

Impact of Attainment Scotland Funding (ASF) on Numeracy and Mathematics 2022-25

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Section 1

Scottish Attainment Challenge: Background

The Scottish Government's (SG) refreshed mission for the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), published in March 2022, is 'to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap to deliver on the vision of equity and excellence in education'.

Attainment Scotland Funding (ASF) has been available to all local authorities and schools over the last three years to fund this mission. The different funding streams available are as follows:

- Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) has been available to all local authorities from 2022 to 2026. £43 million has been shared by all 32 local authorities to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). The fund has been distributed based on [Children in Low Income Families data](#) for the 2019/20 financial year.
- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), available to almost all schools in Scotland from 2022 to 2026. PEF is additional funding allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. It is allocated to schools based on the estimated number of children and young people in P1-S3 registered for free school meals (FSM).
- Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) funding, available to all local authorities from 2022 to 2026. CECYP funding is a targeted resource provided to local authorities to support care experienced children and young people from birth to the age of 26. The funding aims to improve the educational outcomes and experiences for care experienced children and young people, supported by the strategic goals of [The Promise](#) and the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#). Funding is provided annually to support care experienced children and young people at a figure of £1,225 per looked after child aged 5-15, as outlined in the Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2021/22.

The SAC programme is evaluated through the [ASF Evaluation](#), which is underpinned by the SAC logic model. The outcomes within the [SAC Logic Model](#) describe the transformational changes needed in systems, cultures and practices across Scottish education in order to make the differences necessary to achieve the longer-term strategy of the SAC. They provide the information on the step changes that will lead to achieving equity for every child in Scotland.

Section 2

Purpose of this report

What is the purpose of this report?

This report was undertaken to provide an equity lens to numeracy and mathematics development, the first curricular area of the curriculum improvement cycle.

The report will look at the progress being made towards the logic model long-term outcomes since the SAC refresh in 2022, within the context of numeracy and mathematics and how this information can be used to inform next steps.

Specifically, the report addresses the question: ***what has been the impact of ASF on improving numeracy and mathematics outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty?***

Approaching 10 years since the launch of the SAC, Education Scotland (ES) undertook an approach to evidence the impact of the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) with a particular focus on numeracy and mathematics. This report focusses on activity from 2022 until 2025, sharing and highlighting work taking place across Scotland, supported by the ASF.

In order to understand the impact ASF has had on numeracy and mathematics, the high-level outcomes from the SAC logic model were used as a framework for evaluating impact:

- **Closing the gap/educational outcomes:** to what extent has the ASF contributed to a closing of the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics between the most and least socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people, in line with stretch aims¹?
- **Achievement:** to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which encourages, reflects and values the breadth of numeracy and mathematics achievements that contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people?
- **Embedded practices and culture:** to what extent has the ASF contributed to an embedded culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics at different levels of the education system?
- **Education system- improving access to the numeracy and mathematics curriculum:** to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which actively addresses poverty, removing barriers through inclusive ethos, practice and approaches for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners?

¹ Click [here](#) for further information on stretch aims

For stakeholder interviews and evaluations, supplementary questions were developed under each of the long-term outcomes. The supplementary questions featured themes from the medium-term and short-term outcomes to help answer and break down the long-term outcomes (see appendix 5).

Section 3

Numeracy Attainment Data

This section provides detail about the National Improvement Framework (NIF) measures. In addition to referencing the NIF measures, this report will also explore how ASF has been used to positively impact numeracy and mathematics against the long-term outcomes from the SAC logic model.

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels²

Primary School Attainment

The percentage of primary school pupils across Scotland (P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined) achieving the expected CfE numeracy levels in 2022/23 and 2023/24 was 80%. The proportion of primary school pupils achieving the expected levels has risen above that of 2018/19³ by 1.2 percentage points (pp).

In 2023/24, attainment among pupils from the most deprived areas (quintile 1 - Q1) rose slightly from 71.86% in 2022/23 to 71.92%. However, the attainment gap between the most (Q1) and least deprived pupils (quintile 5 - Q5) widened from 16.96% to 17.4pp, continuing an increase since 2018/19, when the gap stood at 16.81pp.

Between 2022/23 and 2023/24, numeracy attainment among pupils from Q1 increased in 18 local authorities, while the attainment gap between pupils in Q1 and Q5 narrowed in 20 local authorities. Since 2018/19, 18 local authorities have seen an overall reduction in the numeracy attainment gap.

***This data does not include the 3 island authorities due to the low numbers of pupils living in Q1.**

Secondary School Attainment

Broad General Education (BGE)

The percentage of secondary school pupils (S3) achieving third level or better in numeracy increased from 89.55% in 2022/23 to 90.32% in 2023/24. The proportion of secondary school pupils in S3 achieving third level or better has increased slightly above that of 2018/19 (90.17%).

