

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 March 2021 17:07
To: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Breifing note on Closing the Gap

Thanks for the quick turnaround everyone, much appreciated.

[REDACTED], can you address Graeme's points and then return to me, and I'll put it up on the back of the earlier call with DFM – and copy you and others in as per Graeme's note below?

Thank you!
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Deputy Director: Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing | Learning Directorate
[REDACTED]



From: Director of Learning
Sent: 16 March 2021 17:06
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Breifing note on Closing the Gap

[REDACTED] and team

I think this note is excellent and combines top lines with some important data and evidence. Many thanks for pulling this together. Please find attached a couple of comments.

As DFM is going to be reading all your material tonight, please send this up today. When it goes up ask in the covering email whether DFM wishes us to share this with the FM also. Please copy in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Graeme.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 March 2021 16:55
To: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Subject: Breifing note on Closing the Gap

Hi Graeme

As discussed today I attach a briefing note for FM/DFM that focusses on key lines, supportive quotes and additional funding. We have tried to simplify the data to give easy to use lines but of course in doing so have removed a number of caveats.

Briefing note to DFM/FM on Closing the attainment gap (A32501647)

Happy for your thoughts before sending on

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Head of Raising Attainment / Attainment Challenge

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THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE

Tackling educational inequity



From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 March 2021 12:48

To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; CommunicationsDFM & Education
<CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Draft release - progress report on attainment

Policy colleagues,

Please see the draft release below to mark Thursday's publications.

Grateful for input on the percentage in the bullets to qualify the opening line of the release.

Grateful for views on this:

Closing the attainment gap

Report outlines progress made towards achieving equity in education.

Almost nine out of ten schools have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap in the last five years as a result of Scottish Government supported approaches, a new report has found.

The study examines progress made through the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and wider education policies, towards closing the attainment gap during this Parliamentary term

The report highlights a systemic change in culture and ethos as a result of a greater understanding of the barriers faced by pupils and families from disadvantaged communities

The study highlights:

- The gap between the proportion of primary pupils (P1, P4 and P7 combined) from the most and least deprived areas achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy has narrowed since 2016/17
- 96% of headteachers felt that they had a good awareness of the range of approaches that can help close the poverty-related attainment gap
- 88% of headteachers expect to see improvements in closing the gap over the next five years
- **X%** of headteachers have seen an improvement in closing the gap in their schools in the past five years

Looking at performance of pupils since 2009-10, the report finds:

- The percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination consistently increased between 2009/10 and 2018/19, for leavers from both the most deprived and least deprived areas. The gap in positive initial destinations also decreased in this period.

- The gap between pupils achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 5 has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009-10 to 20.8 percentage points in 2019-20.
- The gap between pupils achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009-10 to 36.1 percentage points in 2019-20.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney said:

“Closing the poverty-related attainment gap and giving every young person the chance to fulfil their full potential, regardless of their background, remains our defining mission. Our ambition is a long-term one and this report clearly shows significant progress has been made across the education system.

“Over the last five years we have put in place a comprehensive range of measures, supported by the £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund, to turn the corner with the attainment gap. We have seen improvements across a number of indicators, including a narrowing of the gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy. Longer term we have also seen the gap narrow in initial positive destinations and the proportion of pupils achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 and 6.

“Headteachers are positive about the impact of our measures and have a clear understanding of what is working and are optimistic about improvements being embedded and continuing over the next five years.

“I am greatly encouraged by this welcome progress and am confident we are on the right path, however we know the school closures and cancellation of last year’s exams due to the pandemic has impacted our journey towards equity and made that task harder. To mitigate against this, we have committed £375 million in education recovery over this year and next, including to recruit additional teachers and support staff and address digital exclusion.

“I am determined to continue to support our young people through these unprecedented times and the evidence from this report and the Equity Audit will guide our thinking for the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Now, more than ever, there is a need to stay the course with our vision of equity and excellence.”

Background

Closing the poverty-related attainment gap – a report on progress 2016-2021
[HYPERLINK]

Attainment Scotland Fund – Year 5 Evaluation report [HYPERLINK]

Since 2015/16 over £750 million has been invested in the SAC through the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF).

