

ITEM No ...2.....
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**REPORT TO:** CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 12 MAY 2025

**REPORT ON:** SENIOR PHASE – SCHOOL LEAVERS' UPDATE

**REPORT BY:** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

**REPORT NO:** 147-2025

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This Senior Phase – School Leavers' Update report provides information on the attainment of S4, S5 and S6 school leavers in academic session 2023/24, particularly in relation to four national benchmarking measures:

- Percentage of Leavers attaining Literacy and Numeracy
- Improving Attainment for All
- Attainment versus Deprivation
- Leaver Initial Destinations

1.2 Senior phase attainment data for school leavers in academic session 2023/24 has been extracted from the national Insight Senior Phase benchmarking tool, which was updated on 26 February 2025.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Children, Families and Communities Committee notes the content of the report.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 None.

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 Insight is the national online benchmarking tool for secondary schools and local authorities. It is designed as an improvement tool to aid schools and local authorities in understanding performance in the senior phase of secondary school education. Insight was developed by the Scottish Government and partners with input from a range of key stakeholders including school leaders, teachers, Directors/ Heads of Education and Education Officers. Insight is aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) assessment framework and is available to staff in schools as well as staff in central teams.

4.2 National Benchmarking data in Insight is based on school leavers and includes details of leavers' destinations. Leavers' data is not fully available until the end of each calendar year and the annual update of leaver data does not take place until the following February. This year's data is based on the 1,431 senior phase pupils who left school in Dundee during academic session 2023/24. 616 of these leavers live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1, the 20% most-deprived areas in Scotland. The other 815 leavers live in Quintiles 2 to 5. This data was published on 26 February 2025.

4.3 Insight data is used by Education Scotland in their ParentZone website to provide parents with information on their local schools through the School Information Dashboard. It is also used by secondary schools when producing their annual School Improvement reports and is used by the Children and Families Service during school attainment and achievement reviews.

4.4 Insight provides an important statement regarding the impact of COVID-19 which was last updated in September 2023. This statement warns that "There have been different approaches to awarding in each year since 2019. This means that comparisons of attainment between years should be treated with significant caution and do not allow for conclusions to be drawn on

changes in education performance during this time.” The updated attainment figures can be used as an accurate reflection of learner attainment in different years and to compare the attainment of different cohorts within years. Attainment figures should not be used “as an indication that performance in 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/2022 or 2022/23 was better or worse than in previous years, without further evidence.”

- 4.5 School Leavers’ data in this report now includes S4 school leavers who made the transition from primary school to secondary school during the first lockdown as a result of COVID-19. Furthermore, their initial experiences of secondary school, in 2020/21 were often very different than the typical planned S1 experience. Despite this, their first ever experience of national SQA exams in 2024 did not include any adaptations to assessment – in terms of the removal of coursework or elements of the exam, as there have been for the previous two years.
- 4.6 Insight publishes the following four National Benchmarking Measures for each school and for the local authority:
- Percentage of Leavers attaining Literacy and Numeracy
  - Improving Attainment for All
  - Attainment versus Deprivation
  - Leaver Initial Destinations

## 5.0 PERCENTAGE OF LEAVERS ATTAINING LITERACY AND NUMERACY

### Literacy

- 5.1 Figure 1 shows the percentage of school leavers attaining literacy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5 or better for Dundee City and its virtual comparator for the last five academic sessions.



**Figure 1: Percentage of Leavers Attaining Literacy**

- 5.2 86% of Dundee school leavers attained Level 4 or better in Literacy, 4 percentage points (pp) less than the virtual comparator (VC). This was a dip in performance from 2023 for both Dundee (-4 pp) and its VC (-2pp).
- 5.3 73% of Dundee school leavers attained Level 5 or better in Literacy, 1 percentage points (pp) less than the virtual comparator (VC). Dundee maintained its performance from 2023 to 2024, whilst its VC dipped by 2 pp (76% to 74%).

## Numeracy

- 5.4 Figure 2 shows the percentage of school leavers attaining numeracy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5 or better for Dundee City and its virtual comparator for the last five academic sessions.



