

Closing the Poverty-Related Attainment Gap – A Report on Progress 2016-2021 will be published on 23 March, alongside The Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) Year 5 Evaluation and the Headteachers survey top line report.

There is a strong body of evidence that shows good progress is being made towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap and that the SAC, supported by the £750 million ASF, is having a positive impact.

- Almost nine out of ten schools reported that they have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related gap in attainment and/or health and wellbeing as a result of ASF supported approaches.
- 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.
- Over the first five years of the SAC programme there is evidence that almost all of the short and medium-term outcomes have been overtaken and there has been demonstrable progress on a number of long-term measures to close the poverty related attainment gap.
- The attainment gap is closing, but it remains a long-term endeavour.
- For primary school pupils, the attainment gap in literacy and numeracy has narrowed. (*NB: based on the combined P1, P4 & P7 attainment since 2016/17*)
- For S3 pupils, the attainment gap in numeracy narrowed between 2016/17 and 2018/19.
- The gap in the proportion of young people in education, employment and training has narrowed year-on-year between 2017 (11.5pp) and 2020 (9.9 pp).
- The most recent evidence from the International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) acknowledged the progress that is being made in Scottish education to close the attainment gap through the SAC and wider education policies.
- Whilst the attainment data indicates a variation in the pace of progress, the change in culture and ethos that is being seen, particularly in Challenge Authorities, with a stronger focus on poverty and equity, will maximise the sustainability of those improvements already achieved, providing solid foundations on which we can accelerate progress.

The longer-term picture shows further evidence of progress

- 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.

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, a record level of investment in a single year since the challenge began in 2015, building on our investment of £750 million over the course of this Parliament.
- 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.
- This report demonstrates a number of key strengths that the system can build on. The opportunity ahead is to build on these and accelerate progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- This must remain a collective, system-wide endeavour that builds on the progress to date.

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.

Supportive quotes

- **The ICEA:**

“Scottish education exhibits many strengths. It values equity as well as excellence. It has an excellent standing internationally. It is investing effort and resources to narrow attainment gaps, working with and strengthening the teaching profession.”

“The pandemic reinforces the issue of equity as the defining agenda of our time.”

- **Professor Chris Chapman, Senior Academic Advisor to the Scottish Attainment Challenge:**

“This report highlights both government’s commitment to equity and the cultural change that has occurred in Scottish education over the past five years. The drive to improve outcomes for children and young people from Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities has been placed centre stage of the reform agenda. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the challenge and magnified the necessity of ensuring that all children and young people reach their full potential irrespective of their circumstances”.

- **Maureen Mckenna, Executive Director of Education Services, Glasgow City Council:**

“Glasgow has been involved in the Attainment Challenge since its inception. From the outset we wanted to use this opportunity to enhance and accelerate our journey of improvement by taking a holistic approach which included all schools and nurseries across the city.

We have relentlessly focused on improving learning and teaching, always reflecting on what works and adapting and changing, where necessary...Over the last decade, we have continued to raise attainment and achievement, particularly for those young people who live in the most deprived communities.”

Scottish Attainment Challenge Challenge Authority Programme Summary of Progress 2015-20

Clackmannanshire Council

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Summary of Progress – Clackmannanshire Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering equity and excellence in education. Clackmannanshire was identified as one of five original Challenge authorities.

The education service in Clackmannanshire Council is led by the Strategic Director (People). The service is responsible for the education of over 6717 school-aged children and 766 within its nursery provision. There are 18 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, 1 special school and 2 support services: 1 primary and 1 secondary. There are also 3 stand-alone local authority nurseries. Over 29% of school pupils in Clackmannanshire live in areas of highest deprivation as categorised by The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2.

The authority has received Attainment Scotland funding through the Challenge Authority Programme (£7,985,703), the Pupil Equity Fund (£6,292,187), the Innovation Fund (£29,850) and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund £397,494), a total of (£14,705,234) over the period 2015 to 2020.

In the early years of SAC Clackmannanshire Council went through a period of significant political and strategic change. During the first year of the Attainment Challenge Clackmannanshire was part of a shared education service with Stirling Council. A new Clackmannanshire education service was established after this partnership ended in 2017. This early instability had a negative impact on the initial governance, focus, pace and direction of the education authority's work in relation to implementation of SAC. The newly established senior education team in Clackmannanshire revised the initial plans to better reflect the needs of Clackmannanshire Council and to support their vision for education. In 2020 a new Strategic Director (People) and a new Interim Chief Education Officer were appointed.