As a result of COVID-19 and the closure of schools in March 2020, the ACEL 2019/20 data collection did not go ahead. Therefore the latest data available is 2018/19, and reliable comparisons can be made back to 2016/17.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

Media Manager | Communications DFM, Education and Justice | Scottish Government

Tel- [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]

Attainment

ACHIEVEMENTS

We have delivered record levels of achievement and funding

- Our policies have resulted in the highest level of education investment per person across the UK.
- Since 2015/16 we have invested over £750 million in the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- This includes over £182 million in 2020/21 and we have committed to extend the programme into next year, including almost £128 million in Pupil Equity Funding going direct to 97% of head teachers in Scotland.
- All 163,911 pupils in primaries 1 to 3 benefit from access to free school meals, allowing families to save around £400 per child per year.
- We have provided extra resources to local councils, allowing spending on education to increase in real terms for the past three years – up by £189 million in 2018/19.
- 958 schools upgraded under the SNP (since 2007)
- 93.3% of 2019/20 school leavers in Scotland were in education, employment or training 3 months after leaving school, up from 87.7% in 2009/10.
- 63.9% of young people leaving school in 2019/20 had achieved 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 (e.g. Higher) or better.
- A record 260,490 students enrolled at Scottish universities in 2019/20
- Latest HESA statistics show we have met the key CoWA target to have 16% of students from the most deprived areas of Scotland by 2021.
- In 2019/20, 971 schools and groups across Scotland registered for the First Minister's Reading Challenge.
- We've introduced a national minimum school clothing grant of £100 to help more families afford school uniform costs.
- Since 2012, we have invested over £1 billion per year in Scotland's universities.
- We are leading the way as the only administration in the UK to offer bursary support targeted specifically for care- experienced students.
- In the PISA 2018 Global Competence assessment, Scotland's average score (534) was higher than the average of all participating countries (474). Only two countries out of the other 26 taking part had a higher average score.
- We have provided additional resources, including funding the recruitment of around 1,400 additional teachers and 200 support staff this year.
- Teacher numbers are currently the highest they have been since 2008, with the number of primary teachers the highest since 1980.

Attainment

OECD Independent Review of Curriculum for Excellence

ISSUE: 21 FEB The Mail on Sunday says OECD report has been tainted by government 'interference'. Professor Lindsay Paterson claimed that specialists who tried to give detailed written evidence were told only people approved by the Scottish Government could contribute.

ISSUE: 17 FEB: The Scottish Parliament has backed a Liberal Democrat motion to overhaul Education Scotland and SQA and to publish the OECD's preliminary findings. Mr Rennie has now formally written to the Scottish Government requesting this.

ISSUE: 18 FEB: Willie Rennie claims FOI Documents show the Scottish Government has had a draft report for months and has a group specifically set up to look at the OECD Report. At First Minister's questions he said "*there is even a special group established to make changes, which is dominated by SQA and Education Scotland, the very organisations that are under the microscope of the OECD report*".

ISSUE: 14 Feb: Criticism in a number of media outlets that the OECD will not publish their final report on the Review of CfE until June 2021 despite the Scottish Government being in receipt of an "interim report". The articles also claim the evidence gathering and engagement was "stage managed" by the Scottish Government and criticises the OECD for not accepting written submissions.

The OECD's Directorate of Education have used its Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education framework for the review.

- This is not a national consultation. The OECD has been very clear that they do not require written submissions. The OECD is assessing the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence based on standard OECD methodology for country education policy and implementation reviews. Taking into account the current stage of the process and past experience conducting such reviews, the report will be finalised and is expected to be ready for publication in June 2021.
- In April 2020 the Scottish Government and the OECD made the unavoidable decision to delay the Review in light of the COVID pandemic, but we worked in close partnership with the OECD to ensure their report would be delivered as early as possible.
- The OECD uses this framework to provide tailored support to individual countries and education systems to analyse and support the development and implementation of education policies.
- The methodology includes a comprehensive document analysis prior to formal interviews, which provides the information required for a rigorous, evidence-based assessment.
- The Scottish Government submitted a comprehensive evidence pack to the OECD in July 2020 which was developed in line with OECD guidelines.
- The OECD has compiled information from key stakeholders' websites and think tanks publication on top of the initial evidence pack.
- This constitutes a significant and comprehensive amount of documentation, with many different perspectives informing the review.