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/achievement-of-curriculum-for-excellence-cfe-levels-2023-24/>

³ 2018/19 data is used to provide a baseline for pre-Covid levels of attainment

In 2023/24, the attainment of S3 pupils from Q1 achieving third level or better increased from 82.51% in 2022/23 to 84.12%. The gap between pupils from Q1 and Q5 decreased from 13.7pp in 2022/23 to 12pp in 2023/24. This gap has narrowed since 2018/19 when it was 13pp.

From 2022/23 to 2023/24, the proportion of S3 pupils from Q1 achieving third level or better increased in 18 local authorities. Over the same period, the attainment gap between pupils in Q1 and Q5 narrowed in 12 local authorities, and since 2018/19, this gap has decreased in 13 local authorities.

Senior Phase - leavers

In 2023, **54,719** pupils left school, increasing to **55,961** in 2024

The percentage of these pupils achieving level 4 numeracy decreased slightly from 2023 (90.89%) to 2024 (90.53%). The percentage achieving level 5 numeracy increased from 70.87% to 71.86% from 2023 to 2024.

In 2023, **12,151** pupils living in Q1 left school, rising to **12,491** in 2024

The percentage of pupils from Q1 achieving level 4 numeracy decreased slightly from 2023 (84.88%) to 2024 (84.18%). The percentage of pupils from Q1 achieving level 5 numeracy increased slightly from 2023 (56.69%) to 2024 (57.35%).

Between 2023 and 2024, the attainment gap in numeracy between pupils in Q1 and Q5 widened at both level 4 and level 5, rising from 10.98 to 12.24 pp at level 4, and from 28.92 to 29.82 pp at level 5.

In 2023, **1,012** pupils in the 'all looked after' category on Insight left school, rising slightly to **1,016** in 2024

The percentage of pupils in this category achieving level 4 in numeracy decreased from 71.25% in 2023 to 66.04% in 2024. Similarly, those achieving level 5 decreased from 32.81% to 32.48% over the same period.

Section 4

Evaluation of progress against the long-term SAC logic model outcomes

4.1 Strategic Equity Fund (SEF)

Twenty-one out of thirty-two local authorities (LAs) have used SEF to create numeracy officer roles (or roles which have a numeracy aspect), or numeracy related projects.

Closing the gap/educational outcomes: to what extent has the ASF contributed to a closing of the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics between the most and least socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people, in line with stretch aims?

LAs report annually on approaches towards closing the gap in numeracy via standards and quality reports. Additionally, attainment data is available at national and LA level. However, in some cases, impact within this outcome is still developing due to the fact that most projects funded by SEF are relatively new and have only been in place since 2022, with some only beginning over the past 18 months. Accordingly, this section pertains to the nine local authorities that have elected to highlight their work in this area for inclusion in the report.

Highlights

- Evidence strongly suggests that where a targeted or data-informed approach was used to support schools, SEF positively contributed to improving numeracy attainment among the most socio-economically disadvantaged learners
- Approaches contributing to improved outcomes include numeracy recovery and building sustainability via models such as 'grow your own modelling and coaching' team
- A range of poverty indicators, beyond the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), are used alongside attainment data and analysis of school improvement plans to identify which schools to target, demonstrating a data-informed approach to intervention

Examples
Dundee City (DCC)
DCC Pedagogy team developed a Conceptual Understanding in Numeracy (CUiN) career long professional learning (CLPL) programme. Between June 2023 and June 2024, the team delivered the CUiN programme and provided intensive supported in a primary school where 73% of pupils were in Q1. Following the intensive support, 90% of primary 4 pupils in Q1 achieved first level, compared to 48% who had been on track at the end of primary 3 in June 2023. Similarly, 70% of primary 7 pupils in the same quintile achieved second level, up from 50% who had been on track at the end of P6.
Shetland Islands
Within the authority, schools are invited to submit a bid for Strategic Equity Funding. Sound Primary School received SEF for extra staffing to support a pilot project raising attainment in P7. This project focussed on the use of Quality Improvement approaches and tools, to implement and measure small tests of change projects in numeracy and mathematics. The aim of the SEF project is to accelerate school level work to close the poverty-related attainment gap (PRAG). As a result of the project, attainment and engagement was raised within the class, with pupils' attitudes to numeracy also improving.

