

REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 4 DECEMBER 2023
REPORT ON: PROGRESS UPDATE: SENIOR PHASE ATTAINMENT 2022/23
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE
REPORT NO: 362-2023

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report informs the Children, Families and Communities Committee of senior phase attainment by Dundee pupils to the end of academic session 2022-23. The data is taken from Insight, the Scottish Government’s benchmarking tool. They are based on the latest Insight data release, published in September 2023.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children, Families & Communities Committee:
- a Notes the contents of the report, and,
 - b Instructs the Chief Education Officer to update the Committee about senior phase attainment in academic session 2023/24 after the Insight update in September 2024.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report is focused on providing Committee with an update about the attainment of pupils in the senior phase during academic session 2022/ 23.
- 4.2 Recent reports submitted have detailed key actions planned to further improve the attainment and achievement of all Dundee’s pupils, including: at the meeting of the Children and Families Service Committee on 4 September 2023, Article III of the minute of the meeting of this Committee of September 2023 refers, Report No [243-2023](#); and, at the meeting of the City Governance Committee on 4 September 2023, Article III of the minute of the meeting of this Committee of September 2023 refers, Report No [185-2023](#).
- 4.3 Data used in this report is taken from Insight. Insight is the professional benchmarking tool for analysing attainment data in the senior phase, accessible by secondary schools and local authorities. It is designed to support self-evaluation and provide schools with their attainment information in a format that makes it straightforward to identify possible areas for improvement for pupils in S4 to S6.
- 4.4 This committee report is based on the September Insight refresh, which adds results from the 2023 exam diet and allows stage-based measures to be calculated.

- 4.5 The last cohort whose senior phase was unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic started S4 in August 2016 and finished S6 in 2019. The cohorts finishing S6 in 2020 to 2023 will have had at least one of their senior phase exam diets take place using either teacher judgements in 2020 or the Alternative Certification Model in 2021. A vertical, dashed line has been added to charts in this committee report to indicate this distinction. Importantly, Insight includes a COVID-19 statement which was updated in September 2023. It cautions:

Use the updated attainment figures:

- As an accurate reflection of learner attainment in different years.
- To make factual comparisons of the proportions of learners attaining at different SCQF levels over time.
- To compare the attainment of different cohorts within years.

Do not use attainment figures:

- As an indication that performance in 2019/20 or 2020/21 or 2021/2022 or 2022/23 was better or worse than in previous years, without further evidence.
- Without taking full account of the different approaches to certification in recent years.

- 4.6 Stage-based measures are provided in this report for 'S6 based on S4.' It is important to know that measures such as "Attainment for All" and "Breadth and Depth" are cumulative, in the sense that they show attainment gathered through the Senior Phase. An S6 pupil will have all their "best (in each subject)" S4, 5 and 6 attainment included. It is also important to know that "S6 based on S4" can be heavily impacted by leavers' rate. If a school, or local authority, has a high S4 leavers' rate this means less Highers and Advanced Highers.

