Education Scotland Scottish Attainment Challenge

National Summary Report
April - June 2023

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

Contents

Section 1

1.1 Introduction

National Summary Reports are part of the cycle for reporting on the implementation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). Attainment advisors, in collaboration with their associated local authority, produce reports triannually. This ensures a continuous narrative where thematic next steps are identified and subsequent progress evaluated. Equity and improving outcomes for those children and young people impacted by poverty are referenced throughout.

This summary is a collation and analysis of all 32 local authority reports. Section 1.2 provides an overview of the progress being made towards the next steps identified in Triannual Report 2. Illustrations throughout this summary are examples from local authority reports.

The key theme for this reporting period was learning, teaching and assessment and is summarised in Section 2. The improvement and progress being made by local authorities is outlined in four key areas: strategies for learning and teaching, assessment, partnerships and professional learning.

1.2 Progress towards next steps for this period

All local authorities worked with their attainment advisor and identified their next steps which included data for improvement. The summary of these next steps can be found in the Scottish Attainment Challenge Summary Report December 2022 to March 2023. The key themes were:

- Data systems and processes
- Stretch aims
- Professional learning
- Quality improvement
- Pupil Equity Funding
- Children and young people who have experienced care
- Strategic Equity Funding

These key themes highlight the continued importance being placed by local authorities on the SAC Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress 2022-23 (the Framework). They also illustrate how data for improvement permeates, and is integral to, the principles of implementing the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

There continues to be strong evidence that all local authorities have made progress towards their next steps. There are indications that the pace of progress continues to increase.

Data for improvement

The following key factors have contributed to progress

- Professional learning
- Tracking and monitoring
- Quality assurance visits
- Stretch aims
- Improving the use of data in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase

Professional learning

It is important to recognise that every local authority is at a different stage in the journey of implementing aspects of the SAC. Therefore, the expertise and confidence of teachers in using data for improvement continues to develop. As part of their next steps, more than a third of local authorities delivered professional learning which focused on data. There is strong evidence that this is improving the data literacy skills of teachers. As a result, they are becoming more effective at targeting and evaluating the impact of support.

Professional learning
Professional learning was delivered in the use of the bespoke Broad General Education tracking dashboard which builds upon existing school data profiles. This highly comprehensive tool pulls data from Insight, SEEMiS and Progress and Achievement tracking and is mandatory for all schools. As a result, central teams and senior leaders have access to live data in one place. Benefits also include the ability for the authority and schools to pinpoint where the poverty-related gaps are in each SIMD decile, school, stage and at an individual level.
The data improvement officer delivered bespoke training on data literacy to 27 primary schools across the academic session. This was delivered to whole staff teams; feedback included: • *Increased confidence of educators on using data*   • *Gathering the right data to inform high-quality learning and teaching*   • *Focusing on improving, not proving aims*
All primary headteachers have now received training on the data dashboard. This is an on-going iterative process, and the authority is responding to headteacher individual needs. Evidence at headteacher meetings suggests that the data culture is beginning to embed, with requests for the most recent data to be made available for setting school-based stretch aims. Headteachers are making more use of data and using it to support school improvement planning.
Good progress continues to be made in engagement between senior managers and school leadership on the use of data. Further delivery of professional learning by the data team using SEEMiS Business Intelligence has led to an increased confidence in analysis of data by senior leaders.

The education service has successfully delivered data for improvement training to all school leaders. Feedback was positive. For example, 100% of participants said that the training had developed their knowledge, increased confidence and provided ideas that they would apply within their school or setting. A significant number of leaders requested follow up support and shared the ways in which they had applied learning effectively. This included the adoption of a 'data on a page' approach which allowed schools to organise and analyse data in a clear and diagnostic way.

Tracking and monitoring

Effective use of data is key to the success of the SAC. There is strong evidence that tracking and monitoring processes are informing:

- Management of funding
- Analysis of data to target support
- Progress towards stretch aims

Tracking and monitoring
The equity officer has increased levels of scrutiny regarding the tracking and monitoring of the PEF spend in all establishments. In schools where underspends had been a concern, targeted support has been provided. As a result, the local authority is on track to significantly reduce the overall underspend from 30% in 2021-22 to less than 5% in 2022-23.
Monthly tracking of PEF spend indicates significant improvement. PEF spend for 2021-22 was 56% of the total allocation, 13% below national average, resulting in a 44% carry forward. The PEF lead officer and attainment advisor continue to provide additional support to schools to maximise appropriate spends. The underspend is continuing to decrease with an overall spend for April 2023 of 83%.
Support managers have been tracking the PEF spend and working with headteachers in using Excel workbooks. This support has led to fewer schools with a PEF underspend and lower underspend totals.
The data from pupil tracking has been used consistently to support 'Progress in Learning' meetings with all primary schools. Summary reports were used to take a snapshot of progress and direct improvement questions and follow-up support.
Data that was collated in the second term to track and monitor progress of the stretch aims has been used effectively to continue to develop strategic priorities around equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
Data has been collected from all settings with S1-3 learners. Discussions with headteachers have taken place. This is beginning to improve confidence in the accuracy of the judgements. Development of a common tracking toolkit for S1-3 is scheduled to take place over the summer.
The local authority continues to develop approaches to enable close monitoring and evaluation of progress towards stretch aims. *Good progress has been made in tracking progress towards stretch aims in the Broad General Education.*
Significant progress has been made in tracking the progress of stretch aims. The equity tracker is populated and submitted for analysis every month by all schools. This has allowed access to regular indicative data and the provision of support and challenge in a timely manner. The local authority attributes the high levels of engagement to the appointment of principal teachers for equity in each secondary school and the targeted support for schools.

All secondary headteachers have agreed to implement a Senior Phase tracking dashboard. This has been piloted in one school. Within the tracker, schools will be able to review more regularly who is on track to achieve Level 5 and 6 qualifications.
The local authority has its own Broad General Education toolkit. This is used to track progress at all stages in all primary schools. Plus stretch aims have been set for children in receipt of free school meals and for those who have experienced care within the primary sector. Specific information pertaining to these two cohorts is available from the toolkit for each school. The local authority has now developed the capacity to collate this data centrally.
Local guidance on arrangements for completion of Progress and Achievement in SEEMiS has been issued to all schools, with dates agreed for three collection points throughout the year. Meetings for the quality improvement officers to analyse this data have been set accordingly. As a result, progress towards the stretch aims within the Broad General Education will be monitored three times a year.

For a few local authorities, the need to further develop systems and processes to improve access to data was recognised as a next step. This has improved the systematic use of data at both school and authority level.

Systems and processes
Implementation is well underway for central staff and senior leaders to further strengthen their skills and confidence in using the new tracking tool.
The education officer for the pupil tracking tool continues to develop its functionality. This is supporting schools and the local authority to effectively track progress and attainment in the Broad General Education, promoting equity of outcomes for learners. The education officer has provided advice, guidance and practical support to individual schools as part of the implementation plan. This is helping to embed pupil tracking in all primary schools.
Version 2 of the 'Closing the Gap Planning and Tracking Intervention Tool' has been successfully developed and launched. The tool has been reviewed and re-designed in collaboration with school leaders. This has improved the planning, tracking and evaluative functions of the tool.
The authority has developed a systematic approach to gathering and analysing data. This has been further developed by the collaborative work with the equity lead officer and data team. Together, they have devised an interactive system to make collection and analysis of data more accessible through Power BI. This has already led to a greater awareness of school's performance data at authority level.
A shared tracking system has now been offered to all secondary schools. This is providing increased opportunities to aggregate data more effectively to identify next steps for individual learners, cohorts, and improvement priorities. This complements the recently refreshed systems for monitoring attainment, attendance, and achievement of learners with care experience.
The data officer has supported schools to access their own and local authority data. This has positively impacted on the level of analysis of data being conducted by all staff. There are plans to continue this support across learning communities to bring a greater consistency of data analysis among schools. One learning community has already undertaken specific training on the use of the new BGE Benchmarking tool. A version of this will soon be available for secondary schools.

Local authorities continued to develop and improve their approaches to quality assurance visits and meetings with schools. The analysis of data is an important element of such visits. Local authority officers provided support and challenge in using data to measure the impact of outcomes, targeting interventions and analysing gaps.

Quality assurance visits
Support is being provided and offered by the central team where appropriate e.g., where requested on a school-to-school basis or identified specifically through data discussions during quality improvement visits.
Additional support for PEF planning is offered to ensure planned outcomes can be measured effectively and are related to identified gap(s) that are based on school data. Targets and check-in points have been agreed to track, monitor and support evaluation of progress. This round of visits has begun to identify emerging pockets of stronger practice which can be shared more widely across the authority supporting robust moderation of judgements and outcomes.
Significant progress continues to be made by the primary quality improvement team to ensure support and challenge is provided during school attainment visits. The team engages in effective dialogue with senior leaders. This has improved the use of data analysis of the poverty-related attainment gap (PRAG) to plan interventions and support all learners, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
The senior leadership team and attainment advisor attended a variety of 'Insight' visits presented by Scottish Government colleagues to secondary schools. These have increased confidence in data handling and increased capacity in data literacy.
Local authority officers are using the data dashboard and Insight to prepare for school quality improvement visits. The school's data is set in the context of average attainment over time as well as local and national comparative benchmarking comparators data. This supports discussions at school level and encourages them to be ambitious when setting stretch aims. This marks a changing data culture within the authority over the past year.
The central team continues to reiterate the effective use of intersecting data and the 'Data Driven Dialogue' model. This reinforces the importance of data when planning for school improvements and appropriate interventions. As a result, senior leaders have an improved understanding of the use of data when engaging in attainment discussions during quality improvement visits and school reviews.