Points to consider

- Evaluating the impact of SEF on closing the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics with stakeholders remains an area for further development
- The range of comparative data available could continue to be used more effectively to precisely quantify the extent of SEF's contribution to closing the overall attainment gap
- The adoption of live tracking systems is enhancing the quality of challenge and support for schools

Achievement: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which encourages, reflects and values the breadth of numeracy and mathematics achievements that contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people?

While every local authority has a focus on wider achievement, eight LAs highlighted this as an area where SEF has had an impact for the purposes of this report.

Highlights

- Access to enriching and challenging activities is supported by the fund, while promoting engagement and enjoyment of the subject
- The fund has supported work that extends beyond standard courses by embedding numeracy in real-world contexts, linking it to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)

subjects and vocational pathways, fostering key meta-skills, and addressing learners' specific needs

- SEF is helping to initiate partnerships with universities, colleges, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and industry, further strengthening the relevance and practical application of numeracy skills for future pathways

Examples

Angus

SEF is used to fund a STEM Improvement Officer who is responsible for planning, developing and empowering improvements to STEM education across primary and secondary schools. A wide range of partnership projects with local industry has reached almost all schools. These projects are supporting the development of a broad range of skills, including applying numeracy in context, and progress into positive destinations, including modern apprenticeships.

Edinburgh City

The SEF funded senior development office (DO) pathways has enabled links with the city construction sector. This has led to the creation of National 5 Roofing, and Skills for Work: Creative Industries courses, enabling a number of previously disengaged young people to achieve qualifications and secure pathways to college courses or employment.

Points to consider

- While in some LAs the fund has been used creatively to establish roles linked to STEM and employability, these roles provide universal rather than targeted support, highlighting the need for further analysis to determine which pupils are most impacted
- SEF is not widely used to provide opportunities for wider achievement in numeracy and mathematics

Embedded practices and culture: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an embedded culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics at different levels?

Most of the evidence gathered for this project has aligned with this outcome. Almost all of the 20 LAs which have used SEF to support numeracy and mathematics have done so via the creation of numeracy officer roles. Evidence indicates that the main functions of these roles are design and delivery of professional learning, establishment of online platforms which host a variety of resources, and creation of progression frameworks. All of these functions have the purpose of embedding effective practice and building sustainability.

Highlights

- Where a culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics is well established, it is largely driven by 'equity focussed' professional learning, inclusive pedagogical approaches, targeted support for the most deprived schools, and a strategic commitment at local authority level
- Substantial professional learning in numeracy and mathematics has been initiated, with a discernible, though not always exclusive, focus on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap

- The fund has been used effectively to deliver targeted numeracy and mathematics interventions grounded in educational equity, demonstrated through strategic deployment of specialist staff, a focus on areas of highest deprivation, implementation of targeted programmes and family learning initiatives, and data-driven approaches to identifying needs and tailoring support
- The fund has supported the development of universal approaches in numeracy and mathematics, including career-long professional learning, progression frameworks, and shared resources and toolkits, all designed to build capacity and ensure consistent, high-quality education for all learners
- Numeracy learning and teaching practices initiated by the fund have become well embedded at classroom level in many schools, as evidenced by increased teacher confidence, shifts in pedagogy, positive headteacher feedback, and impact demonstrated through evaluations and quality assurance processes
- The fund has placed strong emphasis on sustaining numeracy approaches through strategies such as building internal capacity, embedding effective pedagogies, fostering collaboration via networks, and developing accessible resources
- Data and evidence are extensively used to inform and share understanding of effective numeracy interventions, demonstrated through tracking systems, research-based pedagogies, attainment monitoring, and strategic guidance, reflecting a strong commitment to data-informed decision-making and evidence-based practice
- There is significantly enhanced engagement and participation in numeracy among children and young people, particularly in schools receiving targeted support, as evidenced by positive feedback from pupils, teachers, and headteachers, alongside quantitative data such as Leuven scale findings
- SEF has contributed to the development of quality improvement (QI) approaches in a few LAs, supporting schools to evidence incremental improvements in numeracy

Examples
Glasgow City
An equity culture is evidenced through a relentless focus on closing the PRAG which underpins the work of the SEF funded Leaders of Learning (LoLs) and Challenge Leaders of Learning (CLoLs). A 'How Good is Our Project' approach is adopted by the CLoLs. This approach provides the LA with evidence of impact across a variety of measures. This evidence includes impact on pupils (almost all pupils in school target groups made progress in numeracy in session 23/24, including an increase in the number of pupils 'on track' to achieve national levels) and the impact of training (most CLoLs reported that approaches and practices are embedded in their schools).
Renfrewshire
A small group of four schools has piloted a 'grow your own maths modelling and coaching officer (MCO)' approach during session 2024-25. The SEF funded numeracy development officer (DO) provides regular coaching support for the MCOs and helps to plan the development work across the four schools. The aim of the programme was to build capacity within the schools and to ensure that high quality learning and teaching is embedded in numeracy and mathematics. In one of the schools, the headteacher has reported that there is more consistency in approaches to planning and assessment. There is also an increase in staff confidence in teaching numeracy. There has also been increased attainment and improved levels of engagement for pupils.

