

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee

4 November 2020

Scrutiny Committee

2 December 2020

ATTAINMENT AND PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING UPDATE 2020

**Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report No. 20/210)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update on progress made in Perth and Kinross to raise attainment and close the poverty-related attainment gap. It outlines the range of measures implemented to improve performance and monitor progress of improvements, including the use of Pupil Equity Funding to support learners. It meets the requirements to report on the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for education and on the expenditure and impact of the Pupil Equity Fund.

1. MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1. The Scottish Government published [statutory guidance](#) in 2017 outlining the local education authority's duties regarding Standards in Scotland's Schools. Education authorities are required to demonstrate how they have delivered against the strategic priorities of the [National Improvement Framework](#) (NIF) for Education. The guidance promotes a reduction in inequalities in education experienced by children and young people as a result of socio-economic disadvantage. Education authorities are required to publish annual plans and reports setting out the measures they have taken in order to realise the NIF aims of achieving excellence and equity in education.
- 1.2. Subsequently, further guidance issued in 2018 requested that this reporting include information on the use and impact of [Pupil Equity Funding](#) within the education authority, which is allocated directly to schools, and is targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This report meets all of these national reporting requirements.

2. ATTAINMENT UPDATE REPORT

- 2.1. This report is an update on the final year of the [2016-2019 Raising Attainment Strategy](#) and Implementation Plan. The strategy document outlined the approach within Perth & Kinross Council's (PKC) and Education & Children's Services (ECS) in the pursuance of the current priorities of the NIF which are:
 - Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
 - Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged;
 - Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and

- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

2.2. A new [Raising Attainment Strategy](#) was agreed by the Lifelong Learning Committee on 26 August 2020 ([Report No. 20/140 refers](#)), along with its associated [Raising Attainment Implementation Plan 2020-2021](#). This builds on the work of the 2016-2019 strategy and is organised around the five PKC Themes which are closely aligned to the four NIF Priorities:

1. Leadership at all Levels
2. Excellence in Learning and Teaching
3. Effective Interventions
4. Engaging with Families and Communities
5. Use of Evidence and Data

2.3. This report (provided as Appendix 1) provides information on progress made in 2019/20 towards each of the four NIF priorities. Key performance headlines that are reported include:

- There has been an improvement in the proportion of children meeting developmental milestones at age 27-30 months. Prior to joining primary school, around 1 in 5 children are assessed as not meeting at least one development milestone appropriate for their age.
- Attainment across literacy and numeracy at P1, P4, P7 and S3, based on teacher judgements of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels, was not formally gathered in 2020. However, earlier information on predictions indicate that some progress continues to be made in all areas of literacy and numeracy and across all year groups, building on improvements seen in recent years.
- For school leavers, literacy and numeracy qualifications achieved continue to increase across both Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5. For level 5 in numeracy, the latest figure remains slightly behind the virtual comparator, indicating continued focus is required. There are encouraging signs of the poverty gap closing for these indicators.
- Beyond literacy and numeracy, senior phase attainment for leavers continues to be good and above or at virtual comparator in most cases. However, poverty-related gaps remain evident in all areas of attainment and leaver destination gaps remain but are narrowing slowly. It may be that narrowing of gaps in these areas will be seen over a longer time period, once the effects of improvements and interventions earlier in young peoples' lives (including PEF) become evident for school leavers.
- Literacy and numeracy qualifications for looked after children are improving, although these generally remain behind those of peers who are not looked after. Positive destinations for looked after young people are also growing.
- Initial and follow-up school leaver destinations and 16-19 participation rates have grown further from an already high level, remaining one of the highest figures nationally.
- Exclusions from school continue to decline. Overall attendance is also slowly declining, but the unique circumstances surrounding this session

with the Coronavirus pandemic led to increased school absence in the weeks before lockdown and this has affected overall annual figures.

