



Education Directorate

Fife Education Directorate Annual Service Report 2026

Introduction

This report reflects the performance of the Education Directorate for 2026. It covers the period April 2025 to June 2026, highlighting our delivery, progress, change and improvement plans for 2026-7.

We have considered our performance in relation to the council’s policy priorities set out in the Plan for Fife; key indicators; financial and workforce pressures and how we compare in relation to other similar services in other Scottish councils, through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

Individual service indicators and results are published online in advance of this annual review to facilitate scrutiny and feedback.

These are available at www.fife.gov.uk/councilperformance

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Please note, performance data can run behind the period of this report. This is due to data gathering requirements including national benchmarking. The most up-to-date information available has been used to inform this report.

Service overview

Fife's Education Directorate

The Education Directorate Improvement Plan (2023-2026) aligns with the key national drivers and policy requirements that support the Directorate's work, and contributes to delivering the Plan for Fife, enabling the Directorate to continue working to achieve our purpose of **Improving Life Chances for All**.

The Directorate Improvement Plan sets out, at a high level, the challenges and barriers faced by children and young people in their lives and learning and how our services plan to address these. It outlines our key strategic priorities and actions to provide direction across the Directorate describing how, collectively, we aim to improve the outcomes and experiences of all of Fife's children, young people and families.

The outcomes that we sought to achieve respond to the Directorate's key challenge areas including:

- Improving Health & Wellbeing
- Improving Attendance & Engagement
- Improving Achievement
- Improving Positive Destinations
- Equity & Equality (addressed across all our improvement activity)

This Annual Report provides an overview of the work undertaken during the final year of the Directorate Improvement Plan (April 2025 to June 2026). It reviews the progress made across each priority area, the impact of improvement activity on outcomes and experiences for children and young people, and the contribution of the Education Directorate towards delivering national priorities and the Plan for Fife. The report also incorporates Fife's Standards and Quality Report for 2025/26.

Demand & delivery overview

The Fife Education Service supports the learning and development of children and young people across all ages, regardless of their individual need.

The Education Service oversees, quality assures and supports provision in the early years and primary, secondary and special school sectors, as well as delivering a range of specialist provision for learners.

Children & young people we support

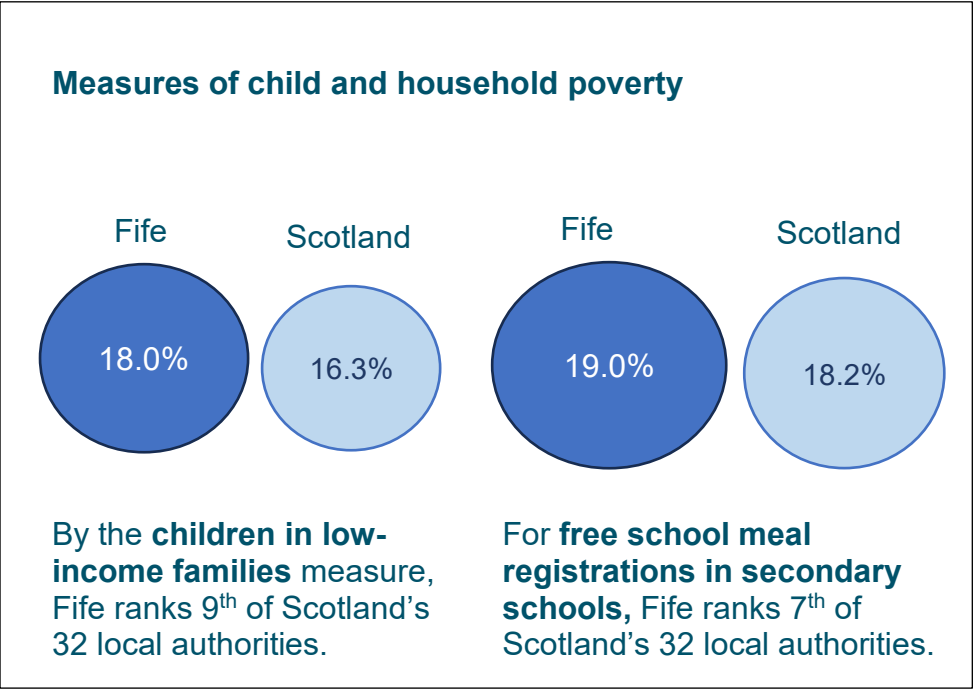
- 69,513 children and young people, aged 0-17 years.
- 47,997 pupils in Fife schools (26,286 in primary, 22,226 in secondary and 162 in special schools).
- 6,244 children registered for early years provision (4,762 local authority and 1,482 partnership).

How we support our children & young people

- 155 schools in Fife (132 primary schools, 18 secondary schools and 5 special schools).
- 159 early learning and childcare centres (112 local authority ELC centres and 47 partnership centres).
- 3,579 FTE teaching staff (1,698 primary schools, 1,685 secondary schools, 99 special schools and 97 centrally employed).

Group	Number	%
With an additional support need	20,053	41.8
Living in SIMD Quintile 1	10,608	22.1
Speaking English as an Additional Language (not fluent)	2,852	5.9
Minority Ethnic	3,884	8.1
Assessed as having a disability	1,358	2.8
All school pupils	47,997	100.0

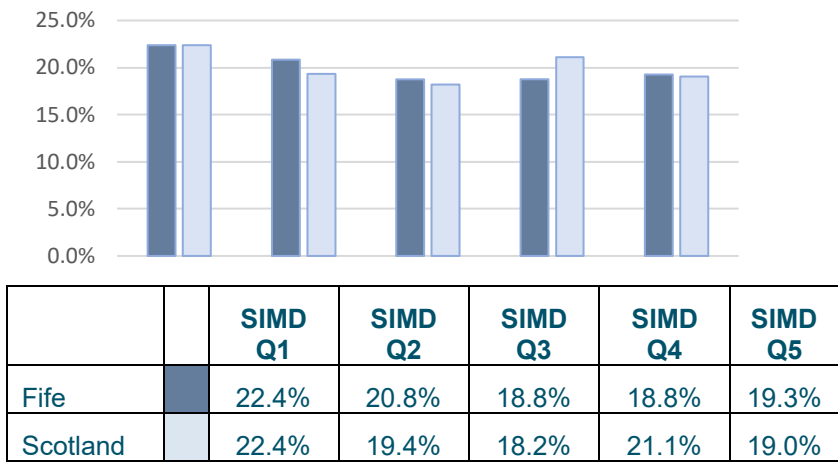
Child poverty in Fife



Area deprivation in Fife (SIMD)

The table below shows the geographical distribution of school pupils in Fife and Scotland, based on the SIMD Quintile where they live.

SIMD Quintile 1 areas (SIMD Q1) are the most deprived in Scotland. SIMD Quintile 5 areas (SIMD Q5) are the least deprived. The profiles of Fife and Scotland are very similar.



Why are the SIMD profiles of Fife and Scotland similar, if Fife has higher levels of child poverty?

In general, SIMD over-represents poverty in large urban areas and under-represents poverty in other types of area.

Fife's lack of any large urban area means that it's levels of child poverty are not fully represented by its share of SIMD quintile 1 (SIMD Q1) areas.

Our people

Workforce profile (including headcount)

- 7645 headcount, 6007.07 FTE. Represents 41.6% of Fife Council's headcount.
- 45.2% are full time, 87.6% permanent and 86.5% female.

Workforce age

- Average workforce age is 42.5, slightly higher than 42.3 in 2024/5. This is below the Fife Council average age of 44.8.
- Average age of leavers is 47.2 and new starts 33.1.
- 5.25% of the workforce is aged 24 and under, comparable to 5.47% in 2024/5.

