening leadership capacity across the system and supporting a more sustainable pool of future leaders. Participation in Into Headship remains steady, supporting continuity in leadership development and contributing to effective succession planning across the authority.
- The refreshed programme for newly appointed Head Teachers is having a positive impact. Feedback indicates that most participants value opportunities for collaboration and networking, and almost all report benefit from professional reading and reflective time. This is supporting newly appointed Head Teachers to strengthen their understanding of local processes and policy expectations.
- Overall, there is encouraging progress in the structures being put in place to support system leadership and improvement. Continued focus on strengthening engagement across all professional learning pathways will further maximise participation and impact across the service.
- A newly formed leadership group for specialist settings is strengthening leadership capacity through collaborative professional learning aligned to identified improvement needs. With representation from all specialist settings, this approach is building confidence in specialist leadership roles, promoting the sharing of effective practice and supporting a more consistent and informed approach to leading improvement across this sector.

There is growing emphasis on developing leadership of learning, teaching and assessment across the system, with targeted professional learning supporting Head Teachers, aspiring leaders and middle leaders to strengthen their role in leading improvement.

- The authority's professional learning offer has included a specific focus on the strategic leadership of learning, teaching and assessment for Head Teachers,

System Leaders, aspiring Head Teachers and middle leaders. This is supporting greater coherence between leadership practice and school improvement priorities.

- There is emerging evidence that this is contributing to increased collegiate and enquiry-led professional learning within schools, with a growing number of establishments placing explicit emphasis on practitioner enquiry and collaborative improvement.
- While impact is not yet consistent across all settings, this work is beginning to strengthen leadership capacity for learning and teaching improvement and to support more sustainable approaches to school-based improvement.

Overall, there is strong progress in improving the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across the authority, supported by enhanced professional learning, moderation and shared pedagogical frameworks. There is evidence of increasing practitioner confidence and improved approaches to literacy and numeracy, particularly in Early Years and targeted settings. However, further work is required to ensure consistency of implementation, strengthen tracking and monitoring and increase engagement in some leadership professional learning to maximise system-wide impact.

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Key Messages from Parents and Carers

Engagement with parents and carers has played a significant role in shaping the Education Service Strategic Priorities for 2026–2029. A parent and carer survey was undertaken between 20 April and 29 May 2026, with 608 responses received, to gather views on current strengths and areas for improvement to inform the development of the Education Service Strategic Plan 2026–2029.

Parent and carer feedback identifies a number of strengths within the Education Service, particularly in relation to ethos, relationships and early years provision, alongside clear and consistent areas for improvement relating to the quality and consistency of provision, support for additional needs and communication.

- Parents/Carers identified high-quality education and positive learning experiences as a key strength, particularly within early years and primary settings. There is recognition of the commitment of staff and the quality of learning environments in many establishments.
- Health and wellbeing and nurturing relationships are widely recognised as strengths, with parents highlighting the positive ethos within many settings and the importance placed on supporting learners' emotional wellbeing.
- Early years provision and transitions from nursery to primary are viewed positively, with parents identifying supportive and high-quality experiences for younger learners.
- A number of parents/carers identify effective communication and partnership working as strengths; however, this is not consistent across all settings and stages.
- In contrast, feedback highlights a number of system-wide areas for improvement, most notably in relation to support for children and young people with additional needs. This includes staffing, access to support, staff training and consistency of provision across schools.
- Parents/Carers also identify communication between schools and families as a key area for improvement, including the need for more timely, consistent and accessible information about learning, progress and support.
- There is a strong theme relating to inconsistency in the quality of learning and teaching, with parents highlighting variation across schools, departments and individual staff.
- Concerns are also raised regarding the consistency of staffing and leadership, with changes in personnel impacting continuity of experience for children and young people.
- Parents/Carers highlight the impact of dysregulated behaviour with concerns that this can reduce learning time for all pupils.
- There is also a clear message regarding the need to broaden opportunities and pathways, particularly within the senior phase, including vocational options and preparation for life beyond school.
- Overall, the feedback presents a positive picture of relationships and ethos within establishments, alongside a clear and consistent message that greater

consistency, stronger support and improved communication are required across the system to ensure equity of experience for all learners.

Parent/Carer feedback on improvement priorities for the Education Service indicates a clear message of parental priorities of a consistently high-quality education experience for all learners, alongside strengthened support for wellbeing, inclusion and communication. The key themes identified as priorities by parents/carers have been carefully considered and are reflected across all four strategic priorities.

- Improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching was a clear and repeated message from parents and carers. This has directly informed Priority 1, which focuses on strengthening curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment to ensure equity and high standards for all learners regardless of context.
- Feedback relating to additional support needs, inclusion, wellbeing and behaviour was the most prominent theme within survey responses. This has directly shaped Priority 2, with a strong emphasis on reducing inequalities, strengthening inclusive practice and ensuring all learners feel safe, supported and able to thrive.
- Parents also highlighted the importance of broader opportunities, relevant pathways and preparation for life beyond school, particularly for young people in the senior phase and those pursuing non-academic routes. This has informed Priority 3, which focuses on improving skills development, widening achievement opportunities and strengthening pathways to positive destinations.
- Feedback regarding communication, leadership consistency and variation across settings have informed the development of Priority 4. This priority emphasises collaborative leadership, evidence-informed decision making and improved alignment across the service to ensure a more consistent experience for children and families.
- Feedback also highlighted the importance of transitions and continuity of experience, particularly between key stages. This is reflected across all priorities, with a focus on ensuring progression, coherence and continuity in learning and support.

The Education Service priorities for 2026-2029 reflect both the areas where improvement is most needed and the aspects of the system that matter most to families. They establish a clear focus on improving consistency, strengthening inclusion and support, enhancing communication and leadership, and ensuring all learners are well prepared for their future

Connecting for Success – Shaping the Future

An independent review of Argyll and Bute's Education Service was conducted from May to September 2025 in line with the Council's brief:

Having regard to the numerous challenges which are currently being faced by the Service, the Education Service requires reassurance that its current Service design and delivery model is efficient and effective, and will deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people, whilst providing Best Value and to support the Council's options to review and redesign (if necessary) all aspects of its operation in this regard, in a manner which could be feasible and permitted having regard to the national requirements and legislation which the Service is subject to.

