

REPORT TO: CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2025

REPORT ON: ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2023/24

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 72-2025

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report on Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels 2023/24 provides information on the proportion of primary school pupils who have achieved the expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy relevant to their stage in academic session 2023/24.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children, Families and Communities Committee notes the contents of this report and the improvements in literacy and numeracy attainment in the primary school sector.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Curriculum for Excellence defines five levels of learning. The first four levels in the Broad General Education (BGE) phase are Early Level, First Level, Second Level, Third/Fourth Level; with progression to qualifications described under a fifth level, the Senior Phase.
- 4.2 The path pupils are expected to follow through the levels reflects the stages of maturation of pupils and the changing ways in which they engage with learning as they develop. Some pupils will start learning at these levels earlier and others later, depending upon individual needs and aptitudes. Table 1 shows the three curriculum levels in the primary sector.

Table 1 BGE Curriculum Levels (Primary)

Pre-School – Primary 1	Early Level
Primary 2 – Primary 4	First Level
Primary 5 – Primary 7	Second Level

- 4.3 This report focuses on the BGE in the primary sector, providing information in relation to the relevant Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) children's services indicators and descriptions. These are:
- % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy
 - % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy
 - Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils
 - Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils

- 4.4 Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data is based on teachers' professional judgements of individual pupil performance. This report refers to the school year 2023/24; the data reflect what pupils have achieved by the end of the school year – i.e. June 2024. This report is based on data published by the Scottish Government on 10 December 2024. The Scottish Government note that achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels in 2020/21 and 2021/22 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that 2022/23 results may also have been affected by the ongoing impact of the pandemic on pupils' learning. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons over time.
- 4.5 The full details of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data for Dundee's primary pupils from 2017/18 to 2023/24 are available in Appendix 1. Table 2 shows the number of pupils in each stage in June 2024.

Table 2 No. of pupils at each stage in 2024

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined
Roll:	1,283	1,435	1,588	4,306

ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2023/ 24

5.0 LITERACY

% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy

- 5.1 It is important to note that a pupil is only reported to have achieved their expected level in literacy if they have achieved the expected level in all three of the literacy organisers: reading, writing, and listening and talking.
- 5.2 Prior to 2018/19 the proportion of primary pupils in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels was lower than the national average (Figure 1, below). Since 2018/19, Dundee's primary literacy attainment levels have been similar to the Scottish average. Both Dundee and Scotland demonstrate continuing recovery, post-pandemic, in 2023/24.
- 5.3 The proportion of primary pupils in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (74%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire) which was 73%.

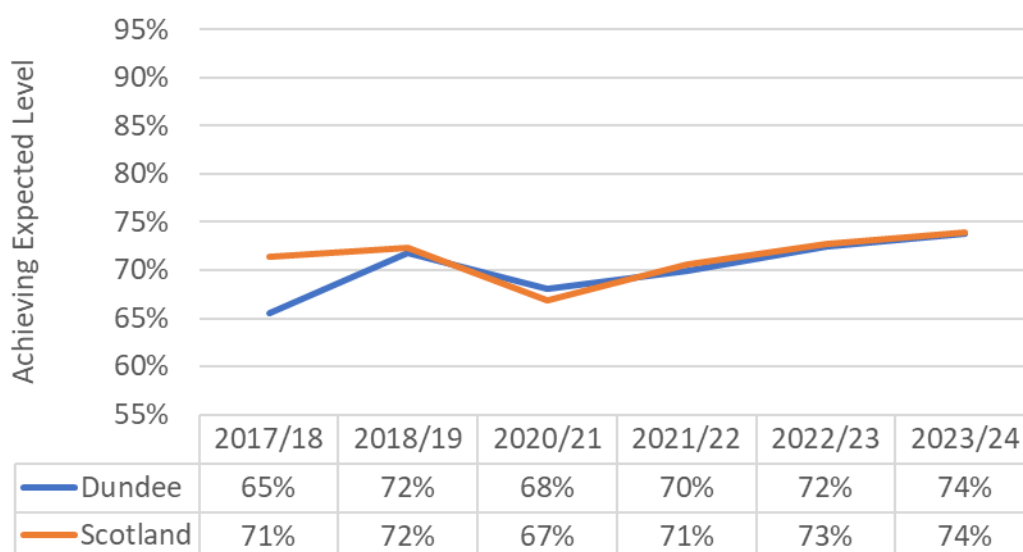


Figure 1: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving their expected level in Literacy

Closing the attainment gap in literacy: Primary 1, 4 & 7

- 5.4 In 2023/24 in Dundee, 46% of primary pupils lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1 data zones (20% most deprived areas) – see Appendix 2; in Scotland overall, 23% of primary pupils lived in SIMD Quintile 1.
- 5.5 Since 2018/19 primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee have shown higher levels of literacy attainment than the Scottish average (Figure 2, below). This position has been maintained, with improvement, in 2023/24. Despite any residual impact of the pandemic, the proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas in Dundee who have attained their expected level in literacy is the highest on record evidencing the impact of focused interventions and improvement actions in this area.
- 5.6 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (67%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (66%).