Additional next steps beyond the use data for improvement focused on:

- Planning, reporting and tracking and monitoring of funding
- Learner participation
- Pedagogy
- Professional learning
- Governance structures
- Children and young people who have experienced care
- Planning

Other next steps
An initiative to extend pathways and development of a suite of city-wide growth sector aligned courses for young people, is well underway. Choices for 37 new courses are now open to young people, providing 970 available places. An online application portal allows for a comprehensive 'clearing' system to take place between

late April and June, ensuring young people have the best possible chance to access their chosen course.
In response to the impact of COVID-19 on learning, teaching and assessment, extensive work was undertaken to develop and launch a learning, teaching and assessment strategy. This has resulted in some progress being made in further developing approaches to high-quality literacy and numeracy.
Very good progress was made in facilitating evaluative writing sessions for senior leaders. Sessions were successfully rolled out in May 2023 and were well attended. Senior leaders were well supported by the central team and attainment advisor during these sessions. Participants were given the opportunity to work collaboratively to improve school improvement plans and standards and quality reports. Support incorporated the effective use of data to inform and plan appropriate outcomes and measures.
Considerable progress has been made to ensure the CECYP self-evaluation toolkit is ready to be implemented as planned. The new guidance and procedures implemented this session has been well received by senior leaders and is supporting consistent practice.
Positive progress has been made with this next step. A draft children and families service improvement plan for 2023-27 has been completed and will be subject to approval at the children and families services committee in September 2023. The proposed plan includes five key priority areas which relate to excellence, equity, and positive sustained outcomes for children and young people.
As a result of professional learning to support core approaches, there has been an increase in staff capacity. Practitioners' knowledge, understanding and confidence have improved. This is leading to improved experiences and outcomes for learners. This will be strengthened in 2023-24 by aligning the professional learning with quality improvement methodology.
Good progress has been made towards developing a framework to measure learner engagement. The criteria for levels of engagement and a common language have been agreed by the team. Staff and learners are making judgements on levels of engagement for each learning session. This is recorded on daily records and the learner digital platform, where it can be shared with parents.
The newly formed Care Experienced and Young People's (CECYP) plan includes local stretch aims. Required improvements in literacy and numeracy were identified for this targeted group, and the rationale for improvement communicated effectively through a series of network events. Although there are smaller numbers of CECYP in primary, managers have a much clearer focus on the specific interventions in their schools.

Section 2

Theme: Learning, teaching and assessment

2.1 Strategies for learning and teaching

Research clearly outlines that effective learning and teaching plays an integral part in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This section outlines the strategic approaches that local authorities have in place to ensure high-quality learning and teaching, and the extent to which these focus on equity.

Strategies and policies

Most local authorities outline clear expectations for effective learning and teaching within strategic-level policies or frameworks. Guidance on achieving equity is explicit within the majority of these. There is growing evidence to suggest that layers of complementary guidance are being revised and increasingly co-constructed with teachers. These include:

- Overarching clear aims within education service plans
- Policies for learning, teaching and assessment
- Raising attainment strategies
- Frameworks that provide guidance on pedagogies and focus on achieving equity

In several authorities, these suites of guidance support increased consistency of learning and teaching. In the strongest examples, evidence-based practice is embedded within strategic advice and used to inform targeted approaches, whilst complementing universal learning and teaching. There is evidence to show that when expectations for learning and teaching are shared, this provides clarity for schools on areas where improvement is required. Subsequently, this informs self-evaluation and school improvement planning.

Some local authorities acknowledge that further work is required to establish a shared vision and guidance on learning and teaching, which specifically focuses on addressing the poverty-related attainment gap. Education Scotland will continue to work collaboratively with local authorities to support this.

> **Strategies and policies**
> *The authority has developed a comprehensive social justice framework that aligns to the learning and teaching strategy. The framework successfully provides practical guidance on how educators can use resources, learning and teaching, curriculum design, professional learning, recruitment and relationships with families and communities to ensure equity and equality.*

> *Following extensive consultation with learners, practitioners and stakeholders, a 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy' was developed and launched in 2022. The strategy provides a statement on expected outcomes for all learners, with reference to understanding socio-economic and cultural barriers related to learning. Robust guidance is structured around four key themes of: learning and engagement, quality of teaching, effective use of assessment and planning, tracking and monitoring. Authority feedback indicates schools are beginning to implement this guidance, to promote context specific high-quality learning, teaching and assessment.*

> *The revised learning, teaching and assessment policy was launched in session 2021-22. The policy reflects the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission of improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty. It sets out clear expectations across the Broad General Education. There are three principles that underpin the policy: meeting learners needs, health and wellbeing and skills for work.*

> *The local authority has established shared expectations for high-quality learning and teaching across all schools which align with the local authority's values. These sit alongside shared, high expectations in leadership and relationships. To address the poverty-related attainment gap the local authority also has in place a raising attainment strategy. This provides an overview of targeted approaches to reducing gaps in key areas and is due to be reviewed in session 2023-24. Feedback from headteachers suggested that this has provided clarity about areas for improvement.*

> *The raising attainment strategy has learning, teaching & assessment as one of its two core priorities, the other is using data for improvement. Following the launch of the strategy, a learning, teaching and assessment framework will be created to support this priority. The framework will be based on current best practice in the authority and make use of research to form a more robust and consistent approach across all schools.*

> *The revised learning, teaching and assessment policy was launched this session. The policy clearly embeds the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission of improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty. It is a practical reference tool providing clear and succinct guidance on key aspects of learning and teaching. Several schools are using the revised policy to self-evaluate progress. It is expected that the impact of this policy will be evident through school improvement planning.*

Quality Assurance

The majority of local authorities have referenced quality assurance (QA) visits which include a focus on learning and teaching. Almost half of local authorities ensure that equity and the use of targeted learning and teaching approaches are an integral part of the visit. There are a few examples where 'peer' support models are used to enhance QA activity, review practice with colleagues and learn from each other. There is evidence that where rigorous processes and regular reviews of data are in place, this is leading to improved self-evaluation at school level. When used to inform targeted learning and teaching approaches, outcomes are improved for children and young people.

> **Quality assurance**
> *A well-established quality improvement visit cycle is in place which includes a focus on learning and teaching. Visits have been further strengthened through the involvement of inclusion coordinators. This has resulted in better targeted support*

> *plans. Evidence from these visits informs the authority's professional learning offer. Peer mentoring by associate assessors is used well to complement this.*

> *The authority has a well-established quality assurance calendar. This includes local officers, cluster and trio supports. As a result of recent quality assurance and self-evaluation across the authority, further work has been done to ensure consistency of approach with the learning, teaching and assessment strategy.*

> *Primary schools receive a 'Learning and Achievement' visit. These are needs-based reviews carried out by education officers and school leaders. Evidence of need includes attainment and achievement gaps for learners affected by poverty. This year, all secondary schools took part in a 'Validated Self-Evaluation' programme focused on inclusion. Specific consideration was given to learners affected by poverty including the use of the PEF. The process successfully allowed schools to peer review inclusive practice in partnership with local authority officers. Learning from this programme has been shared and will inform future improvement planning.*

> *Across secondary schools, learning, teaching and assessment has been captured through the headteacher 'trio' model. This model supports, provides challenge, and focuses on How Good is Our School? 4, Quality Indicator 2.3, ensuring equity for all learners. This pilot has made some progress across the primary sector and work is already underway to develop this next session.*

> *A quality assurance programme has been developed to support effective, valid, and reliable self-evaluation. This programme is underpinned by a data-informed approach to support Quality Indicators 2.3 and 3.2. All primary and secondary schools have received a visit from the central team where attainment and performance are reviewed. In addition, almost all secondary schools have had an improvement model visit involving senior staff who have adopted a peer review approach. This engagement has been set as a priority, and forms part of a rigorous approach to improving learning, teaching and assessment.*

> *A robust quality assurance programme supports effective, valid and reliable self-evaluation. To strengthen this approach, an 'Improving Outcomes Calendar' has been introduced. This aims to focus on attendance and attainment, including data collection, and applying an equity lens.*

Progression frameworks

Expectations on the use of progression frameworks are set out by most local authorities. In some cases, these frameworks have been designed by the local authority themselves, individual schools or Regional Improvement Collaboratives. In others, frameworks designed by other local authorities have been adopted. Commonly, these frameworks are for literacy and numeracy, but are increasingly used for a variety of other curricular areas. In the best examples, these are supported by both professional learning and resource recommendations, which have a focus on achieving equity. This is resulting in a positive impact on the confidence of teachers in both planning and teaching a progressive curriculum.

Whilst not explicit, evidence suggests that there is more consistent use of frameworks within the primary sector. A few local authorities acknowledge that further development is required to embed the use of frameworks.