Ten strategic recommendations for Service improvement were made by the review team. These recommendations take account of the need to support the Council's vision. There is a particular emphasis therefore on Best Value, Affordability, Sustainability, Performance and Collaboration.

The main over-arching theme for all ten recommendations is one of the need for greater strategic collaboration across all services and across partners. Strategic collaboration is vital because it unlocks capabilities, resilience, and innovation that no single entity can achieve alone. Partners bring different strengths – technical skills, local knowledge and expertise that when combined with Service expertise can help tackle some of the more complex challenges faced by a large, rural local authority area such as Argyll and Bute. Successful collaboration will be built on trust, mutual respect, and aligned aims – *Connected for Success*.

The review team's recommendation was that a planned, incremental implementation of the recommendations across a two to four year horizon would build strong foundations from which to deliver better outcomes for children and young people across Argyll and Bute. The ten strategic recommendations set out in the review are:

1. Early Learning and Childcare

Working with community planning partners, re-envision the service to ensure it is sustainable and meets the needs of local communities.

2. Additional Support Needs / Inclusion – Workforce Model

Carry out a comprehensive review of all support staff roles to design a workforce model aligned with the principle that staff should be equipped with the skills to meet a diverse range of needs flexibly and sustainably, with resources directed towards universal provision where most children's additional support needs are being met

3. Additional Support Needs / Inclusion – Strategic Planning

Plan strategically for Additional Support Needs at all levels using more diverse sources of data, including partner data, to inform workforce planning, curriculum development and the design of future learning environments that are sustainable and offer best value.

4. Secondary Provision – Strategic Collaboration and Pupil Choice

Establish a cross-school group of senior secondary leaders and central officers to collectively plan a reshaping of secondary timetabling models, increasing learner choice through greater alignment, technology-enabled delivery, partnership working and more efficient staff deployment.

5. Leadership Model (Primary and Secondary)

Plan, develop and implement a model of shared leadership across schools and clusters in response to recruitment, retention and succession planning challenges. This should include a different approach to business and finance support staffing allocation and take account of wider workforce recommendations.

6. Primary Staffing Standard

Develop a new Primary Staffing Standard designed to ensure equitable and fair allocation of teaching staff across all primary schools. The standard should include weightings for socio-economic factors, exceptional ASN, and management time, with annual review of allocations and three-yearly review of the standard itself.

7. Learning Estate Strategy

Develop the existing Learning Estate Strategy as a matter of urgency, setting out current and medium-term challenges, adopting an appropriate place-based review methodology, and identifying clear priorities for action.

8. Integrated Facilities Management

Commit to developing an integrated Facilities Management Service, establishing a project board to design, implement and oversee delivery arrangements.

9. Education-Wide Support Staffing Synergies

Adopt a strategically coordinated, locally empowered hybrid support staffing model for all non-teaching posts across all sectors to ensure holistic strategic oversight, flexibility and improved deployment of resources.

10. Multi-Agency Partnerships

Strengthen multi-agency collaboration and shared analysis of data to address the increasing complexity of children and young people's needs, including development of approaches such as a Single Point of Access for Families and strengthened transition planning.

The recommendations arising from *Connecting for Success – Shaping the Future* will be used to inform service planning, prioritisation and improvement activity over the coming years. While implementation will take place over a two to four year period, this Annual Plan identifies the key actions that will be progressed during 2026-2027 to

strengthen sustainability, collaboration, workforce capacity and service effectiveness. Collectively, these actions will support the delivery of better outcomes for children and young people while ensuring the Education Service is well placed to respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

The Education Service Strategic Plan 2026–2029 sets out the intended outcomes and impacts for education in Argyll and Bute, aligned to the priorities of the National Improvement Framework, Argyll and Bute Council’s overarching priorities and the Education Service’s Vision and Strategy, *Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together*. It builds on progress achieved in recent sessions and identifies the key priorities and strategic actions required to secure sustained improvement and meaningful outcomes for children and young people.

The Strategic Plan provides a clear, enabling framework to support schools, early learning and childcare settings and strategic remit teams in shaping their own improvement activity. It is not designed to prescribe specific actions, but to ensure coherence, shared direction and flexibility, allowing improvement priorities to be addressed in ways that reflect local context and need across Argyll and Bute’s diverse communities. More detailed operational plans will be developed by individual teams, setting out specific actions and expected impact.

The sections that follow outline how this strategic framework is being translated into targeted improvement activity and measurable impact across the Education Service.

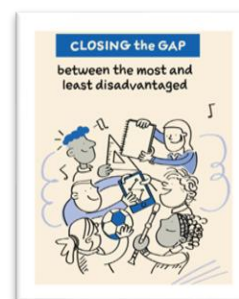
Priority Mapping

Education Service Strategic Priority	National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priorities	Argyll and Bute Council Priorities	Our Children, Their Future – Thriving Together
We will improve the quality and consistency of curriculum design, learning, teaching and assessment across all establishments to ensure every learner experiences high-quality pedagogy, strong literacy and numeracy development, and equitable outcomes regardless of setting, stage or individual support needs.	<i>NIF Priority 1</i> – Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education <i>NIF Priority 3</i> – Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people <i>NIF Priority 5</i> – Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy	Children and Young People – giving young people the best start in life Communities – supporting equity and consistency across diverse communities	Best Start for Learners Ambitious Learners
We will strengthen inclusive practice, early intervention and targeted support to reduce the poverty related attainment gap, uphold children’s rights, improve attendance and engagement, and ensure every child and young person feels safe, supported and able to thrive.	<i>NIF Priority 1</i> – Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education <i>NIF Priority 2</i> – Improvement in children’s and young people’s health and wellbeing <i>NIF Priority 3</i> – Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people	Children and Young People – supporting wellbeing, inclusion and early intervention Communities – reducing inequality and building resilience	Best Start for Learners Nurtured Learners
We will enhance learner pathways, widen achievement opportunities and strengthen partnerships to increase attainment, skills development and sustained positive destinations for all young people.	<i>NIF Priority 4</i> – Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people <i>NIF Priority 5</i> – Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy	Children and Young People – developing skills for the future Housing, Economic Growth and Population – supporting economic sustainability and population retention	Connected Learners Lifelong Learners
We will build a culture of collaborative leadership at all levels and evidence-informed decision making, ensuring clear accountability, effective self-evaluation and alignment across the service and schools to drive continuous improvement.	<i>NIF Priority 3</i> – Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people <i>NIF Priority 4</i> – Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people <i>NIF Priority 5</i> – Improvement in achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy	Sustainable Service Delivery – improving quality, consistency and accountability Communities – strengthening partnership and local leadership	Ambitious Learners Lifelong Learners

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Education Service Strategic Priority 1: We will improve the quality and consistency of curriculum design, learning, teaching and assessment across all establishments to ensure every learner experiences high-quality pedagogy, strong literacy and numeracy development, and equitable outcomes regardless of setting, stage or individual support needs.