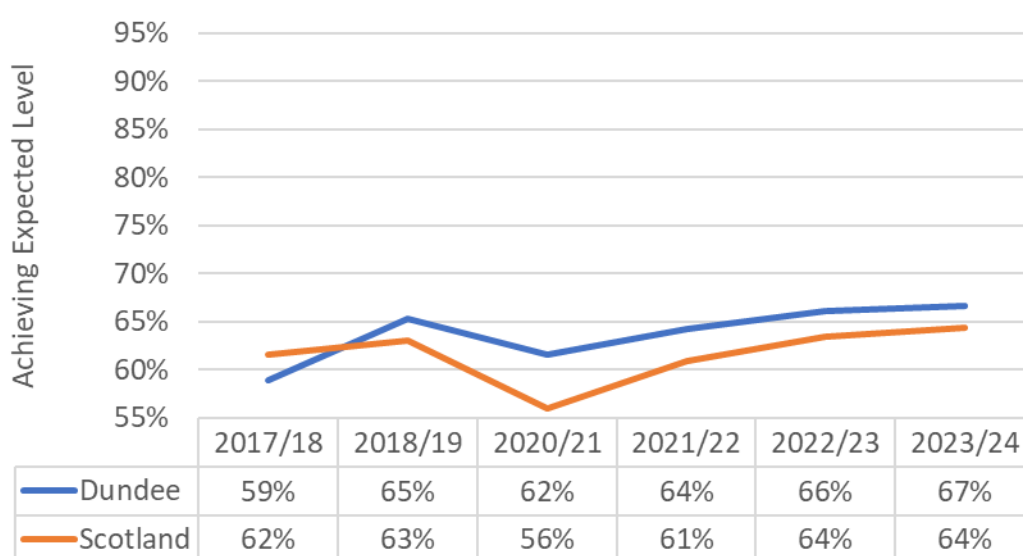


Figure 2: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving their expected level in Literacy.

- 5.7 From 2018/19 to 2022/23 primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas) in Dundee had also shown slightly higher levels of literacy achievement than the Scottish average (Figure 3, below). Dundee pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 saw a three percentage-point decline in achievement in 2023/24 and now lie below the national average.
- 5.8 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (83%) is lower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (84%).

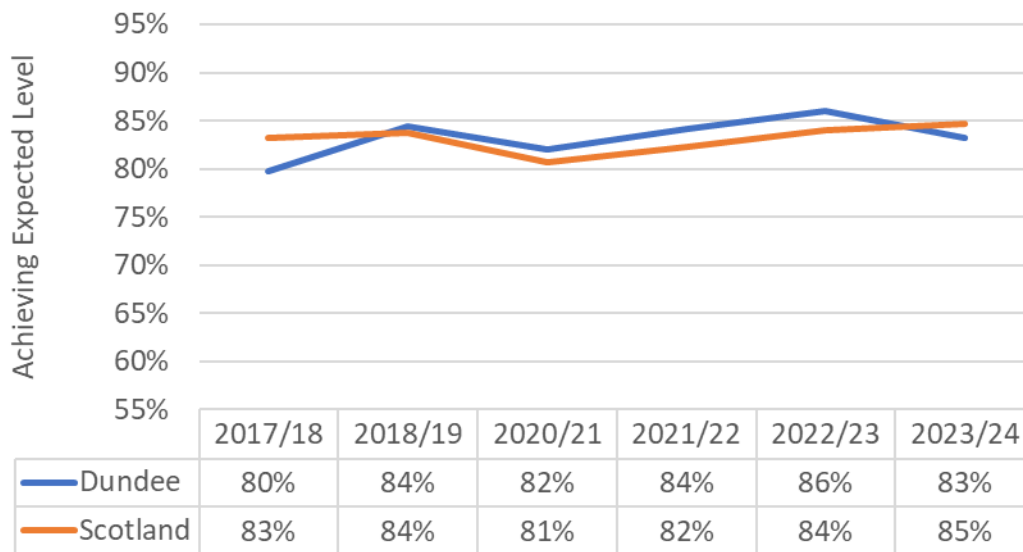


Figure 3: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving their expected level in Literacy.