Figure 2: Percentage of Leavers Attaining Numeracy

- 5.5 83% of Dundee school leavers attained Level 4 or better in Numeracy, 4 percentage points (pp) less than the virtual comparator (VC). This was a dip in performance from 2023 for both Dundee (-4 pp) and its VC (-1pp).
- 5.6 62% of Dundee school leavers attained Level 5 or better in Numeracy, 2 percentage points (pp) less than the virtual comparator (VC). This was a dip in performance from 2023 for Dundee (-4 pp) whilst the VC improved by 1 pp.

## S4 Leavers

- 5.7 Further analysis of this national measure shows that the dip in performance largely relates to the attainment of S4 leavers in 2024. As per paragraph 4.5, this year group was the cohort that made the transition to secondary education during a COVID-19 lockdown. 45% of Dundee's S4 pupils (321) achieved Level 4+ Literacy and Numeracy in 2023/24, compared to 58% of Dundee's S4 pupils (307) in 2022/23. This is reflected in the overall attainment measure as per Table 1.
- 5.8 Schools and the Service were aware of the overall attainment and achievement of this year group through robust internal tracking and monitoring. At the end of academic session 2022/23 this S4 cohort were in S3. This provided the first real opportunity for schools and the Service to benchmark concerns about performance in Literacy and Numeracy externally, through the publication of Achievement of Curriculum Excellence Levels (ACEL). Overall:
- 79% of this cohort achieved Third Level or better in Literacy, this was a dip of 5pp from the previous year, and the lowest level of S3 attainment on record. The Scotland average was 88%.
  - 76% of this cohort achieved Third Level or better in Numeracy, this was a dip of 5pp from the previous year, and the lowest level of S3 attainment on record. The Scotland average was 90%.
- 5.9 Through in-school tracking individual schools put carefully planned interventions in place to narrow the significant gap from S3 into S4.

5.10 It was also important to show a bigger improvement in performance for the current S3 year group compared to the national average, in order to improve performance in this national benchmarking measures in the Senior Phase. ACCEL data published in December 2024 showed that:

- 81% of the 2024 S3 cohort achieved Third Level or better in Literacy, 2pp higher than the previous year. The Scotland average remained at 88%, thus reducing the gap by 2pp.
- 79% of the 2024 S3 cohort achieved Third Level or better in Numeracy, 3pp higher than the previous year. The Scotland average remained at 90%, thus reducing the gap by 3pp.

#### S5 & S6 Leavers

5.11 As can be seen in Table 1, the performance of Dundee's S5 and S6 leavers is broadly in line with Dundee's virtual comparator.

Stage		SCQF Level 4 or better		SCQF Level 5 or better		# Leavers
		Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	
	<b>S5</b>	80%	80%	48%	49%	408
	<b>S6</b>	95%	96%	86%	85%	702

**Table 1: Percentage of S5 and S6 leavers attaining literacy and numeracy**

## **6.0 IMPROVING ATTAINMENT FOR ALL**

6.1 Insight uses Tariff points to provide a summary view of a wide range of achievement and different awards from a variety of providers. Tariff points are based on the latest and best results a pupil achieves at school. A fuller explanation of tariff points is contained within the Glossary at the end of this report.

#### All S4, S5 & S6 Leavers

6.2 Table 2 shows the average complementary tariff points for the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60%, and the highest attaining 20% of all Dundee's school leavers compared to Dundee's virtual comparator for the last five years.

		Lowest attaining 20%		Middle attaining 60%		Highest attaining 20%		# Leavers
		Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	
<b>Year</b>	2020	85	88	566	552	1273	1259	1,167
	2021	83	93	566	575	1226	1283	1,223
	2022	86	99	540	526	1223	1237	1,394
	2023	81	95	519	510	1221	1227	1,441
	2024	60	78	508	497	1186	1202	1,431

**Table 2: Average Complementary Tariff Points**

- 6.3 Despite a dip in performance, the middle 60% all Dundee's school leavers have a higher complementary tariff points average than Dundee's virtual comparator for the third year in a row. However, both the highest 20% and the lowest 20% of all school leavers in 2024 have the lowest average tariff points in the last five years. Further analysis again shows that as expected through tracking, the dip in performance relates, in part, to the achievements of S4 Leavers in 2024.