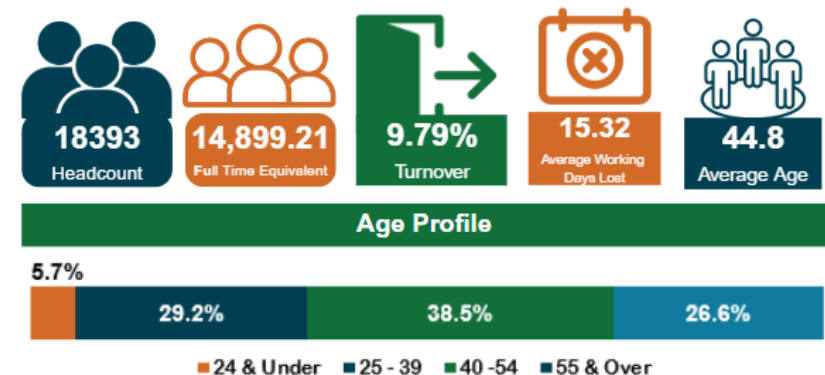
Workforce turnover

- Turnover rate is 9.04%, slightly lower than 10.83% in 2024/25.
- 42.84% of leavers aged 55 and over, with the top reason being retirement.

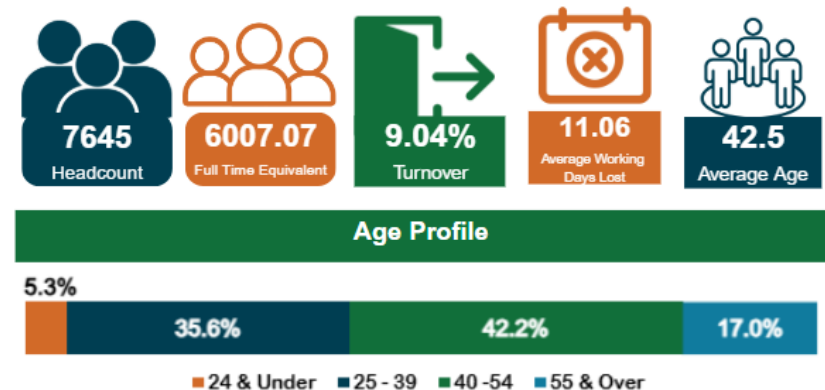
Working days lost

- Average WDL to sickness absence was 11.06, this is higher than 10.83 in 2024/25.
- Short term absences account for 4.07 working days lost and 6.99 for longer term absences (over 28 calendar days)

Fife Council Workforce 2025/26



Education 2025/26



Our budget

	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Outturn 25/26 £m	Variance 25/26 £m
Staff Costs	404.912	397.719	7.194
Property Costs	34.483	34.169	0.314
Transport Costs	17.840	18.663	0.823
Supplies and Services	21.987	25.962	3.976
Third Party Payments	19.303	19.093	0.209
Transfer Payments	0.018	0.000	0.018
Support Services Charges	0.095	0.143	0.048
Total Expenditure (Directorate)	498.637	495.749	2.888
Internal Income	1.799	2.333	0.534
External Income	27.550	29.204	1.655
Total Income	29.349	31.538	2.189
Net Expenditure (Directorate)	469.288	464.212	5.076

Key points

Within the overall budget outturns recorded above, the following variances were recorded within Devolved and Non-Devolved parts of the Directorate budget:

Devolved Education:

- **Staff Costs:** Underspend on core school staffing budgets of £5.1m and underspend on Pupil Equity Funding budgets of £3.6m. Both of these amounts are carried forward by schools into the 2026-27 financial year.
- **Supplies and Services:** Overspend of £1.215m on supplies and services, as headteachers utilise some of their underspend on other devolved budgets to enhance spend in these areas (classroom resources / printing and stationery etc).

Non-Devolved Education:

- **Staff Costs:** Overspend due to cost of long-term absence and maternity for teaching staff, additional staffing and cover arrangements in Nursery Education, and additional staffing in Special Education. Offset by underspends in staffing in General Education and Childcare.
- **Property Costs:** Underspend in relation to utility costs and non-domestic rates, offset by overspends on waste collection and other property recharges.
- **Transport Costs:** Overspend in relation to the cost of transporting pupils across all sectors.
- **Supplies and Services:** Overspend in relation to maintenance costs in schools (not devolved), additional equipment and additional printing and stationery costs.
- **Third Party Payments:** Underspend due to reduced payments requested by Early Years partner providers, and reduced payments to NHS.

Our risks

Key corporate and service-specific risks affecting delivery are actively tracked and managed, with control measures in place. The table below highlights current service-specific risk and ongoing mitigation actions to minimise risk impact. Progress against these will be reported next year. Full details on all risks are available on request.

Risk	Mitigation
Workforce Challenges within the Education Section	There is a risk Education Service do not have the right people with the right skills at the right time. Key mitigating actions • Workforce planning • Recruitment & retention • Leadership Development • Professional learning • Staff wellbeing & attendance
Inability to secure adequate & efficient provision of education for Primary, Secondary, Early years learning and childcare	There is a risk that the Education Service is unable to meet its statutory duty. Key mitigating actions: • Governance & Compliance • Safeguarding and Additional Support for Learning • Workforce Capacity and Capability • Financial Management and Resource Planning • Legal and Risk Management
Deterioration of Health & Wellbeing outcomes for children and young people	There is a risk that the service may be unable to thrive if conditions, and interventions, are not embedded that promote employee wellbeing Key mitigating actions: • Employee Wellbeing • Leadership and Management • Staff Engagement and Organisational Culture • Attendance Management • Recruitment, Retention and Development • Monitoring and Assurance

Risk	Mitigation
Deterioration of attendance and engagement of children and young people	There is a risk that attendance levels of children and young people continue to reduce. Key mitigating actions: • Attendance Monitoring and Early Intervention • Family Engagement and Support • Inclusion and Wellbeing • Safeguarding and Child Protection • Targeted Support for Vulnerable Learners • Partnership Working • Attainment and Achievement • Monitoring and Assurance
Reduction in Positive Destinations for School leavers	There is a risk that some learners may not achieve a positive post-school destination (e.g. further/higher education, employment, training, volunteering). Key mitigating actions • Curriculum and skills pathways • Targeted support for Vulnerable learners • Partnership working • Attendance, engagement & Inclusion • Monitoring and Assurance
Inadequate protection of vulnerable children	There is a risk that children may be exposed to harm or abuse within the educational setting. Key mitigating actions: • Policies and Procedures • Training and awareness • Safe recruitment and workforce management • Early intervention • Partnership working • Monitoring and Assurance
Equity & Equality	There is a risk that Learners within the Authority may experience unequal access to high-quality education. Key mitigating actions: • Strategic planning & Governance • Targeted support for learner • Quality of learning & teaching • Wellbeing & Inclusion • Partnership working • Monitoring and Assurance

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Introduction - service delivery context and challenges

The Education Directorate Improvement Plan 2023-26 was significantly influenced by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This caused a significant disruption in the learning and development of children and young people. This impact resulted in a fall in some key measures of attainment and a widening of the attainment gap. The overarching aim of the Improvement Plan has been to support ongoing *recovery* of learning and development for Fife's children and young people, whilst also *reforming* the way that we work, to ensure a more focused, effective and resilient basis for sustainable improvements into the future.