- 5.9 The gap in literacy attainment between the most and least deprived areas in Dundee had been holding steady at around 20 percentage points. It has now closed to less than 17 percentage-points (Figure 4, below). This is a result of the increase in performance of pupils living in the most deprived areas, combined with the decline shown by those living in the least deprived areas. The poverty-related attainment gap within Dundee remains smaller than the national average.

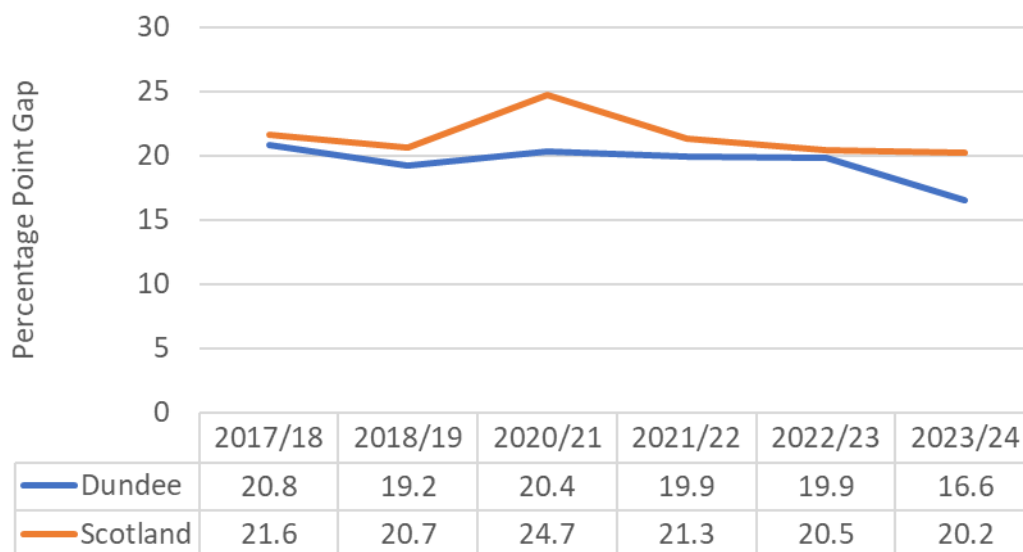


Figure 4: Percentage point gap between P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving their expected level in Literacy.

- 5.10 As detailed in Appendix 2, Dundee has higher levels of Literacy attainment in P1, P4 & P7 combined for SIMD Quintiles 1 to 4 than the Scottish average.
- 5.11 The gap between primary pupils living in SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (17 percentage-points) is narrower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (18 percentage-points).

6.0 NUMERACY

% of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy

- 6.1 Prior to 2020/21 primary pupils in Dundee had lower levels of numeracy attainment than the national average (Figure 5) but were showing improvement. In 2023/24, both Dundee and Scotland are showing higher levels of attainment than the pre-pandemic peak in 2018/19. Dundee is at a similar level to Scotland as a whole. The proportion of P1, 4, 7 combined Dundee pupils who have attained their expected level in numeracy is the highest on record.
- 6.2 The proportion of primary pupils living in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (80%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (79%).