In December 2019 Education Scotland published the inspection of Local Authorities *How well is Clackmannanshire Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?* The authority was evaluated as making 'satisfactory' progress and the report identified the following key strengths:

- The strong leadership of the Chief Education Officer, supported by her senior leadership team, who share a clear vision of the action which needs to be taken.
- Education staff have been reinvigorated to make a positive difference for children and young people as part of the Clackmannanshire 'family'.
- Positive steps, including strong partnerships with universities, have been put in place to improve the use and analysis of data to measure the impact of SAC initiatives.

Aspects for development:

- Continue to develop and strengthen joint working with partner agencies which is leading to improvement.
- Ensure, as planned, implementation for the initiatives which are making the greatest difference to improving outcomes for learners.
- Continue to develop and improve the sustainability element and exit strategies for Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding initiatives and improve governance arrangements.

In December 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:

- A strong commitment to trauma informed practice evidenced by the investment, at all levels, in the Readiness for Learning (R4L) Programme. 1200 staff have received training and 2900 pupils have benefited from a range of R4L interventions. The programme has been influential in developing key principles and 'non-negotiables' which are now accepted as an entitlement for all learners across Clackmannanshire.
- A sustained focus on improving health and well-being has resulted in improved social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people accessing the wellbeing workers who have been employed in targeted schools.
- The intelligent use of a range of data is leading to increasingly more appropriate targeting of resources at local authority level.
- An effective tracking system developed by the data analyst and the one to one support provided by the data coach is helping headteachers to identify and address poverty related gaps.
- A strong emphasis on building the capacity of staff has resulted in improved practice. The Equitable Literacy Programme, for example, has improved approaches to reading across the authority. The Improving Outcomes Team have played a key role in supporting professional learning.
- The continuing commitment to supporting parents and families through initiatives such as Talk Clacks, FLIC 1400 and school family learning programmes are positively influencing families and their capacity to support children and young people in their learning.

Next steps include:

- It will be important that the recent more forensic targeting of SAC resources continues and is reflected at school level, particularly in relation to Pupil Equity Funding. This will ensure that all Attainment Scotland Funding is very clearly focused on improving outcomes for the children and young people impacted by poverty.
- There has been an increased coherence between the various workstreams involved in the local authority SAC plan which has worked well. It will be important to develop a similar coherence between the various strands of Attainment Scotland Funding (SAC, PEF and Care Experienced Funding) within Clackmannanshire. A common governance structure for all three strands would help ensure all funded activities are very clearly focused, and result in, a closing of poverty related gaps across all sectors.

March 2021

Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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Scottish Attainment Challenge Challenge Programme Summary of Progress 2015-2020

Dundee City Council

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Summary of Progress 2015-2020 – Dundee City Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering equity and excellence in education. Dundee City Council joined the Challenge programme in year 1 (2015-16).

There are 24,000 school age children and young people in Dundee and 43.8% live in areas of highest deprivation as categorised by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. Data from 2020 indicates that 37% of people in Dundee live in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland, only 65% of adults are in work, and life expectancy is the second lowest of any city in Scotland. There are 33 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 1 special school and 1 off-site service for children with additional support needs. The Executive Director of Children and Families Services has overall responsibility for education, social work and community justice. There are two heads of service; the Chief Education Officer and the Chief Social Worker.

Dundee City Council has received Attainment Scotland funding through the Challenge Authority Programme (£25,851,375), the Pupil Equity Fund (£20,060,277), and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (£871,506), a total of £46,783,158 between 2015 and 2020.

In 2015, Dundee City Council adopted an early intervention approach to achieve its vision for improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty. Eleven schools were initially targeted but this was quickly expanded to include all schools and sectors to ensure that equity is a priority for all. As a result of this expansion, there is a shared moral purpose and a collaborative ethos which underpins improvement.

The Education Scotland inspection report of February 2018, *How well is Dundee City Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?* stated that the authority was making good progress. The report stated that Education Scotland was confident that the evidence and evaluation at that time indicated the following strengths:

- Strong leadership of the children and families service which has recently improved the pace of change through increased awareness of the need for improvement and appropriate support and challenge within the system to deliver change.
- Effective partnership working is providing a wide range of support for children and families and is leading to improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- A range of career-long professional learning opportunities is supporting practitioners to collaborate, to test out changes in their practice, to make better use of research and to develop further their knowledge and skills.
- Improved self-evaluation which is being supported by the recently developed framework, trios of schools working together and more intelligent use of data and improvement methodology.
- Very helpful advice to headteachers with regard to supporting them in their responsibilities with respect to PEF.