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priorities



Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Improve the consistency and quality of curriculum design through the embedding of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) and evolved technical framework across all practitioners.	- By December 2026, 100% of schools will have engaged with national CIC guidance and evolved technical frameworks (Know/Do/Understand). - By May 2027, quality assurance and collaborative activity will evidence that all schools are engaging with Curriculum Improvement Cycle documents, resources and activities in relation to their own context, informing curriculum design and planning. - By June 2027, at least 80% of sampled schools will demonstrate evidence of curriculum design aligned to CIC and evolved technical frameworks within planning and improvement priorities.	- Evaluation of progress against the evolved technical framework and CIC guidance - Local authority tracking and feedback through collaborative groups and professional learning networks - School curriculum documentation and planning evidence - Stakeholder and practitioner feedback	BGE Learning, Teaching and Assessment
Improve the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across all schools through targeted support, challenge and quality assurance.	- By June 2027, at least 70% of schools will evaluate HGIOS4 QI 2.3 (Learning, Teaching and Assessment) as 'Good' or better through Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs). - By June 2027, the proportion of schools evaluated as	- School Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) - HMIE inspection	Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	'Good' or better in QI 2.3 through HMIE inspection will increase from 64% (2023–2025 baseline) to at least 74%. - By June 2027, quality assurance activity will demonstrate improved consistency in LTA practice across the majority of schools.	reports and Argyll & Bute HMIE dashboard - Quality assurance and school review evidence	
Improve the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across all schools through the delivery and embedding of a structured, high-quality CLPL programme.	- By May 2027, a revised authority-wide Learning, Teaching and Assessment CLPL programme will be fully delivered across the 2026–2027 session, with participation from targeted staff and schools. - By June 2027, at least 80% of participating staff will report that CLPL has led to improved learning experiences for learners, supported by professional enquiry and evaluation. - By June 2027, quality assurance and review evidence will demonstrate improved consistency in learning, teaching and assessment practice across participating schools.	- CLPL participation and engagement data - CLPL evaluation and professional enquiry evidence - Quality assurance and school review evidence - HMIE inspection evaluations and SQRs - Observation of learning, teaching and assessment - PRD discussions and professional dialogue records	Learning, Teaching and Assessment
Expand Senior Phase curriculum pathways through strengthened partnership and collaborative delivery models to improve equity of access for all learners regardless of school or locality.	- By May 2027, all secondary schools will demonstrate an increase in the number of Senior Phase courses available through partnership delivery. - By May 2027, 100% of secondary schools will offer at least one additional pathway through partnership working (e.g. Argyll College, e-Sgoil or inter-school collaboration). - By June 2027, all schools will evidence a broader and more flexible Senior Phase curriculum, including academic and vocational pathways. - By June 2028 an increase in shared offers across schools starting with Advanced Highers will be evidenced in school timetables.	- School and authority-level Senior Phase curriculum offer mapping - Partnership delivery data (e.g. Argyll College, e-Sgoil, inter-school courses) - School curriculum rationales and timetables	Senior Phase
Improve collaborative leadership of curriculum design through Head Teacher networks and collegiate professional learning aligned to the	- By May 2027, 100% of Secondary Specialist Subject Groups will engage regularly with CIC guidance and evidence-informed pedagogical approaches. - By May 2027, all secondary schools will evidence	- Subject Group agendas and minutes - Faculty and school	Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).	increased participation in Subject Groups, with attendance from all relevant subject staff. - By June 2027, all secondary schools will demonstrate evidence of shared pedagogical approaches informed by CIC within faculty or subject improvement planning.	improvement plans (SIPs) - Secondary curriculum frameworks and rationales	BGE
Improve the quality and consistency of curriculum design, learning, teaching and assessment across ELC settings and schools through the embedding of inclusive pedagogies, effective differentiation and adaptive teaching, aligned to inclusive workforce development.	- By May 2027, all 3 targeted ELC Hub settings and most schools will have engaged in professional learning on inclusive pedagogies, differentiation and adaptive teaching. - By May 2027, quality assurance and moderation activity will evidence improved consistency in inclusive learning, teaching and assessment in at least 75% of sampled settings. - By June 2027, at least 80% of participating practitioners will report increased confidence and use of inclusive pedagogies in everyday practice. - By June 2027, tracking and professional judgement will evidence improved engagement, participation and progress for identified learners with ASN in the majority of sampled settings. - By June 2027, requests for specialist support will show a shift towards increased use of universal and targeted approaches.	- Practitioner feedback and CLPL evaluation data - Quality assurance and moderation evidence - Attainment and tracking data for identified learners with ASN - Professional judgement and school review evidence	Inclusion & Equality Team Early Years
Improve Early Years curriculum design through the implementation of a structured ELC curriculum CLPL programme focused on progression across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.	- By June 2027, all participating ELC settings will demonstrate a clear and documented curriculum rationale and progression framework across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. - By June 2027, quality assurance activity will evidence improved coherence and progression in learning in the majority of targeted settings. - By June 2027, at least 80% of participating practitioners will report increased confidence in curriculum design and progression through CLPL evaluation.	- Quality assurance visit evidence - Curriculum documentation and planning evidence - Scrutiny reports - CLPL participation and evaluation feedback	Early Years
Improve consistency in learning, teaching and assessment across Early Learning and Childcare settings through the delivery and embedding of a comprehensive	- By June 2027, 100% of ELC settings engaged in CLPL will be using agreed planning approaches that demonstrate a balanced range of learning experiences. - By June 2027, at least 50% of inspected ELC settings	- CLPL participation and attendance data - Planning and learning	Early Years