Attainment

The intention has always been to share draft findings from the OECD Review. We are giving careful consideration to the issues raised in the education debate on 17 February and the view of parliament in relation to them. On the matter of the OECD's independent review of Scotland's curriculum, the Deputy First Minister will respond to Parliament as soon as practicable and certainly ahead of the pre-election period

- The intention to share preliminary findings was set out in the remit for the independent Review of Curriculum for Excellence, published on 26 February 2020
- The Deputy First Minister wrote to the Education and Skills Committee (25 November) informing them of the OECD's stakeholder engagement event in March to do so.
- The OECD will be holding an engagement event for key stakeholders on 16th March at which they will have the opportunity to consider draft findings, discuss how the draft recommendations might be taken forward, with the proposals feeding into the final report.
- The Scottish Government received a draft preliminary report on 2 February 2021.
- This was purely to allow for accuracy checking and was not an opportunity to influence the content or rewrite any of the report.
- Officials have approached this task as directed by the OECD and provided clarification where they spotted factual inaccuracies, terminology that would require clarification or areas where further contextual information was required.
- They have not been spending months "providing comments" as some have suggested.
- This is an OECD document and would not be for the Scottish Government to share. Moreover, given the further development to be done on this, we do not believe it would be in the interests of the system to publish at this point.
- This is the standard process that OECD always use with countries they are reviewing.
- They are clear this is a very early draft and as well as awaiting further engagement with stakeholders in Scotland, it would still require further drafting and quality assurance through their own internal processes. This is the approach they always use.
- Mr Rennie contradicts himself - he accuses the Scottish Government of interfering in an independent report, or jiggery pokery as he puts it, and in the same breath demands that the Scottish Government publishes a draft version of a report that belongs to the OECD.

Mr Rennie has clearly misinterpreted the information contained in the Freedom of Information documents.

- The Fol documents included outdated versions of timelines with potential dates for meetings and receipt of a draft report.
- The meeting of 15 February to discuss the report (mentioned in the media) was a potential date for the Scottish Practitioner Forum but was cancelled due to school holidays and will now meet on 11 March.
- This was to be an opportunity for the OECD to share high level findings with the Forum.

Attainment

- The Scottish Practitioner Forum have been updated verbally by the OECD after each engagement event. No papers have been issued.
- The draft report has not been shared with the Scottish Practitioner Forum.
- The Scottish Practitioner Forum was established in response to a request by OECD for a project advisory group to guide the work and discuss progress and deliverables.
- This Forum is made up of practitioners from primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, Community learning and development representatives, ADES, SQA and Education Scotland

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

The achievements of our children and young people demonstrate that CfE has been well implemented and remains the right approach for Scotland

- Under CfE:
 - The percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination has increased from 92.6% in 2013/14 to 93.3% in 2019/20 and the proportion entering Higher and Further Education is now at a record high.
 - The percentage of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 and above has increased from 7.3% in 2013/14 to 22.5% in 2019/20.
 - There were over 71,000 skills-based qualifications achieved in 2020, up 50 per cent from the figure attained in 2014 (from 47,747 to 71,723).
- Due to the different certification method last year, the latest school leaver attainment statistics covering 2019/20 school leavers are not directly comparable to previous years, however we can see:
 - The percentage of school leavers that achieved qualifications equivalent to at least a Higher was 58.1% in 2013/14 and 63.9% in 2019/20
 - The gaps between school leavers from the most and least deprived areas achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF levels 3 to 6 or better have reduced between 2009/10 and 2019/20.

Young people can choose from a much broader range of pathways than before:

- There has been a year on year increase in the number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF Level 5 and above, from 7.3% in 2013-14 to 22.5% in 2019/20. This includes a significant expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships since their introduction in 2016.
- There were over 71,000 skills-based qualifications achieved in 2020, up 50 per cent from the figure attained in 2014 (from 47,747 to 71,723).

The Senior Phase curriculum should meet learners' needs and equip them with the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to maximise their individual potential.