Priorities & progress

The Plan identified four key improvement priorities for the period 2023-26 to help achieve this overarching aim of recovery and reform:

- Priority 1 – Improving **Health & Wellbeing**
- Priority 2 – Improving **Attendance and Engagement**
- Priority 3 – Improving **Achievement** (including literacy and numeracy, as well as wider achievement)
- Priority 4 – Improving **Positive Destinations**

There are significant differences in outcomes relating to equity and equality for many aspects of wellbeing, attendance, attainment and post-school opportunities. These differences are seen for measures of poverty or deprivation (e.g. SIMD areas, registration for free school meals, or other indicators), Additional Support Needs for learning, or having an experience of care.

For this reason, **Equity and Equality** is recognised as a cross-cutting challenge that needs to be addressed across all of our improvement activity. An integral part of this work is promoting the rights of our children and young people.

This section of the Annual Report provides an overview of the progress made during 2025/26 for each of these four improvement priorities and for the cross-cutting theme of Equity and Equality. It also provides an overview of the Directorate's performance, as reported to the Education Scrutiny Committee during the year.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 1 Health and Wellbeing

- Health and Wellbeing is a key challenge facing the Education Directorate and wider Fife Children's Services Partnership.
 - In 2025/26, significant progress was made in embedding early help through Decider Skills, piloted referral pathways and commissioned services, widening access to a range of targeted and preventative supports.
 - Staff capacity and wellbeing support increased through professional learning, peer support models and wellbeing initiatives.
 - In 2025/26, pupil-led initiatives and community-based programmes increased engagement, helped reduce stigma around mental health and supported wellbeing across schools and families.
 - The development of dashboards, surveys and communication channels strengthened evidence-based planning, created clearer referral processes and more consistent engagement with staff, children, young people and families.
- In partnership with Health, Education rolled out the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway— a multi-agency pathway, which provides specialist support for children and young people where there are concerns about the impact of neurodevelopmental conditions such as Autism, ADHD, or Learning Disability (LD). There will be ongoing review and an evaluation framework created to review implementation of the pathway. Further information about the ND Pathway can be found in the September 2025 Education Scrutiny Committee paper.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Progress

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-26

- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-26 delivered a comprehensive and multi-layered improvement programme for Health & Wellbeing. The work spanned universal, targeted and specialist supports and showed clear progress in both delivery and system-level change.
- Mental health featured heavily, with large-scale training, enhanced access to community supports and a developing Mental Health Pathway. Challenges included inconsistent early intervention and capacity building opportunities in schools, and high demand for specialist services.
- Physical wellbeing was developed through extensive Active Schools programming, robust monitoring and targeted support for disadvantaged groups. Evaluation activity is helping to strengthen evidence of impact.
- Relationships and behaviour work deepened through trauma-informed practices, professional learning and the introduction of new informed practices, and a new local authority Relationships and Behaviour Guidance.
- Communication and engagement are becoming more systematic, with improved survey processes, shared data, better intranet structures and young people's voices informing planning.
- Overall, the work is broad, collaborative and data driven, demonstrating strong progress across improvement priorities with clear next steps and ongoing refinements.

Other Areas of Progress

- Embedded Active Schools provision and health promotion activity across all 18 clusters, supported by strengthened monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
- Improved communication, engagement and evidence-informed planning through aligned Staffwise, Parentwise, Pupilwise and Health & Wellbeing surveys.
- Progressed development of the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2026-29, informed by consultation, evaluation and evidence gathered through the current strategy.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Areas for Improvement

- Improve consistency of early intervention and access to support, ensuring children, young people and families can receive help at the earliest stage and reducing reliance on specialist services.
- Further strengthen staff capacity and confidence through continued professional learning, wellbeing support and the wider implementation of effective supervision and peer support approaches.
- Embed Relationships and Behaviour approaches consistently across all settings, including implementation of the new Relationships & Behaviour Guidance, Anti-Bullying Policy and associated professional learning.
- Continue to develop trauma-informed practice across the system, ensuring consistent application of Core Approaches and positive relationships for learning.
- Strengthen communication and engagement with children, young people, families and staff, using survey findings and feedback to inform planning and improvement activity.
- Further develop the use of data and evaluation, including dashboard reporting and monitoring arrangements, to better evidence impact and support improvement planning.
- Evaluate the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway, ensuring effective implementation and consistent multi-agency support for children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs.
- Ensure sustainability and long-term impact of new approaches and commissioned services, through the implementation of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2026-29.

Relevant KPI details

During 2025/26 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was undertaken of the outcomes of all children and young people in Fife. This formed the basis for the new Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29. This included a review of a wide range of evidence on Health and Wellbeing.

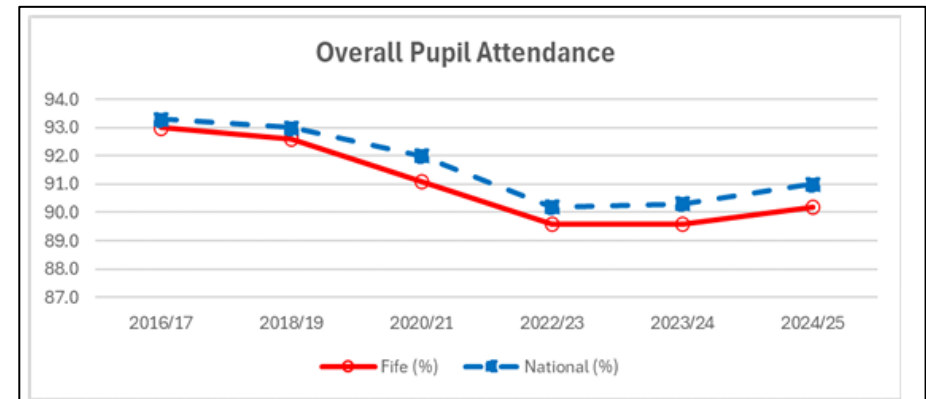
Although significant progress has been made in improving support for the wellbeing of young people, health and wellbeing continues to be an area for improvement.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 2 Improving Attendance and Engagement

Progress

- Attendance and engagement with learning have a significant impact on attainment and life chances.
- Improving attendance and engagement has been a national priority as well as a priority in the Directorate Plan 2023-26, supported by work with wider partners within the Fife Children's Services Plan 2023-26.
- The overall national attendance rate last year 2024/2025 was 91.0%. This result is an improvement of +0.7% on the previous year (90.3% in 2023/24). It is the highest annual rate of improvement recorded in the last five years, reflecting continued recovery.
- In line with the national picture, Fife's attendance reflects a strong uplift of +0.6% compared to the previous year (89.6% in 2023/24) and shows continuous improvement in recent years with overall attendance in 2024/2025 at 90.2%. In absolute terms, the gap between Fife and National attendance was 0.8 percentage points in 2024/25.



Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Other Areas of Progress

The SEEMIs Attendance codes have been reviewed and updated, with supportive resources created to raise awareness and aim for more consistent practice in their application. This has involved cross-authority partnership working.

A clear understanding of pupils' attendance issues enables schools to be successful in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. Data reports for schools have been improved, providing more comparison data and enabling schools to be more timeous in their actions.

All schools and Early Learning Centres have access to broad, comprehensive Engagement and Attendance guidance to support their practices in managing pupil absence and promoting attendance. This guidance will help to promote continuity of good practice across Fife.

Our new Supporting Attendance Toolkit developed by Fife Educational Psychology Service has been added to our guidance. The guidance takes account of research and provides a framework to gather information effectively and support schools' planning and implementation of effective interventions to re-engage young people. In particular, the toolkit aims to support those who are working with learners who have a profile of non-attendance.