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
CLPL programme focused on high-quality play and learning.	will achieve “good” or better in relevant Quality Indicators for Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Play and Learning. - By June 2027, quality assurance evidence will demonstrate increased consistency in learning, teaching and assessment practice across the majority of settings.	documentation - Quality assurance feedback and visit evidence - School/self-evaluation data	
Improve the quality of Early Learning and Childcare provision through the embedding of ‘Realising the Ambition’ as the core pedagogical framework underpinning practice across all settings.	- By May 2027, 75% of practitioners in targeted settings will demonstrate consistent use of ‘Realising the Ambition’ principles within their practice, as evidenced through quality assurance and scrutiny activity. - By June 2027, quality assurance evidence will demonstrate improved consistency in high-quality play-based pedagogy across the majority of settings. - By June 2027, monitoring and tracking of children’s learning will evidence improved progression and engagement in play-based learning across targeted settings.	- Scrutiny and quality assurance data - CLPL participation and evaluation feedback - Head Teacher / manager monitoring evidence - Children’s progression and planning records	Early Years
Improve the consistency and quality of curriculum design across all schools through collaborative engagement with the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC), including Head Teacher networks and collegiate professional learning.	- By May 2027, 100% of schools will have Senior Leadership who have engaged in professional learning related to CIC and curriculum development. - By June 2027, all schools will have identified and are actively progressing CIC-informed curriculum development actions within their School Improvement Plans. - By May 2027, all Head Teachers will evidence staff engagement with CIC through collegiate activity (e.g. WTA sessions, cluster working). - By June 2027, quality assurance activity will demonstrate improved consistency in curriculum rationale and design across the majority of schools, reflecting CIC principles.	- CLPL participation records (HTs and senior leaders) - Head Teacher network / cluster engagement records - School Improvement Plans (CIC actions) - Quality assurance and school review evidence - Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) - Staff engagement and feedback from collegiate activity	BGE
Improve the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment in numeracy and mathematics across all stages,	- By May 27 Integrate the Education Scotland evolved Technical Framework for Mathematics and Numeracy into the Counting On Excellence (COE) framework to	Counting on Excellence resources	BGE

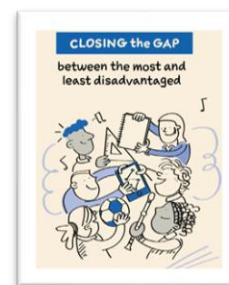
Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
with a focus on improving attainment from Early to Third Level, through the alignment of professional learning, resources and frameworks with the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).	ensure full national alignment and coherent progression across all levels. - Through 26/27 on-line and in person professional learning programmes will be designed and delivered to support practitioners and leaders continue to improve learning and teaching approaches in numeracy and mathematics and ensure familiarity and understanding of the updated framework in line with CIC. - By May 27, all secondary maths lead will engage in professional development activities aligned with Counting on Excellence resources. - By May 2027, most primary schools will engage with authority numeracy guidance and professional learning. - By June 2027, quality assurance and moderation activity will evidence consistent use of agreed numeracy approaches in the majority of schools. - By June 2027, ACEL data will demonstrate improved numeracy attainment from Early to Third Level compared to the June 2026 baseline. - By June 2027, identified schools will demonstrate improved learner progress in numeracy following targeted support and CLPL.	Data showing number of visits to Counting on Excellence web resources Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) CLPL participation records Quality assurance meetings Staff feedback BGE progress and ACEL data	
Improve the quality and consistency of literacy learning, teaching and assessment across all schools through the development, implementation and embedding of an authority-wide Literacy Guidance and targeted professional learning based on attainment data.	- By October 2026, 100% of schools will have accessed and engaged with the authority Literacy Guidance and Good Practice Policy. - By May 2027, quality assurance and moderation activity will evidence consistent use of agreed core literacy approaches (reading, writing and talk) in the majority of schools. - By June 2027, ACEL data will demonstrate improved literacy attainment from Early to Third Level compared to the June 2026 baseline. - By June 2027, identified schools will demonstrate improved learner progress in reading and writing following targeted CLPL, with participating practitioners evidencing improved application of agreed pedagogical approaches.	- Quality assurance and moderation visit records - ACEL literacy attainment data - School improvement plans and self-evaluation documentation (HGIOS aligned) - CLPL participation and evaluation data - Learning observations and professional dialogue records	BGE
Improve the quality, consistency and progression of Gaelic Learning (GLE) and Gaelic Medium Education (GME) across settings	- By June 2027, a structured programme of support and professional learning will be in place across all primary stages, contributing to the maintenance or increase in the number of teachers delivering Gaelic	- Engagement data for Live Lessons and collaborative delivery models	BGE

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
through strengthened collaborative delivery, transition pathways and moderation of Gaelic literacy.	L2/L3 . - By June 2027, 100% of GME settings will have implemented a Gaelic-specific transition project, supporting progression in Gaelic literacy at key transition points. - By June 2027, most schools delivering Gaelic L2 will have engaged in transition planning projects, evidencing improved continuity in learning. - By June 2027, all GME teaching staff will participate in moderation of Gaelic writing, with evidence of improved consistency in assessment and progress in ACEL Gaelic literacy at Early to Third Level. - By June 2027, collaborative delivery approaches (e.g. Live Lessons, partner programmes such as <i>Spòrs Gàidhlig</i>) will be implemented across targeted settings, increasing learner access to high-quality Gaelic learning and wider Gaelic experiences.	- Transition project plans and evaluation reports - CLPL participation data and evaluation feedback - Moderation documentation and shared assessment evidence - ACEL Gaelic literacy attainment data - Programme evaluation and learner participation feedback	

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Education Service Strategic Priority 2: We will strengthen inclusive practice, early intervention and targeted support to reduce the poverty related attainment gap, uphold children's rights, improve attendance and engagement, and ensure every child and young person feels safe, supported and able to thrive.