- Effective partnership takes place between schools, colleges, universities, employers and the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Board. A total of 489 business partnerships with schools were recorded in 2019/20.

- 2.4. Based on the progress to date, the updated Raising Attainment Strategy 2020-2023 clearly sets out the revised performance measures and updated aspirational stretch aims. The PKC Approach within the strategy details the responsibilities for schools and the local authority.

3. PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING (PEF)

Background

- 3.1. The allocation of PEF is currently in its fifth year and is allocated directly to schools from the Scottish Government. It is specifically targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. A total of £750m has been committed to this funding as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme. PEF will continue to be invested in schools until the end of the current Parliamentary term.
- 3.2. Beneficially, schools have been informed as to their PEF funding budgets for the next two years, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, which will enable them to forward plan for developments more effectively.
- 3.3. PEF is allocated to schools on the basis of the estimated number of children and young people in P1-S3 registered for free school meals. Funding is allocated on the basis of £1200 for each child and young person. It must be used to provide support for those affected by poverty, to help them achieve their full potential and give them the same opportunities to succeed.
- 3.4. Within the Scottish Attainment Challenge, funding was also made available in August 2020 to help improve the educational outcomes of care experienced children and young people. An allocation has been made to the Council for this session 2020/2021 of a grant of up to £228,000, payable over the current academic year.
- 3.5. Headteachers have full access to PEF funding and meet regularly with their Finance Officer to review spending. Although funding is allocated on the basis of eligibility described above, Headteachers are permitted to use their discretion in making decisions about which children and young people would benefit most from any particular intervention or approach, whilst keeping a clear focus on delivering equity.
- 3.6. There is a continued expectation that funding will focus particularly on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All schools develop a school improvement plan indicating PEF priorities, outlining planning for universal and targeted approaches. Currently, schools have developed a COVID-19 Recovery Plan to determine the key priorities for this session.

2020/2021 Allocation

- 3.7. In session 2020/2021, schools were allocated £1,699,113 of funding, which was allocated to almost all the 72 primary schools, all 11 secondary schools and one special school. Goodlyburn Primary was awarded the greatest PEF allocation of £108,082 and St John's Academy, an all-through school, was awarded £93,044 in total. Full details of allocations and expenditure for 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years to the end of August 2020 are included in Appendix 2.
- 3.8. In funding session 2019/20, a total of £1,620,161 was spent. A carry forward of £686,441 was taken into 2020/21. At the end of July 2020, 85% of 2019/20 PEF allocation had been spent.

Guidance and Planning

- 3.9. Revised Local PEF Guidance was issued to all schools in June 2020. This aligns closely with the Scottish Government's updated National Guidance. The guidance exemplified the Scottish Government's advice on relaxing the use of PEF in response to the financial and resource implications brought by the COVID-19 Pandemic, to ensure critical provision for children and families. Although there will be a more flexible approach in the use of PEF, decisions will remain consistent with the principle of equity in education. PKC will work in partnership with schools to support the education and care of children and young people where it is most needed.
- 3.10. School Improvement Framework Guidance was issued to schools in August and schools were signposted to organisations which provide research-based interventions. These included the Education Endowment Fund (EEF), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), The National Improvement Hub and Education Scotland's Interventions for Equity. These were kept regularly updated on the PKC Education SharePoint site for schools to access.
- 3.11. In response to the COVID-19 Recovery stage, all schools have developed contingency planning which includes a focus on home learning, as well as blended learning approaches. This is in place across the local authority and will ensure schools are well organised to maximise teaching and learning opportunities for children and young people and enable continuity in learning should groups, classes or schools require to access some or all of their learning at home at any point this session.
- 3.12. A number of plans are in place to further support schools in the implementation of PEF plans, working in collaboration with the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor:
- Specific discussions with schools to provide support and challenge;
 - Signposting local and national guidance and resources through the PKC Education SharePoint site;
 - Providing virtual bespoke PEF discussion drop-ins for all schools;
 - Sharing good practice locally and nationally through Microsoft Sway presentations and snapshot case studies; and

- Further developing virtual Equity Network Sessions to connect staff with equity roles across the authority.