Points to consider

- Fully embedding a culture of equity requires further development in a few LAs (There are strong examples of LAs where this has been achieved, including Glasgow City, Renfrewshire, Stirling and South Lanarkshire)
- While almost all of the SEF funded roles have been deployed to initiate and deliver professional learning, the direct link to reducing the poverty-related attainment gap is less explicitly stated as the main focus
- The focus on a more universal offering suggests a broader aim of improving outcomes for all, with the understanding that this will also contribute to narrowing the gap
- Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure consistent evaluation and the universal adoption of effective practices across all schools
- Almost all professional learning supported by SEF is focussed on the primary sector, with only a few examples of successful engagement with the secondary sector

Education system- Improving access to the numeracy and mathematics curriculum: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which actively addresses poverty, removing barriers through inclusive ethos, practice and approaches for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners?

All LAs are committed to addressing poverty and removing barriers. Five chose to highlight the work they have undertaken in this area for the purposes of this report.

Highlights

- The fund has supported collaboration in numeracy and mathematics across the education system, including partnerships between schools and industry, regional improvement collaboratives, and community learning and development initiatives
- Data and evidence are used to a moderate extent across the education system to improve access to the numeracy and mathematics curriculum
- Initiatives, like targeted numeracy support in S1 and parental engagement programmes, are informed by data and aim to create more equitable access to learning opportunities

Example

West Lothian

West Lothian Council has taken a strategic approach to continuous improvement in numeracy. A range of professional learning opportunities is offered to practitioners at all levels and detailed progression pathways support planning and assessment. Support is also provided through guidance in relation to targeted interventions and development of the numeracy and mathematics curriculum. In addition, the SEF funded equity team has supported the development of the PEF planning tool. This tool includes a mandatory outcome focused on the cost of the school day, encouraging schools to continually review and develop approaches to reducing school costs and supporting families. The team also promotes 'Talk Money Week', an opportunity for schools to develop financial literacy within their communities. The equity team developed materials that could support families to talk about money. There has been positive engagement with families around this work. The team has also fostered effective partnerships which have contributed to tackling poverty related attainment gaps linked to numeracy and/or mathematics, including, for example, with the Credit Union (supporting pupils and families to develop financial literacy), Adult Learning Service (including cookery classes and family games evenings), and the anti-poverty service (providing financial support to families).

Points to consider

- A three-year trend shows a growing number of young people from Q1 being presented for National 5 Applications of Mathematics, though further evaluation is needed to determine if this trend is due to early identification of appropriate pathways or other factors
- The explicit integration of a numeracy and mathematics lens into improving access to the curriculum is still developing

4.2 Pupil Equity Fund (PEF)

Engagements took place with 20 schools across 11 local authorities which have used PEF to fund numeracy related roles or projects.

Closing the gap/educational outcomes: to what extent has the ASF contributed to a closing of the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics between the most and least socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people, in line with stretch aims?

Highlights

- In schools where attainment in numeracy and mathematics improved, leadership teams maintained a strong focus on equity, leading to measurable progress in closing the attainment gap
- PEF has enabled some schools to create leadership roles responsible for data analysis and the strategic deployment of additional staff, leading to the effective identification and closure of learning gaps
- Schools employ a range of context-appropriate methods to measure the PRAG, such as comparing attainment between Q1 and Q5 learners, or those with and without free meal entitlement (FME)

Examples
East Dunbartonshire- St Matthew's Primary School
Through PEF, the role of numeracy champion was created. The numeracy champion led the development of the 'Making Maths Memorable' initiative. The aim of the initiative was to make knowledge and skills more memorable by providing a concrete association with conceptual learning. Quality assurance processes confirmed teachers embraced new effective strategies to develop mental maths, recall and computation (procedure of calculating using local methods). Pre and post assessments demonstrated significant progress for learners involved. This was particularly evident where children were identified as being 'off track.' The greatest progress was observed in learners who were the most delayed in their maths comprehension, suggesting the approach effectively supported addressing gaps in learning.
Western Isles- Nicolson Institute
The school has used PEF to employ a teacher, responsible for planning and leading intervention sessions on a small group and 1:1 basis. The teacher liaises with colleagues within the Maths department to ensure that intervention sessions can address any gaps in learning which are specific to the pupils, demonstrating a data-informed approach. Wherever possible, the teacher will try to plan

sessions which are based around a pupil's area of interest in order to encourage engagement and attendance. During the 2023-24 session, the teacher worked with 25 pupils with a focus on improving numeracy outcomes. The impact of the intervention sessions was measured using baseline assessments, with 100% of the pupils showing improvements following completion of the 12-week intervention programme. Maths teachers also commented that pupils demonstrated an improved level of focus in class as a result of the sessions.