- Schools, local authorities and their partners take a range of approaches to ensuring a wide choice is available (including creative timetabling, digital learning options and partnership approaches – often working collaboratively with other schools).
- We would expect this to continue, but recognise that schools are rightly prioritising the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of learners during the recovery phase.

Attainment

Our policies have resulted in the highest level of education spend per person anywhere in the UK and we have protected free tuition for higher education.

	SG	England	Wales
Tuition Fees for first full time degree	£0	£9,250	£9,000
Education spending per person in population (2018/19)	£1,558	£1,292	£1,365
Education spending per pupil in schools (2019/20)	£7,300	£6,100	£6,100
Teachers per 100,000 pupils	7,605	5,499	5,036
Schools per 100,000 pupils	355	257	314
Starting Salary for Qualified Teacher (not including probationers)	£32,994	£25,714	£27,018

POVERTY RELATED ATTAINMENT GAP

ISSUE: 7 Mar: Where We Are programme - A new creative programme for the children of teenage parents, refugees and people in deprived areas has been set up to help provide support for artists during the coronavirus pandemic and will try to address concerns about young people's lack of involvement in cultural experiences.

ISSUE: 28 Feb: Calls for permanent shake-up of education as academics call for shorter summer holidays to help our most disadvantaged learners

ISSUE: 24 Feb: UK Government announces a £700m package to help pupils in England catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic. This includes an expansion on one-to-one small group tutoring programmes and increased summer provision.

ISSUE: 18 Feb: The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published its latest findings after the Scottish Government announced £60 million of additional investment in Covid-related education recovery, including the employment of more teachers, classroom support staff and facilities management but it claims that these resources are not sufficiently targeted to help the most disadvantaged pupils.

ISSUE: 17 Feb: The Telegraph reports that the last year of lost learning will have a detrimental impact on those suffering from social and economic disadvantage for the rest of their lives.

ISSUE: 11 Feb: The Sun reports on Professor Lindsay Patterson's claims that children may need extra tutoring to catch-up on lost learning and that many children will have "gone backwards" as interruptions could wipe out previous learning.

ISSUE: 13 Jan: The Equity Audit was published. The 106 page Scottish Government report deepens our understanding the impact COVID-19 and last year's school building closures had on children from disadvantaged backgrounds setting clear areas of focus for accelerating recovery.

Our mission to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap remains central to our plans.

- We have extended our commitment to the Scottish Attainment Challenge by committing over £200 million to the Attainment Scotland Fund in 2021/22, building on our investment of £750 million over the course of this Parliament.

Attainment

- We have introduced a £20 million Pupil Equity Funding Premium for 2021/22, increasing our investment in Pupil Equity Funding from almost £128 million to almost £148 million next year.
- This funding is used to support a range of approaches, such as provision of additional learning and support programmes, investment in specialist support such as support from educational psychologists, home school link workers, mental health counsellors and speech and language therapists.

ATTAINMENT AND COVID-19

We published the Equity Audit in January 2021 to deepen our understanding the impact COVID-19 and school building closures had on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and set clear areas of focus for accelerating recovery.

- The Equity Audit provides a comprehensive overview of the existing national and international research and evidence, balanced with an in-depth study of the experiences in 54 schools across the country.
- Alongside the NIF, it provides clear indicators for deepening the recovery process for children and young people.

To date the Scottish Government has committed over £375m over 2020/21 and 2021/22 to support education recovery.

- The majority of this is supporting a range of work to accelerate learning recovery, including the provision of additional teachers and staff to support those who need it most; devices and connectivity to lift children and young people out of digital exclusion as quickly as possible; and targeted youth work services.
- £90 million is committed to support LAs in implementing protection measures to ensure schools are safe, open and welcoming, in line with school safety guidance.

A key risk as a result of COVID-19 is that the poverty-related attainment gap grows as direct face-to-face school based learning and teaching has reduced and the Attainment Scotland Fund is a key factor in mitigating this risk

- We have ensured councils and schools can redirect Attainment Scotland Funding to help mitigate the impact of school closures on our most disadvantaged families.
- Local authorities and schools have been prioritising personalised support to meet the individual physical and emotional needs of all children and young people.
- Headteachers must be directly involved in any decisions made about the deployment of Pupil Equity Funding.
- The Attainment Scotland Funding Flexibility Guidance and revised PEF Guidance we have issued to Local Authorities and Headteachers is clear.
- Any flexibility must remain consistent with the principle of equity in education.
- Education Scotland Attainment Advisers also continue to be available to provide support and advice to local authorities and headteachers.