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priorities



Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Improve the consistency and timeliness of neurodevelopmental and mental health and wellbeing support through the implementation of a consistent Single Point of Access (SPA) model across all localities.	- By June 2027, 95% of Requests for Assistance (RfAs) will be screened within 5 working days and allocated to the appropriate pathway. - By June 2027, 90% of MHWB cases will receive an initial recorded response within 25 working days. - By June 2027, at least 75% of MHWB cases will be supported through consultation, advice or short-term intervention without escalation. <i>*Achievement of intended outcomes is partially reliant on the contribution of NHS partners.</i>	- SPA and pathway dataset - Audit of Requests for Assistance - Locality forum records	Inclusion & Equality Educational Psychology
Improve school attendance by implementing a consistent authority-wide approach to early identification and targeted intervention for persistent non-attendance, supported by improved tracking, monitoring and use of ANA tools.	- By May 2027, reduce persistent non-attendance across the authority from the June 2026 baseline data. - By December 2026, 100% of schools will be actively using the attendance dashboard. - By May 2027, 90% of identified persistent non-attenders will have an ANA data collection tool completed and recorded.	- SEEMiS attendance data - Attendance dashboard usage data - ANA data collection tools - School-level	Educational Psychology Wellbeing, Rights and Relationships

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	- By May 2027, all identified learners will have a documented intervention plan within 2 weeks of identification.	intervention tracking records	
Improve the consistency and effectiveness of identifying, recording and responding to bullying incidents across all schools and hostels through updated guidance and targeted workforce development.	- By May 2027, there will be an increase in bullying and equalities incidents recorded in SEEMiS. - By May 2027, there will be a reduction in bullying-related complaints. - By May 2027, 100% of schools will demonstrate a clear and consistent understanding and application of anti-bullying guidance. - By May 2027, 100% of key staff will have completed Respect for All training, with increased engagement in TIE and Equally Safe at School. - By May 2027, 100% of hostel leadership staff will demonstrate a clear and consistent understanding and application of anti-bullying guidance.	- SEEMiS bullying and equalities data - Complaints data - School QA/review evidence - CLPL/training participation records - School self-evaluation evidence	Wellbeing, Rights and Relationships
Improve the consistency and quality of RSHP delivery across all schools through a structured audit and self-evaluation model aligned to national guidance and child protection strategy.	- By April 2027, 100% of primary and secondary schools will complete an RSHP audit using the agreed self-evaluation toolkit. - By June 2027, all schools will identify strengths and areas for improvement in RSHP delivery, reflected in SIPs. - By June 2027, quality assurance activity will evidence improved consistency in RSHP delivery across the majority of settings.	- RSHP audit returns - School self-evaluation and SIPs - Quality assurance and review evidence - Curriculum planning documentation	Wellbeing, Rights and Relationships
Improve parental engagement and participation in supporting children and young people's wellbeing through structured family learning and communication approaches.	- By April 2027, implement a pilot parental engagement model in at least one locality. - By June 2027, achieve at least 60% positive engagement rate from participating parents/carers. - By June 2027, Parent Portal engagement will reach at least 70% of parents/carers. - By June 2027, feedback will evidence improved	- Parental engagement data - Parent/carers evaluation feedback - Parent Portal usage data - PAG minutes and feedback	Wellbeing, Rights and Relationships

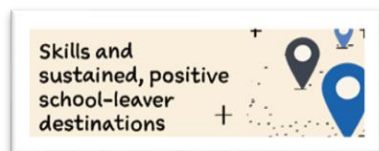
Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	parental awareness and confidence in supporting wellbeing and development.		
Improve the consistency and quality of transition planning for children and young people with additional support needs across all stages through the implementation of an authority-wide transition planning model.	- By June 2027, quality assurance will evidence consistent transition planning in at least 80% of sampled cases. - By June 2027, 80% of transition plans will include early and appropriate multi-agency involvement. - By June 2027, 90% of transition-related Requests for Support/ERG applications will be timely and multi-agency informed. - By June 2027, data will evidence improved engagement, wellbeing and attendance at key transitions (ELC→P1, P7→S1). - By June 2027, onward destination data will evidence appropriate and sustained post-school destinations for learners with ASN. - By June 2027, 75% of initial stakeholder surveys will show approval for proposed transition planning processes with implementation to begin in 90% of settings in August 2027.	- Audit of Child's Plans and ERG paperwork - Quality assurance records - Requests for Support data - Attendance, wellbeing and participation data - Parent/carers feedback - Destination data	Inclusion & Equality Educational Psychology
Improve language and communication outcomes for children in targeted Early Learning and Childcare settings through the implementation of a Language and Communication Supportive Environment (LCSE) model.	- By June 2027, a minimum of 3 identified ELC settings (including at least 2 standalone settings) will complete a full LCSE programme cycle. - By June 2027, quality assurance will evidence embedding of LCSE strategies in practice. - By June 2027, all participating settings will report pupils making overall progress with their speech and language development.	- LCSE participation data - Self-evaluation and planning documentation - Quality assurance and audit evidence - Developmental tracking data	Early Years Educational Psychology
Improve the consistency and effectiveness of staged intervention and inclusive practice across all schools through targeted professional learning and strengthened quality assurance approaches.	- By June 2027, 75% of participating staff will report increased confidence and capability in inclusive practice, with evidence of application. - By June 2027, audit of staged intervention plans will evidence increased support at universal and targeted stages and appropriate use of specialist support in at least 80% of cases.	- CLPL participation and evaluation data - Quality assurance evidence - Staged	Inclusion & Equality Educational Psychology

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	- By June 2027, 80% of schools will demonstrate consistent use of staged intervention processes.	intervention documentation - Planning samples	
Improve outcomes for children and families through the implementation of a multi-agency Early Years Family Hub model focused on early intervention and prevention across identified localities.	- By June 2027, 3 Early Years Family Hubs will be delivering at least 2 family engagement programmes for targeted families, in collaboration with at least 1 external agency. - By June 2027, targeted families will actively engage with EY Family Hub provision. - By June 2027, at least 75% of targeted children and families will show improvement in identified outcomes (e.g. wellbeing, engagement, developmental progress).	- Partner agency data - Attendance and participation records - Family engagement logs - Developmental and wellbeing outcome data	Early Years
Improve the consistency, clarity and effectiveness of processes and procedures for information sharing across schools and associated hostels, ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and strengthening safeguarding, wellbeing and operational practice.	- By May 2027, 100% communication processes between hostels and associated schools will lead to clear impact upon young people's care and wellbeing. - By May 2027, Care Inspectorate assessment of wellbeing in both hostels will be evaluated as Good.	- Updated hostel policies, procedures and guidance documentation - Training records and CLPL participation data for hostel staff - Quality assurance and review visit evidence - Monitoring and recording systems - Learner feedback and consultation findings from hostel users - QA audits / reporting	Early Years

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Education Service Strategic Priority 3: We will enhance learner pathways, widen achievement opportunities and strengthen partnerships to increase attainment, skills development and sustained positive destinations for all young people.