Points to consider

- School leaders should continue to consider how to ensure equity is a core focus
- While ACEL data provides valuable insights, we can get a fuller picture of how learners are progressing by also looking at other achievements which warrant more recognition
- Schools should consider tracking the long-term impact of targeted interventions on pupils from Q1 and other vulnerable groups beyond just short-term progress
- There is limited, but positive, evidence regarding how stakeholders, specifically children and young people, perceived the fund's contribution to improvements in numeracy attainment and a reduction of the gap

Achievement: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which encourages, reflects and values the breadth of numeracy and mathematics achievements that contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people?

Evidence for this outcome was limited, as it was not a significant focus of PEF investment across the 20 participating schools.

Highlights

- There is a clear emphasis for a few schools on the real-life context of numeracy, with children learning concepts through play and applying numeracy skills in practical, enjoyable settings
- Where evidence was available, PEF has supported the creation of tangible pathways for young people into further education and employment, demonstrating a direct link between numeracy skills and future life and work success

Example

Midlothian- Saltersgate School

PEF has supported the introduction of assessment software which tracks both attainment and wider achievement. The new tracking system has helped teachers understand and recognise numeracy development from its earliest stages. The system, alongside the school curriculum map, is ensuring breadth of numeracy teaching and highlighting children and young people's achievement in numeracy which should provide a pathway to senior phase achievement.

Points to consider

- Schools should consider looking beyond attainment data and establish ways to use PEF to impact on creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the development of a broader range of numeracy and mathematics achievements

Embedded practices and culture: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an embedded culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics at different levels

Evidence provided by participating schools demonstrates that PEF has contributed to an embedded culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics to a significant extent, driven by strong pedagogical shifts and effective data use. While the intention to implement sustainable approaches was evident, some elements of sustainability continue to rely on funding.

Highlights

- In a majority of the participating schools PEF has enabled extensive training for teaching and support staff, promoting consistent, high-quality, research-based approaches that have driven a fundamental pedagogical shift, resulting in learners demonstrating greater flexibility, a broader range of strategies, and deeper numerical understanding
- A focus on sustainability through internal capacity building (modelling and coaching, new staff training) is clearly evident
- Evidence from almost all participating schools indicates a significant rise in pupil enjoyment, confidence, and engagement in numeracy
- Pupils in a selection of these schools effectively articulate their learning progress and the strategies they employ, confirming increased confidence with number

Example

South Ayrshire- Tarbolton Primary School

Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used to support the work of the numeracy lead and to employ support assistants who deliver targeted interventions in numeracy and mathematics. The numeracy lead has adopted a modelling and coaching approach to enhance pedagogical practice across the school. Over the past two to three years, this approach has significantly increased the confidence of both teachers and support staff. As a result, the concrete, pictorial, abstract (CPA) approach is now embedded in numeracy teaching and learning at all stages. Children are supported to think critically, analyse problems, and reason effectively. They are increasingly able to articulate their thinking and represent their understanding through both pictorial methods and the use of concrete materials.

Points to consider

- Although a number of schools have clearly adopted a culture of equity, further evaluation is needed to determine its system-wide consistency and implementation
- The reliance on PEF to create, for example, support staff posts, which are vital for supporting work focused on closing the PRAG, presents a risk to sustainability

Education system: Improving access to the numeracy and mathematics curriculum: to what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which actively addresses poverty, removing barriers through inclusive ethos, practice and approaches for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners?

Evidence for this outcome was limited, as it was not a significant focus of PEF investment across the 20 participating schools. However, where it has been used, the evidence demonstrates that it has contributed significantly to an education system that actively addresses poverty and removes barriers to numeracy and mathematics. This has been achieved through robust and highly successful engagement with parents and carers, alongside targeted in-school practices for children and young people.