Calls for National Tutoring Scheme

- We have encouraged schools and local authorities to target support where it is most needed, including tutoring if required. However, the Scottish Government does not currently have plans to introduce a national tutoring scheme.

Attainment

- Local authorities and schools are best placed to understand local needs and develop bespoke education recovery offerings based on specific circumstances.
- We are empowering local authorities and schools to make the best decisions for their children and young people based on local context and knowledge, rather than procuring one-size-fits-all services ourselves.

Calls for shorter Summer Holidays

- We recognise the value of school holidays in supporting young people's health and wellbeing by providing them with the time to spend time with friends, families or carers or engage in holiday and activity clubs.
- Any decision to reduce the length of school holidays would be a matter for the individual local authority.

EPI REPORT

The claims in the report are not accurate on the basis that, as the report acknowledges, it does not take into account all of Scotland's investment in education recovery.

- Further, the methodology that appears to have been used to determine how the funding is targeted is limited only to the methodology that underpins the distribution of the funding and overlooks its actual purpose.
- In practice the Government has identified sums of money and distribution formulae with Local Government. Once allocated, LAs are able then to invest the funding based on need, rather than based on the elements included in the funding formulae.
- Equity and excellence are at the forefront of Scottish education and the investment in education recovery to date has been accompanied by clear guidance that it should be invested at LA level to support the children and young people who need it most, with local authorities best placed to identify the children and young people who need support most.
- The Scottish Government has committed £375m to support education recovery over 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 6 or better increased from 50.4% to 63.9% between 2009/10 and 2019/20

- Due to the different certification method last year, the latest school leaver attainment statistics covering the 2019/20 cohort are not directly comparable to previous years, however we can see:
 - Every local authority in Scotland for which comparisons could be made saw an increase in this figure compared to 2009/10.
 - The gaps between school leavers from the most and least deprived areas achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF levels 3 to 6 or better have reduced between 2009/10 and 2019/20.
 - The percentage of school leavers achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better and 6 or better increased among school leavers between 2018/19 and 2019/20, for both those from the least deprived and most deprived areas of Scotland

Attainment

- Attainment of leavers with additional support needs have also increased. Due to the different certification method last year, 2019/20 school leaver attainment statistics are not directly comparable to previous years, however we can see:
 - 89.3% of 2019/20 school leavers with additional support needs had a positive initial destination - a 4.3 percentage point increase since 2011/12.
 - 68.7% of 2019/20 school leavers with additional support needs attained 1 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 5 or better - an increase of 13.5 percentage point increase since 2011/12.
 - 88.2% of 2019/20 school leavers with additional support needs attained 1 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or better - an increase of 2.7 percentage points since 2011/12.

We will publish evidence of progress with our defining mission of closing the poverty-related attainment gap in the coming weeks .

- A longer term strategy will be required to help address the impact the pandemic has had on some of the most vulnerable children and families.
- We will work with partners, including our International Council of Education Advisors, to design the best approach to accelerating progress in closing the attainment gap, through the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- An advisory group with a remit of advising on future approaches to accelerate recovery and progress within the next iteration of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme will be established in the coming weeks. This will draw heavily on the findings of the Equity Audit and evidence on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

At national level, evidence points to an improving system

- HMI inspections on how well each of the 9 Challenge Authorities are improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap were published across 2018 and 2019.
- All were making progress, with Glasgow and Renfrewshire considered by HMI to be making excellent progress.
- We are also seeing steady, incremental gains in attainment across the broad general education. This is in line with the sustainable progress we would expect to see at this stage, according to international experts.
- The PISA 2018 survey showed that the reading performance of Scotland's 15 year-olds was higher than in 2015 and is now above the OECD average. Only five of the 36 OECD countries participating in PISA performed statistically significantly better.