Progression frameworks
In 2022-23 the local authority launched a high-quality skills framework and identified key evidence-based approaches to support implementation. These included play-based learning, metacognition, growth mindset and project-based learning. The local authority made clear its expectation that all schools use these approaches. A high-quality professional learning offer is supporting this.
Progression frameworks for literacy and numeracy are used by almost all schools and the majority for health and wellbeing. Whilst the authority endorses certain frameworks, schools are empowered to adapt these to suit their needs.
Early to Third Level progression pathways in literacy, numeracy and digital learning have been developed to support teacher planning and professional judgement. The programme of study in literacy at Second Level has been revised, with professional learning offered to literacy champions in all establishments to support professional understanding.
Progression frameworks for literacy and numeracy are available to all staff. Frameworks and resources to support learning and teaching of health and well-being and STEM as well as play pedagogy and outdoor learning are also available. These are well-used by practitioners to ensure appropriate progression in learning.
Progression frameworks exist for every level across all curricular areas. Whilst more established in the primary sector, progress has been made this year to embed the use of the frameworks in secondary settings. Feedback was sought from practitioners to agree achievement of a level, supporting the development of the frameworks. A pilot was undertaken across all secondary schools, with plans to upscale in the next academic session.

Pedagogy

The development and understanding of pedagogy are supported by professional learning in the majority of local authorities. Whilst a variety of pedagogical approaches are identified to raise attainment, commitment to play pedagogy is growing across a number of authorities. Where most successful, this is embedded across all schools and Early Level data reflects a positive impact.

Pedagogies which develop specific literacy and numeracy skills are common across most local authorities. However, there is evidence that these are most effective when clear strategic expectations or frameworks are in place, supported by comprehensive training and networking opportunities ensuring staff are both skilled and confident.

Pedagogy teams, leads or champions are often in place to support both implementation and consistency of specific approaches. Although universal support and training are regularly offered, a focus on equity and improving outcomes for those living in poverty is evident. Data is being used to inform both targeted work and evaluate impact. In a few local authorities, use of Quality Improvement Methodology is successfully improving learning and teaching.

Pedagogy
The improving writing at First Level programme, which focuses on using quality improvement methodology, has resulted in increased attainment for writers in 10 targeted primary schools. Data has revealed that within these schools, learners

> *experiencing socio-economic deprivation have demonstrated the biggest increase in their attainment.*
>
> *The pedagogy team delivers career-long professional learning (CLPL) to support practitioners. CLPL programmes focus on evidence-based pedagogy, literacy and numeracy. Evaluations indicated these are valued by practitioners.*
>
> *Play pedagogy is firmly embedded across the authority. Early Level data continues to reflect the significant progress in this approach and schools report an increased independence and creativity in children. The authority provides robust professional learning to support practitioners, resulting in them being upskilled in this pedagogy.*
>
> *The local authority has recently launched its framework for pedagogy. This has been revised over a period of time and now frames the activities for enhancing effective learning, teaching and assessment. There are a variety of key offers to support establishments across sectors in developing their approaches in effective pedagogy.*
>
> *Guidance on pedagogical approaches which supports equity including metacognition, differentiation and play-based approaches are provided to all relevant sectors. For instance, this year, all principal teachers of secondaries received professional learning on differentiation which was highly evaluated. Play pedagogy is now embedded in most primary one classes and primary two learners are beginning to benefit from this approach.*
>
> *Pedagogical approaches for equity are supported through professional learning such as: pedagogy for equity sessions delivered to probationers, an 'Equity Network' and the literacy and numeracy leader programmes. Improvement methodology approaches have also successfully improved learning, teaching and assessment for learners including those affected by poverty through the national improving writing programme.*

Participation of children and young people in improving the quality and consistency of learning and teaching

A range of approaches which ensure learner participation within schools are evident in most local authorities. These include:

- Use of How good is OUR school?
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Consultation through quality assurance processes and visits

Where effectively embedded, the views of children and young people inform self-evaluation of learning and teaching and are the basis of identifying areas for improvement. A few local authorities have made good use of the Young Leaders of Learning programme. This is ensuring meaningful opportunities for children and young people to share their views and contribute towards improvement planning.

There is some evidence of strategic policy, planning and frameworks being influenced by the views of children and young people. Mainly, this is through surveys or questionnaires, with specific areas then identified as a development priority. Positively, a few authorities include children and young people representatives on strategic boards.

Whilst there is a clear recognition and commitment to ensuring learner participation, evidence suggests that this continues to be an area for development. There is scope to

further improve consistency and ensure meaningful opportunities for learner participation at all levels. Supporting improvements in this remains a key priority for Education Scotland.

Participation of children and young people
Children and young people's views are gathered during the PEF reporting process. Feedback regarding specific interventions is given to headteachers. This, along with data analysis, allows them to implement appropriate changes to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching for targeted learners in line with PEF guidance.
Learner participation is encouraged at both school and authority level. Learners are asked about their views on equity as well as what they need to succeed. School improvement processes, including equity planning templates, encourage the use of stakeholder voice. Schools then use this to support and inform next steps. Establishments collect this using a variety of methods. *The authority has a focus on increasing the participation and engagement of learners in their learning, personal achievement and activities beyond school.*
The authority has a strong focus on learner participation, recognising the importance of actively involving children and young people in decision making processes, including those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Included within the revised learner participation framework is an expectation of learners' views being gathered frequently and consistently. Linking these views to self-evaluation and improvement ensures learners are involved in a meaningful way in school improvement.
There is commitment to ensuring that children and young people's views are used to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Education managers meet with focus groups of pupils during QI 2.3 visits to discuss their learning experiences. This information informs improvement at school and local authority level.
The Young Leaders of Learning network is well established and encourages children and young people's views on a range of improvement matters. Pupil voice is encouraged throughout all schools and where this is best embedded, children and young people are contributing towards the leading of learning and improvement planning. All schools are implementing their own approaches to participatory budgeting consultations and use at least 5% of PEF allocated to impact school ethos and culture.
Young people's views are actively sought by schools when reviewing class lessons. There is a strong focus on increasing the participation and engagement of children and young people in their learning. Children's rights are being embedded across schools.

Recognition of the importance of ensuring high-quality learning and teaching to close the poverty-related attainment gap is clear. All local authorities continue to focus on this to some extent. To improve outcomes, local authorities should continue to develop all the themes identified above.

2.2 Assessment

Assessment plays a crucial role in accurately identifying and addressing poverty-related attainment gaps. When assessment is valid and robust it provides important diagnostic

information which allows individual learners to make progress. Effectively used it also provides useful tracking information for specific groups. This can inform decisions relating to Attainment Scotland Funding (ASF) to ensure improved outcomes for all. The strategic approaches which local authorities have developed to support effective assessment are outlined below.

Strategies and frameworks

The majority of local authorities have strategies or frameworks in place which support assessment, largely in the Broad General Education. These are helping to ensure consistent approaches to assessment across establishments. In several local authorities these frameworks are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and effective. In the best examples, they form part of a wider raising attainment or learning and teaching strategy. Typically, they include guidance around planning and the use of formative and summative assessments to support teacher professional judgements. This guidance is most effective where it is supplemented by the professional learning and resources to support effective assessment and moderation.

In a few local authorities, where there is no strategy or framework in place, there is an expectation that individual establishments develop their own policies or frameworks to support assessment. It is recognised that this leads to inconsistency in approaches to assessment.

Strategies and frameworks
Practitioner feedback highlights the learning, teaching and assessment strategy is a supportive tool in assessing learning. Teachers are increasingly planning for, and using, a greater range of assessment evidence to demonstrate how well learners are progressing in relation to National Benchmarks. Several resources have been made available which promote robust assessment and support staff in having a shared understanding of standards and expectations within the Broad General Education.
The 'Learning and Teaching' policy gives guidance on assessment approaches. Staff are encouraged to plan for formative and summative assessments. National Standardised Assessments are undertaken annually. This supports planning at classroom and school level, ensuring teaching and learning is meeting the needs of learners, and support is targeted where most needed.
The authority's Scottish Attainment Challenge team has revised guidance for planning, learning, teaching and assessment. Closing the poverty-related attainment gap and ensuring equity for all are outlined as key priorities. The guidance provides clear expectations and outlines the need for establishments to develop assessment models which are appropriate for their own context.

Standardised assessments within the Broad General Education

In almost all local authorities standardised assessments are used as part of the range of evidence which informs teacher professional judgements. Scottish National Standardised Assessments are used in all local authorities. However, there is some variance in how they are used. For example, a few local authorities do not use the Primary 1 assessments. The S3 assessments are not as widely used as the primary

assessments. In a minority of local authorities other standardised tests are also used to provide further evidence of progress or diagnostic information. One local authority has developed its own standardised assessments.

Increasingly, as part of quality assurance processes, local authorities are examining the congruence between standardised assessment information and teacher professional judgements. Where significant discrepancies exist, schools are often encouraged to look more closely at the evidence which informs teacher professional judgements. It is important that local authorities continue to develop the confidence of teachers in using a wide range of evidence, thereby avoiding an over-reliance on standardised assessments.

A few local authorities provide professional learning to help schools make best use of standardised assessments. Where this is in place, staff confidence has increased in relation to both their use of the assessments and interpretation of the data generated.

In some examples, local authorities provide timelines on when standardised assessments should be administered. Where responsibility for timing of assessments is devolved to individual establishments it has empowered headteachers to ensure that each child or young person can engage in a positive and equitable manner.

