

# Report

Report to:	<b>Education Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>5 December 2023</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director of Education</b>

Subject:	<b>Secondary Raising Attainment Strategy</b>
----------	--

## 1. Purpose of Briefing Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to:-

- ◆ provide an overview of the secondary school raising attainment strategy
- ◆ provide a high-level overview of September 2023 Senior Phase attainment

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the overview of the secondary school raising attainment strategy is noted;  
and
- (2) that the high-level overview of September 2023 Senior Phase attainment be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. In school session 2022/2023, a full return to face-to-face teaching took place following a 2-year period of interrupted learning associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We are acutely aware of the long-term impact of the pandemic on all aspects of the education system.
- 3.2. The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on experiences and resulting attainment of young people affected by poverty.
- 3.3. There has been an ongoing focus on raising attainment and achievement across all South Lanarkshire Council secondary schools, and central systems to support and challenge school leaders continue to evolve.
- 3.4. Scottish Government surfaces qualifications data via the Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool 'Insight'. Insight provides schools and local authorities with a summary of their attainment compared to a 'Virtual Comparator' plus their Local Authority, Regional Improvement Collaborative and National averages.
- 3.5. Insight is updated two times per year, firstly in September after every SQA exam diet and more formally in March with published 'Leavers' data.
- 3.6. The most recent update of Insight (September 2023) allows schools and Local Authorities to reflect on S4, S5 and S6 performance in SQA exams. Although this is a helpful benchmarking exercise, it should be stressed that September Insight data is for internal use only, and not for the purposes of reporting.

- 3.7. Data related to cohorts certificated in 2020 allowed for an 'inferred attainment' element and in 2021 certification was delivered through the SQA Alternative Certification Model (ACM). Data related to cohorts certificated in 2022 was affected by the 'modification' of course work and examination papers and the SQA's stated 'generous approach' to marking. Although 2023 was expected to be a return to 'normal', the SQA still made some allowances, a 'sensitive approach' to marking.
- 3.8. The impact of these different approaches to certification upon school cohort attainment means that care should be taken when making comparisons over time, particularly when comparing 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 data.

#### **4. Raising Attainment in South Lanarkshire Secondary Schools**

- 4.1. South Lanarkshire Council has high aspirations and is committed to securing improved educational outcomes for all children and young people. Two of the current 5 strategic priorities for Education Resources are directly linked to raising attainment:-

- ◆ *Ensure inclusion, equity and equality are at the heart of what we do*
- ◆ *Provide a rich and stimulating curriculum that helps raise standards in literacy and numeracy*

- 4.2. Raising attainment has been an ongoing priority for Education Resources with a number of initiatives already in place to support secondary schools. There are 6 key areas which support raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap:-

- ◆ High quality learning, teaching and assessment
- ◆ Learner pathways and wide range of accreditation opportunities qualifications and courses
- ◆ Curriculum design and offer
- ◆ Performance improvement
- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Professional development and career long professional learning

- 4.3. Secondary Head Teacher networks and the development of South Lanarkshire Council's 'Pedagogy Palette' are examples of two approaches to drive high quality learning, teaching and assessment across secondary schools.

- 4.4. As part of the widening participation agenda, extending opportunities for all learners and supporting the development of more individualised and personalised learner pathways, Education Resources developed a resource for schools to consider the range of non-National Qualification courses available for learners.

- 4.5. This resource highlights the large number of courses at SCQF levels 3 to 7 which schools can use to support learner pathways and leaver destinations.

- 4.6. In session 2023/2024, schools have been further supported to engage in these qualifications via direct funding from the Strategic Equity Fund. Funding will be provided to schools for learners from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1. This support is linked to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

- 4.7. Through the South Lanarkshire Council 'SSR' (Statistical Summary Report) programme Head Teachers and their leadership teams are provided with the opportunity to engage in high-quality support and challenge discussions around their

attainment and school improvement priorities at two points during the school session, known as SSR1 and SSR2 respectively.