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priorities



Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Improve attainment across the Broad General Education (BGE) and Senior Phase, with a targeted focus on key equity groups, through strengthened use of data, targeted support and challenge.	- By June 2027, ACEL data will show a 2% improvement in attainment in literacy and numeracy across P1, P4, P7 and S3 compared to the June 2026 baseline. - By August 2027, Senior Phase results will demonstrate improved attainment at National 5 and Higher (A–C pass rates) compared to the 2026 baseline, including improved outcomes for identified equity groups. - By June 2027, analysis will evidence a reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap. - By June 2027, all schools will demonstrate targeted use of attainment data to identify and support learners in key equity groups.	- ACEL BGE attainment data - Insight Senior Phase attainment data - School tracking and monitoring data - Quality assurance and school review evidence - Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs)	Performance & Improvement
Improve the effectiveness and consistency of early intervention approaches in the Senior Phase through the implementation of robust, systematic tracking and evaluation of targeted interventions.	- By May 2027, 100% of secondary schools will have a clearly defined intervention framework in place. - By June 2027, all targeted interventions will be systematically tracked with clear measures of impact. - By June 2027, school evidence will demonstrate improved attainment and progress for targeted	- School intervention tracking systems - Attainment and progress data - QA and school review evidence - SQRs	Performance & Improvement

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	learners, including those in key equity groups. - By June 2027, QA activity will evidence more consistent use of intervention data to inform planning across schools.		
Improve the impact of SEF and PEF investment on attainment and equity by strengthening targeting, planning and evaluation of funded interventions across all schools.	- By February 2027, schools will demonstrate an improved use of targeted SEF/PEF linked to identified attainment gaps. - By June 2027, all schools will report measurable impact on attainment for learners affected by poverty. - By June 2027, QA activity will evidence improved consistency in planning, tracking and evaluation of SEF/PEF interventions. - By June 2027, data will evidence improved progress and attainment for targeted learners.	- SEF/PEF plans and mid-year reports - Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) - Attainment and tracking data - QA and school review evidence	Performance & Improvement
Improve the quality and consistency of planning and evaluation of PEF interventions to ensure all activity is evidence-based, data-informed and clearly focused on impact.	- By February 2027, 100% of schools with PEF funding will have PEF plans clearly linked to attainment gaps with measurable outcomes. - By June 2027, all schools will report clear evidence of impact of PEF interventions on targeted learners. - By June 2027, QA will evidence improved consistency in PEF planning and evaluation across schools.	- PEF mid-year reports (February 2027) - SQR analysis (June 2027) - PEF plans and tracking documentation - QA evidence	Performance & Improvement
Improve the consistency and effectiveness of data-informed practice across all schools through strengthening practitioners' data literacy and confidence in using data to identify and address attainment gaps.	- By May 2027, 100% of schools will have systems to record, analyse and track attainment and ASN data. - By June 2027, targeted staff will demonstrate increased confidence in using data to inform planning. - By June 2027, QA will evidence consistent use of data to identify gaps and plan interventions in the majority of schools.	- QI visit evidence on tracking - Audit of ASN and attainment systems - CLPL evaluation data - QA evidence - School planning and	Performance & Improvement Inclusion and Equality

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	- By June 2027, tracking data will evidence improved targeting of support for key learner groups.	tracking documentation	
Improve developmental outcomes for children in early years through the delivery of evidence-based skills programmes and strengthened family learning approaches in targeted settings.	- By June 2027, at least 80% of targeted settings will deliver at least one evidence-based developmental programme. - By June 2027, parental participation will increase by at least 10%. - By June 2027, at least 70% of participating children will demonstrate improved developmental outcomes appropriate to their age and stage. - By June 2027, evaluation will evidence improved engagement and confidence among families.	- Attendance and participation data - Family feedback - Developmental milestone data - QA and programme review evidence	Early Years
Improve sustained positive post-school destinations for young people at risk of a negative destination through strengthened partnership working and targeted 16+ planning processes.	- By June 2027, 100% of schools will hold and record at least four 16+ meetings annually, including evaluation of impact. - By August 2027, the Annual Participation Measure (APM) will meet or exceed 95.0%. - By February 2027, School Leaver Initial Positive Destinations will increase from 94.8% to at least 95.5%. - By June 2027, schools will evidence improved identification and support for learners at risk of negative destinations.	- 16+ meeting records - SDS APM data - School leaver destination data - School tracking records	Senior Phase DYW team

Section 4: Education Service Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Education Service Strategic Priority 4: We will build a culture of collaborative leadership at all levels and evidence-informed decision making, ensuring clear accountability, effective self-evaluation and alignment across the service and schools to drive continuous improvement.

National Improvement Framework (NIF) Priorities



Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Improve the quality and consistency of leadership of self-evaluation across all schools through a structured programme of professional learning, support and targeted challenge.	- By May 2027, at least 85% of middle leaders, aspiring Head Teachers and newly appointed Head Teachers participating in authority led leadership programmes, will engage in professional learning focused on leading effective self-evaluation. - By June 2027, at least 80% of participants will report increased confidence in leading self-evaluation processes. - By June 2027, all schools identified through QI visits, school review or HMIE inspection will receive targeted support to improve self-evaluation approaches. - By June 2027, QA activity will demonstrate improved consistency in self-evaluation across the majority of schools. - By June 2027, SQRs will demonstrate stronger	- CLPL participation and evaluation records - QI visits, school review and HMIE evidence - QA and review evidence - Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) - Records of targeted support	Performance & Improvement