3.13. The PEF planning format is structured to enable staff to consider:

- Gaps in attainment and the rationale for selecting particular cohorts of pupils.
- Baseline data available, including the use of common key measures, eg attainment, achievement, attendance, exclusions, participation rates, parental engagement and leaver destinations.
- Identifying appropriate universal, and targeted, strategies and interventions.
- Opportunities to work in partnership with other schools within their Local Management Group (LMG), comparator school groups or within the Tayside Regional Collaborative.
- Opportunities to involve other agencies and third sector organisations.
- Support they may need from staff at the centre.
- The impact of interventions.
- Reporting on progress made.

3.14. Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) will carry out follow up discussions in relation to PEF with Headteachers during virtual Local Management Group Meetings and planned Term Two visits. A 'Closing the Gap' Planning Tool has been developed which closely aligns to PKC Improvement Methodology. This will be trialled by a group of schools in Session 2020-21 with a view to rolling it out to all schools next session. The Planning Tool will enable schools to track pupil progress and highlight the impact of interventions and planned measures to close attainment gaps.

Interventions

3.15. Schools have focused closely on a range of approaches to enhance the universal provision for children and young people, especially as they are returning to the school environment after a period of home learning.

3.16. In 2019/20, PEF plans for Literacy and Numeracy development consisted of two-thirds universal provision and one-third targeted support for specific cohorts.

3.17. Two-thirds of school PEF plans outlined universal support in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing interventions. Within the plans, nearly half of planned interventions were literacy based, a quarter focused on numeracy and well over three-quarters focused on health and wellbeing.

3.18. One-third of all planned interventions in numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing were targeted in order to meet the needs of particular cohorts of children. Numeracy and literacy strategies were the main focus however, there were a small number of targeted health and wellbeing strategies planned for particular individuals and groups.

- 3.19. Schools were well supported in considering appropriate interventions and the support was available from the Educational Psychology (EPS) team in their implementation. Support also included advice and guidance from QIOs, Education Support Officers (ESOs) and the Attainment Advisor.
- 3.20. Several schools continued to focus on Parental Engagement, which research shows progresses a child or young person's learning by at least 3 months, through planned activities such as 'Brunch and Blether', Families Connect, Pause, Prompt, Praise and the Solihull Approach.
- 3.21. In several instances schools employed staff with a range of skills to support children and young people in their learning. Staff roles included: Early Childhood Practitioners (ECPs), Modern Apprentices, probationer teachers, PEF teachers and Acting Depute Headteachers. An example of effective practice was where a secondary school employed a teacher with a primary sector background to work with identified learners within the Broad General Education. The staff member brought a wealth of experience and expertise in learning and teaching approaches to support learners working at First and Second Level of Curriculum for Excellence. Strong collaboration and planning by staff with literacy responsibilities, between departments and library staff, helped to improve outcomes for young people.
- 3.22. Other resources purchased to support learners included digital devices such as laptops and iPads, curriculum resources, classroom equipment and materials (detailed in Appendix Two).

Monitoring and Evaluation of Impact

- 3.23. Although PEF is allocated directly to primary and secondary schools within Perth and Kinross, the local authority is required to monitor and evaluate its use including reporting to the Scottish Government. Individual schools report on the impact of PEF interventions within their annual Standard and Quality Reports.
- 3.24. During the course of 2019/20, the Raising Attainment Board was further established with representatives from across ECS becoming members. One of the board's main roles will be to monitor the impact of PEF expenditure and the impact of interventions to close the poverty related gap.
- 3.25. The Education Psychology Service provided a range of support for schools with evaluation including training workshops on literacy and numeracy interventions and evaluation support around self-regulation. Four Improvement Methodology sessions are provided each year, led by an Educational Psychologist, QIO, the Analysis & Improvement team and Attainment Advisor. These provide school leaders with the opportunity to analyse their school data, identify gaps in learning for cohorts of children and young people and to plan suitable interventions to close gaps in learning.
- 3.26. A Perth and Kinross Education SharePoint site was developed over session 2019/20. This is designed as a central point for practitioners to access key local and national policies, find support resources and to share good practice

across schools. Within the SharePoint site is a section specifically for Raising Attainment materials including the Raising Attainment Strategy and Implementation Plan.