- 4.8. 'SSR1' is carried out in September and focuses on the SQA exam results achieved by all Senior Phase learners in the previous academic year.
- 4.9. 'SSR2' is carried out in March and focuses on the results achieved by all school leavers (from S4, S5 and S6 combined) from the previous academic year.
- 4.10. This programme informs the school's improvement plan priorities for the following session.
- 4.11. The SSR programme allows schools to take a retrospective look at certification information and exam performance while looking at trends and patterns to understand where long term improvements are required.
- 4.12. In order to support interrogation of live attainment data, a pilot programme called 'SSR Live' is taking place in session 2023/2024 which will allow senior Secondary school leaders to collaborate on the analysis of live tracking and monitoring information and which will provide opportunities for schools to support and challenge each other on ongoing and required interventions.
- 4.13. The SSR programme is intrinsically linked with planning for school improvement. All work undertaken on performance improvement and raising attainment has a link to the School Improvement planning process.
- 4.14. In session 2023/2024, central officers will continue to work with Secondary Head Teachers to highlight the importance of the leadership of school improvement to support attainment and achievement.
- 4.15. School leaders meet with central officers collectively 2 times per year at Secondary Head Teacher Attainment Network meetings. Head Teachers are able to engage in discussion around local authority priorities for performance improvement and share examples of highly effective practice from colleagues.
- 4.16. A series of tools to support Secondary schools' analysis of data have been developed. These allow schools to focus on analysing the data to identify areas for improvement and planning next steps for learners. Appendix 1 details the range of tools recently developed.

## **5. Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap**

- 5.1. Schools will continue to be supported to pursue 'excellence and equity' via interventions offered at authority level through our existing Strategic Equity Fund projects continuing from session 2022/2023.
- 5.2. Education Resources and schools continue to focus on and interrogate data in order to increase the pace of change towards closing the poverty related attainment gap.

## **6. Local Benchmarking Measures**

- 6.1. One of the functions of Insight is to provide an analysis of four Local benchmarking measures showing the performance of stage-based cohorts. These measures are connected and should be looked at together when considering the performance of a school or local authority and the next steps to be taken in seeking further improvements.

6.2. The 3 Local Benchmarking Measures pertinent to secondary school attainment are:-

**Improving attainment in literacy and numeracy**

South Lanarkshire Council's aim is for all learners to be highly literate and numerate, increasing their life chances greatly.

Curriculum for Excellence stresses the responsibility of all teachers for developing literacy and numeracy skills. This reflects the importance placed on these crucial skills which unlock learning in all other areas of the curriculum and are vital for success in learning, life and work in the modern world and workplace.

**Improving attainment for all**

The overall aim for this measure, along with tackling disadvantage, is to have all learners attain as highly as possible.

Attainment is an individual's passport to personal, social, cultural and economic opportunities. Raising attainment means improving life chances. This does not mean just focusing on exam results, but instead looking at attainment in its widest sense. It is this rich attainment which enables all of our children and young people to make good progress and develop the skills, ambition and know-how they need to improve life chances.

**Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers.**

The overall aim for this measure, together with improving attainment for all, is to have all young people attain as highly as possible.

This measure is aimed at closing the gap in attainment associated with the incidence of higher and lower deprivation and has the same aspirations for our pupils as improving attainment for all.

## **7. Overview of Attainment (progress data)**

7.1. This report provides a narrative for the performance of stage-based cohorts.

Virtual Comparator data is constructed from the performance of individual pupils with similar characteristics from schools in other local authorities. This allows a comparison based on some key pupil characteristics (gender, deprivation, additional support needs and stage) that are linked to educational outcomes.

7.2. **S4 (Please see Appendix 2 for more detailed commentary)**

The 2022/2023 academic year witnessed promising trends in attainment across most S4 measures as we observed a consistent improvement in the achievement of our learners. This reflects the effectiveness of the targeted teaching strategies and robust tracking procedures used in our schools. These improvements are indicative of our drive for excellence and our continued commitment to ensure every learner achieves the best possible outcomes.