#### All S5 & S6 Leavers

- 6.4 The average complementary tariff points for Dundee's S5 and S6 leavers is broadly in line with Dundee's virtual comparator, as can be seen in Figure 3. In 2024, the lowest attaining 20% of Dundee's S5/6 leavers gained 149 complementary tariff points, higher than 143 for the virtual comparator. The middle attaining 60% of S5/6 leavers gained 658 complementary tariff points, again higher than 643 for the virtual comparator. The highest attaining 20% gained 1,245 complementary tariff points, slightly lower than 1,263 for the virtual comparator.

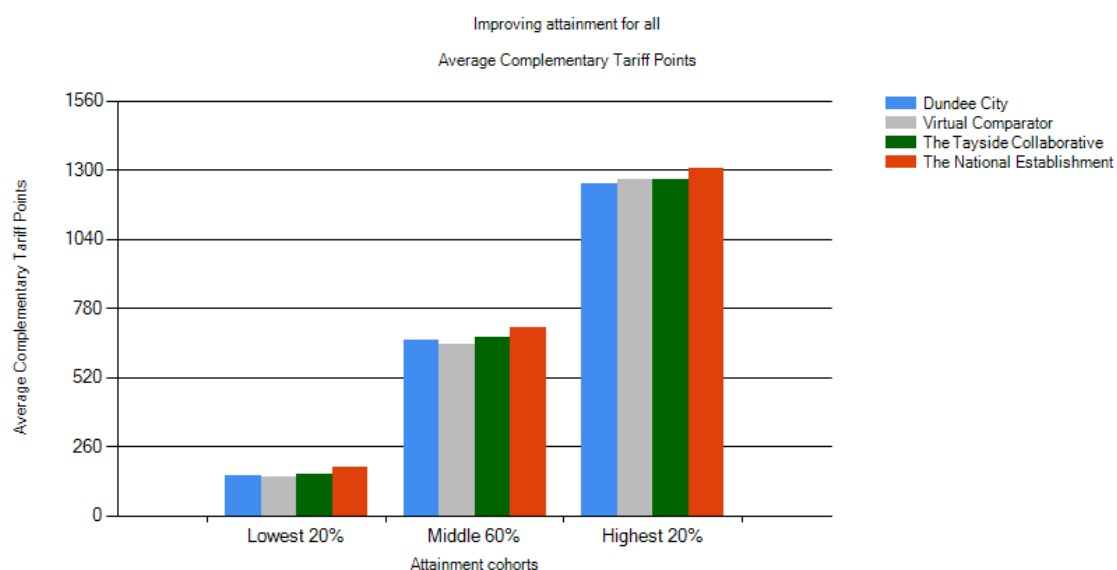


Figure 3: Average Complementary Tariff Points for S5 and S6 leavers

#### All S4, S5, S6 Leavers living in SIMD Quintile 1

- 6.5 Figure 4 shows the average complementary tariff points for the 616 school leavers (S4-S6) in Dundee living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1 (most deprived 20%) compared to Dundee's virtual comparator.
- 6.6 The lowest attaining 20% achieved lower tariff points (30) compared to the virtual comparator (47). The middle attaining 60% achieved higher tariff points (363) compared to the virtual comparator (323). The highest attaining 20% also achieved higher tariff points (1025) than the virtual comparator (1007).