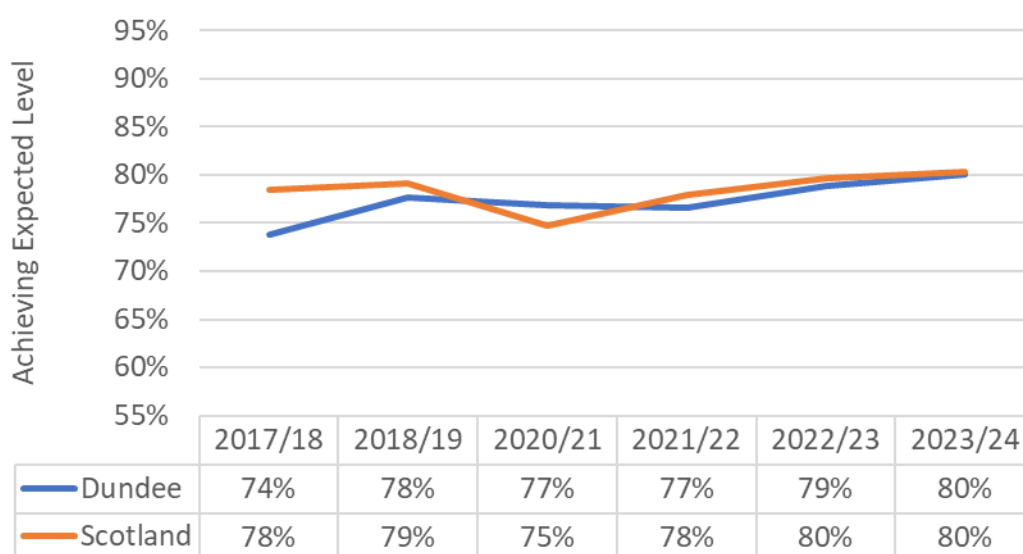


Figure 5: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

Closing the attainment gap in numeracy: Primary 1, 4 & 7

- 6.3 Dundee primary school pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived areas) have seen an improvement in numeracy attainment since 2017/18 (Figure 6, below). Since 2020/21 Dundee has had a higher proportion of primary pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 achieving their expected level in numeracy than Scotland's average. Dundee has maintained an achievement level of 74% in 2023/24.
- 6.4 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (74%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (73%).

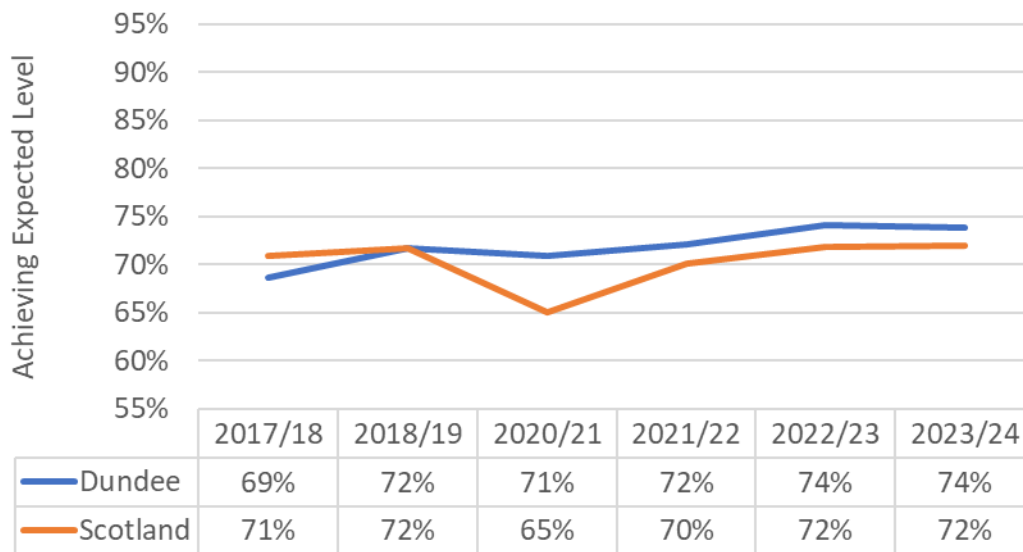


Figure 6: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

- 6.5 Dundee primary school pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) saw improvement in their numeracy attainment in 2022/23 (Figure 7, below). In 2023/24 achievement in numeracy by Dundee primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 declined slightly and now lies one percentage-point below the national average.
- 6.6 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (88%) is lower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (89%).