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	evaluative statements and clearer links between evidence and impact.		
Improve leadership capacity in pupil support, wellbeing and inclusion through the development and implementation of a targeted leadership programme for Guidance Teachers and aspiring Guidance staff.	- By March 2027, the programme will be developed and advertised. - By August 2027, participants will have commenced the programme. - By June 2027, baseline evaluation will evidence increased understanding of Guidance roles. - By June 2028, evaluation will evidence increased capacity within schools to support wellbeing and inclusion.	- Programme participation records - Participant evaluation feedback - School feedback on impact - PRD records	Wellbeing, Rights & Relationships Inclusion & Equality
Improve the leadership capacity of middle leaders (including Depute Head Teachers) to lead strategic improvement through the delivery of a structured programme of Cluster Leadership Conferences.	- By May 2027, a programme of Cluster Leadership Conferences will be delivered. - By June 2027, almost all participating middle leaders will report increased confidence in strategic leadership. - By June 2027, almost all participants will report improved understanding of national and local policy. - By June 2027, QA activity will evidence increased leadership contribution to school improvement.	- Conference participation records - Participant feedback - QA and school review evidence - School improvement plans	Performance & Improvement
Improve the coherence, accessibility and uptake of leadership development pathways across the Education Service through the development of a revised, enhanced structured Leadership Pathway.	- By March 2027, a revised Leadership Pathway will be developed and communicated. - By June 2027, participation in leadership programmes will increase compared to 2025–2026 baseline. - By June 2027, at least 75% of participants will report increased confidence in leadership roles. - By June 2027, PRD and QA evidence will demonstrate increased progression into leadership roles.	- Leadership programme participation data - CLPL evaluation feedback - PRD and succession planning records - QA evidence	Education Leadership

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
Strengthen system leadership and consistency in self-evaluation through QUAD collaboration, development of networked leadership approaches and targeted support for middle leaders.	- By June 2027, networked leadership approaches with associated Local Authority Quad/Trios will be evidenced across all secondary schools, with collaborative activity evidenced through planned visits and any additional engagement. - By June 2027, at least 80% of participating middle leaders will report increased confidence in leading self-evaluation and improvement. - By June 2027, quality assurance activity will demonstrate improved consistency in self-evaluation for self-improvement across the majority of secondary schools. - By June 2027, the majority of participants in the first implementation phase of Self-Improving Schools' Groups will report increased confidence in self-evaluation for self-improvement, strengthened professional collaboration and an enhanced understanding of effective practice across settings.	- QUAD meeting records - Quad Secondary Head Teachers' conference materials and evaluation feedback - School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Standards and Quality Reports (SQRs) - Quality assurance and school review evidence - Professional dialogue and moderation records - participant feedback	Performance and Improvement
Improve leadership capacity at all levels in Early Learning and Childcare and School Hostels through the development and implementation of a coherent leadership CLPL programme aligned with SSSC requirements .	- By March 2027, the ELC leadership CLPL programme will be developed and communicated. - By June 2027, at least 70% of targeted leaders/middle leaders will complete at least two CLPL sessions. - By June 2027, at least 75% of participants will report increased confidence in leading ELC practice.	- CLPL participation records - Evaluation feedback - QA and scrutiny evidence - Planning documentation	Early Years Team

Improvement Activity	Measure	Evidence Sources	Lead
	- By June 2027, QA evidence will demonstrate improved leadership of care and learning within ELC's and school hostels.		
Improve system capacity for collaborative, locality-based improvement through the development of Lead Practitioner roles to deliver high-quality CLPL across networks of settings.	- By December 2026, 100% of Lead Practitioners will have a clearly redefined role and remit. - By June 2027, 100% of Lead Practitioners will deliver regular CLPL to multi-setting groups. - By June 2027, at least 75% of practitioners will report increased confidence and application of learning. - By June 2027, QA activity will demonstrate improved consistency of practice across networks.	- CLPL delivery records - QA and review evidence - Practitioner feedback - Role descriptions and plans	Early Years
Improve collaborative leadership of Learning, Teaching and Assessment across schools and clusters through strengthened enquiry-led professional learning and networked improvement approaches.	- By June 2027, the proportion of schools reporting positive impact of enquiry-led CLPL will increase from 48% to at least 60%. - By June 2027, schools evaluating HGIOS4 QI 1.2 as Good or better will increase from 68% to at least 80%. - By June 2027, QA evidence will demonstrate increased collaboration across schools and clusters.	- Professional enquiry survey - School self-evaluation data (HGIOS 1.2) - SQRs - QA and school review evidence	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Performance & Improvement

Through this plan, the Education Service is strengthening its contribution to the ambitions of *Our Children, Their Future: Thriving Together*, with improvement activity clearly aligned to the National Improvement Framework and informed by robust evidence of progress and impact. Continued focus on equity, inclusion, partnership working and high-quality learning and teaching, alongside a commitment to addressing variability and building system-wide consistency, will support sustained improvement and improved outcomes for all children and young people across Argyll and Bute's diverse communities.

APPENDIX 1: Provisional 3 Year Stretch Aims 2023-2026

The stretch aims set out our collective ambition for improving outcomes for children and young people across Argyll and Bute. Developed through analysis of performance data and informed by professional dialogue with school leaders and national advisors, they provide a clear focus for improvement planning and resource allocation. While recognising the differing contexts of our schools and communities, the stretch aims reinforce our commitment to raising attainment, improving achievement and reducing inequity through evidence-informed improvement activity at all levels of the system.

Stretch Aims 2023-2026

Literacy (P1, 4, 7 Combined) Stretch Aim

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Stretch Aims 2022-2023	68.4%	60%	81.5%	21.5pp
ACEL June 2023	67.7%	67.7%	80.6%	13.9pp
Stretch Aims 2023-2024	71%	70%	81%	11pp
ACEL June 2024	72.2%	67.6%	82.6%	15.0pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	73.5%	72.5%	83.0%	10.5pp
ACEL June 2025	72.5%	69.5%	86.6%	17.1pp
Stretch Aims 25-26	76.0%	75.0%	85.0%	10.0pp
ACEL June 2026	Available after publication December 2026			

Numeracy (P1, 4, 7 Combined) Stretch Aim

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Stretch Aims 2022-2023	69%	58%	87%	22pp
ACEL June 2023	76.3%	75.6%	90.3%	14.7pp
Stretch Aims 2023-2024	78%	73%	89.5%	16.5pp
ACEL June 2024	80.1%	73.1%	87.5%	15.4pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	80.5%	75.5%	90.25%	14.75pp
ACEL June 2025	79.9%	75.7%	91.0%	15.3pp
Stretch Aims 25-26	83.0%	78.0%	91.0%	13.0pp
ACEL June 2026	Available after publication December 2026			

School Leavers with 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 5

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Leavers Cohort 22-23	89.1%	80.0%	96.4%	16.4pp
Stretch Aims 23-24	91.5%	85%	98.5%	13.5pp
Leavers Cohort 23-24	85.7%	81.7%	95.3%	13.6pp
Stretch Aims 24-25	92.25%	87%	99.25%	12.25pp
Leavers Cohort 24-25	87.0%	76.6%	96.7%	20.1pp
Stretch Aims 25-26	93.0%	89.0%	100.0%	11.0pp
Leavers Cohort 25-26	Available after publication February 2027			