Aspects for development were noted as:

- Continue to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap across all sectors, building on valuable lessons learned in the early learning and childcare and primary sectors and in health and wellbeing. In so doing, continue to raise the attainment of all children and young people in literacy and numeracy.
- Review, based on evidence available, the number of initiatives that are being tested out and supported with a view to simplifying the landscape and gaining improved outcomes.
- Continue to develop exit or continuation strategies for SAC funded initiatives in order to embed practice and to build on children's progress.

- Further strengthen the information provided to the Children and Families Services Committee to enhance scrutiny and transparency through, for example, providing more information on the funding provided and used, and an increased focus on progress against planned activity.
- Building on the good start made, to develop further the role of school improvement partnerships, and using these as a mechanism to share good practice and collaboration of stakeholders across wider areas.

In December 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact, which identified the following key strengths:

- The strategic direction provided by senior leaders consistently promotes the vision of the attainment challenge and there is a strong commitment from staff at all levels to improve outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.
- High-quality professional learning for leadership is strengthening capacity and supporting sustainability. Professional learning and support for teachers and early years practitioners is developing skills in the use of data, action research and improvement approaches. This is increasing agency, confidence and skills to address equity in the classroom.
- More effective use of data is supporting authority officers, school leaders and practitioners to identify attainment gaps and evaluate progress at classroom, school and authority level.
- Intervention programmes in the early years are delivering intensive, targeted support which is improving acquisition of early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Literacy and numeracy attainment in P1, P4, P7 and S3 has increased over time. In primary, the poverty-related attainment gap has narrowed as a result of greater increases in the attainment of learners living in areas of highest deprivation.
- A range of early intervention approaches to support wellbeing is having a positive impact on vulnerable young people by reducing anxiety, improving attendance and increasing engagement in learning.
- Services created to assist in mitigating the impact of poverty on family life and on learning are providing effective support. For example, school and family development workers who are based in every primary school are playing a central role in strengthening relationships, improving parental engagement and facilitating family learning.
- The significant drop in exclusions since 2014, when rates were double the national average, to primary exclusions falling below national figures in 2018-19.

Next steps identified include:

- Embed systems leadership to enhance capacity at all levels, maximise progress and deliver the local authority's vision for a transformational pace of change.
- Build upon improvements in primary attainment and maximise attainment in the senior phase to ensure that young people affected by poverty achieve a breadth of skills, qualifications and achievements.
- Continue to strengthen quality improvement approaches and effective use of data by building on existing capacity and embedding consistent systems and practices across the authority.
- Utilise opportunities presented by entering the next phase of the attainment challenge to continue to review and streamline evidence gathering and evaluation across all SAC activity.

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Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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Scottish Attainment Challenge Challenge Programme Summary of Progress 2015-2020

East Ayrshire Council

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Summary of Progress – East Ayrshire Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering equity and excellence in education. East Ayrshire was initially identified in 2015 to be involved in the Schools Programme and became a Challenge Authority in June 2016.

Over one third of all children and young people in East Ayrshire live in areas of highest deprivation as categorised by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. This is above the national average. There are 7 secondary schools, 40 primary schools and 3 special schools. The education service in East Ayrshire Council is led by the Head of Education. The service is responsible for the education of over 16,000 school-aged children and over 3,000 children between the ages of 0 and 5.

The authority was allocated Attainment Scotland funding through the Challenge Authority Programme (£14,434,854), the Pupil Equity Fund (£13,830,939), the Innovation Fund (£115,877) and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (£723,629), a total of £29,105,299 over the period 2015 to 2020.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) leadership team was formed between May and September 2017. The East Ayrshire SAC programme is focused on three main workstreams: Literacy and Numeracy, Families and Communities and Leadership.

The Education Scotland inspection of local authorities (March 2019) *How well is East Ayrshire Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?* reported that the authority was making satisfactory progress with improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report stated that Education Scotland were confident that the evidence and evaluation at that time indicated the following strengths:

- The commitment of senior leaders to understand the needs of local communities.
- The recently refreshed leadership, which is providing greater clarity in the education service.
- Partnership working, which is helping to develop successful family and community work.