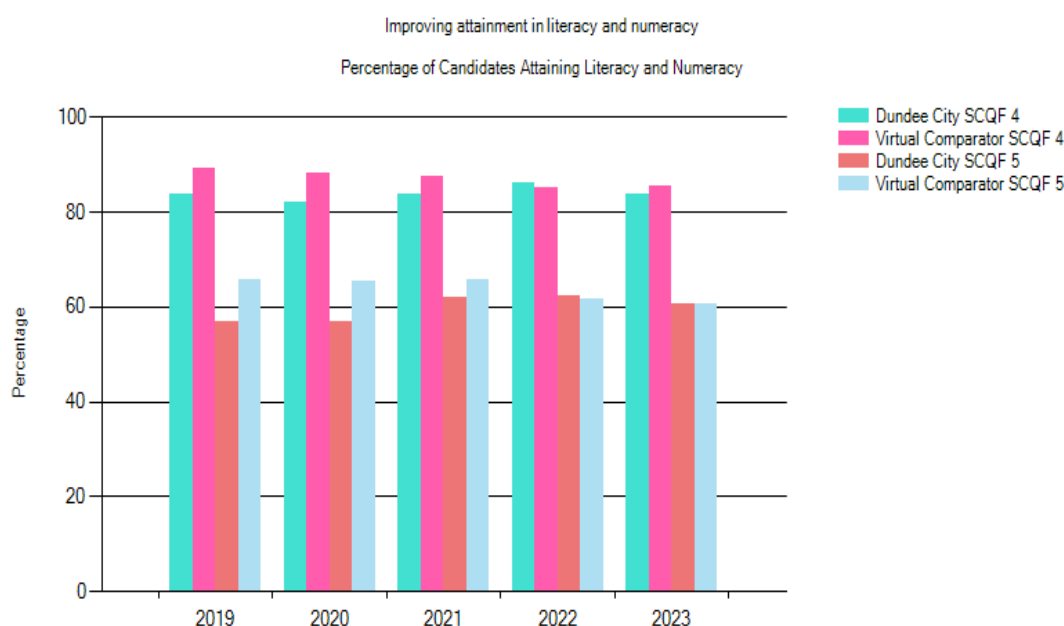
- 4.7 In addition to providing attainment information as outlined in paragraph 4.5, the report also includes information about the performance of our S6 pupils in 2023 compared to S6 pupils in Dundee's 'virtual comparator' in 2023. Using the virtual comparator, or VC, is a way of comparing the performance of all pupils in a school, or a local authority, with a group of pupils taken from around Scotland who have the same backgrounds as those of the school or local authority using Insight.

5 IMPROVING ATTAINMENT IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY

'S6 based on S4' Analysis

- 5.1 Chart 1 shows the percentage of pupils in Dundee (S6 based on S4) who attained literacy and numeracy at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better, together with the equivalent data for Dundee's virtual comparator (VC). There were 1,416 pupils in 2023.

Chart 1 Percentage of pupils attaining literacy and numeracy (S6, based on S4)



- 5.2 In 2023, 84% of pupils in Dundee attained literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better, compared to 85% for Dundee's VC. In 2019, there was a gap of 5% between Dundee (84%) and Dundee's VC (89%), which increased to 6% in 2020. Figure 1 shows that there has been an overall decline in the performance of the VC from 2019 to 2023, at level 4. However, Dundee has maintained attainment levels during this period.
- 5.3 In 2023, 61% of pupils in Dundee attained literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better, compared to 61% for Dundee's VC. In 2019, there was a gap of 9% between Dundee (57%) and Dundee's VC (66%), which reduced slightly to 8% in 2020. Figure 1 shows that there has been an overall decline in the performance of the VC from 2019 to 2023. However, Dundee has seen a moderate improvement in attainment levels during this period.

'S6 based on S6' Analysis

- 5.4 Table 1 shows the performance of pupils in S6 in Dundee during 2022/ 23, compared to S6 pupils in Dundee's virtual comparator (VC), at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better.

Table 1 S6, based on S6 in 2022/ 23, Dundee and Virtual Comparator, Literacy and Numeracy

	SCQF Level 4+	SCQF Level 5+
Dundee	98%	88%
Virtual Comparator	96%	84%

- 5.5 As Table 1 shows, the percentage of S6 pupils attaining literacy and numeracy is higher than the VC at level 4 and above (2%) and at level 5 and above (4%). Insight testing found that the following comparisons were significant:

- "Performance in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 4, 2023 is much greater than your virtual comparator.
- Performance in Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF Level 5, 2023 is greater than your virtual comparator."