Quality Improvement methodology practices connected to attendance have been built upon with new projects being undertaken as part of Education Scotland's Quality Improvement programme. These focused on testing changes and sharing learning on actions which helped to build pupil engagement and attendance in a range of contexts.

To help to develop our partnership working with parents and carers we have established area Parent Forum meetings. These aim to raise awareness and promote discussion around approaches to key themes for development within education, including how to build engagement and attendance.

Areas for Improvement

Work is being undertaken to develop a sustainable online offer for those disadvantaged by low attendance in Fife Secondary Schools. The focus is on improving this group of young people's engagement with learning, their connection with their school and key staff within it, to enable them to gain qualification and certification, which will enable them to have post-school opportunities in line with their aspirations.

Building an effective and coherent curriculum remains a central approach to strengthening pupil engagement across Fife. Through Scotland's Curriculum Improvement Cycle we continue to design, refine and implement key developments to ensure that children and young people experience learning that is relevant, engaging and appropriately challenge. Engagement in learning and school life is crucial to building pupil attendance.

We continue to develop ways to target support for families. Some schools use Pupil Equity Funding to employ Family Support Workers and other support staff to liaise with families to support young people's re-engagement in school. Our Family Engagement team continues to work with identified pupils from P6 to S3 and their families to support wellbeing and resilience and help to address barriers to attendance.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Relevant KPI details

There was a long-standing decline in attendance across Scotland prior to 2021/22. This trend has been reversed, and attendance levels are increasing. Although attendance for 2024/25 fell below the ambitious stretch targets set at the beginning of the Education Directorate Improvement Plan 2023-26, outcomes for the secondary sector compare well with the national average. Attendance for the primary sector is lower than the national average.

Attendance challenges remain complex and multi-factorial, driven by poverty, mental ill health, family circumstances and social pressures. Some groups continue to experience significantly lower attendance, including pupils from the most deprived areas, young carers, pupils with Additional Support Needs linked to family wellbeing, and those with English as an Additional Language. It is recognised that improving pupil attendance requires a multi-layered, partnership-based approach.

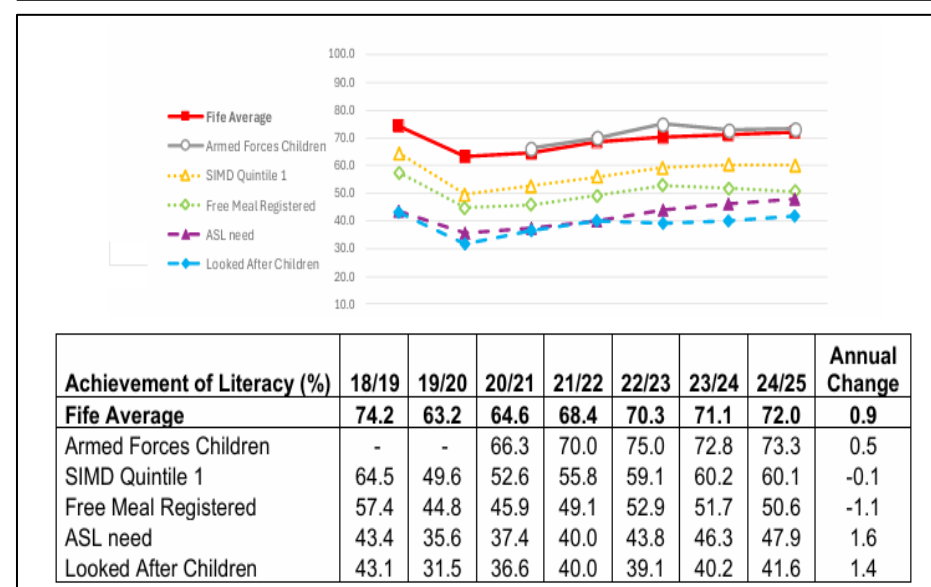
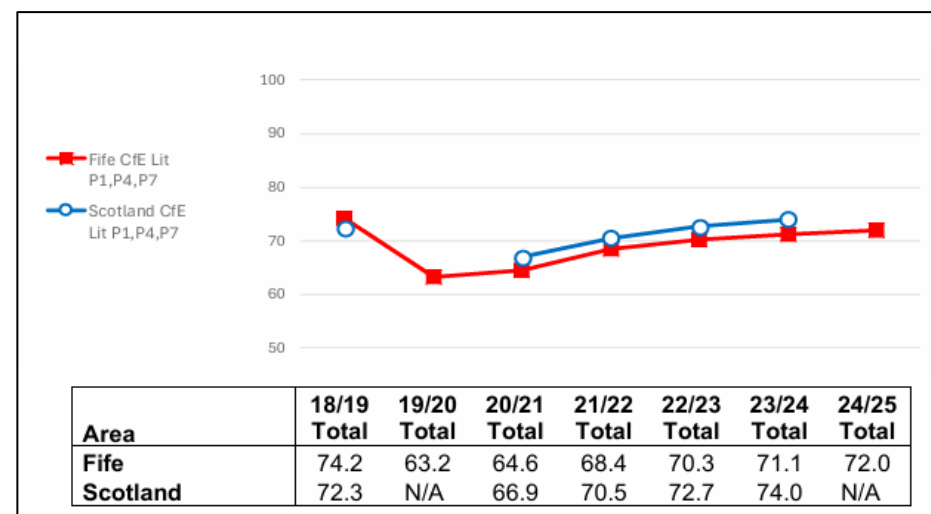
Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 3 Improving Achievement

Progress

Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in the BGE

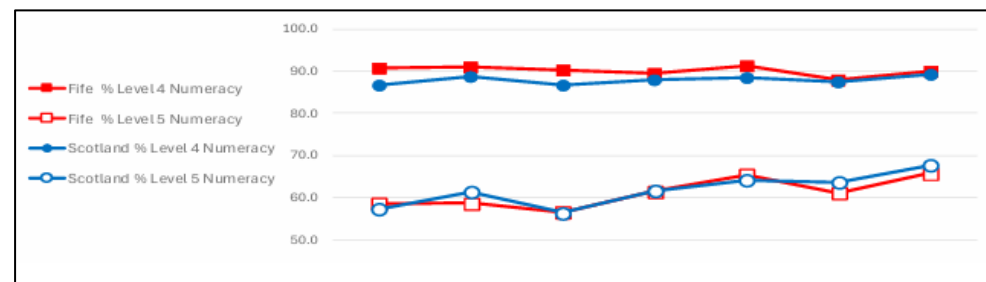
- The figure on the top right shows the combined CfE achievement level for literacy for pupils in stages P1, P4 and P7 of primary schools. CfE achievement fell during the pandemic but has seen a sustained improvement since.
- The figure on the bottom right shows the achievement level for literacy for groups of pupils who frequently face barriers to learning. While many groups have seen a generally improving trend in achievement over the past few years, Free Meal Registered and SIMD Quintile 1 pupils saw a slight decline.
- The rate of improvement for each group since the Covid pandemic has tracked with the Fife average. Because of this, the attainment gap seen for these groups has not closed significantly since 2019/20.
- Outcomes in SIMD Quintile 5 (the least deprived areas) have returned to pre-Covid levels of achievement. Outcomes in SIMD Quintile 1 (the most deprived areas) have seen some improvement over recent years but remain below pre-Covid levels.
- The general pattern of improvement for CfE achievement of numeracy since 2019/20 is similar to that for literacy.