Aspects for development were noted as:

- Increase the pace of progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap and improve approaches to using data to support this.
- Approaches to sustainability should be more formally documented and shared with elected members to provide them with assurance that the most effective interventions provided through the Scottish Attainment Challenge are embedded within schools.
- Improve rates of attendance and continue to reduce exclusions, while also addressing the variations in these between schools.

In December 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:

- Through the clear commitment of senior leaders to understand the needs of local communities and supported by the work of the SAC leadership team there is an improved and shared understanding across the authority of the challenges faced by children, young people and families living in poverty. SAC funding has been a key driver for improvement

across the local authority. Overall, the attainment of children and young people in East Ayrshire affected by poverty is beginning to improve.

- The approach to targeting SAC resources was improved by widening the data set used to identify pupils and schools. In doing so, the pace and reach of the programme was accelerated.
- Progression frameworks for literacy and English and numeracy and Mathematics were developed. In addition, the local authority has engaged well with the national quality assurance and moderation support officers (QAMSO) programme; good use of local expertise has linked this work to SAC priorities. As a result, there is now a strategic approach to planning for learning, teaching and assessment across the authority.
- The increased availability of high quality professional learning for all practitioners with an explicit focus on pedagogy, raising attainment and improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty. The growing culture of professional enquiry has contributed to the development of a 'leaders of learning' approach to share practice and build capacity across the workforce. This approach has the potential to be a sustainable model to further develop quality pedagogy and andragogy across the local authority.
- The professional learning networks established in the last two years to provide opportunities for learning and collaboration across all practitioners. These include those focused on self-evaluation, data training, Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) planning, School Improvement Planning (SIP) and Standards and Quality (S&Q) training. These professional learning networks have demonstrated early positive impact on school improvement. They are designed and delivered in consultation with a range of partners and all school leadership teams and are open to practitioners at all levels across the system.

Next steps identified include:

- Through analysis and scrutiny of attainment data and SIMD profiles there is scope for further targeted support and professional learning to interrupt the cycle of deprivation in schools where there are persistent gaps and low attainment.
- Action research/professional enquiry approaches within professional learning should be embedded authority wide. The data gathered from these approaches should continue to be used to inform professional learning requirements and to improve the design of targeted and universal support across the local authority.
- Continue to embed the Professional Learning Framework to further increase teacher agency, collaborative working and supporting the development of leadership skills across the local authority. Further articulation of SAC, PEF and Care Experienced Children and Young People funding, including planning and evaluation, is required across the local authority to maximise impact.

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Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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Glasgow City Council

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Summary of Progress – Glasgow City Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in February 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering excellence and equity in education. Glasgow City Council has been part of the SAC since 2015.

Education services in Glasgow City Council is led by the Executive Director. The service is responsible for the education of 80,000 children and young people across the education authority. There are 110 childcare settings, 123 partner providers and early learning and childcare settings, 140 primary schools, 30 secondary schools, and 25 special schools and services. Over half of children and young people live in areas of highest deprivation categorised as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2.

Glasgow City Council has received Attainment Scotland funding through the Challenge Authority Programme (£40,497,213), the Pupil Equity Fund (£87,894,530), the Innovation Fund (£109,445) and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (£5,371,032) over the period 2015 to 2020, a total of £133,872,220.

The Education Scotland inspection of local authorities (March 2019) *How well is Glasgow Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?* reported that the authority was making excellent progress with improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report stated that Education Scotland were confident that the evidence and evaluation at that time indicated the following strengths:

- The very strong council-wide vision focused on reducing the impact of poverty on children, families and communities.
- The relentless drive of the Executive Director in improving the educational outcomes of children and young people living in poverty in Glasgow.
- The exceptional progress made in reducing the impact of poverty on the educational attainment and achievement of children and young people.
- Outstanding approaches to career-long professional learning and leadership which have strengthened the skills and knowledge of staff and, as a result, improved children's and young people's attainment.
- In-built sustainability through capacity building is at the heart of the professional learning approaches undertaken across the city. Education Services have strongly promoted the importance of long-term sustainability across all aspects of their universal and targeted approaches to permanently reduce the impact of poverty on outcomes for children and young people.

Aspects for development were noted as:

- As planned, further refine the multi-layer self-evaluation approaches to continue to drive up standards.

In December 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:

- The very strong council-wide vision focused on reducing the impact of poverty on children, families and communities. The work of Glasgow's Improvement Challenge has remained a core priority across Education Services over the last five years and is promoted as 'core business' by the Executive Director. Staff at all levels work together to promote excellence, equity and empowerment across the city.

- The exceptional progress made in reducing the impact of poverty on the educational attainment and achievement of children and young people. In primary schools there remains an attainment gap between those living in SIMD 1 and 2 and those living in SIMD 9 and 10, however, it is closing. In primary schools, children from the most deprived areas continue to perform above the national average for all Broad General Education National Improvement Framework measures. At senior phase, outcomes for young people have shown a very positive upward trend over the last five years. Overall, young people are leaving school with better qualifications particularly at SCQF Level 6. Glasgow City Council is mitigating the impact of poverty very successfully for its young people at the senior phase across a number of measures.
- Outstanding approaches to career-long professional learning (CLPL) and leadership which have strengthened the skills and knowledge of staff and, as a result, improved children and young people's attainment. The CLPL programme developed for Challenge Leaders of Learning has received accreditation from the General Teaching Council of Scotland and has had measurable impact on staff knowledge, confidence and learner experience across the city.
- Education Services have strongly promoted the importance of long-term sustainability across all aspects of their universal and targeted approaches to permanently reduce the impact of poverty on outcomes for children and young people. The capacity building approach built within the Challenge Leader of Learning model ensures knowledge and skills are developed across staff teams and that leadership of learning is a responsibility of all teachers.

Next steps identified include:

- Continue to increase curriculum for excellence achievement levels at all stages through increased levels of rigour, effective use of data and improved professional dialogue.
- Continue to focus on assessment and moderation to increase and refine understanding of achieving a level in the broad general education to impact further on narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap.

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Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

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Inverclyde Council

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Summary of Progress - Inverclyde Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering equity and excellence in education. Inverclyde Council joined the Challenge programme in year 1 (2015-16).

The education service in Inverclyde Council is led by the Director of Education, Communities and Corporate Development, supported by two heads of service. The service is responsible for the education of over 11,000 school-aged children and just over 1,100 children between the ages of zero to five. There are 20 early learning and childcare settings, 2 schools and centres for children and young people with additional support needs, 20 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. Over 48.8% of children and young people live in SIMD 1 and 2.

The authority has received Attainment Scotland funding through the Challenge Authority Programme (£14,632,650), the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) (£9,668,837) and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (£387,643), a total of £24,689,130 over the period 2015 to 2020.

Inverclyde has taken a strategic approach to raising attainment for all, while closing the poverty related attainment gap. Interventions in the local authority's Attainment Challenge Programme (ACP) were introduced with a 'start small and grow' approach. Initially 6 primary schools with the highest levels of children and young people living in areas of deprivation were identified to receive additional supports. This has grown to 12 over the life of the project with all 6 secondary schools joining the project in 2016/17. The authority's SAC improvement plan was developed in partnership with headteachers and other relevant stakeholders and is closely aligned with the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

The Education Scotland inspection of local authorities (October 2018) *How well is Inverclyde Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?* reported that the authority was making very good progress with improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report stated that Education Scotland were confident that the evidence and evaluation at that time indicated the following strengths:

- The very strong vision and shared values which are 'lived by all' across the authority.
- The influential leadership at all levels, from the Chief Executive, head of education through the central teams, and heads of establishments empowering staff to play their part in improving the life chances of children, young people and their families.
- Sector-leading evidence-based professional learning resulting in a culture of strong reflective and confident practitioners.
- Staff and partners working very effectively together to provide sensitive and well-judged support for children and young people, which is improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Robust self-evaluation, supported by strong strategic governance, at the heart of Inverclyde Council's practice

Aspects for development.

- Continue to secure high-level outcomes for all children and young people.
- Strengthen exit and continuation strategies for SAC initiatives.

In November 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:

- The leadership approach taken by Inverclyde in supporting the aims of the SAC and its implementation.
- Collaborative working across schools and between partners and schools is highly valued. This collaboration leads to improved outcomes for children. Highly effective professional learning has led to more skilled teaching. Through training and support in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved.
- The use of data is now an integral part of school improvement and the local authority continue to prioritise the development of data literacy. Processes for data analysis supports the review of the poverty related attainment gap and inform decisions in addressing this gap.
- Overall, there are improving trends in the attainment for children and young people in Inverclyde affected by poverty. Data shows improvement over time and the poverty related attainment gap is decreasing. Initial positive destinations for young people from areas of disadvantage in Inverclyde are improving and are above national levels. There are many factors which contribute to this including the work by staff funded by SAC across primary and secondary schools.