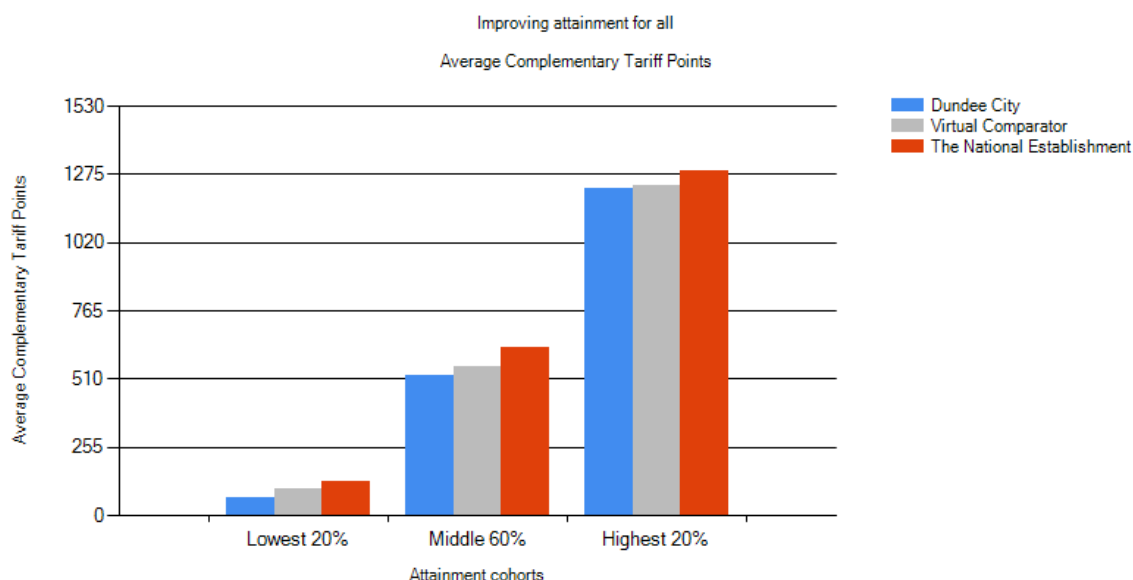
6 IMPROVING ATTAINMENT FOR ALL

- 6.1 Insight 'tariff points' are a notional point value assigned to levels of attainment. Insight uses tariff points to provide a summary view of a wide range of achievement and different awards from a variety of providers. Tariff scores are based on the latest and best results a pupil achieves at school. For example, if a pupil has attained National 5 French and Higher French, only the tariff points from the Higher award would be counted.

'S6 based on S4' Analysis

- 6.2 Chart 2 shows the performance of pupils' overall attainment by looking at the average complementary tariff score of Dundee's highest-attaining 20%, middle-attaining 60% and lowest-attaining 20% groups. The graph compares Dundee to its virtual comparator and Scotland.

Chart 2 Improving attainment for all 2023 data.



- 6.3 When looking at S6 based on S4 data, in 2023, Dundee's average complementary tariff points for the lowest attaining 20% of pupils was 67 compared to the VC's tariff score of 100. The middle-attaining 60% group had an average tariff score of 523 in 2023 compared to the VC's tariff score of 556. The highest-attaining 20% group had an average tariff score of 1224 in 2023, compared to the VC's tariff score of 1236.

'S6 based on S6' Analysis

- 6.4 As table 2 highlights, the average complementary tariff points for Dundee's S6 pupils in 2023 is higher than the virtual comparator for the lowest-attaining 20% group and highest-attaining 20% group. The attainment of the lowest 20% is also higher than the Scotland average. The performance of the middle-attaining 60% group broadly in line with the virtual comparator.

Table 2, Average Complementary Tariff points (S6, based on S6), Dundee and Dundee's Virtual Comparator.

	Lowest 20%	Middle 60%	Highest 20%
Dundee	369	856	854
Virtual Comparator	311	858	842