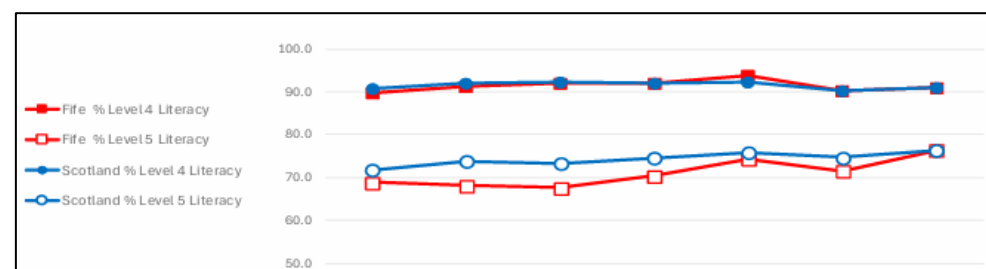
Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Literacy and Numeracy Attainment in the Senior Phase

- Literacy and numeracy attainment are key skills for learning and future sustained employability. Ensuring that young people are equipped with attainment in these skills is a goal by the end of stage S4.
- Outcomes in 2024/25 improved in Fife and across Scotland as a whole. Data indicates a recovery for stage S4 outcomes, particularly at SCQF level 4 and below.
- Outcomes at SCQF level 4 for numeracy in Fife have generally been at or around the 90% level. National attainment has progressively narrowed a long-standing attainment gap with Fife.
- Outcomes at SCQF level 5 for numeracy in Fife closely match those seen across Scotland, with both seeing a general improvement in attainment over time.
- Literacy attainment at SCQF level 4 in Fife closely match those seen across Scotland, at around the 90% level over time.
- Literacy attainment at SCQF level 5 in Fife have seen a sustained improvement since 2020/21 to close a long-standing attainment gap with national.



Area	Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Fife	% Level 4 Numeracy	90.7	91.0	90.3	89.5	91.3	88.1	90.0
Fife	% Level 5 Numeracy	58.6	58.7	56.6	61.5	65.4	61.2	65.9
Scotland	% Level 4 Numeracy	86.8	88.8	86.6	87.9	88.4	87.5	89.1
Scotland	% Level 5 Numeracy	57.4	61.4	56.4	61.6	64.2	63.7	67.7

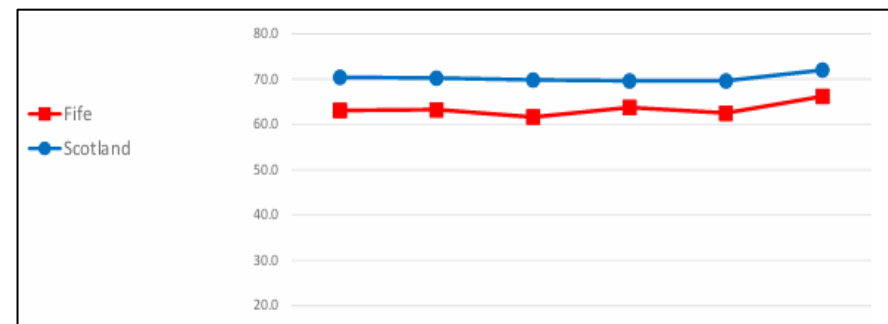


Area	Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Fife	% Level 4 Literacy	89.8	91.3	92.1	92.1	93.8	90.2	91.0
Fife	% Level 5 Literacy	68.9	68.1	67.6	70.5	74.4	71.6	76.4
Scotland	% Level 4 Literacy	90.9	92.0	92.2	92.0	92.3	90.3	91.0
Scotland	% Level 5 Literacy	71.8	73.8	73.3	74.6	75.9	74.8	76.4

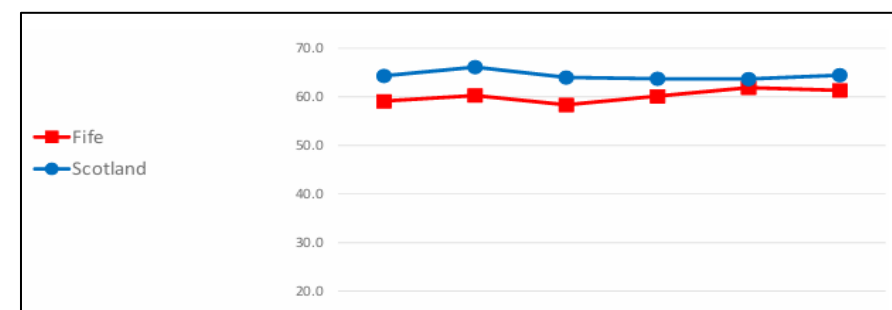
Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Wider Attainment in the Senior Phase

- Young people's ability to access post-school opportunities depends on their total qualification set when they leave school. This includes other aspects of attainment and achievement, as well as the core skills of literacy and numeracy.
- The Directorate introduced a revised set of measures, to support a greater focus on improving wider attainment. The measures reflect different pathways to post-school destinations and are:
 - 3 or more awards at SCQF level 5 by the end of S4 and 1 SCQF level 6 award by the end of stage S5.
 - 5 National 5 passes by the end of stage S4 and 3 Higher passes by the end of stage S5.
- The figure on the top right highlights trends for attainment of 3 or more awards at SCQF level 5. Achieving this qualification set equips a young person to apply for a range of training and employment opportunities, as well as enabling progress to further attainment at SCQF level 6. Outcomes have been relatively constant over earlier years but improved last year.
- The figure on the bottom right shows trends in time for attainment of 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6. Outcomes have seen a general improvement over recent years, with some closing of the gap with national outcomes, despite a slight decline in attainment in 2024/25, which, followed a slight decline in S4 outcomes in 2023/24.



3+ awards at SCQF level 5 (by end of S4)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Fife	63.1	63.3	61.6	63.7	62.5	66.2
Scotland	70.4	70.2	69.8	69.6	69.6	72.0



Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Other Areas of Progress

- Developed and piloted the Achievement Strategy and Fife Diploma of Achievement, creating a more consistent approach to recognising, profiling and tracking learner achievement across the 3-18 learner journey.
- Established a multi-agency steering group and engaged with a wide range of partners to shape wider achievement pathways and ensure alignment with national developments.
- Introduced and piloted achievement tracking, profiling and digital recognition tools, supporting more effective monitoring of learner achievement, skills development and wider achievements gained both within and beyond school.
- Developed curriculum rationale, planning guidance and professional learning to strengthen skills development, wider achievement and implementation of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) across sectors.
- Strengthened inclusive practice and support for learners with additional support needs through professional learning, revised guidance, improved planning processes and enhanced assessment and tracking approaches.
- Continued to improve literacy and numeracy through targeted attainment support, professional learning, moderation networks and quality improvement activity across schools and clusters.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Areas for Improvement

- Close the poverty-related attainment gap, particularly for learners living in SIMD Quintile 1 areas and those experiencing disadvantage.
- Improve Curriculum for Excellence literacy and numeracy achievement, particularly within the Broad General Education.
- Increase wider attainment at SCQF Levels 5 and 6, where outcomes continue to lag behind national performance.
- Further embed the Achievement Strategy and Fife Diploma of Achievement across all sectors to ensure consistent recognition and tracking of learner achievement.
- Strengthen learner pathways, skills development and wider achievement opportunities to support positive destinations.
- Continue to improve outcomes for learners with additional support needs through consistent planning, assessment and inclusive practice.
- Improve consistency in learning, teaching, assessment and moderation across settings and at key transition points.

Relevant KPI details

CfE Achievement levels in the primary sector have continued to improve. Literacy has shown a steady improvement; however, the rate of improvement for numeracy has slowed in recent years.

Literacy and numeracy outcomes in the senior phase continue to be strong, with S4 outcomes matching or exceeding national outcomes at SCQF Level 4. Outcomes at SCQF level 5 show a generally improving trend and are close to national outcomes.