Standardised assessments
A robust system is in place for the creation and moderation of local standardised assessments. These are used systematically across all schools and provide more effective moderation and consistent assessment of progress through, and achievement of, a level. The authority has recognised that over-reliance on these can detract from teacher professional judgement. As a result, a performance board has been created to support with the analysis of a range of assessment information. This is ensuring that all evidence is considered when forming professional judgements.
Education managers engage in 'challenge and support' conversations with headteachers around the alignment of professional judgements with standardised assessment data. The data analysis team has produced packs to support these conversations. These support planning and help build confidence around achievement of a level.
Training is provided for senior leadership teams and classroom teachers on National Standardised Assessments (NSAs). This professional learning, tailored to the needs of different settings, is highly effective in supporting teacher professional judgement. There is greater understanding of the value of NSAs and how educators can interpret the data for complementary value.
Schools with a sound rationale, can decide when learners engage in standardised assessment. Creating the right conditions ensures that all learners engage in a positive and equitable manner, allowing schools to better meet their needs. Assessment evidence comes from a wide range of sources to support sound professional judgements.

Moderation

Moderation activities take place in all local authorities. These aim to promote a shared understanding of standards, increase teacher confidence and levels of consistency in

professional judgements. Strategic support for moderation is provided in a variety of ways.

Most local authorities have designated staff such as Quality Assurance and Moderation Officers (QAMSOs) who help to facilitate and promote moderation. They have often been supported in their role by professional learning offered by Education Scotland. These roles have been most effective where local authorities have a programme of moderation activities.

Professional learning, the establishment of networks and creation of resources have also supported moderation across local authorities. Whilst all local authorities encourage activity at school level, in the best examples, moderation also happens across schools, clusters and between local authorities supported by Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

Moderation
As a result of Quality Assessment and Moderation Officer training provided by Education Scotland, the authority now has a network of expertise at establishment and cluster level to support moderation. The online digital moderation platform continues to support establishments in the primary sector with effective moderation within English and the Gaelic Medium. Early indications show that engagement with the platform has resulted in a clearer understanding of the moderation process at establishment level and improved confidence of teacher professional judgement of learners' progress. At secondary level, enhancement of the digital moderation platform within and between schools, schools' analytical evaluation and quality improvement skills and capacity to make evidence-based decisions relating to assessment has continually developed. This has led to increased staff confidence in understanding standards and in making accurate and reliable judgements.
Several resources have been made available which further promote robust assessment and support staff in arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations for the Broad General Education (BGE). These resources include the local authority 'Moderation' site and the 'BGE Sharing Standards' site, together with additional audit and toolkit resources. Feedback from attainment reviews suggests the increased support is beginning to have a positive impact. The majority of schools have participated in training opportunities provided by central officers. These have focused on effective approaches to assessment and moderation.
A comprehensive programme of professional learning is offered annually to all establishments for learning, teaching and assessment, including moderation. Sector-specific training has been developed for primaries and secondaries. Core sessions are designed as whole-school opportunities. These promote and develop moderation and planning between and across school staff teams. This develops a shared understanding of standards and expectations and enhances teacher professional judgement. Feedback suggests this is supporting practitioners to be more effective in moderating and achieving consistency in all aspects of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle. Schools that have completed the training, moderate at school and cluster level and have opportunities to moderate across clusters. Two annual moderation events take place, mirroring the model used in the West Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). Those which took place in December and June received positive feedback in supporting practitioner confidence in professional judgements. Annually, local authority schools participate in the RIC moderation event. A total of 39 schools participated this session.

Tracking and monitoring

Tracking and monitoring the attainment of individuals and cohorts helps to ensure that resources and interventions are effectively targeted. Local authorities have a range of processes in place to support the effective targeting and evaluation of the use of Attainment Scotland Funding. Examples include data uplift calendars, systems to collect and collate data and clear planning and reporting structures. These are used to inform quality assurance discussions with headteachers.

Tracking and monitoring
Regular dialogue between the central improvement team and senior leaders is based upon the most current tracking and monitoring data ensuring a focus on equity. Data dashboards are now readily accessed and support practitioners in identifying barriers to learning and planning for targeted interventions to support individual learners.
As a former challenge authority, the local authority's Scottish Attainment Challenge team is confident in evaluating the impact specific interventions have on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. In doing so, a range of data is considered. Where necessary, adaptations are made to ensure that the additional funding is used effectively.
The authority recently revised its 'monitoring and tracking progress and achievement framework' which aligns to the learning and teaching strategy. This provides explicit guidance for staff on the assessment framework, how to assess across the curriculum, use of the benchmarks, monitoring and tracking, target setting, effective professional dialogue, and how to use local authority and national data effectively. This supports a consistent approach for all staff and led to more reliable data. Data conversations are then followed up during quality assurance visits. *The authority has used the new PEF quad meetings effectively to monitor interventions and approaches that address the poverty-related attainment gap.*
An attainment suite is used to track the progress of all learners including those affected by poverty. Schools take part in regular progress discussions with quality improvement officers. The 'Closing the Gap Interventions' tool is effectively used to track the impact of all interventions at school and local authority level, including PEF.

2.3 Partnerships

Education departments in all local authorities continue to work closely with a range of internal and external partners to enhance the experiences and outcomes of all children and young people.

There is evidence that a growing number of local authorities are placing greater emphasis on co-constructing strategic plans with services and partners beyond education. Where this is the case, shared plans have a clear focus on inclusion, equity and closing poverty-related attainment gaps.

Partnership planning
A partnership approach to SEF planning is in place to collaborate with a range of services across the local authority including the anti-poverty team, social policy, Community Learning and Development, educational psychologists, Active Schools,

> *Youth Homelessness and others. Eight collaborative projects were identified which have a specific targeted focus.*

> *There is an ambitious vision to work in partnership to use Strategic Equity Funding effectively. This resulted in a 'community of practice' including education, health, and community representatives. This enabled high-quality partnership planning approaches to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.*

> *There is an authority-wide 'Equity & Inclusion' group which meets regularly. This group is made up of representatives from health, education, social work and the third sector. The group works strategically and collaboratively to ensure equity and inclusion are the foremost considerations.*

> *The authority's child poverty working group is made up of partners from health, education, social work and the Community and Life-Long Employability team. This group directly addresses aspects of child poverty across the authority including work on the Cost of the School Day. The group sets targets for the child poverty action plan and reports on progress in their annual local child poverty action report.*

> *Collaborative working ensures strategic planning to create resources, professional learning policies and frameworks which are evidence-based and cohesive. NHS colleagues and third sector organisations are consulted and involved in the design and delivery of development work, for example to inform the relationships, sexual health and parenthood framework.*

Strong partnerships exist between local authorities and Educational Psychology Services (EPS). There is considerable evidence that local authorities work in collaboration with EPS to develop policies and guidance. These support establishments to enhance provision for the diverse range of learners in their care. In many cases there is a distinct focus on developing authority-wide programmes or professional learning, which is based on, for example:

- Nurture
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Neurosequential model for education
- Zone of Regulation
- Relationships
- Grief
- Loss and change

In other examples, educational psychologists are used in a consultative manner to ensure that relevant strategies and interventions are in place which support individuals and targeted groups of children and young people. In a few cases, there is evidence that children and young people most impacted by poverty are a targeted cohort.

> **Educational Psychology Services (EPS)**
>
> *Educational psychologists (EPs) provide a variety of support. These range from targeted support for individual learners to leading on authority-wide strategies aimed at removing the barriers to learning. EPs work in partnership with education officers to plan at school and cluster level.*
>
> *The EPS provides targeted input on supporting children and young people with grief, loss and change and is involved in the development of pupil support resources.*

> *Educational psychologists work closely with the 'Educational Outreach Service' to provide targeted support for identified learners. This is further developing the skills and confidence of staff and ensuring appropriate supports are in place.*

> *The EPS provides a wide range of guidance and universal, targeted and intensive support to schools including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing for those learners affected by poverty.*

> *The EPS sits within the pupil support and inclusion service along with the wider pupil support team. They work collaboratively to provide targeted support for identified learners.*

> *The EPS has a clear service delivery model which is used by all establishments. Currently this supports around 785 children and young people, 49.3% of whom reside in quintile 1 and many of whom have experienced care.*

Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) continue to be a valued resource in local authorities. They provide targeted support to individual children and young people with a clear focus on closing poverty-related communication and vocabulary gaps. These specialists also work closely with central teams and teachers to deliver professional learning and develop classroom-based activities and interventions which can be implemented by teachers.

In a few cases, there is evidence that SALTs provide support to networks of staff to enhance the development of a communication-friendly environments. Some local authorities have invested Attainment Scotland Funding to support the work of SALTs. Moving forward, a team of speech, language and communication therapists will be joining Education Scotland by October 2023 as seconded regional early speech and language leads. This should support the ongoing work in local authorities to address poverty-related gaps that exist in relation to children's early speech, language and communication skills.

Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs)

> *The SALT team, which is partly funded through the Strategic Equity Fund, continues to provide invaluable support to learners and establishments. This includes upskilling practitioners on how they can support the language development of children living predominantly in SIMD deciles one and two. The team also provides support to the network of communication leads. As a result, twenty-six schools are on the journey to achieve communication-friendly school's accreditation within the local authority.*

> *Working in collaboration with education services, speech and language therapists developed the 'Language is Fun Together' programme. This has successfully upskilled educators and parents to support communication and vocabulary development across Early Level.*

> *SALTs work alongside class teachers to close the vocabulary gap. Through a coach-consult model class teachers are upskilled in evidence-based language development programmes. The impact and evidence base around the coaching model now includes primary two teachers.*

> *A service-level agreement with NHS speech and language provides a range of support from therapists in schools, health centres and at home. Work between therapists and the inclusion team has resulted in a range of class activities and interventions being identified and implemented at classroom level.*

Almost all local authorities have outlined strong partnership working with third sector providers to support their mission to close the poverty-related attainment gap. There is strong evidence that establishments engage with third sector partners to support learning and teaching, including:

- Mental health and wellbeing interventions
- Nurture
- Family support
- Outdoor and family learning
- Attendance
- Physical activity and sport

It is evident that local authorities and establishments continue to work closely with national organisations such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Scotland. Both provide support to ensure that children and young people develop the skills and knowledge required to succeed in the world of work. A growing number of local authorities have designated DYW officers either working in central teams or within secondary schools. In the best examples, this is having a significant impact on school leavers securing and sustaining positive destinations.

Third sector
Significant collaborations with third sector organisations support schools to provide valuable experiences targeting mental and physical health. Examples include programmes provided in partnership with Sport Aberdeen, Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust, Place2Be and The Wood Foundation. These opportunities are informed by, and respond to, the needs identified through children and young people surveys and questionnaires.
There are strong partnerships with SDS, DYW and youth employment partners. There is a DYW coordinator in almost all schools, helping to build meaningful partnerships with employers. There is a targeted job education training (JET) offer for Senior Phase learners and the JET team lead on work placement strategy.
Tackling attendance issues has been a major focus for the LA and third sector partners. This included working with clusters to improve processes around attendance and the provision of eight family engagement support assistants. These assistants work with families to improve the attendance of children and young people. Data for session 2022-23 shows attendance is up by 0.9pp across all sectors, reversing a previously reducing trend.
A youth board has been established in an emerging partnership with a local football club. This has led to bespoke experiences for some young people who experience barriers in learning such as disengagement, attendance, or trauma.
DYW school coordinators continue to play an important role in creating and sustaining engagement between schools, employers and young people. The DYW team has successfully supported several employer events. They create links with local employers to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers.
A range of effective partnerships support the 16+ agenda. These include: the third sector, employability teams, SDS and DYW. The impact of partnership working includes better opportunities for learners to develop skills for learning, life and work through real contexts. The positive destination rate is increasing and at 92.1% is higher than the Scottish average.

Family learning continues to be a key priority for most local authorities. Strategies for implementation range from utilising the expertise of third sector partners to establishments and central officers creating their own programmes. In many cases there is a focus on engaging with the most vulnerable families and those most impacted by poverty. Programmes centre on enhancing relationships, trust between establishments and families and developing the confidence of parents/carers in supporting their child's education and development.

<table>
<tr><td>Family learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>The parental empowerment programme is now delivered in five establishments. This was developed in collaboration with Columba 1400, staff and parents/carers. Following consultation with parents, the team created a bespoke programme for parents. Early indications show that this programme is having an impact on enhancing relationships and the trust of those participating with the school.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Successful partnerships continue to emerge between early years, social work, health and third sector partner providers. A recent focus was to strengthen community relationships. This work addressed the cost-of-living crisis around food and education. Families from two identified areas completed a six-week 'cooking on a budget' course. All parents attending reported a positive impact on their own and their family's health and wellbeing. They also highlighted reduced feelings of isolation, a sense of pride and empowerment, and knowledge of low-cost, healthy recipes that they can recreate at home.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Many schools have established family learning programmes. These are typically funded through Pupil Equity Funding and Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and are supporting children and families impacted by poverty. Through SEF, the authority is committed to funding family workers in an increased number of schools to support partnership collaborating with the school and community. There is strong evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of this family work.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The education service has a well-established and successful family learning offer with many programmes accessed by families including those affected by poverty. Examples include the 'Strengthening Families', 'Incredible Years' and 'Teen Triple P' programmes. The positive impact of this provision was recognised this year with the parenting and family learning team winning a National Education Award and a successful bid for further support through the 'Whole Family Wellbeing Fund'.</td></tr>
<tr><td>The family hub model is a key area of working to close the poverty-related attainment gap. Strategic Equity Funding is used effectively to support a partnership with 'Working 4 U', the local authority's community learning and development service. In 2021-22, 128 families were supported by 'Working 4 U' staff through the hub model. Support ranged from maximising family income to support for mental health and wellbeing.</td></tr>
</table>

There are several examples of local authorities and schools strengthening partnership working with Further and Higher Education establishments. Where this is the case, aims include enhancing curricular provision in the Senior Phase and supporting young people to enter and sustain positive destinations.

<table>
<tr><td>Further and Higher Education</td></tr>
<tr><td>Partnership work with the University of Highland and Islands has ensured primary school learners are now benefitting from enhanced lessons as part of the university's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) outreach programme which is funded by four offshore wind project developers. The programme provides</td></tr>
</table>

materials (e.g. 'Lend a Lab' boxes) and training to teachers to build confidence and knowledge.
There is a well-established collaboration between all high schools and the college. There is growing evidence that this partnership is effectively improving positive destinations for those impacted by poverty. There is a developing picture of strong partnerships across high school clusters to support a varied curriculum offer.
The Access to Engineering Academy has been in some secondary schools since 2020. Targeted groups of young people participate in the access programme for studying engineering. This has led to further learning opportunities in the University of Strathclyde's Engineering Academy. Successful partnerships provide learners with the opportunity to develop engineering skills at SCQF level 6.
The local authority has developed strong partnerships with the education departments from Shetland and the Western Isles (the '3 islands group'). Key officers meet regularly to discuss a variety of subjects, such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge. A particular area of focus is to establish a mechanism that can identify and measure poverty more effectively across the three island authorities.

Strong partnership working is taking place between three island authorities. Central officers, with the support of Education Scotland and the Scottish Government are working closely to develop a mechanism that can identify and measure poverty more effectively in relation to their unique context.

In a few cases, local authorities have outlined specific examples which take cognisance of their particular contexts.

Specific examples
The local authority has developed a strategic framework for local and national partnerships and created 'Academy 9'. This involves partnerships with a range of companies who were involved in the duelling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness. These companies have successfully worked in schools on problem solving, engineering and STEM careers. This programme has been shared and scaled up to a national level.
The 'Money Advice and Rights' team has worked in partnership with the education department to develop a pilot project offering financial advice within two primary schools. This approach builds on parents' positive relationships with the schools and enables them to access support and advice in a discreet, familiar environment. By increasing family income, the service helps to reduce the negative impact of poverty on children's health and wellbeing. Following positive feedback on the impact of the pilot, the initiative will be expanded.
'The Social Innovation Partnership' between Scottish Government, Columba 1400 and the local authority is enabling council services, Elected Members and the third sector to develop the 'Community Around the School'. This will move services closer to families via the schools.

2.4 Professional learning

All local authorities continue to be committed to providing an array of professional learning opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of staff and the outcomes for all children and young people.

A range of approaches have been adopted by central teams to ensure that the needs of staff are being met in each authority's particular context. All local authorities use the expertise from within their own teams to support delivery of professional learning opportunities. Where appropriate, this is supported by various external partners, including Education Scotland and the Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Professional learning includes a clear focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing alongside pedagogical approaches.

There is some evidence that information, feedback and evaluations gathered from teachers is being used to develop programmes that better meet their needs. In a few cases, local authorities are using this information to provide targeted support for staff and establishments. There is scope to increase opportunities for teachers to directly influence their professional learning activities. Delivery of professional learning offers continues to evolve with inputs being a mixture of in-person, online and pre-recorded workshops and modules.

Professional learning
The local authority offers a comprehensive programme of professional learning annually for learning, teaching and assessment. This programme is researched, written and developed by the learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) education support officer and the sessions focus on developing a shared understanding of the LTA cycle, the use of Assessment is for Learning strategies and effective assessment.
To develop understanding of specific approaches to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment there have been opportunities this session to engage with the local authority's own 'Numeracy Academy', the National Writing Programme and training on the development of play led by the pedagogy team.
The extensive programme of career-long professional learning (CLPL) offered is regularly evaluated and used to support planning. Bespoke CLPL sessions are also planned for a small number of establishments.
A range of professional learning to support all practitioners has been developed. This professional learning is underpinned by the local authority's updated 'Learning to Achieve' policy. This policy focuses on four key areas to ensuring consistency of expectations linked to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure equity for all learners.
The annual professional learning (PL) offer from the authority is informed by school visits, recent inspections, and performance information. They allocate twilight sessions and in-service days to focus on learning, teaching, and assessment. All PL is advertised in a monthly bulletin and signposts local and national events.
The education service ensures that practitioners have a clear understanding of specific approaches for high-quality learning, teaching and assessment through the provision of specific professional learning programmes such as 'Inspiring Schools' and 'Inspiring Teachers'.

There is evidence that some local authorities continue to develop the data literacy skills of staff at all levels. Where this is the case, the aim is to ensure staff are confident in using the data to support self-evaluation activities and plan for improvement.

Some local authorities are enhancing their professional learning offers around the use and impact of Pupil Equity Funding allocations. This work is often supported by the link attainment advisors from Education Scotland.