7.3. **S5 (Please see Appendix 3 for more detailed commentary)**

The 2022/2023 academic year for our S5 students has been a journey of encouraging progress across various educational measures. In literacy and numeracy, we've witnessed continued improvement, reflecting the effectiveness of our teaching strategies and a strong commitment to ensure more young people are achieving across a wider range of SCQF level 6 qualifications.

Overall, the year has been marked by a collective move towards better educational outcomes, with students demonstrating resilience and adaptability in their learner journeys. While there is always room for growth and improvement, Improvements made this year are a testament to the dedication of schools and potential of our students to overcome the disruption to learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 7.4. **S6 (Please see Appendix 4 for more detailed commentary)**

In the 2022/2023 academic year, S6 learners have demonstrated progress in key educational metrics, marking a year of significant achievements. In literacy and numeracy, we witnessed a strong performance that stands out as one of the best in recent years and generally, at a strong and steady pace of growth and improvement over the last 5 years. The year has been particularly notable in terms of key performance indicators, where our students have achieved notable successes across different levels highlighting and increased 'added value' year in S6. It stands as a clear indication of our commitment to excellence in education throughout the entire senior phase.

### 8. **Findings**

#### 8.1. Areas of key strength include:-

- ◆ Schools increasingly adding value as young people progress through the Senior Phase
- ◆ Increased focus on data for improvement resulting in more robust school and local authority level improvement planning
- ◆ Closing of the gap in almost all measures
- ◆ Significant improvement in outcomes for Q1 learners in most areas
- ◆ Reduced impact of covid on Q1 learners in South Lanarkshire compared to other areas in Scotland

#### 8.2. Areas for ongoing consideration:-

- ◆ Focus in all schools on reduction in numbers of young people leaving school after S4 and in Christmas of S5
- ◆ Increasing the range of qualifications on offer to young people outwith the core National Qualifications
- ◆ Enhanced mentoring work to support young people make more informed decisions around course and career choices

8.3. It should be noted that the poverty-related attainment gap remains a challenge across the country, with early indications suggesting that South Lanarkshire council data compares favourably to National data. A further and fuller update around Strategic Equity Fund work and stretch aims will be reported at next committee when verified national comparison data is available.

### 9. **Next steps**

9.1. Education Resources will continue to provide support for schools to continue to raise attainment through the work of the Curriculum and Quality Improvement (CQIS) service and the SSR programme.

9.2. This data will continue to be reported on through Education Resources' planning and reporting mechanisms linked to both the Council Plan and Resource Plan at quarters 2 and 4.

## **10. Employee Implications**

10.1. None.

## **11. Financial Implications**

11.1. None.

## **12. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

12.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

## **13. Other Implications**

13.1. There are no implications for sustainability or risk in terms of the information contained within this report.

## **14. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

14.1. This report does not present a new strategy, policy or plan and is, therefore, not subject to equality impact assessment.

14.2. There was no requirement to undertake any formal consultation in terms of the information contained within this report.

**Carole McKenzie**  
**Executive Director (Education Resources)**

20 November 2023

### **Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes**

◆ Education and learning: Inspiring learners, transforming learners and strengthening partnerships

### **Previous References**

◆ Education Resources Committee – 15 November 2022

### **List of Background Papers**

◆ None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:- Stewart Nicolson, Head of Education (Secondary)

Ext: (Tel:01698 ) 454475

E-mail: Stewart.Nicolson@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

**Appendix 1** – South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources – overview of analysis tools for schools to support usage of data for improvement