Measures of wider attainment in S4 and S5 (measures of multiple awards and A-C passes at SCQF Level 5, National 5, SCQF Level 6 and Higher) continue to lag significantly behind national outcomes and those of comparable authorities.

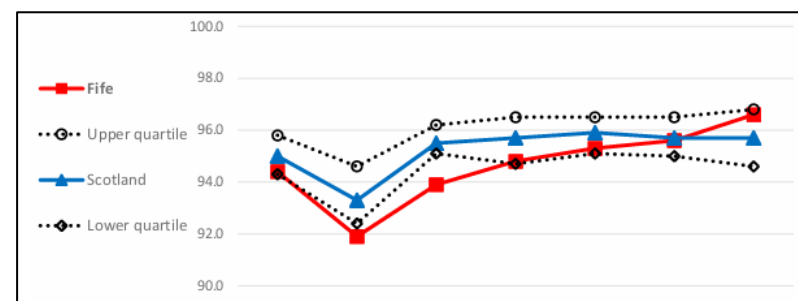
Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 4 Improving Positive Destinations

Progress

- The data in this section reports initial destinations data for young people who left Fife schools at the end of the 2024/25 school year. The figure on the top right shows the initial destinations of Fife school leavers, as compared with national outcomes. As can be seen, the percentage of school leavers entering a positive destination from school in Fife has improved over the past five years.
- Outcomes for Fife are now above national; **96.6% of Fife school leavers after the 2024/25 school year entered a positive destination**, compared with 95.7% nationally.
- The figure on the bottom right shows data for the percentage of school leavers entering a positive destination across a range of key groups within the school leaver cohort. These groups include young people whose educational outcomes are generally below the cohort average, as well as those with protected characteristics.
- The count figure shows the number of young people from each group in the school leaver cohort following the end of the 2024/25 school year. S4 leaver performance has improved

considerably following a targeted approach, with 5 schools achieving 100% positive destinations for the S4 cohort. Additionally, targeted resource has been directed to those care-experienced young people with the Fife outcome exceeding previous years and the national figure of 86.8%.



Positive Destinations	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Fife	94.4	91.9	93.9	94.8	95.3	95.6	96.6
Upper quartile	95.8	94.6	96.2	96.5	96.5	96.5	96.8
Scotland	95.0	93.3	95.5	95.7	95.9	95.7	95.7
Lower quartile	94.3	92.4	95.1	94.7	95.1	95.0	94.6
Gap with Scotland	-0.6	-1.4	-1.6	-0.9	-0.6	-0.1	0.9
Fife rank	23	27	29	21	21	18	11

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Count
All school leavers	94.4	91.9	93.9	94.8	95.3	95.6	96.6	4025
Minority ethnic	97.5	94.7	98.3	95.0	97.7	97.1	96.2	212
ASN	91.1	87.6	91.0	92.8	93.6	93.3	95.3	2350
S4 leavers	86.4	87.7	90.2	91.0	93.2	93.7	95.6	674
SIMD Quintile 1	90.9	86.6	90.7	93.4	92.1	92.4	94.3	933
Free School Meal	87.0	83.3	87.2	89.9	90.4	90.6	93.5	727
Looked After	78.5	86.9	85.3	86.2	85.6	81.7	92.2	103

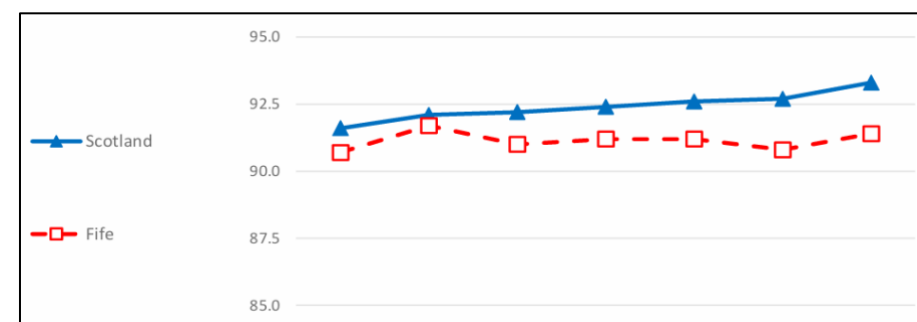
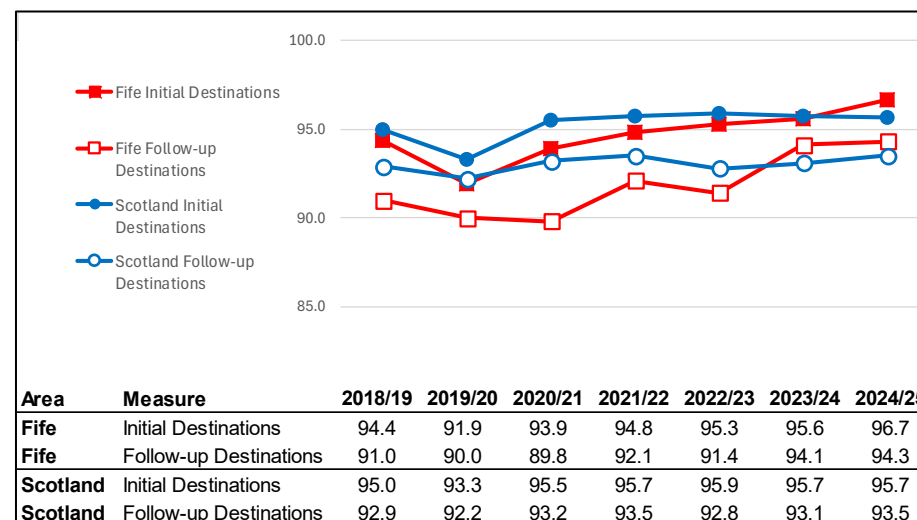
Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Follow up destinations

- Data on follow up destinations of school leavers were published in June, as shown on the top right figure. These reflect the destinations of school leavers nine months after the end of the school year. Follow-up positive destinations were **94.3% for 2024/25 school leavers** in Fife and continues to exceed the national average.

Participation measure

- The participation measure records involvement of 16-19 year olds in the local economy. This provides a longer-term view of outcomes for young people within the age range 16 to 19 years. This data is published for each local authority based on young people currently living in a local area, rather than those who attended school there.
- The figures to the right indicate data for 2025. It shows that the **participation rate for Fife young people improved in 2025**, reaching the highest level since 2020.



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Scotland	91.6	92.1	92.2	92.4	92.6	92.7	93.3
Fife	90.7	91.7	91	91.2	91.2	90.8	91.4

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Other Areas of Progress

- Positive destinations reached an **all-time high**, supported by strengthened tracking, monitoring and strategic oversight across schools and partners.
- Greater use of destination, participation and risk-group data improved early identification of young people requiring support and informed targeted interventions.
- Targeted approaches for key cohorts, including S4 leavers, care-experienced young people, learners affected by poverty, those with ASN and young people at risk of disengagement, were further developed and refined.
- Opportunities for All networks, Positive Destinations networks and partnership arrangements were strengthened, providing clearer referral pathways and more coordinated support for young people.
- The four Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) pillars (work experience, volunteering, leadership and enterprise) were further embedded across schools, increasing opportunities for young people to develop skills for learning, life and work.
- Employer engagement increased, supporting growth in work inspiration activity, work experience opportunities and wider employability pathways.
- The use of Workit, volunteering programmes and work-related learning pathways expanded, increasing access to meaningful employment and skills development opportunities.
- Mentoring and employability initiatives, including DYW Ambassadors, My Future Plan and MCR Pathways, strengthened personalised support and learner engagement.
- Quality assurance activity and targeted support with schools helped improve consistency of practice and strengthen local approaches to positive destinations and DYW.
- The Fife Diploma of Achievement pilot supported the recognition of wider achievement, employability skills and work-related learning through a more coherent learner pathway.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Areas for Improvement

- Further improve sustained positive destinations and reduce movement out of positive destinations over time.
- Strengthen outcomes for targeted groups, including S4 leavers, care-experienced young people, learners with ASN and those affected by poverty.
- Increase consistency in the use of work-related learning and work experience pathways across secondary schools.
- Improve the recording and analysis of enterprise, wider achievement and employability activity to better evidence impact.
- Continue to expand employer engagement and partnership working to increase opportunities and strengthen learner pathways.
- Embed the Fife Diploma of Achievement and wider achievement pathways to support progression into positive and sustained destinations.

Relevant KPI details

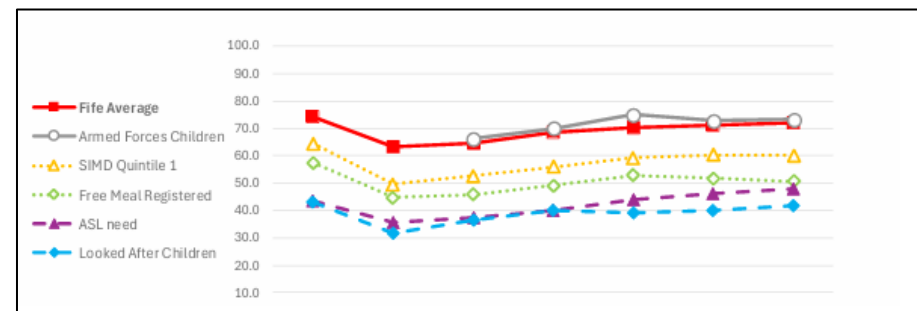
Initial Positive Destinations of school leavers have seen a sustained and significant improvement over recent years. They have exceeded the stretch targets set for the Education Directorate Plan 2023-26 and now exceed national outcomes.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

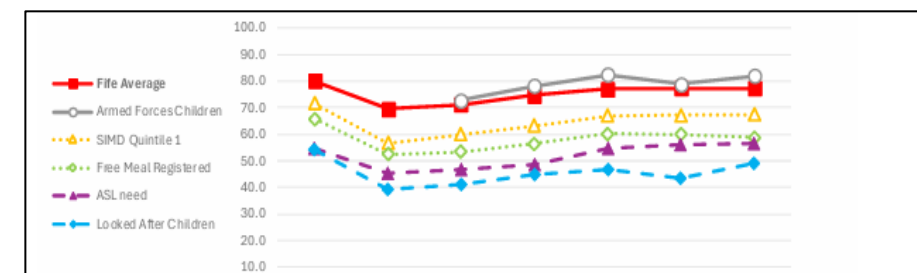
Cross-cutting priority Equity & Equality

Progress

- There are a range of barriers to child development and learning. These include: poverty (e.g. living in SIMD Quintile 1, being registered for free school meals); having an indicator of individual needs (e.g. Additional Support with Learning; an experience of care; speaking a language other than English or Scots at home), etc.
- Children and young people in these groups typically have poorer than average outcomes. The figures on the top and bottom right show the longer-term trends in achievement of CfE in literacy and numeracy for different groups of learners in stages P1, P4, and P7. The tables also show the change in outcomes seen in 2024/25 compared with the preceding year.
- Outcomes for a range of learners at risk of lower achievement have generally seen an improvement since 2019/2020. However, these improvements have generally tracked with the overall improvement seen for the cohort as a whole.



Achievement of Literacy (%)	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	Annual Change
Fife Average	74.2	63.2	64.6	68.4	70.3	71.1	72.0	0.9
Armed Forces Children	-	-	66.3	70.0	75.0	72.8	73.3	0.5
SIMD Quintile 1	64.5	49.6	52.6	55.8	59.1	60.2	60.1	-0.1
Free Meal Registered	57.4	44.8	45.9	49.1	52.9	51.7	50.6	-1.1
ASL need	43.4	35.6	37.4	40.0	43.8	46.3	47.9	1.6
Looked After Children	43.1	31.5	36.6	40.0	39.1	40.2	41.6	1.4



Achievement of Numeracy (%)	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	Annual Change
Fife Average	80.2	69.7	71.3	74.8	77.0	77.3	77.4	0.1
Armed Forces Children	-	-	72.9	78.3	82.4	79.0	82.1	3.1
SIMD Quintile 1	71.8	56.6	59.9	63.3	67.1	67.3	67.6	0.3
Free Meal Registered	65.8	52.5	53.4	56.4	60.2	60.1	58.9	-1.2
ASL need	54.9	45.2	46.9	48.7	54.9	56.2	56.7	0.5
Looked After Children	54.1	39.0	41.3	44.7	46.7	43.6	49.1	5.5

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

- Improving educational attainment for all groups is a key ambition in Plan for Fife and within the Education Directorate and Children's Services Plans. The Directorate is a significant contributor to the Fife Children's Services Partnership, working with partners to improve the collective impact of our work. Further information can be found in [Fife's Children's Services Annual Report 2025/26](#).
- The Strategic Equity Fund Oversight Group delivered its 2025/26 Plan focusing on a range of interventions aimed at closing the attainment gap. While it is difficult to demonstrate direct, short-term impact on school level attainment from individual SEF interventions, the Directorate is committed to delivering longer-term initiatives that effectively close the gap.
- Strengthened tracking and monitoring through the Progress system, supporting improved transition, planning and early intervention across early years, primary and secondary sectors.
- Expanded use of attainment and intervention data, with over 47,000 children and young people tracked by 3,000 staff, supporting more consistent and data-informed decision making.
- Engaged children, young people and families in the planning of PEF and Strategic Equity Fund activity, ensuring approaches better reflect local needs and priorities.
- Strengthened the visibility of equity and equality across Directorate strategies and improvement activity, ensuring inclusion remains a consistent thread throughout service delivery.

Other Areas of Progress

- Delivered targeted support across all 18 clusters through PT Closing the Gap and cluster-based interventions focused on reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Continued review of attainment plans and stretch targets strengthened improvement planning, accountability and the early identification of gaps in performance.
- Delivered targeted literacy and numeracy professional learning, including Core Literacy, Core Numeracy, Conceptual Understanding in Numeracy and Writing programmes.
- Projected attainment improved across targeted cohorts, including improvements in Writing (+3.78%), Numeracy (+2.83%) and Reading (+5.71%).

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to close the poverty-related attainment gap in literacy and numeracy for learners disadvantaged by poverty or a protected characteristic.
- Strengthen engagement and participation for learners facing barriers to education and attainment.
- Maintain a clear focus on planning, interventions and attainment stretch targets to accelerate improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged learners.
- Further develop tracking, monitoring and data analysis tools to support improvement discussions and targeted interventions.

Relevant KPI details

Generally, across KPIs and other measures, outcomes for disadvantaged groups of learners (those living in SIMD Quintile 1, those registered for free school meals, those with Additional Support Needs, and care experienced learners) have improved over recent years.

However, the rate of improvement for these groups has tended to track improvements for more advantaged learners. Progress with closing equity gaps in all outcomes continues to be a challenge.

Performance assessment – Operational delivery

Overview of progress

All results against key indicators can be found in Appendix 1 and online at www.fife.gov.uk/councilperformance to facilitate feedback and scrutiny.