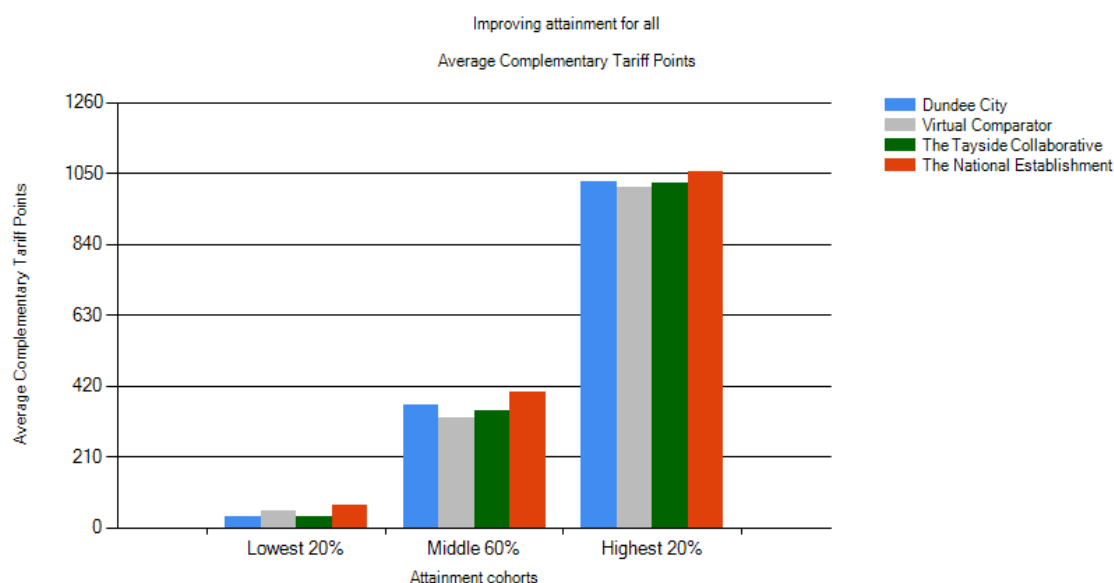


Figure 4: Average Complementary Tariff Points (SIMD Q1 School Leavers- S4/S5/S6)

#### S6 Leavers living in SIMD Quintile 1

- 6.7 Pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 attain well overall when they stay in school until S6. This can be seen in Figure 3 which shows the average complementary tariff points of Dundee's 2024 S6 leavers living in SIMD Quintile 1.

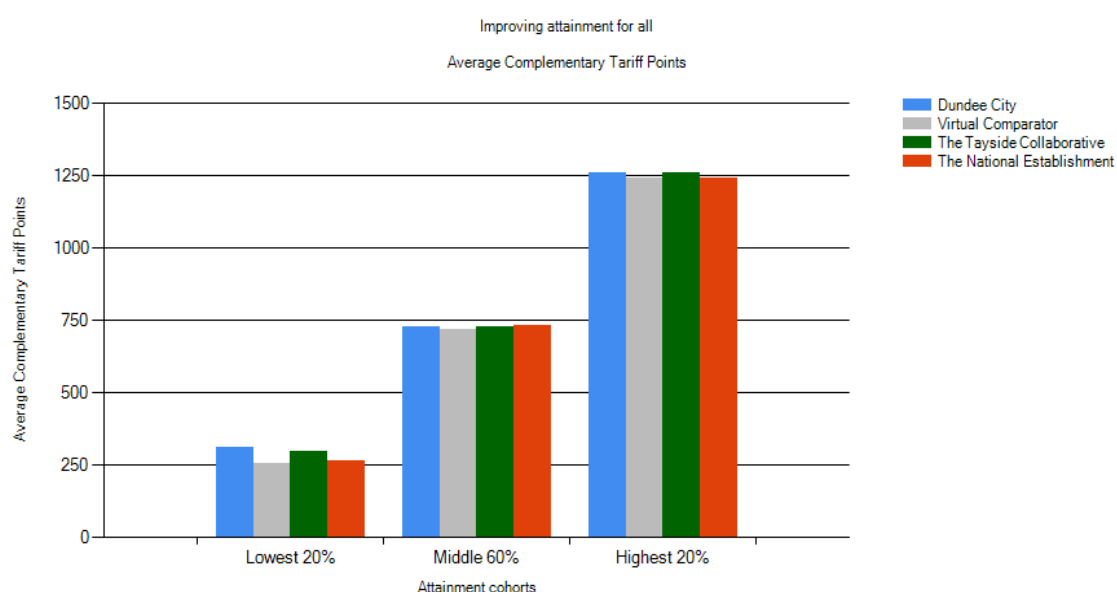


Figure 5: Average Complementary Tariff Points (SIMD Q1 School Leavers - S6 only)

- 6.8 The lowest attaining 20% achieved an average of 332 tariff points. This is higher than the virtual comparator (244), the Tayside average (300) and the Scotland average (254). The middle 60% achieved an average of 786 tariff points, which is higher than the virtual comparator (714), the Tayside average (779) and the Scotland average (729). The highest attaining 20% of pupils living in SIMD Q1 achieved an average of 1220 tariff points, which is higher than the virtual comparator (1209) and the Scotland average (1219).