Next steps identified include:

- Strengthen reporting of outcomes of PEF spend to ensure the impact of the fund is maximised.
- Review care experience children and young people's fund plans to ensure improved educational outcomes for this group of children and young people.

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Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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Scottish Attainment Challenge Challenge Programme Summary of Progress 2015-2020

North Ayrshire Council

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Summary of Progress – North Ayrshire Council

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in February 2015 to help the Scottish Government achieve its vision of delivering excellence and equity in education. North Ayrshire Council has been part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge since 2015 and receives funding as a Challenge Authority, through the Pupil Equity Fund and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund. North Ayrshire Council has received £43,187,412 over the last 5 years across these funding streams.

The majority of children and young people in North Ayrshire live in the 30% most deprived areas of Scotland with over a third living in the 20% most deprived. North Ayrshire has the second highest proportion of children and young people affected by socio-economic disadvantage in Scotland.

The Education Scotland inspection of local authorities (July 2018) How well is North Ayrshire Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap? reported that the authority was making very good progress with improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. The report stated that HM Inspectors were confident that the evidence and evaluation at that time indicated the following strengths:

- The central officer team's drive, vision and capacity for continuous improvement, supported by strong governance structures, provide opportunities for innovation within an appropriate framework of accountability at all levels
- There are shared values and common purpose where school staff feel valued and very well supported
- The very strong leadership of the Executive Director and leadership team is driving improved outcomes for children and young people
- Partnership working within Scottish Attainment Challenge thematic workstreams is leading to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families living in the highest areas of deprivation
- Very effective self-evaluation is leading to improved learning, raised attainment and a narrowing of the poverty-related attainment gap
- Very strong approaches to staff development are evident across the whole authority led by the work undertaken by the PLA. The development of leadership at all levels is building leadership capacity across the authority

Aspects for development were noted as:

- The authority should continue to build on identified areas of strong and sector leading practice
- The authority should continue to engage a wider range of stakeholders, including parents and pupils, in self-evaluation, planning and governance of the Scottish Attainment Challenge across North Ayrshire Council
- The authority should further strengthen the information provided to the cabinet to further enhance scrutiny and transparency
- The authority should confirm formal exit strategies for Scottish Attainment Challenge workstreams as a matter of priority and share them with elected members to ensure sustainability

In December 2020, Education Scotland link Attainment Advisors worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:
SAC Challenge Authority Summary of Progress 2015 - 20

- The strategic leadership and governance approach taken by North Ayrshire Council has supported the Scottish Attainment Challenge vision and embedded practice across schools. A consistent approach has been adopted throughout the challenge with operational overview being provided by the head of service with senior managers leading specific workstreams. This approach has supported improvement, agility and sustainability
- Continued development of the sector-leading professional learning academy is providing a range of high quality professional learning activities to practitioners in every school in the authority. This professional learning is helping to raise attainment, particularly for those most affected by socio-economic disadvantage
- Innovation within the leadership workstream has resulted in improved leadership capacity across North Ayrshire and the development of a sustainable delivery model.
- Nurture provision is well established within North Ayrshire and is providing robustly assessed and effective support for many of the authority's most vulnerable learners
- The work of the family learning team continues to develop a range of valued support to an increasing number of families most affected by socio-economic disadvantage
- There are improving trends in the attainment of children and young people most affected by socio-economic disadvantage. In particular, young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage are achieving well in literacy and numeracy. The poverty related attainment gap has closed significantly for S3 learners

In line with national trends the attainment of children and young people in North Ayrshire who live in the 20% least deprived areas continues to be higher than those living in the 20% most deprived areas resulting in an enduring attainment gap. There are improvements in reducing the poverty related attainment gap and the authority is committed to making these improvements more consistent across all measures. Consequently, areas of development for the future include the following key points:

- Continuation of North Ayrshire's governance and implementation approach to support sustainability and prioritisation of initiatives. This may include building on existing approaches to renew the focus on identifying key gaps and objective evaluation of the impact of Scottish Attainment Challenge funded initiatives - including Care Experienced Children and Young People and Pupil Equity Funds - to ensure their impact on equity
- Continue to deliver progress against key National Improvement Framework and local measures of the poverty related attainment gap
- Continue to develop access to high quality learning and teaching including digital and remote learning approaches for every learner and particularly those affected by socio-economic disadvantage

March 2021

Education Scotland
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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