16 March

Hi there

Here's the wording from the ASF Year 5 report Exec Summary on the stats from HT survey 2020:

There were continuing positive messages in terms of perceptions of success. This included the views of headteachers gathered through the Headteacher Survey 2020: • 90% of headteachers reported to have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap as a result of ASF supported approaches. This measure remained broadly the same as in 2019 (91%). • 88% of headteachers reported to expect to see improvement in closing the gap over the next five years. There was a 10 percentage point decrease on this measure since the previous survey (98%).

[REDACTED], there might be something more to add from the five year report.

I'm signing off for half hour just now but will pick back up at midday if anything else needed.

[REACTED]

Thanks, [REDACTED]

These are the stats from the section summaries in the PfG Report (see below). I think the perceptions of progress from HTs are key findings to include from the frontline, both in terms of progress made and expected. The first finding around HT confidence in awareness of approaches is also insightful.

- The ASF Headteacher Survey indicated that a great majority of headteachers (96%) felt that they had a **good awareness of the range of approaches** that can help close the poverty-related attainment gap, while 93% felt confident about **selecting the approach most effective for their school**.
- 45% of headteachers indicated that there was a strong emphasis on **culture and ethos** in their approach to closing the attainment gap.
- A large majority of headteachers indicated that the approach to achieving equity in education is **embedded within their school community** in 2020; 84% agreed that this was the case to a 'great' or 'moderate' extent, while no headteachers said 'not at all'
- A strong focus across schools and local authorities has been placed on **professional learning** to bring about high quality teaching and learning.
- Nearly 2 in 3 headteachers have seen an increase in **collaborative working** in their school as a result of ASF support, including one quarter who have seen a large increase.
- 84% of headteachers felt that they are 'very good' or 'good' in using **data and evidence** to inform development of their approach

Perceptions of progress

Headteachers are very positive about the impact of SAC in their school and optimistic about improvements being embedded and continuing over the next five years.

- 9 in 10 schools report seeing an improvement in closing the poverty-related gap in attainment and/or health and wellbeing, while a similar proportion of schools (88%) expect to see an improvement in the next five years.
- A great majority (84%) of headteachers indicated that the approach to achieving equity is embedded within the school community to either a great extent (35%) or a moderate extent (49%).
- Ability to implement approaches relevant to the school, teaching and staffing resources, and high quality learning and teaching, were perceived to be the most important factors in supporting closing the attainment gap.

Progress in improving attainment

Progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap has been made on a number of measures, although the level of such progress is varied depending on the measure under consideration. For the majority of measures, attainment of those from the most deprived areas has increased, although in some cases not at the same rate as for those from the least deprived areas.

- Change in the attainment gap across the Challenge Authorities is varied, and on some measures the gap has widened. However, this is largely not due to performance worsening, but instead that performance in the most deprived areas has improved but not kept pace with performance of those from the least deprived areas.
- The gap between the proportion of primary pupils (P1, P4 and P7 combined) from the most and least deprived areas who achieved their expected level in literacy and numeracy has narrowed since 2016/17.
- At S3, the gap between the proportion of pupils from the most and least deprived areas who achieved their expected level in literacy reduced slightly between 2016/17 and 2017/18, but then increased slightly between 2017/18 and 2018/19. There has been a narrowing of the gap between the most and least deprived areas for pupils in S3 who achieved their expected level in numeracy since 2016/17.

Progress in wider education measures

A range of key wider data sources may provide insight into the longer term benefits of the SAC for young people. Across a range of data sources, an increasing proportion of young people from the most deprived areas are in education, employment or training; are in a positive initial and follow up destination after school, or are accessing Higher/Further Education. The gap between young people from the most and least deprived areas has narrowed across all these measures.

- The Annual Participation Measure – the proportion of young people in education, employment or training – shows there has been an overall reduction in the participation gap between those living in the most deprived areas compared to those living in the least deprived areas (9.9

percentage points in 2020, 10.5 percentage points in 2019, 10.8 percentage points in 2018, 11.6 percentage points in 2017).

- The percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination consistently increased between 2009/10 and 2018/19, for leavers from both the most deprived and least deprived areas. The gap in positive initial destinations also decreased in this period. However, the proportions in positive initial destinations fell in 2019/20 for leavers from both the most and least deprived areas and the gap widened. This is likely to at least in part reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Overall, a greater proportion of school leavers from the most deprived areas were reported to be in Higher/Further Education as a positive initial destination in 2019/20 (65.7%) than in 2013/14 (58.8%).
- Between 2013/14 and 2019/20, the total Undergraduate Higher Education entrants from the most deprived areas increased from 14,730 to 16,500. In the same period, the proportion of all entrants from the most deprived areas increased from 17.2% to 19.4%.