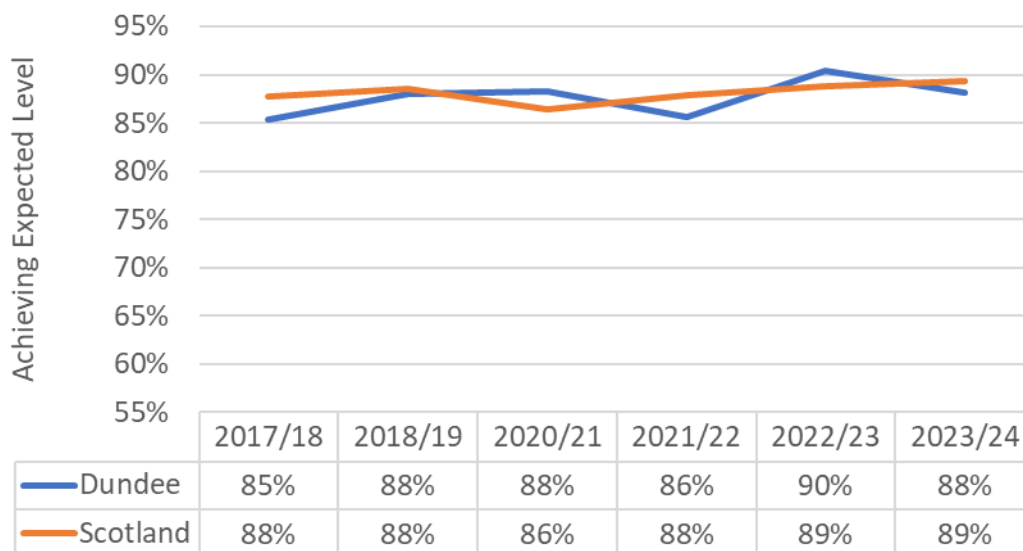


Figure 7: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

- 6.7 The poverty-related attainment gap remains slightly wider than that seen in 2021/22 but narrower than other previous years and smaller than the gap seen overall in Scotland (Figure 8, below).

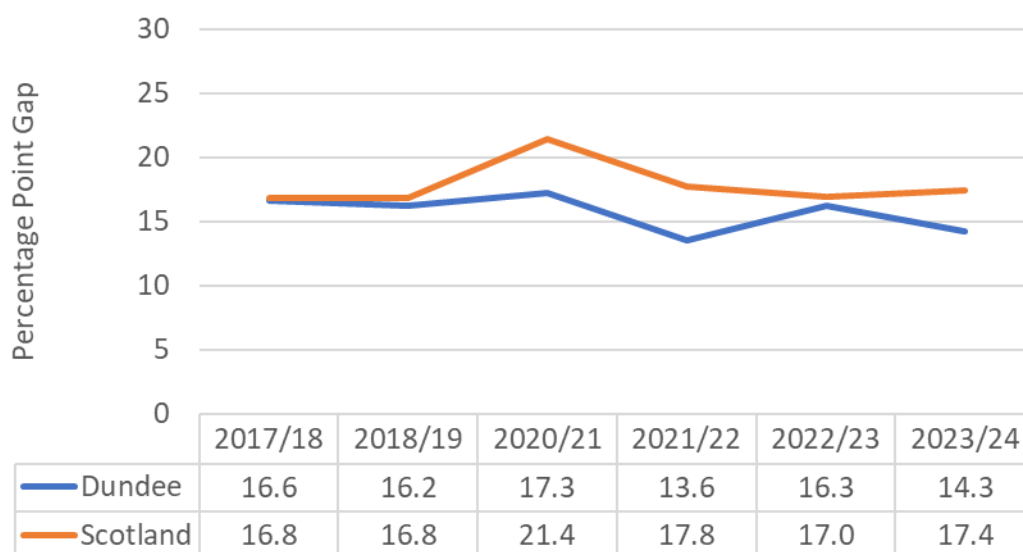


Figure 8: Percentage point gap between P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

- 6.8 As detailed in Appendix 2, Dundee has higher levels of Numeracy attainment in P1, P4 & P7 combined for SIMD Quintiles 1 to 4 than the Scottish average.
- 6.9 The gap between primary pupils living in SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (14 percentage-points) is narrower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (16 percentage-points)

7.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Key strategies and actions to further improve the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy include:
- Continue to embed the Service's 'Every Dundee Learning Matters' (EDLM) Improvement Strategy, with support from University of Glasgow Professors, with a focus on ensuring that classroom teachers have increased opportunities to share, and learn from, practice that improves the presence, participation, and progress of pupils in Dundee schools.
 - The Service, working in partnership with Education Scotland, now has ten schools (across two cohorts in academic session 2025/26) involved in the Quality Improvement National Writing programme. These schools also receive ongoing support directly from Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor and the Service's Pedagogy Team. Learning will be shared across all schools.
 - Each school continues to have an improvement inquiry focused on improving the presence (attendance and engagement) of their pupils. Additionally, the Service, working in partnership with Education Scotland, now has eleven schools (across the first two national cohorts) involved in the Quality Improvement Improving School Attendance National programme. Again, learning will be shared across all schools
 - The Service's Pedagogy Team will continue to provide professional learning at universal and targeted levels informed by data (attainment data and teacher feedback) and school improvement plans; the team will also support all Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) to ensure a sound understanding of the learning, teaching, and assessment cycle.
 - Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor, working alongside central officers, will continue to provide bespoke support to targeted schools, directed and overseen by the Chief Education Officer.