Highlights

- PEF is supporting schools to apply comprehensive and adaptable parental engagement methods, including information sessions, "how-to" videos, and targeted numeracy project groups with partner organisations
- Parents involved in these projects reported significant personal and practical benefits, including increased understanding of teaching methods, reduced stress, and improved confidence, alongside a strong desire for continued engagement

Example

East Lothian- Preston Tower Primary School

The school utilised Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to appoint a Family Support Worker (FSW), who collaborated alongside school staff and the East Lothian Works Team to utilise funding from the local authority's Multiply⁴ team to launch a parental engagement programme. Recognising the importance of a welcoming environment, the programme was hosted in the local church—a space identified as comfortable and accessible for parents. Feedback from participating parents highlighted a range of positive outcomes, including enhanced personal learning and a deeper understanding of how their children are taught numeracy. Children also responded enthusiastically, particularly enjoying the opportunity to use the numeracy packs alongside their parents.

Points to consider

⁴ [Multiply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - GOV.UK](#)

- While PEF is used to support parental engagement, there are limited examples demonstrating impact
- The most impactful contributions from PEF have occurred where collaboration has been facilitated between schools and other local groups and initiatives

4.3 Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) Fund

Nine local authorities, via the CELCIS network of virtual school headteachers, provided information on how the CECYP fund is impacting on numeracy and mathematics outcomes for children and young people with care experience. The evidence provided links almost entirely to the 'closing the gap' and 'achievement' outcomes. As the evidence is linked to only two outcomes a general summary is provided. Common themes which emerged from the engagement with the network were the emphasis on relational support, bespoke learning, and effective data use.

Highlights

- The deployment of dedicated staff, such as numeracy teachers in residential houses, has provided targeted specialist support tailored to specific age ranges - from primary to upper secondary - enhancing individualised learning and helping pupils achieve SQA qualifications
- A significant number of LAs emphasise the foundational role of wellbeing, confidence-building, and strong relationships in numeracy improvement, with a number deploying wellbeing teachers who provide enhanced maths support and integrate learning into activities such as forest schools and sports
- Pathways to further education and employment are supported, including, for example:
 - an interrupted learners service for college placements
 - a focus on National 4 maths qualifications for college and apprenticeships
 - linking secondary pupils with services for post-school progression

Points to consider

- Consideration should be given to raising the awareness of the range of qualifications available for numeracy
- The importance of early identification of mathematical difficulties and implementation of effective support strategies is paramount to ensuring positive outcomes for learners with care experience

- Subject specialists are needed to address specific learning gaps to ensure learners with care experience can catch up and progress⁵
- Articulating the impact of the CECYP fund on improving outcomes of CECYP in numeracy and maths can be challenging, particularly as funding is not always being explicitly directed towards numeracy activities but is more often interwoven

⁵ Numeracy and mathematics build upon previous learning. Learners with care experience are likely to have gaps in learning due to challenges experienced in their home lives, attendance, and other issues. Therefore, assessment of learning is vital in maths and numeracy for care experienced learners.

Section 5

5.1 Evaluation of progress against the long-term SAC logic model outcomes: stakeholder surveys. (a copy of the survey, which used Likert Scales, can be seen in appendix 4)

Surveys were carried out with two stakeholder groups: SAC local authority leads, senior regional advisors (SRAs) and attainment advisors (AAs). Seventeen SAC leads responded to the survey, and 21 SRAs/ AAs responded.

Summary of views

- ASF has played a key role in improving numeracy outcomes for children affected by poverty, through initiatives such as one-to-one support, additional resources, digital tools, and focused interventions in primary schools
- Funding has had a moderate to large impact on the breadth of achievements and opportunities in numeracy and mathematics
- The focus on numeracy has created opportunities to develop skills for learning, life, and work, exemplified by initiatives such as flexible senior pathways
- The ASF has contributed to embedding a culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics to a moderate or large extent, supported by equity-focused pedagogy and targeted training to support disadvantaged learners
- Leadership supports an equity-based culture in numeracy from a moderate to large extent, with school leaders increasingly using attainment data for planning and quality assurance
- The perceived extent to which ASF supports universal numeracy approaches is varied, while, in contrast, use for targeted interventions is better evidenced
- The ASF has initiated professional learning focused on numeracy, mathematics, and closing the attainment gap, including a wide range of career long professional learning (CLPL) opportunities from Education Scotland and a coordinated programme of universal and recorded webinars to support sustainable access
- Numeracy practices supported by the fund are becoming embedded at classroom level to a moderate to large extent, with trained staff using numeracy recovery approaches and universal practices like Number Talks becoming more widely used
- While there are initiatives such as training the trainers for numeracy recovery, and establishing numeracy leader networks, evidence of sustainability is limited
- Data and evidence are widely used to embed a culture of equity and evaluate effective interventions, with schools and local authorities placing strong emphasis on data through the introduction of new tracking tools and enhanced analysis practices
- Engagement of children and young people, families and communities in decision-making related to the numeracy and mathematics curriculum is inconsistent
- Collaboration to improve numeracy access is generally positive with strengthened professional networks highlighted as being a key strength

- Data and evidence are increasingly used across the education system to enhance access to and attainment in numeracy, reflecting a growing emphasis on data-informed practice and the adoption of digital tracking tools

Section 6

6.1 Conclusion

The ASF has made **demonstrable positive contributions** to improving numeracy and mathematics within the logic model outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty. However, the extent of impact varies across different levels of the system and there are consistent messages signalling a need for continuing rigorous data collection, evaluation, and system-wide embedding of best practices.

Strategic Equity Fund

SEF has made significant positive contributions to numeracy and mathematics outcomes, by funding dedicated numeracy roles and projects in a majority of LAs. It has positively impacted on the closing of the attainment gap in many LAs through targeted, data-informed approaches and effective pedagogies, while also broadening numeracy achievements by embedding skills in real-world contexts and helping to foster partnerships. Furthermore, SEF has largely contributed to embedding a culture of equity in numeracy through extensive professional learning, targeted interventions for schools in areas of high levels of deprivation, and the development of universal resources, leading to embedded learning practices and a strong emphasis on sustainability in many LAs.

While SEF shows positive impacts, several areas require development. For example, precisely quantifying its contribution to closing the attainment gap nationally requires comparative data. Stakeholder consultation on SEF's impact also needs further enhancement. Some SEF funded roles provide universal rather than targeted support, and the fund is not widely used for broader numeracy achievement opportunities. The direct link of SEF initiated professional learning to reducing the poverty-related attainment gap is not always explicitly stated. Furthermore, most CLPL is primary-focused, with less engagement with the secondary sector. While embedding practice is strong in some areas, consistent evaluation and universal adoption of effective practices across all schools are still needed.

Pupil Equity Fund

Evidence from most participating schools demonstrates PEF's significant role in fostering an equity focus among senior leadership teams. This has led to improved numeracy attainment and a reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap in these schools. School leaders are more adept at data analysis and strategic staff deployment. PEF has also supported tangible pathways to further education and employment. There are a few examples of PEF supporting effective parental engagement, with parents reporting significant personal and practical benefits.

While PEF has shown positive impacts on numeracy and mathematics, several areas require further development. Its investment focus on broader achievement beyond attainment data is limited. ACEL data does not always fully capture learner progress, highlighting a need for improved long-term impact tracking beyond existing measures. A sustainability risk exists due to reliance on PEF for teaching and

support staff posts. Despite a focus on parental engagement, examples of impact as a result of this engagement remain limited.

Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) Fund

The CECYP fund has supported the development of dedicated staff roles (e.g. virtual headteachers and numeracy teachers in residential houses). These roles have provided enhanced, age-specific numeracy support, helping pupils secure qualifications and pathways to positive destinations.

Fully articulating the precise impact of the CECYP fund on numeracy and mathematics is challenging as it is often integrated across various services. However, an important point to note is that, based on the views of members of the CELCIS network, there is a need to consider pedagogical approaches in numeracy and mathematics as they can provide a barrier to children and young people who are care experienced.

Recommendations

- **Evaluation and data collection:**
 - Local authorities to continue developing evaluation frameworks to help map the chain of impact of funding streams to the closure of the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics, including the impact of professional learning
 - Continue to explore ways to use comparative data more effectively and capture broader progress beyond NIF measures
- **Strategic planning and governance:** local authorities should continue to consider the sustainability and impact of ASF funded roles and projects related to numeracy and mathematics via strengthened planning and reporting approaches
- **Continue to refine pedagogical approaches and professional learning for system-wide equity:**
 - Continue to deliver high-quality professional learning for the primary sector
 - Consider how ASF can have a greater impact on numeracy and mathematics in the secondary sector
 - Local authorities and schools should re-visit the theme of 'equity' and ensure it remains part of their core business within numeracy and mathematics
- **Strengthen stakeholder engagement and communication:** continue to improve consultation processes with all stakeholders, especially children, young people, families, and communities, to ensure their voices inform numeracy and mathematics initiatives and projects and to better articulate the tangible impact of ASF

Appendix 1: Method and Process

During the period from November 2024 to June 2025 engagements took place with a range of stakeholders from across the national education system including:

- Virtual headteacher network (CELCIS)
- 17 SAC local authority project leads
- 20 local authorities where SEF has been used to fund a numeracy related role or project (appendix 1)
- 20 schools which have used PEF to fund numeracy related roles or projects (these schools were identified by attainment advisors and local authority (LA) officers - appendix 2)
- 13 schools where LA SEF supported work has been exemplified (these schools were identified by LA officers - appendix 3)

Further evidence was gathered from a variety of different sources:

- Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data
- Senior phase data
- SAC national summary reports
- Surveys and discussions with stakeholder groups

Appendix 2: local authorities engaged with where SEF has been used to fund a numeracy related role or project

Local Authority
Aberdeenshire
Angus
Argyll & Bute
Clackmannanshire
Dumfries & Galloway
Dundee
East Ayrshire
East Renfrewshire
Edinburgh
Fife
Glasgow
Highland
North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire
Renfrewshire
Shetland
South Lanarkshire
Stirling
West Dunbartonshire
West Lothian

Appendix 3: schools engaged with which have used PEF to fund numeracy related roles or projects

Local Authority	School
Dumfries & Galloway	Drumore & Sandhead Primary Schools Kirkcolm & Leswalt Primary Schools Kirkcudbright Academy Laurieknowe Primary School Park Primary School St Michael's Primary School Wallace Hall Academy Wallace Hall Primary School
East Dunbartonshire	St Matthew's Primary School
East Lothian	Preston Tower Primary School
East Renfrewshire	Carlibar Primary School
Highland	Coulhill Primary School Hilton of Cadboll Primary School
Midlothian	Saltergate School
Moray	Bishopmill Primary School
North Lanarkshire	St Margaret's High School St Patrick's Primary School, Kilsyth
Perth & Kinross	Grandtully Primary School
South Ayrshire	Tarbolton Primary School
Western Isles	Nicolson Institute

Appendix 4: schools engaged with where LA SEF supported work has been exemplified

Local Authority	School
Angus	Langlands Primary School
Argyll & Bute	Hermitage Primary School
Clackmannanshire	Park Primary School
Dumfries & Galloway	Closeburn & Penpont Primary Schools New Abbey Primary School
East Renfrewshire	Carlibar Primary School
Edinburgh	Clovenstone Primary School
Fife	Woodmill High School
North Lanarkshire	Berryhill Primary School
Renfrewshire	St Fergus Primary School
Shetland	Sound Primary School
West Dunbartonshire	Clydemuir Primary School Goldenhill Primary School

Appendix 5

Supplementary questions from the SAC logic model used for engagements with local authorities and schools.

Outcome 1: Closing the gap/educational outcomes

To what extent has the ASF contributed to a closing of the attainment gap in numeracy and mathematics between the most and least socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people, in line with stretch aims?

- *To what extent have the **specific funding streams** (SEF, PEF and CECYP) contributed to improvements in numeracy for children affected by poverty?*
- *To what extent did **stakeholders** – including children and young people, families and communities, and third sector organisations - think the fund contributed to improvements in attainment of numeracy and a reduction of the gap?*

Outcome 2: Achievement

To what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which encourages, reflects and values the breadth of numeracy and mathematics achievements that contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people.

- *To what extent has the ASF fund had an impact on the **breadth of achievements and opportunities** for children and young people related to numeracy and mathematics?*

What have the additional opportunities been? Have there been any?

Examples:

- *To what extent has the ASF focus on numeracy provided opportunities for learners to **develop important skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work**? (e.g. Scottish Vocational Qualifications, National Progression Awards, Modern/Foundation Apprenticeships)?*

Outcome 3: Embedded practices and culture

To what extent has the ASF contributed to an embedded culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics at different levels of the education system?

- *To what extent has the ASF contributed to an **embedded culture of equity** in numeracy and mathematics?*
- *To what extent has the ASF initiated **professional learning** with a focus on numeracy and mathematics and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap?*

- To what extent has the ASF been used to provide **targeted interventions** in numeracy and mathematics based on educational equity?
- To what extent has the ASF been used to provide **universal** approaches in numeracy and mathematics?
- To what extent have **learning and teaching practices** of numeracy initiated by the fund become **embedded** at the classroom level?
- To what extent have LAs and schools addressed **sustainability** of their approaches in numeracy?
- To what extent was **data and evidence** used to embed a culture of equity in numeracy and mathematics?
- To what extent was data and evidence used to build and share an understanding of **effective interventions** in numeracy?
- To what extent has the ASF led to **embedded engagement and participation of children and young people in numeracy**?

Outcome 4: Education system

To what extent has the ASF contributed to an education system which actively addresses poverty, removing barriers through inclusive ethos, practice and approaches for children and young people, parents and carers and practitioners?

- To what extent were **children and young people and their families and communities** engaged in decision-making and options related to numeracy?
- To what extent did the fund encourage **collaboration** across the education system (e.g. between schools, LAs, third sector, other delivery partners and professionals) to improve access to numeracy and mathematics?
- To what extent was data and evidence used **across the education system** to improve access/attainment of numeracy?

How did this change over time?