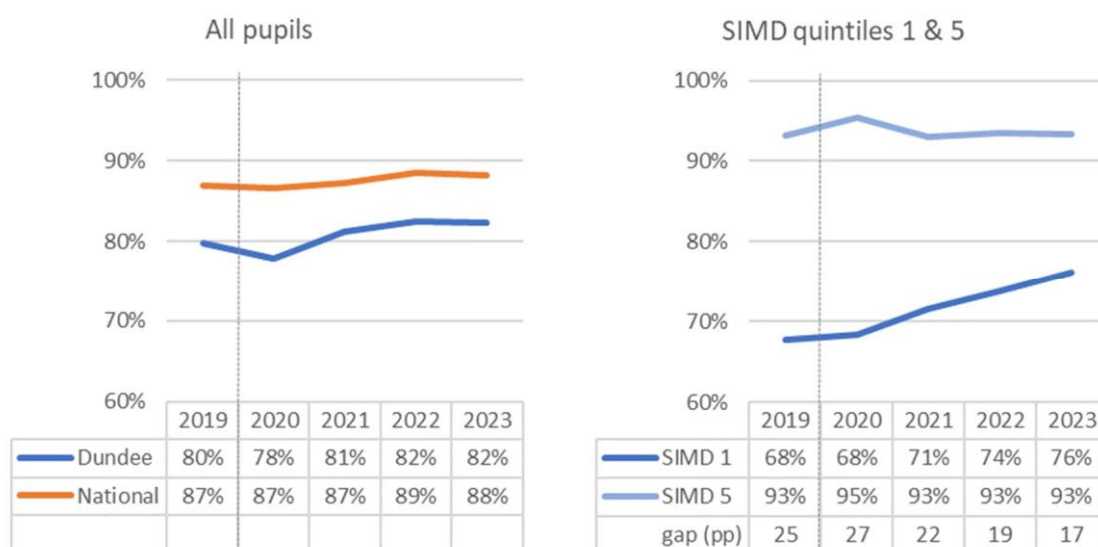
7 BREADTH AND DEPTH

SCQF Level 5

'S6 based on S4' Analysis

- 7.1 The percentage of pupils achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better dropped to 78% in 2020. Since then, it has increased to 82% in 2022 and 2023 (Chart 3). Scotland saw an increase from 2021 to 2022 followed by a decrease in 2023.
- 7.2 The gap in attainment between Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintiles 1 and 5 shown by this measure has decreased from 27 percentage points in 2020 to 17 in 2023. This is driven by improved attainment by pupils in SIMD quintile 1, the most deprived areas.

Chart 3: Pupils achieving 1 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better (S6 based on S4). Dundee, Scotland and Dundee SIMD quintiles 1 and 5



S6 based on S6' Analysis

- 7.3 Table 3 shows the performance of pupils in S6 in Dundee during 2022/ 23, compared to S6 pupils in Dundee's virtual comparator (VC), in terms of achieving at least one award at SCQF level 5 or above.

Table 3 The percentage of S6 pupils achieving at least one award at level 5 or above

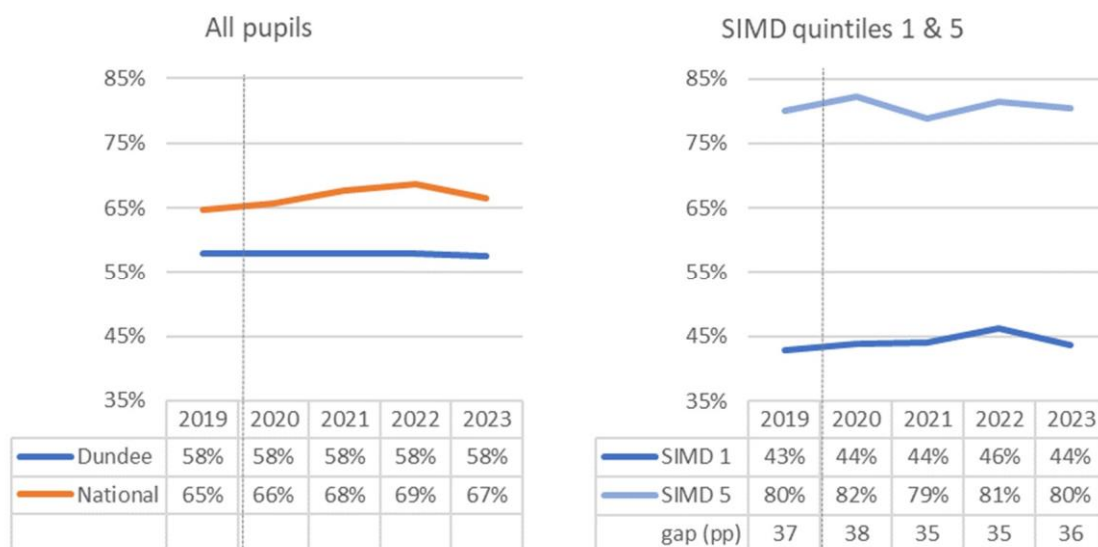
	1+ award at SCQF Level 5 or above
Dundee	99%
Virtual Comparator	97%