- Central quality improvement education officers, working alongside school leaders, will plan and undertake quality improvement visits and activity at universal, targeted, and intensive (“team around the school”) levels using a data informed approach to determine the level of support assigned to individual schools. Learning from these visits are shared across all schools.
- The Executive Director and Chief Education Officer will work closely with three other local authorities (Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire) to engage in robust validated self-evaluation activity about the quality of our education service and will implement any learning from this ongoing collaboration.

7.2 There continues to be clear progress made in relation to increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy relevant to their stage.

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 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.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 The Council Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report and agree with its content.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

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Head of Service – Education, Learning & Inclusion
Chief Education Officer

18 February 2025

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APPENDIX 1: ACEL RETURNS

The full details of Dundee's primary BGE Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data from 2017/18 to 2023/24 are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Percentage of Dundee primary school pupils achieving their expected CfE Levels, 2017/18 to 2023/24, by Stage and CfE Organiser. There was no collection in 2019/20.

Organiser	Stage	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Reading	P1	80%	82%	79%	82%	81%	81%
	P4	74%	78%	76%	79%	80%	81%
	P7	76%	82%	78%	79%	82%	84%
	P1,4,7 combined	77%	81%	78%	80%	81%	82%
Writing	P1	72%	76%	74%	77%	77%	77%
	P4	65%	70%	69%	70%	73%	74%
	P7	69%	77%	72%	71%	76%	77%
	P1,4,7 combined	69%	74%	71%	72%	75%	76%
Listening & Talking	P1	89%	89%	85%	87%	86%	88%
	P4	83%	86%	87%	83%	86%	87%
	P7	83%	87%	82%	87%	88%	88%
	P1,4,7 combined	85%	87%	85%	86%	87%	88%
Literacy	P1	69%	74%	71%	74%	72%	74%
	P4	62%	67%	65%	66%	71%	72%
	P7	65%	74%	68%	70%	74%	75%
	P1,4,7 combined	65%	72%	68%	70%	72%	74%
Numeracy	P1	80%	84%	81%	83%	84%	84%
	P4	70%	73%	75%	73%	76%	79%
	P7	71%	76%	74%	74%	77%	78%
	P1,4,7 combined	74%	78%	77%	77%	79%	80%

In June 2024 the number of pupils in each stage was:

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined
Roll:	1,283	1,435	1,588	4,306






APPENDIX 2: ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS; P1, P4 & P7 COMBINED BY QUINTILE

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL)






P1, P4 and P7 combined

% achieving expected level in

Literacy

		'17/18	'18/19	'20/21	'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	59%	65%	62%	64%	66%	67%	
	Scotland	62%	63%	56%	61%	64%	64%	
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	64%	72%	67%	68%	70%	76%	
	Scotland	67%	68%	61%	65%	68%	70%	
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	70%	76%	71%	72%	77%	81%	
	Scotland	72%	73%	66%	70%	73%	74%	
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	74%	79%	75%	79%	80%	81%	
	Scotland	76%	77%	73%	76%	78%	79%	
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	80%	84%	82%	84%	86%	83%	
	Scotland	83%	84%	81%	82%	84%	85%	

Numeracy

		'17/18	'18/19	'20/21	'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	69%	72%	71%	72%	74%	74%	
	Scotland	71%	72%	65%	70%	72%	72%	
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	73%	79%	77%	76%	76%	82%	
	Scotland	75%	76%	70%	74%	76%	77%	
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	78%	83%	80%	79%	83%	85%	
	Scotland	79%	79%	74%	78%	80%	81%	
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	79%	83%	84%	84%	85%	88%	
	Scotland	82%	83%	80%	82%	84%	85%	
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	85%	88%	88%	86%	90%	88%	
	Scotland	88%	88%	86%	88%	89%	89%	

In June 2024 the number of pupils in each SIMD Quintile was:

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined
Quintile 1:	596	641	710	1,947
Quintile 2:	249	257	296	802
Quintile 3:	84	104	120	308
Quintile 4:	137	177	181	495
Quintile 5:	176	211	230	617
Quintile unknown:	41	45	51	137

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEL	Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels
ADES	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
ASF	Attainment Scotland Fund
BGE	Broad General Education
CI	Collaborative Improvement
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
EDLM	Every Dundee Learner Matters
LGBF	Local Government Benchmarking Framework
PEF	Pupil Equity Fund
SAC	Scottish Attainment Challenge
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SEF	Strategic Equity Fund
QAMSOs	Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer