



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 7 JUNE 2023**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION SCOTLAND: MORAY PROGRESS IN
IMPLEMENTING THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE
PROGRAMME**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the impact of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding for the children and young people of Moray, in particular, those most affected by poverty
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) **scrutinise and note the progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap in Moray using Scottish Attainment Challenge funding; and**
- (ii) **acknowledge the impact of Covid-19 on work to close the poverty related attainment gap and subsequent progress made, including reducing underspend noted through targeted actions, interventions and support**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in February 2015 to support the Scottish Government in achieving its vision of delivering excellence and equity in education.

- 3.2 Moray has been part of the SAC since session 2016/2017 and now receives funding through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund (CECYP), all forming part of Attainment Scotland Funding (ASF). Impact of SAC funding on improving outcomes for children and young people in Moray has previously been reported to Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee on completion of SAC 5-year impact report and 1 year progress update on 26 May 2021.
- 3.3 During session 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, SAC and PEF/CECYP planning and interventions have been impacted by Covid-19 and disruption to our schools including two extended periods of national lockdown. Engagement and participation in learning was variable for some children, with the impact on wellbeing and progress in learning continuing to emerge as noted in behaviours exhibited, attendance and engagement in learning. Due to restrictions on activities, pressures in recruiting additional staff and flexibility provided to schools over use of PEF during both sessions, an underspend resulted which has continued to be addressed from the latter part of session 2021/2022, working with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor.
- 3.4 In November 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills at that time further set out plans for a refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge from April 2022, for session 2022/2023 and beyond. The mission of this refreshed Challenge is to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. Up until then, Moray was 1 of 11 'Universal Support' local authorities, with focus on key policies and access to core funding including Pupil Equity Funding and CECYP funding only. Those local authorities identified as 'Challenge Authorities' made up the final part of the SAC programme at that time, receiving the greatest proportion of funding with targeted funding allocated to the 9 local authorities with the highest concentration of pupils living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile 1 and decile 2 areas. Moray was a 'universal' authority and as such, the local authority or schools within Moray received no additional funding other than PEF devolved to schools and CECYP funding.
- 3.5 CECYP funding has also been available to local authorities since session 2018/2019 with key work underway within Corporate Parenting led by Social Work colleagues and containing an 'Education' pillar within the strategy. Following changes in service managers, further links for oversight of the CECYP funding working in partnership with Social Work colleagues is now in place. As a result, it is now planned to recruit within Education using CECYP monies, a Virtual School Head Teacher, which is common with in local authorities, in order to work with multi-agency partners and with care experienced children and young people across schools, improving outcomes and maximising progress and achievements for all.
- 3.6 From session April 2022, the Scottish Government altered their funding model with specific regard to removal of funding to SAC 'Challenge Authorities' and instead, adopted a more equitable model across Scotland in launching 'Strategic Equity Funding'. Instead, Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) amounting

to £43 million is to be shared by all 32 local authorities in Scotland to invest in approaches to achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) noted above.

3.7 Through the revised Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress launched in April 2022, the Scottish Government recognise that the first five years of the Scottish Attainment Challenge saw much progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap but at a limited pace. The pandemic disrupted the learning of children and young people and had a disproportionate impact on children affected by poverty. The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge programme, backed by a further commitment of £1 billion from Scottish Government through the SAC Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), aims to address these challenges and ensure that equity lies at the heart of the education experience for all.

3.8 The refreshed SAC programme, from 2022/23 now includes:

- An annual investment of up to £200 million in 2022/2023 to support children and young people impacted by poverty.
- Continued empowerment of Headteachers through Pupil Equity Funding as the primary model for distributing funding to the education system, with funding of approximately £130 million annually to be allocated to 97% of schools.
- Continued investment to support Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP funding), contributing to keeping The Promise.
- The introduction of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) of over £43 million, which will be distributed annually to every local authority based on Children in Low Income Families Data.
- Investment in national programmes to enhance supports across the system, supporting a range of national initiatives such as youth work and mentoring.
- A broader recognition of children and young people's achievements and attainment through the refreshed mission.

3.9 Through the Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress (the Framework) it is further aimed to:

- Reinforce collective commitment to equity in education, to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's outcomes and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Set high expectations, including annual, ambitious locally identified stretch aims, to help ensure significant progress is made in recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and in achieving the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Take advantage of multi-year funding allocations for schools and local authorities to plan and set aims for long-term progress in the mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Use existing improvement processes, as far as possible, in order to minimise additional bureaucracy; this is accompanied by specific new

guidance to ensure there is greater consistency on how processes are used across the country and enable a more accurate national picture.

- Through local stretch aims, drive improved outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty in the local authority.
- Build on the continued commitment to empowerment for local planning and decision making, while ensuring strategic direction, support and challenge is provided by local authorities and national agencies. This will help ensure that the best possible outcomes for our children and young people are achieved

3.10 The Scottish Government have intimated that following one year of operation in session 2022/2023, the above Framework and guidance is under review with revision to Stretch Aims guidance for 2023/2024, anticipated in late May/early June 2023.

3.11 Funding allocations for SEF and PEF have been confirmed from April 2022 on a multi-year basis until the end of the Parliamentary term, giving local authorities and schools certainty to support long term planning. Funding allocated to Moray and received through SAC monies is as follows:

Funding:	Per child	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
SEF	N/A	£170,500	£338,950	£507,400	£675,851
CECYP	£1,200	£158,025	<i>tbc</i>	<i>tbc</i>	<i>tbc</i>
PEF	£1,225	£1,484,285 per year, fixed until 2025-2026			

3.12 SEF is provided on a fixed amount basis increasing over time as highlighted in the table above. SEF must be used to deliver targeted activities, approaches or resources which are clearly additional to universal local improvement plans. SEF must provide targeted support for children and young people (and their families if appropriate) affected by poverty to achieve their full potential, focusing on targeted improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

3.13 In Moray, 2022/2023 SEF funding to date has been directed to two key projects in Buckie and Elgin High localities focused on supporting equity for all learning with specific focus on lower Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles and improving achievement for all alongside strengthening Primary-Secondary school learning and wellbeing transition. These projects would continue up until 2025/2026 as final year with additional project bids considered, working with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor through revised local guidance and criteria. A process has been initiated for schools to participate in, working with our Attainment Advisor for funding allocation for 2023/2024. Bids will be centrally reviewed against Scottish Government and Education Scotland guidance for SEF and Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress approaches, moderated in partnership with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor.

3.14 CECYP allocation is based on £1,200 per looked after child aged 5-15, as outlined in the Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2020/21 and continues to be allocated on a yearly basis. This funding can then be used to support care experienced children and young people from birth to the age of

26. The funding is provided to local authorities and aims to improve the educational outcomes for care experienced children and young people, supported by the strategic goals of The Promise and the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

- 3.15 PEF is allocated from 2022/2023 up to 2025/2026 based on the number of pupils from P1 to S3 who are eligible and registered for free school meals or FSM (£1,225 per child or young person). This funding is allocated directly to schools to help close the poverty related attainment gap. Use of FSM as an indicator of need should not promote overly rigid and prescriptive use of the fund. Head Teachers and Teachers are asked to use professional judgement when deciding how funds are targeted to most effectively improve outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty in their schools and communities.

4 IMPACT OF SAC FUNDING IN MORAY ON IMPROVING OUTCOMES

- 4.1 The SAC Triannual Report 2 (March 2023) is contained within **Appendix 1** for reference. This report provides an overview of the local authority's progress in implementing the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) program for the reporting period December 2022 to March 2023. (Note this Appendix is the triannual report referred to in the minute of the ECLS Committee on 19 April 2023 that request a report to committee, para 11 of the minute refers.)

- 4.2 Key progress noted with SAC is as follows:

- Finalisation of action plans, recruitment to key posts and identification of key outcomes and measures in relation to SEF project briefs at Elgin High School and Buckie Associated Schools Group. Both projects are underway with schools supported by our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor and local authority lead officer.
- Progress with PEF monitoring and impact, including PEF database population and analysis in order to provide targeted intervention for schools requiring additional support. Schools continue to implement a range of universal and targeted literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, curricular, transition, staffing and resource based interventions in order to support children and young people to thrive and achieve.
- Review of financial processes in relation to PEF with targeted support to schools in order to address PEF underspends, exacerbated as a result of flexibility from Scottish Government over PEF use during the pandemic, including issues with spending PEF monies due to two extended periods of national lockdown and further disruption due to mitigations in place in schools as a result of the pandemic (most lifted in April 2022). Underspend has been reduced by approximately 60% with ongoing work underway in planning for further reduction.
- Continued roll-out of Seemis Progress and Achievement training to senior staff in schools in a 'train the trainer' approach, strengthening tracking of learner attainment and progress, supporting identification of children and young people in need of targeted support.

- Working with Social Work colleagues, we have worked with social work colleagues and our Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) to progress with recruitment for a Virtual School Head Teach for Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP). It is hoped to appoint to this post following second advert in June 2023.
- As part of our Supporting All Learners strategy previously reported to Committee, in-service training has been delivered in support of roll-out of nurture principles across Moray for wider wellbeing support.
- Data analysis and interrogation by the central team is supporting scrutiny and challenge, with Moray Health Checks further informing school self-evaluation. Central officers following submission of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels (ACEL) early indications for June 2022 achievement are undertaking support and challenge visits in line with Moray Quality Improvement Framework approaches under review.
- Our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor has supported the local authority lead officer with review of PEF planning guidance, templates and training with PEF twilight sessions offered in support of PEF planning, outcomes and measures. Our Attainment Advisor continues to support schools on a targeted basis based on emerging needs identified in partnership with the local authority lead officer.

4.3 Positive progress with Stretch Aims set in line with Scottish Government and Education Scotland's Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress (under review) is provided below. It should be noted that nationally, stretch aims are set with measurement of poverty related attainment gap against Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile 1 against quintile 5. However, in Moray we have a very low proportion of our school population at time of stretch aim setting (3.3%) within quintile 1 and as such comparisons below are based on smaller cohort size with quintile 5 based on average pupil population of 11.8% at time of stretch aim setting:

- Stretch aim for 1 or more SCQF level 5 qualifications (SQA National A-C pass) has been achieved, with reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap from 2020/2021 in 2021/2022.
- Stretch aim for 1 or more SCQF level 6 qualifications (SQA National A-C pass) has been achieved, with decrease in poverty-related attainment gap.
- While the Annual Participation Measure (APM) for 16-19 year olds has decreased slightly by 0.2% and is 0.8% below the national average, the poverty related attainment gap has narrowed by 1.7%. Positive leaver destinations as reported previously to committee ([Analysis of Secondary School Leaver Attainment 2021-2022; 19 April 2023](#)) are above all comparators for the first time in five years.

4.4 Key areas identified for further development:

- Positive progress is being made in percentage of Primary pupils achieving expected levels for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Literacy combined, increasing by 1.1% in 2021/2022 and 2% from stretch aim

achievement. However, current performance remains below the national average by 6% and 4.7% above the national poverty related attainment gap.

- Overall levels of attainment for CfE Numeracy across the Primary stages improved by 4% from 2020/2021. However, levels remain below national average by 6% and the poverty related attainment gap has widened, 7.3% above the national poverty-related attainment gap.
- Progress in achieving stretch aims for attendance and exclusion – with specific regard to secondary schools – as reflected by the national picture are of note. As a result, it is unlikely that ambitious stretch aims will be achieved as a result.

5 NEXT STEPS

5.1 A number of areas identified as next steps are underway in order to support improvements in identified areas, as reported to Committee previously this session within the [Initial Analysis of Secondary School Attainment: Session 2021-22 committee paper](#) in November 2022 (para X of the minute refers). Further interventions specific to CfE Achievement of a Level as noted in 4.4 above are outlined in the [Initial Analysis of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels 2022 committee paper](#) reported to Committee on 25 January 2023 (Para 11 of the minute refers).

5.2 Further next steps for continuous improvement have been identified in relation to SAC Impact reporting with focus on:

- Completion of recruitment and selection process for the role of Virtual School Head Teacher (CECYP).
- Finalisation of HR processes in relation to appointment of data/finance colleague to support PEF planning and spend monitoring.
- Analysis and intervention planning – with initial focus on secondary schools in partnership with secondary Headteachers – due to data emerging vis a vis attendance and exclusions.
- Continue at pace with plans in relation to collaborative curriculum change, improving learning teaching and assessment, and system empowerment through leadership at all levels and unified support of the additional support needs review as outlined in Service Plan.
- Continue to work with our Attainment Advisor, attend events and share learning across the Moray Education system.
- Continued monitoring of PEF and SEF project interventions and impact, with case study capture across our schools for sharing good practice.

6 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Reflective of priorities within the Corporate Plan with particular regard to providing a sustainable education service aiming for excellence in line

with council values of ambitious, improving and responsive. With regards to the LOIP, through raising aspirations, focus relates to building a better future for our children and young people in Moray through equity of learning experience offered across our schools; supporting ambitious and confident children, able to reach their full potential and reducing the impact of poverty.

(b) Policy and Legal

The legal implications arising directly from this report are outlined in the National Improvement Framework to close the poverty related attainment gap.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Financial implications may arise only as a result of key recommendations from feedback informing wider strategies moving forwards, outlined above and relation to SAC funding models allocated by Scottish Government. There are often underspends in PEF due to funding being across the financial year yet delivered across the academic session. Work has continued this session in a targeted manner to consider schools where underspends in PEF may arise and plan for improvement in support of children and young people.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. The attached report outlines progress of Moray in implementing the Scottish Attainment Challenge with positive progress reported to date, minimising risk associated with delivery.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report. Many interventions are dependent on securing staff to take forward but due to the temporary nature of these, there are often delays in recruitment or sometimes inability to fill vacancies. This has resulted in underspends in some schools, with particular regard to impact of the pandemic in recruiting staff and is being addressed.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Equality/Socio Economic Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform Committee on survey findings and recommendations arising from responses received.

(h) Consultations

Senior Officers in Education, Communities and Organisational Development, Equal Opportunities Officer, Human Resources Manager, and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Moray has made positive progress in implementing the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) through Attainment Scotland Funding (PEF, SEF and CECYP funding) as outlined further above and through our SAC Triannual Report 2 Impact Report contained within Appendix 1. A range of universal and targeted interventions and approaches have contributed to positive progress with stretch aims set as part of Scottish Government and Education Scotland’s Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress.**
- 7.2 It is recognised that further actions are required in addition to those previously reported to committee through performance reports during session 2022/2023 noted above with specific regard to identified stretch aims: ACEL Literacy and Numeracy, attendance, exclusion, APM. Key actions have been identified previously and in partnership with our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor in order to progress key areas of work with our wider system.**
- 7.3 Committee is invited to scrutinise and note the contents of this report, strengths and identified areas for development with positive progress made as we have emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic in addressing key actions for improvement through a range of interventions and approaches using SEF, PEF and CECYP monies through SAC ASF.**

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1: SAC Triannual Report 2 – March 2023

[Initial Analysis of Secondary School Attainment: Session 2021-22](#) and [Stretch Aims](#)

[Analysis of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels 2022](#)

[Analysis of Secondary School Leaver Attainment 2021-2022](#)

[SAC Framework for recovery and accelerating progress](#)

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