	<b>BGE Analysis Tool (L&amp;N)</b>	<b>BGE T&amp;M Tool (Subjects)</b>	<b>BGE Attainment Over Time Tool</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>SP T&amp;M Tool</b>	<b>Insight Analytical Dataset Tool</b>	<b>SLC Subject RAG</b>	<b><u>SQA Results</u> School Pupil Estimate</b>
<b>Category</b>	Automated	Automated	Automated	Precompiled	Automated	Automated	Precompiled	Precompiled
<b>Produced By</b>	SLC	SLC	SLC	Gateway for SLC	SLC	SLC	SLC	SLC
<b>Phase</b>	BGE	BGE	BGE	BGE	SP	SP	SP	SP
<b>Dataset</b>	P&A (Live)	P&A (Live)	P&A (Live)	ACEL (Historical)	SEEMiS T&M (Live)	Insight Analytical Dataset	Insight	SQA NQ File, SEEMiS BI
<b>Type of Data</b>	CfE Levels (Organisers), PiL, S&K	CfE Levels (Subjects), PiL, S&K	CfE Level (Organisers & Subjects)	CfE Levels (Organisers)	Working Grade (Past/Present), Target Grade	Pupil Level Attainment Data	Subject Level Grades	SQA NQ Results
<b>Main Purpose</b>	Tracking & Monitoring, ACEL (QA)	Tracking & Monitoring	School Improvement	School Improvement	Tracking & Monitoring	School Improvement	School Improvement	School Improvement
<b>Status</b>	Ready for schools	Ready for schools	Ready for schools	Launched	Launched	Launched	Launched	Launched
<b>Updated</b>	Termly	Termly	Termly	Annually (Oct)	Termly	Biannually (Sep/Mar)	Biannually (Sep/Mar)	Annually (Aug)

## **Appendix 2 – S4 Commentary**

Literacy: 2022/2023 saw the highest percentage of S4 candidates achieving SCQF Level 4 Literacy in 5 years, with figures being above the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the past 3 years. The figures also show a marked improvement since results in 2019. There was a similar picture for SCQF Level 5 Literacy in terms of the highest percentage of candidates achieving this level since 2019.

Numeracy: S4 candidates achieved the highest percentage at SCQF Level 4 since 2020 and the figure shows an upward trend. This is also an increase since 2019. Again, there is a similar picture with SCQF Level 5 Numeracy, with the highest percentage of S4 candidates achieving this level since 2019. In addition, the gap between S4 candidates and the VC has reduced from 6.47 percentage points in 2021/2022 to 0.77 percentage points in 2022/2023.

### Improving attainment for all

This measure provides information on the average complementary tariff score of all candidates in three groups: the lowest 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% based on attainment. The complementary tariff score sums tariff points awarded to a candidate across their 5 best courses for that academic year.

The S4 highest 20% of candidates are broadly in line with the VC and National figures, with the middle 60% of S4 candidates performing above the VC and above National. The lowest 20% have attained the highest score in last 5 years, with the complementary tariff points above the VC and National and a marked improvement since 2019.

### Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers.

In 2023, the average complimentary tariff score of S4 learners in South Lanarkshire is broadly in line/slightly above the virtual comparator and is slightly above the national level in almost all SIMD deciles. 2023 performance is similar to the general performance trend over the last 5 years.

### Key performance Indicators

At SCQF level 3 (5 or more), there has been an improvement since 2022 of over 1 percentage point and the percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 5 awards at SCQF Level 3 or above has remained above the VC and National figures for the past 5 years, with S4 candidates 3.38 percentage points above the VC.

At SCQF level 4 (5 or more), there has been an improvement of 1.8 percentage points since 2022 and of 2.26 percentage points since 2019. The percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 5 awards at SCQF Level 4 or above has remained above the VC and National figures for the past 5 years.

At SCQF level 5 (1 or more), there has been an improvement of 1.21 percentage points since 2022 and of 3.55 percentage points since 2019. The percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 5 awards at SCQF Level 4 or above has remained above the VC and National figures for the past 5 years.

SCQF level 5 (5 or more) has remained above the national figure for the past 5 years.



### **Appendix 3 – S5 Commentary**

Literacy: 2022/2023 saw a higher percentage of S5 candidates achieving SCQF Level 6 Literacy. The percentage of S5 candidates achieving SCQF Level 6 Literacy has been above the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the past 5 years. The figures also show a marked improvement since results in 2019.

Numeracy: There is an increase in the percentage of S5 candidates achieving SCQF level 5 Numeracy since 2019. The percentage of S5 candidates achieving SCQF Level 6 Numeracy has been above the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the past 5 years.

Improving attainment for all: The S5 highest 20% of candidates are above the VC and National figures, with the middle 60% of S5 candidates performing above National for the past 5 years. The lowest 20% have performed above National for the past 4 years.

Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers.

In 2023, the average complimentary tariff score of S5 candidates in South Lanarkshire is broadly in line the virtual comparator and is slightly above the national level in the majority of SIMD deciles. 2023 performance is similar to the general performance trend over the last 5 years.

Key performance Indicators

At SCQF level 6 (1 or more), there has been an improvement since 2019 of almost 2 percentage points.

## **Appendix 4 – S6 Commentary**

Literacy: 2022/2023 saw the second highest percentage of S6 candidates achieving SCQF Level 5 Literacy in 5 years, with figures being above the Virtual Comparator (VC) for the past 5 years. The figures also show a marked improvement since results in 2019. SCQF Level 6 Literacy still remains above VC but was less than it was in 2021/22.

Numeracy: S6 candidates achieved the second highest percentage at SCQF Level 5 since 2018/19 and the figure shows a consistent trend. This is also an increase since 2019. Again, there is a similar picture with SCQF Level 6 Numeracy, with the highest percentage of S6 candidates achieving this level since 2019 and remaining above VC for last 3 years.

### Improving attainment for all

This measure provides information on the average complementary tariff score of all candidates in three groups: the lowest 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% based on attainment. The complementary tariff score sums tariff points awarded to a candidate across their 5 best courses for that academic year.

The S6 highest 20% of candidates are above levels seen in 2022/23 and remain above VC and National figures, with the middle 60% of S4 candidates performing above the VC and above National. The lowest 20% have shown improvement since Covid.

### Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers.

In 2023, the average complimentary tariff score of S6 learners in South Lanarkshire is broadly in line with the Virtual Comparator but is less than the VC in SIMD 7 and 10 and is slightly above National levels in 9 SIMD Deciles. 2023 performance is similar to the general performance trend over the last 5 years.

### Key performance Indicators

At SCQF level 6 (1 or more), there has been an improvement since 2022 of over 1 percentage point and the percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 1 award at SCQF Level 6 or above has remained above the VC and National figures for the past 5 years, with S6 candidates 0.93 percentage points above the VC.

At SCQF level 6 (3 or more), there has been an improvement since 2022 and is at a higher percentage than that of our VC for first time in 5 years. There has been a 7 percentage point improvement in the last 5 years which is a greater relative rate of improvement than the VC or National.

At SCQF level 6 (5 or more), there has been an improvement of 1.82 percentage points since 2022 and of 7.81 percentage points since 2019. The percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 5 awards at SCQF Level 6 or above has surpassed the VC for the first time in the last 5 years. SCQF level 6 (5 or more) has remained above the national figure for the past 3 years.

At SCQF level 6 (5 or more), there has been an improvement of 1.82 percentage points since 2022 and of 7.81 percentage points since 2019. The percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 5 awards at SCQF Level 6 or above is almost in line with the

VC for the first time in the last 5 years. SCQF level 6 (5 or more) has remained above the national figure for the past 3 years.

At SCQF level 7 (1 or more), there has been an improvement of 1.12 percentage points since 2022 and of almost 10 percentage points since 2019. The percentage of candidates attaining a minimum of 1 award at SCQF Level 7 or above is above the VC for the first time in the last 5 years. SCQF level 7 (1 or more) has remained above the national figure for the past 2 years.