SCQF Level 6

'S6 based on S4' Analysis

- 7.4 The percentage of pupils achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better has remained static in Dundee for five years at 58% (Chart 4). Over the same period Scotland saw an increase up to 69% in 2022 followed by a decrease to 67% in 2023. The gap between pupils in SIMD quintiles 1 and 5 in Dundee has remained stable over the period shown, varying between 35 and 38 percentage points and currently at 36. 2023 saw a decrease in the proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 6, from 46% in 2022 back to 44%

Chart 4: Pupils achieving 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better (S6 based on S4). Dundee, Scotland and Dundee SIMD quintiles 1 and 5



- 7.5 As table 4 shows, the percentage of pupils in S6 in 2023 (S6 based on S6) achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 6 or better is 3% greater than the virtual comparator. This is also the case for pupils living in SIMD Q1, the most deprived areas.

Table 4 The percentage of S6 pupils (based on S6) achieving one or more awards at SCQF Level 6, Dundee and Virtual Comparator

	All S6	SIMD Q1 (most deprived)
Dundee	92%	86%
Virtual Comparator	89%	83%

- 7.6 Care experienced young people have generally shown an increase in the percentage gaining one or more awards at SCQF Levels 5 and 6 or better (Chart 5). At SCQF Level 5 the proportion achieving one or more awards rose from 25% in 2020 to 52% in 2022 with a small decrease to 50% in 2023. At SCQF Level 6 there have been fluctuations but overall, an increase from 8% in 2020 to 29% in 2023. (The number of care experienced pupils in any cohort is relatively small, varying from 14 to 37 over the period shown. Small cohort sizes are more susceptible to statistical fluctuations year on year.)

Chart 5: Care experienced pupils achieving one of more awards at SCQF levels 5 and 6 or better (S6 based on S4)



8 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Individual secondary school, and Service, improvement plans are informed by an analysis of performance, and other, data. Key actions of the Children and Families Service to support schools to further improve senior phase attainment include:
- 8.1.1 A secondary Head Teacher has been seconded (0.2 Full Time Equivalent) to lead key citywide secondary-specific improvement actions, working directly with, and reporting to, the Chief Education Officer.
 - 8.1.2 All Head Teachers are required to take part in School Improvement Partnerships (SIPs) and to engage in Peer Inquiry to support, challenge and share practice; this work is supported by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change
 - 8.1.3 A phased implementation of Faculties commenced in August 2023; In collaboration with the Mudd Partnership, the Service is introducing a new 'Principal Teacher (PTs) – Faculty leadership programme' to support new Faculty Principal Teachers in their new roles.
 - 8.1.4 The Service is working with colleagues in Dundee and Angus College to review, and further strengthen, the senior phase college curriculum offers and school/ college partnership. This is to ensure that all pupils attain whilst attending college as part of their school's senior phase offer but is also part of the plan to ensure that pupils only leave school for college, and other destinations, when it is the right pathway and right time for them.
 - 8.1.5 The Pedagogy Team will work with Secondary Head Teachers to implement a new Leading Learners programme (2019-2023) to provide additional support to pupils at risk of not achieving their working grade(s) in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) exams.
 - 8.1.6 An Improving School Attendance strategy group, which includes representation from Education Scotland, is developing and implementing a revised Attendance Strategy.
 - 8.1.7 A planned programme of quality improvement activity at universal, targeted, and intensive ('team around the school') levels using a data informed approach is underway, with some schools receiving a range of targeted and intensive support as a result.

9 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.

10 CONSULTATIONS

The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

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