There is a growing number of local authorities participating in professional learning offers in collaboration with the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative. Emerging evidence indicates that this is having a positive impact on practice and outcomes in relation to writing. Similarly, a significant number of authorities have engaged with the Self-Evaluation for Continuous Improvement programme in collaboration with Education Scotland. There is strong evidence that this offer is improving participants confidence in relation to self-evaluation activities.

Professional learning focus
Professional learning and networking opportunities for data champions continue to improve data literacy across schools. Schools use authority tracking and monitoring spreadsheet data to identify interventions and next steps for all learners and to support school improvement. An increased number of schools can now use formulae to analyse tracking and monitoring data and present this information to all stakeholders using charts and graphs following tracking and monitoring professional learning sessions provided by the central team.
Professional development sessions on effective tracking conversations and collaborative professional judgements are noted to be empowering teachers at all levels. This is encouraging practitioners to use the 'Fact, Story, Action' approach to collecting and analysing data. These sessions are also a key element of deputy headteacher and new headteacher networks. Feedback from the input indicates that almost all participants agree that this training has the most impact on their roles.
Since August 2022, the Equity Team has worked directly with 84 practitioners to tackle poverty-related gaps in the classroom. Data analysis workshops, bespoke professional learning sessions and programmes of targeted interventions have taken place in 12 schools where more intensive support is provided. Feedback from practitioners includes: an increase in data analysis confidence and enthusiasm; ability to use guidance and support to increase motivation of children and young people in writing; and how beneficial sharing of experiences and resources has been.
Collaboration with Education Scotland provided bespoke training on 'Self-Evaluation for Continuous Improvement'. Participation was high and attendees commented positively on the impact on their work, especially in relation to use of data and planning.
Almost half the schools have now completed the National Writing Programme. This has been delivered by staff from Education Scotland and improvement advisors from the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative. Impact has been extensive, both in terms of improved attainment and in terms of children's motivation to write. Staff involved report an increase in their confidence to teach writing. A secure foundation has been built to roll out this programme to the remaining schools.
The attainment advisor and the authority's lead teacher for literacy facilitated professional learning for 10 primary schools as part of the improving writing at First Level programme. This work is based on the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative National Writing Programme. Early indications of authority's ACEL predictions indicate that the programme has made a significant contribution to closing the poverty-related attainment gap for P4 and P5 learners at First Level writing. The programme also provided opportunities for practitioners to create a community of practice as well as strong networks of effective practice.

Most local authorities have a wide range of networks which support teachers and senior leaders. They work in collaboration to drive forward improvement and share practice more widely. In many cases, sharing practice is facilitated at headteacher professional learning days and other similar events. Moving forward, it will be important for local authorities to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for staff at all levels to share effective practice more widely.

There is evidence to suggest that most local authorities supplement their own professional learning offers with programmes delivered by the Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

Although most professional learning offers have a clear link to equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap, there is scope for this to be strengthened in some local authorities. This will help to ensure that teachers, as well as leaders, have a better understanding of the potential barriers that may impact on progress and how they can mitigate against these.

Professional learning networks
Five professional learning events for headteachers have been delivered by the SAC team. These have all focused on learning, teaching and assessment. Headteachers are encouraged to share effective practice with their peers. This has allowed leaders to work collaboratively and learn from the experience of others. It has also helped to ensure that improving the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment continues to be a key focus for all establishments.
There are a variety of local networks in place to ensure effective practice is shared and developed. These include literacy champions and assessment leads. Additionally, SAC workstream leads engage effectively across the regional improvement collaborative (RIC). There has also been a commitment to the RIC 'Improving our Classrooms' programme. Headteachers of schools involved in this programme report on the positive impact for practitioners who have taken part.
Effective practice is shared throughout the year during headteacher meetings. Recently, the authority facilitated 'Delivering Excellence through Equity' seminars for headteachers and senior leaders. This included a variety of professional learning opportunities around the themes of social justice, effective pedagogy for equity, metacognition in maths, emotionally based school avoidance, positive mental health, and effective PEF planning. All headteachers reported that the seminar was useful, and evaluation of feedback, together with early analysis of school improvement plan priorities, suggests that the strategic focus on equity and social justice is influencing school improvement priorities.
Practice is shared that is having a positive impact on closing the poverty-related attainment gap through its annual SAC conference. The conference facilitates school leaders from all sectors to share practice through keynote presentations, workshops and table-top discussions.

Section 3

3.1 Next steps for continuous improvement for learning, teaching and assessment

All local authorities have worked with their attainment advisor to identify next steps. These describe how local authorities can further strengthen implementation of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in relation to improving learning, teaching and assessment. Several common themes have emerged:

- Strategies and frameworks
- Developing capacity
- Moderation
- Quality assurance
- Tracking and monitoring
- Dedicated staff
- Learner participation

Strategies and Frameworks

The majority of local authorities have highlighted their intention to develop, revise or implement strategies to further improve learning, teaching and assessment. A few indicated a specific focus on frameworks or strategies that will support literacy development, with writing being a particular focus for some. There is significant evidence of an emphasis on equity and the implementation of the Framework within these plans.

Strategies and frameworks
Complete review of literacy strategy which considers the findings of the quality assurance of planned learning in writing
Review the raising attainment strategy considering the introduction of stretch aims and current local authority attainment
Continue to develop effective plans for the learning, teaching and assessment workstreams, with a rigorous focus on equity
To implement and embed the new frameworks for literacy, numeracy and learning, teaching, assessment and moderation
Update the learning and teaching strategy through an equity lens
During the next review of the guidance documents on assessment and moderation guidance and validated self-evaluation, the lead officer will consider more explicit reference to the impact of poverty on learning, teaching and assessment

Developing capacity

The majority of local authorities placed an emphasis on further developing the capacity of leaders and teachers. Networks will be established or strengthened to improve collaboration and share good practice. There is strong evidence of an increasing focus

on equity within professional learning programmes. Several local authorities highlighted specific staff who will facilitate these programmes and networks. Participation in the National Writing Programme has also been identified by a few. This will be facilitated by the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) and Education Scotland.

Developing capacity
Extension of professional learning with an equity focus through the new equity network
Implement and evaluate the impact of the 'leaders of learning' programme to support staff to drive forward improvements in the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment. As planned, the local authority should consider how it can continue to strengthen practitioners understanding of equity and the poverty-related attainment gap
The equity team will universally offer and deliver support sessions associated with effective approaches to assessment, differentiation/adaptive teaching, questioning and feedback. *Alongside secondary school leaders, the Equity team will co-design a professional learning offer for secondary middle leaders to focus on leading inclusive learning and teaching at faculty level to ensure all learners' needs are being met*
Continue to strengthen existing approaches which support establishments to learn from effective practice elsewhere to achieve equity, alongside facilitating professional learning, ongoing collaboration and networks
A continuation of the 'Improving Writing at First Level Programme' for the next cohort of primary schools in October 2023

Moderation

Moderation continues to be an area for further development within half of local authorities. Planned next steps reflect the different levels of progress which have been made to date. Extending moderation activities across establishments, clusters, local authorities and regions should help improve consistency in learning, teaching and assessment and lead to increased confidence in professional judgements.

Moderation
Build on the work of individual schools and clusters to develop consistently applied approaches to assessment and moderation across the authority
Continue to review and analyse the responses from the moderation survey to inform priorities of the QAMSO network and identify what improvement support is required
Undertake a planned writing sampling exercise, analyse and share data and identify next steps
Expand the Quality Assurance Moderation Support Officers and Trio networks to support improved assessment and moderation
Embedding the quality assurance and moderation support officer network. Moderation activities will be organised to support learning, teaching and assessment and explore pedagogical approaches to closing the gap
Continuation of the moderation and assessment strategy, involving QAMSOs supporting associated school group moderation activities and training. A roll out and monitoring of a consistent primary approach to key assessment activities linked to common assessment calendar to promote professional dialogue around data analysis

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (QA) has been identified as a next step by just under half of local authorities. Improvements in QA approaches are intended to ensure central officers target support for high-quality learning, teaching and assessment more effectively.

Quality assurance
Further strengthen professional dialogue with an equity focus within quality assurance visits, following the introduction of the new equity tracker
Continue to progress plans to develop a school review programme in the secondary sector with a strong emphasis on learning, teaching and assessment and equity similar to the approach adopted this year in the primary sector
Where significant areas for development are identified in relation to learning, teaching and assessment during learning visits, bespoke support will be provided with central officers continuing to engage with these establishments. This will ensure that the areas for development are progressing at an appropriate pace
Ensure that local authority and school plans clearly state and identify how outcomes for learners impacted by poverty will be improved

Tracking and monitoring

Further development and refinement of approaches to tracking and monitoring remains a priority for just under half of local authorities. They will continue to develop and implement improved systems to support effective tracking of progress with a clear focus on equity. It is planned that data will be used more effectively to:

- inform the identification and development of stretch aims
- target support
- improve consistency of learning, teaching and assessment
- evaluate the impact of programmes and interventions

Other planned improvements include more frequent data uplifts, strengthened arrangements for monitoring progress towards stretch aims and improved capacity of leaders to use data effectively to address poverty-related gaps.

Tracking and monitoring
Conclude the development and implementation of a consistent tracking tool for primary and secondary
Strengthen arrangements for the tracking of progress towards stretch aims
Develop the ability of senior leaders to articulate gaps for individual children and young people and cohorts, target interventions and measure their impact
Develop consistent tracking process in the broad general education that supports schools to use data effectively and identify attainment trends, interventions and approaches for appropriate cohorts of children and young people
Continue to support practitioners to develop confidence in the gathering and analysis of data and evidence

Continue to review ACEL data and information from 'progress in learning' meetings and triads to inform the support offer for schools on learning, teaching and assessment

Dedicated staff

A minority of local authorities plan to use dedicated staff to support implementation of the SAC. These staff will focus on improving pedagogy, learning, teaching and assessment.

Dedicated staff
Establish Scottish Attainment Challenge funded lead roles for literacy and numeracy
A numeracy and maths pedagogy pilot is being extended to include learning communities most impacted by poverty. Staff are being recruited through the Strategic Equity Fund to support this intervention
Appoint, train and fully deploy Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) funded education officer for the LA with a remit for learning teaching and assessment with an. This officer will work for both the LA and the RIC. This post will also have an equity focus
Create three posts funded from Strategic Equity Funding: a BGE numeracy teacher, BGE literacy teacher and a 0.6 central officer with a strategic remit for ensuring effective use of assessment and planning, tracking and monitoring with a focus on equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap

Participation of children and young people

Next steps which have a clear focus on learner participation were also identified by a few local authorities.

Participation of children and young people
Continue to support schools to meaningfully involve children and young people in improving learning and teaching
Further develop approaches to increase engagement of children and young people in their learning

Section 4

4.1 Stretch aims

Expectations for local authority stretch aims were outlined in the Framework for 2022-23. This section outlines the progress being made by local authorities towards achieving their core and plus stretch aims in this reporting period.

Core stretch aims

4.1.1 Broad General Education

Information provided by local authorities is based on, as yet unpublished data. Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) will be corroborated when the Scottish Government publishes the final data in December 2023. The data used here is a snapshot of available information at the time of writing the triannual reports.

ACEL P1, 4, & 7 Literacy combined overall

In many instances, local authorities were still in the process of triangulating and analysing their data. Despite this, the majority of local authorities indicated that it is likely that this stretch aim will be achieved.

ACEL P1, 4 & 7 Numeracy combined overall

The majority of local authorities reported that they are likely to achieve the stretch aim.

A third of local authorities reported that the poverty-related attainment gap will have narrowed, with some predicting that their identified stretch aim will be achieved.

Where it has been indicated that stretch aims may not be met, some local authorities reported that progress has been made when compared to the baseline data for both overall attainment and narrowing gaps.

Broad General Education

The local authority continues to make good progress, which is confirmed by the positive trajectory of attainment data. As a result, there are indicative improvements for learners in quintile one and quintile five, with a significant closing of the gap for numeracy.

Significant improvement has been made in this area since the baseline in 2021, at which time attainment was 59% and is now 66.78%. The gap stretch aim of 21.5pp has been surpassed by 3.91pp. The gap is now 17.59pp which is an improving picture from 2021 when it was 33pp.

Great improvement has been made in this area since the baseline in 2021, at which time overall attainment was 69% and is now 75.66%. The gap stretch aim of 13.5pp

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has been missed by 5.46pp with 2023 figures now at 18.96pp. However, this is an improving picture from 2021 when the gap was 29pp.
However, although the poverty-related gap appears to have reduced from the previous year it remains above the stretch aim set.
Whilst current available data suggests the local authority will not meet their stretch aim, positive progress is anticipated. A 6 percentage point (pp) increase from the 2021 baseline, only 1pp short of the aim, is currently predicted. Good progress in closing the SIMD Quintile 1-5 literacy gap is also predicted. From a baseline of 20.4pp in 2021, this is anticipated as reducing to 15.7pp.
The local authority is confident that considerable progress has been made when compared to the baseline data from 2020-21.
Based on March 2023 tracking data, there is an expectation that this improvement trajectory will continue.
Positively, the poverty-related attainment gap has reduced from 25pp to 15pp.
Tracking data indicates that levels are likely to improve for children living in the most and least deprived quintiles, and that the poverty-related gap will reduce, albeit at a more modest pace that the stretch aim target of 6.6%.

4.1.2 Senior Phase

Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 5

At the time of writing the reports, the majority of local authorities were unable to provide robust, quantitative information on the progress being made towards this stretch aim. Based on leavers' data, which is not published until February 2024, most cited that the requisite information was not available.

Where progress was reported, just over half stated that it was likely that the stretch aim would be achieved.

Proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more pass at SCQF Level 6

At the time of writing reports, the majority of local authorities were unable to provide robust quantitative information on the progress being made towards this stretch aim. Based on leavers' data which is not published until February 2024, most cited that the requisite information was not available.

The majority of local authorities have not been able to report on both of these Senior Phase stretch aims. However, in just under half, processes which support improvement have been strengthened including:

- more focused support from local authority officers
- attainment review meetings
- tracking and monitoring of the S4, S5 and S6 cohorts and also preliminary examinations

Senior Phase
The use of pupil tracking to refresh approaches to monitoring and tracking is being considered. This will support headteachers and the local authority to access a snapshot of progress to inform professional dialogue at school-level. This will also build the capacity of educators in data analysis, which is focused on improvement. The local authority is effectively supporting and challenging schools on the key measures for one or more qualifications at Level 5 and Level 6.
The authority has found that attempting to measure 1+ leavers data at different points of the year is difficult due to the complex make-up of the data itself. However, the authority has willingly engaged in lengthy discussions with the attainment advisor on how and when best to monitor and track Senior Phase leavers' data. It has been decided that there will be an internal pick up of data in late August 2023 when results have been initially confirmed.
Attainment review meetings have taken place with each secondary school to discuss projected attainment with an aim of maximising outcomes for all learners in the Senior Phase.
Attainment review meetings have taken place with each secondary school to discuss projected attainment with an aim of maximising outcomes of all learners in the Senior Phase.
Support and challenge are provided by the quality improvement team ensuring improving attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap remain key priorities.
Internal target setting processes suggest that schools are on track to achieve the aspirational targets set locally.
It is confident that it will meet its stretch aim for this measure. This confidence is based on individual schools' feedback on their Senior Phase tracking and preliminary examinations.
In the Senior Phase measures, the authority is gathering data termly on learners who are on track to achieve 1 or more A-C passes at level 5. The whole S4-6 cohort is being tracked as the leavers, at this stage are unknown.
Work is ongoing to support all secondary schools through bi-annual attainment meetings which include forensic analysis of data and focused target setting. Effective approaches to widening curriculum access and awards, including promoting foundation apprentices, has been shared.
The LA is developing tracking that will allow them to review progress in meeting this stretch aim.
Schools are tracking the whole S4-6 cohort. However, it is worth noting that work is currently underway to make an agreement with the National Data Hub. This will enable schools to have access to identify leavers and their likely destinations and make use of that data in a timelier manner.
Support and challenge are provided by the senior education managers ensuring improving attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap remain key priorities. Work is underway to capture Scottish Qualification Authority estimates, collated for assessment and moderation purposes at department and subject-specific level.
To drive forward positive outcomes, a Senior Phase working group is in place. Revision of the curriculum has taken place, resulting in a significant increase of young people engaging with the University of Highlands and Islands for session 2023-2024. Whilst this will not have a direct impact this session, it is envisaged that a positive impact will be seen next session.
The local authority has undertaken two attainment reviews with each secondary school in the course of the year. Where risks were identified additional support and challenge was provided. For some schools, this included an 'area of focused attention visit'. Local authority staff worked with school staff to identify improvements to raise the attainment of targeted learners.

4.1.3 Annual Participation Measure

The majority of local authorities used the [Interim Participation Snapshot](#) for 16-19-year-olds on the Skills Development Scotland website to report on the progress of this stretch aim.

At this time, most local authorities have indicated that they are unlikely to meet their stretch aim. However, it is important to recognise that in the coming months, local authorities and schools will collaborate with partners to ensure that leavers enter and sustain a positive destination.

There is strong evidence of effective partnership working having an impact on the outcomes for this group of young people.

Annual Participation Measure
The local authority is working closely with the Local Employability Partnership and the children and young people's participation group. Significant work has been undertaken to identify and track 'unconfirmed status' pupils This is ensuring a multi-agency approach focused on improving positive and sustained destinations beyond school. This is leading to improved collaboration across all stakeholder groups. The local authority continues to signpost to appropriate agencies through regular engagement with SDS.
Education is working in partnership with the local employability team and partners to focus on all 16-19-year-olds.
The LA has a clear focus on this agenda and headteachers are currently working in trios to address improving the progress towards the stretch aim. An event on the February in-service day provided inputs from HMIe and sharing of practice from within and out with the LA.
Significant work has been undertaken to identify and track pupils with an 'unconfirmed status'. Due to this relentless focus, this percentage is now down 2.4 percentage points to 2.9%, which is below the national average of 3.6%.
The local authority is working in partnership with the local employability team and partners to focus on all 16–19-year-olds. Targeted work will be undertaken to support particularly 19-year-olds, who are identified as the group with the greatest scope for improvement.
The youth employability service works closely with Skills Development Scotland to track all young people's destinations.
The local authority is committed to increasing the number of young people in sustained positive destinations and is working closely with schools and SDS to improve participation rates. This has included monthly meetings with each secondary school to identify learners at risk of missing out on a positive destination and explore options to mitigate this. The local authority is also seeking to explore with providers ongoing support for young people in further education settings, particularly those most affected by poverty.

4.1.4 Health and wellbeing

Local authorities identified stretch aims for health and wellbeing. Almost all identified attendance as a particular focus. Where broken down beyond overall

attendance, stretch aims were set for specific sectors or cohorts. In addition, around a quarter of local authorities had a stretch aim to reduce exclusions.

The Framework for 2022-23 outlined that the health and wellbeing stretch aims would be measured using local data sets. However, nationally published data for attendance and absence was available on the [Tableau Public](#). Throughout the academic sessions of 2020-21 and 2021-22, the collection of data on pupil and staff attendance was established in response to COVID-19. From 2022-23, the Scottish Government collected local authority data on attendance and absence of pupils only, on a weekly basis. Due to the continued national concerns about pupil attendance this data collection will continue during 2023-24 albeit on a fortnightly basis.

Nationally, post COVID-19 school attendance and absence has caused concern. Whilst this has been reflected by a few local authorities, it is likely that this will have had an impact on figures for all. Between August and October 2023 Education Scotland will conduct a 'Deep Dive' to explore issues and challenges in relation to attendance and share research, evidence and effective practice more widely for session 2023-24.

A few local authorities indicated that it is likely that they will meet their health and wellbeing stretch aims. However, improvement is evident for around a third of local authorities when compared to last year's baseline attendance figures. Targeted interventions such as local education officers working directly with schools with a focus on specific groups of children and young people, has had a positive impact. There is strong evidence that improving attendance remains a key priority.

Attendance
Socio-economic inequalities in school attendance are front and foremost in the authority's main set of priorities for closing the poverty-related attainment gap. An 'addressing non-attendance' programme was piloted in two secondaries this session and will be rolled out further in 2023-24. Plans are in place for the attainment advisor and the principal teacher with responsibility for maximising attendance, to work collaboratively to identify schools with acute attendance challenges and implement an improvement project to mitigate against this.
The local authority continues to be committed to supporting attendance in school. A five-year logic model for improving attendance has been created that has a focus on prevention and intervention. Multi-agency support and collaboration will be a key feature of this work.
From current data, the authority predicts that they will not meet the stretch aim of 95% attendance across both the primary and secondary sector. The authority recognises this was an ambitious target and there has been an increase from 2022 data. As a result of this, work is being done across schools to ensure there is a consistent approach to recording attendance especially for those on split/part-time placements.
Whilst unable to provide an overall authority Health and Wellbeing figure on attendance, the eleven primary schools involved in a Test of Change group have improved attendance by 2.3pp, 1.2pp faster than other schools. Quintile 1 (Q1) and those with Free Meal Entitlement (FME) has risen by 1.8pp. The five secondary

> *schools have collectively improved attendance by 0.1pp. Q1 and those with FME have dipped less sharply than other schools.*
>
> *Attendance has been tracked robustly throughout the year, particularly for children and young people residing in Q1. Current data suggests that stretch aims for Q1, overall and Q5 are not on track to be achieved by June 2023. However due to the additional focus, all stretch aims are now tracking higher in May 2023 than they were in December 2022 (with the exception of Q5 in primary which has maintained the same attendance rate of 95%).*

4.1.5 Plus stretch aims

When considering plus stretch aims, the Framework for 2022-23 outlined the importance of recognising readiness to learn and a broad and varied curriculum. Local authority plans were also required to include additional (plus) stretch aims which were specific to their own context and datasets. The aims are of equal importance to those that form the core aims and a wide and varied range was exemplified in the Framework.

Local authorities have set between one to six plus stretch aims. In all aims cited, these have been forecast to be more likely to be achieved than not. All local authorities, therefore, have responded positively to the opportunity to set their own plus stretch aims in line with the principles outlined in the Framework. In responding to this, they have set and are likely to achieve aims that were appropriately focused on meeting the specific needs of children and young people.

Likely to be achieved
Early indications suggest good progress towards core plus stretch aims. Evidence towards improving attendance children and young people who have experienced care is positive. Evidence on measures to address granular aspects of poverty-related attainment, such as free school meals and clothing grants, illustrates a positive trajectory at school-level. There is an increased percentage of two-and three-year-olds accessing funded childcare places. This is also reflective of the number of children registering for free school meals. There is significant activity ongoing to support improvements in the Senior Phase to underpin the pace and progress of core plus stretch aims. This is part of a longer-term strategy and will inform the next iteration of stretch aims.
The local authority is confident that particularly good progress is being made towards the majority of the 'plus' stretch aims. These aims focus on Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) data for literacy and numeracy at primary one, primary four and primary seven in isolation.
Since setting stretch aims, data for 2021-22 school leavers has been published. This showed improvement in initial, positive destinations and a closing of the gap against national figures. Outcomes improved significantly for learners in SIMD Quintile 1. Good progress is being made for this measure.
Based on ongoing tracking data and collaborative work between central officers and secondary headteachers, it is likely that progress will result in achievement of stretch aims at S4 and S5. Targeted support to improve S6 data is ongoing. The percentage of initial positive destinations remains at the current level and will be reported upon once the cohort data is published in February 2024.

The LA is significantly ahead of the stretch aim set around reducing exclusion of children that are looked after and children with care experience.

Based on the recent data, it is likely that all four plus stretch aims set in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy for P1-7 children in receipt of free school meals, will be met. The improvement ranges from 8-12pp.
Based on the same data, it is likely that all four plus stretch aims set in reading, writing, listening and talking and numeracy set for P1-7 children who have experienced care, will be met. The improvement ranges from 7-19pp.

Based on the latest data available, the local authority is on track to increase the average total tariff points to 1060.

Attainment - free school meal entitlement
P1, P4, P7 literacy combined
Attainment has increased by 8pp from 2020-21 levels. The authority achieved the stretch aim of 59%.
Attainment - experience of care
P1, P4, P7 literacy combined
The authority exceeded the 2022-23 stretch aim by 11pp. The reduction of the gap between the targeted cohort and all pupils exceeded the stretch aim of 34pp by 13pp.
P1 P4 P7 numeracy combined
The authority exceeded the 2022-23 stretch aim by 8pp. The reduction of the gap between the targeted cohort and all pupils exceeded the stretch aim of 28pp by 9pp.

The local authority is confident it will achieve the stretch aims set for S3 attainment at third and fourth levels in literacy and numeracy. It is also confident it will achieve those set for early level baseline assessments and family hub engagement levels.

The local authority has achieved its core plus stretch aim in connection with participatory budgeting and cost of the school day. The plus stretch aim to reduce youth homelessness by 10% has also been achieved.

4.2 Overall progress in implementing the Scottish Attainment Challenge for 2022-23

In this first year of the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC), all local authorities made progress in its implementation. In almost half, substantial or considerable progress is noted. The importance of having a renewed strategic vision and commitment appears to be at the forefront of those making the best progress. This includes clear communication and collaboration on all aspects of the SAC, including setting and monitoring stretch aims.

Further development of governance arrangements has been a priority in the majority of local authorities. For a few, the transition from the previous Challenge and Schools' Programmes had to be given careful consideration. Whilst some challenges remain, plans continue to evolve for the tapering of funding allocations. The introduction of the Strategic Equity Fund has been a key driver for all. In several local authorities strong plans and governance arrangements are in place. These should help to ensure improved outcomes for those targeted by SEF.

As a result of the refreshed SAC, evidence shows that the majority of authorities strengthened the tracking and monitoring of Pupil Equity Funding. This is in relation to the spend and of the impact of plans and interventions. In many cases, Education

Scotland attainment advisors played a central role in providing advice, challenge and support to ensure effective use of this funding. Governance arrangements, planning processes and strengthened monitoring of spend are collectively supporting improved targeting of interventions.

There continues to be evidence of a positive impact of the Care Experienced Children and Young People Funding. Commonly, this funding is used to employ staff who have a particular focus on partnership working and improving outcomes for those who have experienced care. Local authorities continue to review both the use and impact of this funding, as well as the governance arrangements in place.

A growing recognition of the importance of partnership working to deliver the SAC is evident. Where referenced, this is resulting in a more focused and streamlined approach to closing the poverty-related gap across local authority services. Education Scotland attainment advisors remain key partners in supporting this at both strategic and school level.

Following lessons learned this year, areas to ensure continuous improvement are evident. In most cases these are bespoke to each individual authority. However, it should be noted that approaches to ensure rigorous and accurate tracking of progress towards the stretch aims continue to be a focus for many.

4.3 Key messages

- To improve outcomes, local authorities should continue to develop:
  - Strategies and policies for learning, teaching and assessment
  - Quality assurance processes
  - Progression frameworks
  - Pedagogies
  - Participation of children and young people

- There is scope to further strengthen professional learning offers which have a clear link to equity and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This will help to ensure that teachers, as well as leaders, have a better understanding of potential barriers which may impact on progress and how they can mitigate against these

- Extend moderation activities across establishments, clusters, local authorities and regions to help improve consistency in learning, teaching and assessment and lead to increased confidence in professional judgements

- Improving attendance remains a key priority

Local authorities will be further supported in this work by Education Scotland.