## 7.0 ATTAINMENT VERSUS DEPRIVATION

### All S4, S5 & S6 Leavers

- 7.1 Unfortunately, there is a demonstrable correlation between pupils' attainment and levels of deprivation. Like all authorities, the Service is committed to reducing the gap in attainment between those pupils living in the most deprived areas and those in less deprived areas.
- 7.2 Figure 6 shows the relationship between attainment and deprivation for Dundee and Dundee's virtual comparator. The size of the circles represents the proportion of pupils living in each Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile, with decile 1 being the most deprived. The relationship between attainment and deprivation in Dundee is slightly better than the virtual comparator in deciles 1,2,3 and 6 and slightly poorer in the remaining deciles. Testing on Insight found that there were no significant differences between Dundee's performance in comparison to the VC for this measure.

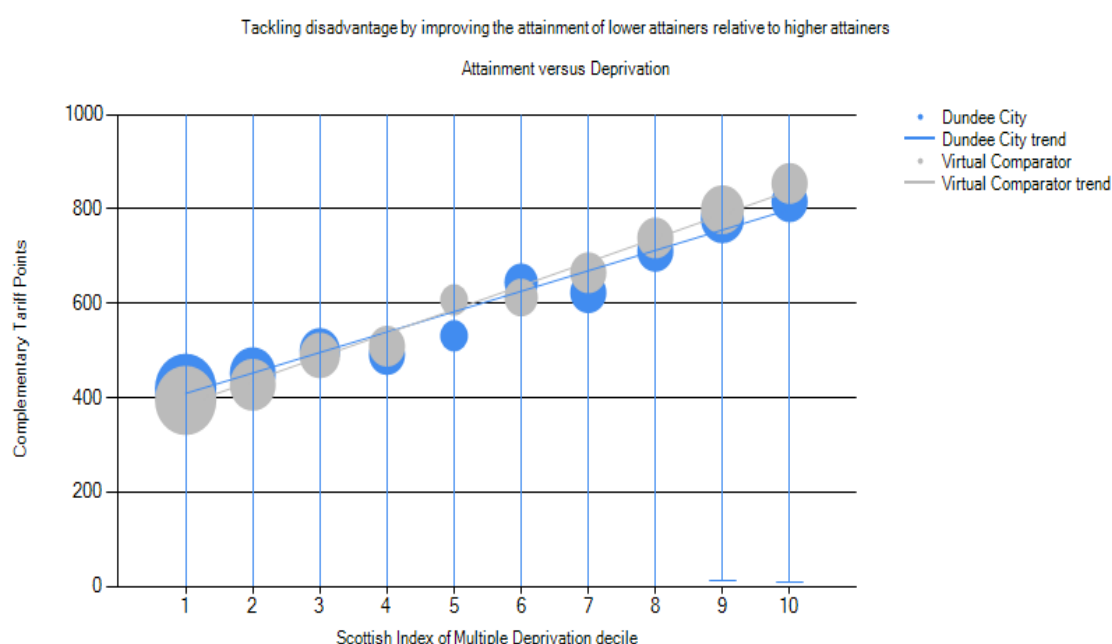


Figure 6: Attainment v deprivation, Dundee, and Dundee's virtual comparator.

## 8.0 LEAVER INITIAL DESTINATIONS

- 8.1 A pupil who left school during the senior phase (S4-S6) is classified as a school leaver. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff record the category of destination for each school leaver. Each category of destination is classified as either positive or non-positive. Positive destinations include Higher Education, Further Education, Training, Voluntary Work, Employment and Activity Agreements. Table 3 shows the percentage of school leavers going into an initial positive destination over the last five years.