Progress

During 2025/26, the Directorate completed a review of its structure and developed a new organisational model to better support ongoing improvement. The new structure is based on three improvement pillars: **Improving Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Meeting Learners' Needs; and Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways**. Each Pillar Group is overseen by a Head of Service and a team of Education Managers and Quality Improvement Officers, providing greater clarity of focus, leadership and accountability for improvement activity across the Directorate.

Overall, we have:

- Strengthened quality assurance and self-evaluation processes, helping us develop a clearer understanding of our strengths, the areas where improvement is most needed and where we can make the greatest difference.
- Developed a new organisational structure aligned to three improvement pillars, providing a clearer framework for

leadership, collaboration and improvement activity across the Directorate.

- Increased the use of evidence, performance information and quality improvement methods to support sharper decision-making and improvement planning.

Challenges

- Achieving greater consistency across schools and ELCs while responding to the diverse needs of children and young people.
- Responding to increasingly complex learner needs and rising demand for support across the system.
- Preparing for a period of significant national reform, including the Curriculum Improvement Cycle and ASN reform.

Areas for improvement

- Further strengthen leadership and improvement capability at all levels, building on the expertise that exists across our schools, ELCs and central teams.
- Build greater consistency across the system through shared expectations, effective collaboration and disciplined implementation of improvement activity.
- Embed the new Directorate structure and continue to strengthen the conditions required to deliver sustained improvement at scale.

Our year ahead

Priorities for 2026/27

Evidence and engagement

The Education Directorate has developed its Directorate Improvement Plan for 2026/27. This plan has been shaped by a wide range of evidence, engagement and improvement activity across our education system. It builds on a review of progress against the Directorate Improvement Plan 2023-26, including a series of self-evaluation discussions during 2025-26 which considered the impact of improvement activity, outcomes for learners and the evidence presented.

The new Plan (2026/27) reflects the views and experiences of those who know our system best, including children and young people, staff, school leaders, partners and communities. Feedback was gathered through meetings, surveys and ongoing engagement around key strategies and priorities. The plan has been informed by collaborative work through the ADES Quad and ongoing improvement activity supported by Fife CYPIC. This enabled us to recognise what has worked well, identify areas requiring further attention and shape our future direction.

Overall, we have strengthened our approach to planning by using Quality Improvement methods, including Driver Diagrams, to articulate our theory of change across each strategic priority. The development of these Driver Diagrams was informed through engagement with the Extended Leadership Team and Secondary Networks, ensuring they reflect both strategic and operational experience. This work helped us identify the key drivers and actions most likely to have the greatest impact.

What the evidence told us

Our review of progress identified three key themes as essential to improvement in schools and ELCs:

- 1. Improving Learning, Teaching & Assessment**
- 2. Meeting Learners' Needs**
- 3. Strengthening Our Curricular Pathways**

These themes reflect the core aspects of education and provide a basis to support ongoing improvement work.

As a key partner within Children in Fife, we have also contributed to the development of the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) and the [Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29](#). The Directorate, particularly our Early Years workforce, has a key role to play in delivering the Children's Services priorities.

Reference links

Education Scrutiny Committee

Further information can be found in the following papers to Fife Council committees and the Fife Partnership Board, regarding strategic approaches of the Directorate and the outcomes & experiences of children, young people & families in Fife.

16 September 2025 (paper available at: https://www.fife.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/49454/Education-Scrutiny-Committee-Public-Agenda-Pack-16-09-2025.pdf)

1. Report on Progress on Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway
2. Education Directorate Improvement Plan update for 2025/26 and Annual Report 2024/25

25 November 2025 (paper available at: https://www.fife.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/56456/Education-Scrutiny-Committee-Public-Agenda-Pack-25-11-2025.pdf)

3. Attainment in the Broad General Education (BGE)
4. Senior Phase Stage-Based Outcomes

27 January 2026 (paper available: <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/about-your-council2/politicians-and-committees/committees/fife-wide-or-strategic/education-scrutiny/meetings/education-scrutiny-committee-27th-january-2026>)

5. Supporting Refugee, Asylum Seeking and Displaced Young People with English as an Additional Language in Education
6. Inspection Outcomes August 2024- June 2025

17 March 2026 (paper available: <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/about-your-council2/politicians-and-committees/committees/fife-wide-or-strategic/education-scrutiny/meetings/education-scrutiny-committee-17th-march-2026>)

7. Languages in Fife
8. Attendance Update Report March 2026

19 May 2026 (paper available: <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/about-your-council2/politicians-and-committees/committees/fife-wide-or-strategic/education-scrutiny/meetings/education-scrutiny-committee-19th-may-2026>)

9. Transforming Learning- Fife Update

10. Destinations of School Leavers

11. Strategic Equity Fund- Session 25/26

Fife Partnership Board

12 May 2026 (papers available at: <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/about-your-council2/politicians-and-committees/committees/fife-wide-or-strategic/fife-partnership-board/meetings/12th-may-2026>)

12. Fife Children's Services Plan 2026-29

Appendix 1 – Key indicators

Key KPI Status:  OK  Warning  Alert  Data only  Unknown **Trend:**  Improving  No change  Getting worse

Customer

Performance Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	National 2024/25	Status	Trend
Children in Relative Low Income Families AHC (after housing costs)	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.2%	16.2%	14.8%		
Proportion of funded early years provision which is graded good/better	98.0%	96.8%	93.6%	94.9%	96.0%	89.0%		
HMIE inspection outcomes (good or better) across all QIs in all schools	N/A	N/A	63.2%	67.4%	75.0%	68.4%		

P4F

Performance Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Target	Status	Trend
Percentage attendance of children at school (Primary)	94.1%	90.7%	91.3%	91.5%	92.0%	93.1%		
Percentage attendance of children at school (Secondary)	91.1%	86.8%	87.3%	87.2%	87.9%	88.4%		
P1, P4, P7 CfE Achievement - Literacy	64.6%	68.4%	70.3%	71.1%	72.0%	73.1%		
P1, P4, P7 CfE Achievement - Numeracy	71.3%	74.8%	77.0%	77.3%	77.4%	79.6%		
S4 literacy at SCQF level 5	67.6%	70.5%	74.4%	71.6%	76.4%	76.4%		
S4 Numeracy at SCQF level 5	56.6%	61.5%	65.4%	61.2%	65.9%	67.7%		
Positive destinations - initial	93.9%	94.8%	95.3%	95.6%	96.7%	96.2%		

Resources

Performance Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	National 2024/25	Status	Trend
Cost per pre-school education place	£9,405	£10,502	£10,743	£11,450	£12,552	£12,055		
Cost per primary school pupil	£6,543	£6,749	£7,062	£7,077	£7,381	£ 7,606		
Cost per secondary school pupil	£6,543	£6,749	£7,062	£7,077	£8,970	£9,338		

Service Operations

Performance Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	National 2024/25	Status	Trend
S4 Literacy at SCQF level 4	92.1%	92.1%	93.8%	90.2%	91.0%	91.0%		
S4 Numeracy at SCQF level 4	90.3%	89.5%	91.3%	88.1%	90.0%	89.1%		
3 or more awards at SCQF level 5 by end of S4	63.3%	61.6%	63.7%	62.5%	66.2%	72.0%		
5 or more National 5 (A-C) passes by end of S4	39.6%	36.7%	36.9%	34.7%	35.4%	44.5%		
1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 by end of S5	60.3%	58.3%	60.1%	61.9%	61.5%	64.5%		
3 or more Higher (A-C) passes by end of S5	35.2%	31.4%	28.3%	27.3%	27.5%	34.4%		