School Leavers with 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 6

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
Leavers Cohort 22-23	62.6%	38.8%	85.7%	46.9pp
Stretch Aims 23-24	66.5%	57%	84%	27pp
Leavers Cohort 23-24	66.7%	47.9%	90.6%	42.7pp
Stretch Aims 24-25	67.75%	60.0%	86.5%	26.5pp
Leavers Cohort 24-25	62.2%	45.5%	86.7%	41.2pp
Stretch Aims 25-26	72%	64%	89%	25pp
Leavers Cohort 25-26	Available after publication February 2027			

Health and Wellbeing – Attendance in Primary – Free School Meal Registered and Non-Free School Meal Registered

	Overall	FSM Registered	Not-FSM Registered	Gap (FSM/Not-FSM)
Stretch Aims 2023-2024	93.5%	89.25%	93.5%	4.25pp
Confirmed Data 2024	93%	89.6%	93.6%	4pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	93.7%	90.25%	94.25%	4pp
Confirmed Data 2025	93.6%	90.1%	94.3%	4.2pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	94.0%	91.0%	94.5%	3.5pp
June 2026 (Provisional)	93.5%	90.0%	94.4%	4.4pp

Health and Wellbeing – Attendance in Secondary – Free School Meal Registered and Non-Free School Meal Registered

	Overall	FSM Registered	Not-FSM Registered	Gap (FSM/Not-FSM)
Stretch Aims 2023-2024	90%	82%	89.5%	7.5pp
Confirmed Data June 2024	87.4%	82.4%	88.3%	5.9pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	89.7%	83.5%	90.75%	7.25pp
Confirmed Data June 2025	87.3%	81.7%	88.5%	6.8pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	91.0%	85%	92%	7.0pp
June 2026 (Provisional)	87.4%	81.2%	88.7%	7.5pp

Participation Measure – 16-19 Year Olds in Education, Training and Employment

	Overall	SIMD Q1	SIMD Q5	GAP (Q1-Q5)
APM August 2023	94.4%	88.4%	97.8%	9.4pp
Stretch Aims 2023-2024	94%	89.5%	96%	6.5pp
APM August 2024	94.3%	91.5%	97.1%	5.6pp
Stretch Aims 2024-2025	94.25%	91%	96.5%	5.5pp
APM August 2025	94.6%	92.2%	96.8%	4.6pp
Stretch Aims 2025-2026	95%	92.5%	97%	4.5pp
APM August 2026	Available after publication August 2026			

Our Children, Their Nurturing Education (OCTNE) Stretch Aim

<i>Argyll and Bute – ‘Our Children, Their Nurturing Education’</i>	
	Overall
June 2023	64.45% (N.B 2023 Stretch Aim = 60%)
Interim Stretch Aim 2023-2024	64%
June 2024	66.67%
Interim Stretch Aim 2024-2025	67%
June 2025	69.19%
Final Stretch Aim 2025-2026	70%
June 2026	85.4%

Stretch Aims 2026-2029

Overall Aims

Stretch Aim	24/25 Baseline	25/26 Provisional	26/27 Target	27/28 Target	28/29 Target
Primary Attendance	93.6%	93.3%	93.7%	93.9%	94.1%
Secondary Attendance	87.3%	86.7%	87.4%	87.9%	88.5%
P1,4,7 Combined Literacy	72.5%	73.3%	75.5%	77.8%	80.0%
P1,4,7 Combined Numeracy	79.9%	81.0%	81.6%	82.3%	83.0%
All Leavers 1+ @ Level 5	87.0%	N/A	87.5%	88.0%	88.5%
S6 Leavers 1+ @ Level 6	87.1%	N/A	87.5%	88.0%	88.5%
Annual Participation Measure	94.6%	N/A	95.0%	95.3%	95.5%

Poverty Related Gap Tables

Session	Attendance Stretch Aims					
	Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance		
	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap	FSM	Non-FSM	Gap
2024/25 Baseline	90.1%	94.3%	4.2pp	81.7%	88.5%	6.8pp
2025/26 Provisional	90.0%	94.4%	4.4pp	81.2%	88.7%	7.5pp
2026/27 Target	90.3%	94.5%	4.2pp	82.1%	88.9%	6.8pp
2027/28 Target	90.7%	94.7%	4.0pp	82.5%	89.1%	6.6pp
2028/29 Target	91.2%	95.0%	3.8pp	82.9%	89.3%	6.4pp

	ACEL Stretch Aims					
	P1,4,7 Combined Literacy			P1,4,7 Combined Numeracy		
Session	Q1	Q5	Gap	Q1	Q5	Gap
2024/25 Baseline	69.5%	86.6%	17.1pp	75.7%	91.0%	15.3pp
2025/26 Provisional	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2026/27 Target	70.3%	86.8%	16.5pp	76.2%	91.20%	15.0pp
2027/28 Target	71.0%	87.0%	16.0pp	76.9%	91.40%	14.5pp
2028/29 Target	71.7%	87.2%	15.5pp	77.6%	91.60%	14.0pp

	Leavers Attainment Stretch Aims					
	All Leavers 1+ @ Level 5			S6 Leavers 1+ @ Level 6		
Session	Q1	Q5	Gap	Q1	Q5	Gap
2024/25 Baseline	76.6%	96.7%	20.1pp	72.1%	96.0%	24.0pp
2025/26 Provisional	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2026/27 Target	80.3%	96.8%	20.0pp	81.1%	96.1%	23.0pp
2027/28 Target	80.9%	96.9%	19.5pp	81.7%	96.2%	22.0pp
2028/29 Target	81.5%	97.0%	19.0pp	82.3%	96.3%	21.0pp

	Annual Participation Stretch Aim		
	All Leavers 1+ @ Level 5		
Session	Q1	Q5	Gap
2024/25 Baseline	92.20%	96.80%	4.6pp
2025/26 Provisional	N/A	N/A	N/A
2026/27 Target	92.5%	96.9%	4.4pp
2027/28 Target	92.8%	97.0%	4.2pp
2028/29 Target	93.1%	97.1%	4.0pp