16th March

Colleagues – we have now received confirmation that publication of the reports will now take place on **Tuesday next week, the 23rd**, [REDACTED] (rather than on Thursday this week, as previously advised).

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have now spoken to DFM and he is content to accept that advice. We should therefore reschedule publication for next Tuesday. DFM indicated that he hopes to consider the report this evening and will after that be in a position to come back to us with any comments.

Can we meet briefly as planned at 1.30 to confirm details for the short summary report and any other implications of this decision.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 March 2021 13:09
To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Lines on attainment by deprivation for FOI responses

Hi [REDACTED],

I'm bringing in [REDACTED] here because I think key point would be around why we typically look at the particular statistics we do when considering the poverty-related attainment gap (in this case one or more pass, rather than say 3 or more passes; and looking at passes rather than grades).

NQ colleagues will be able to confirm, but I suspect versions of lines produced in February may otherwise be enough?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | **Head of Developing the Young Workforce in the Senior Phase | Senior Phase Unit | Scottish Government**
2B North, Victoria Quay | Edinburgh | EH6 6QQ
Tel: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 March 2021 12:33
To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Lines on attainment by deprivation for FOI responses

Hi all,

We're about to respond to a couple of FOI requests on attainment by deprivation. This e-mail is firstly to let you know this and secondly to seek your views on any lines for FMQs etc, - we anticipate there could be some media interest at some point.

The first FOI relates to our recently published school leaver attainment statistics. In February we published the attainment gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas who attained 1 pass or more at each SCQF level or better. We've been asked to provide this information for 2 or more passes, 3 or more passes... up to 5 or more passes for 2019/20 school leavers. We've previously released the same information for 2015/16 to 2018/19 to the same requester. The 'attainment gaps' for larger numbers of passes are a lot wider than those for 1 pass or more. The 2019/20 data shows (amongst other things):

- Most of the gaps between most and least deprived were wider in 2019/20 than in 2018/19
- At National 4 (or equivalent) or better the gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more was 7.1 percentage points. For 5 passes or more this rose to 21.1 percentage points.

- Similarly, at National 5 (or equivalent) or better the gap for 1 pass or more was 20.8 percentage points. This rose to 39.5 percentage points for 5 passes or more.
- The figures also show that 16.6% of school leavers from the most deprived areas attained 5 passes or more at Higher (or equivalent) or better compared to 53.7% of those in the least deprived areas.

When we published in February we highlighted the fact that the proportions of school leavers in the most deprived areas attaining 1 pass or more had increased at most SCQF levels since 2018/19. This would also hold for higher numbers of passes at SCQF 5 or better, 6 or better and 7. We also mentioned that the attainment gap had decreased since 2009/10. This would hold for higher numbers of passes but the 2009/10 data hasn't been published so we may need to compare with 2015/16 for which it would hold for most measures at SCQF 5 or better and SCQF 6 or better.

The second request is for National 5 and Higher grades (based on SQA data but covering only candidates from publicly funded schools) broken down by SIMD group for 2016-2020. It predictably shows more pupils from the least deprived areas getting A grades (and passes) than from the most deprived areas. This isn't quite so stark for 2020 as it was in previous years. I've let SQA know this will be coming out.

Grateful for any thoughts on appropriate lines – do we simply use versions of those that were produced in February or do we need anything else?

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 March 2021 18:46
To: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: PfG report

Colleagues

Gayle has now ready over the PfG documents again. She says: "I think they are really good and I like the structure and approach to both the summary and further detailed report"

I spoke to her about the view that CA inspection gradings should be highlighted further. As HM Chief Inspector her response is clear: "I would NOT wish to see any change or suggestion to ranking CA. As the reports are now technically 3 years out of date I think it would not be a good approach. I would agree with editorial comments from the team – that the current configuration works well and the reasons not to move or highlight further are strong and robust"

Dùrachdan/Best wishes
[REDACTED]

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