		All School Leavers			
		Dundee City	Virtual Comparator	The Tayside Collaborative	National
Year	2019/20	92.3%	91.9%	93.4%	93.4%
	2020/21	93.7%	94.1%	95.4%	95.5%
	2021/22	93.9%	94.7%	94.1%	95.7%
	2022/23	95.6%	95.3%	95.4%	95.9%
	2023/24	94.8%	94.4%	94.5%	95.7%

**Table 3: Percentage of school leavers in an initial positive destination**

- 8.2 2023/24 saw a slight decrease in Dundee's percentage of school leavers recorded as going into an initial positive destination. However, Dundee remained above its virtual comparator and the Tayside collaborative. Nationally there was a decrease in the percentage of school leavers going on to positive destinations back to the 2021/22 level.
- 8.3 In 2023/24, 93.2% of Dundee's school leavers from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1 (The 20% most deprived areas in Scotland) went on to a positive destination. This was better than Dundee's virtual comparator (92.3%), and the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative as a whole which saw 91.7% of SIMD Quintile 1 school leavers enter a positive destination.
- 8.4 2023/24 saw 100% of Dundee's Care Experiencing school leavers enter an initial positive post-school destination, a figure last seen in 2020/21.

Year	% in Positive destinations	Number of Care Experiencing School Leavers
2019/20	71%	21
2020/21	100%	17
2021/22	83%	12
2022/23	76%	17
2023/24	100%	15

**Table 4: Percentage of Care Experiencing school leavers in a positive destination**

## 9.0 NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 There are a range of improvement actions planned to improve the attainment of pupils in the Senior Phase. These include:
- 9.1.1 All English and Maths Principal Teachers, supported by Dundee's Pedagogy Team, will continue to work in partnership with Education Scotland to strengthen secondary practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the learning, teaching and assessment cycle in the Broad General Education and how this translates into Senior Phase attainment. Each school will have a specific improvement plan for improving literacy and numeracy performance in the senior phase.
- 9.1.2 Newly appointed Quality Improvement Education Officers (QIEO) will engage in professional learning to develop knowledge and skills in leading and challenging school improvement. This will then involve ensuring that the literacy and numeracy improvement plans (and the link with subject networks) are rigorous and implemented effectively.



- 9.1.3 Working in partnership with Glasgow, North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire, the Service will engage in robust self-evaluation and focused improvement activity using the 'How Good is Our Education Authority,' framework recently developed by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and supported by Education Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectors of Education. This will lead to collaboration in a number of different areas, including the use of subject networks to improve performance in senior phase subjects.
- 9.1.4 School Improvement Partnerships (SIPs) are a key feature of Every Dundee Learner Matters. Reflecting on learning to date, each secondary school will be moved from their School Improvement Partnership pair or trio into one of just two SIPs, each containing four schools (including Rockwell). By June, each quad will complete a template outlining their proposed SIP improvement activity and intended outcomes for academic session 2025/ 26. Education Scotland will provide additional support and challenge for SIP activity in 2025/26.
- 9.1.5 The newly appointed Strategic Education Manager (Secondary & Inclusion) will work with all schools and key stakeholders to develop specific improvement plans for each of the national benchmarking measures. In addition to specific citywide improvement actions, this should include key improvement actions for individual school. Quarterly reports will be shared at the Education-Senior Leadership Team school improvement meetings.
- 9.1.6 Each school will be given updated school-level stretch aims which clearly articulate the improvement required. Link QIEOs will be expected to discuss and moderate progress towards achieving these at each termly meeting, which help inform the quarterly report outlined above.

## **10.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

## **11.0 CONSULTATION**

- 11.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

## **12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 None.

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April 2025

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACEL</b>	Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels
<b>ADES</b>	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
<b>ASN</b>	Additional Support Needs
<b>SCQF</b>	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
<b>SDS</b>	Skills Development Scotland
<b>SIP</b>	School Improvement Partnership
<b>SIMD</b>	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
<b>SQA</b>	Scottish Qualifications Authority
<b>QIEO</b>	Quality Improvement Education Officer

## GLOSSARY

<b>Insight</b>	<p>Insight is an online tool for benchmarking the senior phase. It is a professional tool available to secondary schools and local authorities to allow them to look at specific cohorts of learners and identify areas of success and where improvements can be made.</p> <p>Although Insight provides data on the attainment of a wide range of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) awards from a range of providers, not all SCQF achievement awards are included.</p>
<b>Senior Phase</b>	The Senior Phase, which takes place from S4 to S6 in schools, is the phase when young people will begin to build up a portfolio of qualifications and awards.
<b>SIMD</b>	<p>Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a tool for identifying the places in Scotland where people are experiencing disadvantage across different aspects of their lives. SIMD gives a ranking for each small area, or data zone, which shows how deprived that area is compared to other areas.</p> <p>SIMD is a relative measure which shows whether one area is more deprived than another, but it does not say how much more deprived. A change in level of deprivation, or SIMD rank, shows that the relative deprivation compared to other parts of Scotland has changed, but this does not necessarily mean that the area has changed in an absolute sense.</p> <p>The latest figures show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the area with the largest local share of deprived areas was Inverclyde, with 45% of data zones among the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland,</li> <li>Glasgow City has similar deprivation levels at 44%,</li> <li>Other local authorities with relatively high levels of deprivation include North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire at 40% and Dundee City at 38%.</li> </ul> <p>SIMD considers deprivation by looking at income, employment, health, education, housing, access to services and levels of crime in an area.</p> <p>SIMD identifies deprived areas, not people. Over half of people on low income do not live in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. So, using SIMD to identify individuals experiencing deprivation will not work in some areas, such as remote rural areas and the islands.</p> <p>The <a href="#">SIMD 2020 introductory booklet</a> is available.</p>

<b>Tariff Points</b>	<p>The Tariff Scale is a key feature of the Insight online benchmarking tool. It allows a score to be calculated that summarises a wide range of achievement and awards from a range of providers. The tariff score is based on elements from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), in particular SCQF Credit Points and levels, as well as elements related to a qualification's composition. The tariff scale allows comparisons to be made between cohorts, schools, local authorities, and their virtual comparators.</p> <p>The tariff points accrued by schools, local authorities and cohorts should not be viewed as the only way of measuring performance and should be considered in the context of the other outcome measures included in the tool, for example, breadth and depth, improving post-school participation and raising attainment in literacy and numeracy as well as other data sources.</p> <p>Tariff points are based on the latest and best results a pupil achieves at school. For example, if a pupil has National 5 French and Higher French only the tariff points from the Higher award would be counted. The table below shows some example tariff scores.</p> <table><tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Pass</td></tr><tr><td>National 4</td><td colspan="2">33</td></tr><tr><td></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr><tr><td></td><td>Grade C</td><td>Grade A</td></tr><tr><td>National 5</td><td>64</td><td>84</td></tr><tr><td>Higher</td><td>160</td><td>204</td></tr><tr><td>Advanced Higher</td><td>400</td><td>480</td></tr></table> <p>At each SCQF level increment, the tariff score more than doubles. Significantly, a pupil attempting Advanced Highers in S6 has the potential to gain considerably more points than a pupil leaving with only Highers or National 5's. An S4 pupil with six awards at National 4 would score just under 200 points. A high achieving S6 pupil with six National 5s, five Highers and three Advanced Highers could have around 2,000 points.</p> <p>Insight divides each cohort into three sections for the Improving Attainment for All measures: the top attaining 20% of pupils, the middle 60% and the lowest 20%.</p> <p>Across Scotland local authorities and schools have different curriculum models in the senior phase. This makes it hard to benchmark tariffs between authorities as pupils sitting eight subjects can accrue more points than those sitting six. To address this the Insight tool introduced a complementary tariff scale. The complementary tariff only includes a pupil's results from their best 120 SCQF credits: generally speaking, a pupil's best five results.</p>		Pass		National 4	33						Grade C	Grade A	National 5	64	84	Higher	160	204	Advanced Higher	400	480
	Pass																					
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<b>Virtual Comparator</b>	<p>For each school leaver, then matching school leavers are randomly selected based on gender, additional support needs, stage of leaving school (S4, S5 or S6) and the social context in which they live (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). These characteristics were selected due to their significance in explaining differences in the attainment and destinations of school leavers in Scotland.</p> <p>The virtual comparator is a valuable resource for self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It enables schools and local authorities to reflect on performance while considering relevant context and additional sources of information.</p>																					