- 3.27. Equity Networks took place during session 2019/20. These were very well attended and the programme focused on particular subjects including: rural and urban poverty, attendance, case studies: home and away, and universal equity: an equitable approach for all. Participants all had a PEF remit and school roles included Pupil Support Assistants, Attendance Officers, PEF Principal Teachers, senior leaders and member of the welfare team.
- 3.28. Over the course of the year, up until March 2020, the School Improvement Team visited all schools, meeting with Senior Management Teams and staff to provide support and challenge in relation to raising attainment and closing the poverty related gap. Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor worked with 4 Primary schools and 4 Secondary schools to: discuss pupil data; identify gaps and plan for PEF; consider small PEF spend; explore pastoral mapping and look at strategies for closing the poverty related gap in more detail, focusing on attendance.
- 3.29. The Analysis and Improvement Team continued to provide support to schools and carried out visits or remote support last session to help schools organise and understand their tracking and monitoring and evaluation data more effectively.

Next steps in Supporting Schools

- 3.30. The Scottish Government has outlined that for the near future there can be a more relaxed use of PEF by schools to help support children and young people during the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, schools will continue to be supported in developing PEF plans for session 2020/21, discussing spending and evaluating the impact of measures taken.
- 3.31. An online Closing the Gap planning tool has been developed which will be piloted during the session by a small group of primary and secondary schools. This online tool will help schools to carefully plan and track the progress being made over the course of the year.
- 3.32. Improvement Methodology Sessions will be carried out virtually this session and will be supported by the Educational Psychology team, Quality Improvement Team and the Attainment Advisor. An introduction to Model for Improvement will also be provided to participants. These sessions will be offered to schools who have not participated previously, as well as to new Headteachers.
- 3.33. Virtual Equity Networks will be provided and these will include a focus on 'Intensifying Support for Children and Young People', PEF workshops and presentations, Holistic Assessments and sharing good practice across schools.

- 3.34. The PKC Education SharePoint site will be utilised to share good practice and support materials. Schools will be encouraged to take part in 'snapshot' case studies to promote the success of interventions and to highlight raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 3.35. The Raising Attainment Board will produce a quarterly Raising Attainment Newsletter which will set out expectations for schools and the local authority in meeting the Raising Attainment Implementation Plan's main actions.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. The report outlines the continuous activity and progress across ECS to achieve the priorities of the NIF, including use of PEF to aid tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 4.2. While there are a number of improvements being made in many areas, there remain some stubborn inequalities in outcomes for children and young people affected by deprivation. The activities described, and the successes outlined, are part of a long-term and sustained endeavour to achieve both excellence and equity in pre-school and school education.
- 4.3. It is recommended that the Lifelong Learning Committee:
- (i) Considers the contents of this report.
- 4.4. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:
- (i) Scrutinises and comments as appropriate on this report.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to objective No. (ii).

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to objective No. (ii).

- 1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the key policy area:

- Change and Improvement

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 N/A.

Workforce

- 2.2 N/A.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 N/A.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 This report been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 This report has been considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.

The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 N/A.

3.5 N/A.

Risk

3.6 N/A.

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The report was developed in collaboration with Heads of Service, Managers and staff across ECS.

External

4.2 N/A.

5. Communication

5.1 N/A.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Attainment Update 2019 - 2020

Appendix 2: 2020/2021 PEF Expenditure, by school