

Attainment Update for Midlothian in Primary and Secondary Schools

Report by Michelle Strong, Chief Education Officer

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

- To note the significant progress, strengths and improvements in our children and young people's attainment in both primary and secondary schools as outlined in this report.
- To note and acknowledge the strategies adopted to address areas for continuous improvement outlined in this report.
- To congratulate all pupils, parents/carers and staff on the improvements in attainment during session 2024/5.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the annual update on attainment for Midlothian's children and young people on two key datasets: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) and Senior Phase Insight update. These two dataset updates provide important indications of the attainment of our children and young people at various stages from P1 to S6. This report highlights the successes and challenges at various points, along with plans to address these and ultimately improve the outcomes for all our children and young people. The stretch aims for Midlothian Council for the period to 2026/27 are also presented here as part of the Scottish Governments programme for raising attainment.

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3 Background

- 3.1** The purpose of this report is to present the current position, trend outlook and comparison to national and comparator performance for our children and young people's attainment in Midlothian. The report will examine two core sets of data to highlight areas of strength and improvement in our primary and secondary schools. Including both sets of data allows analysis of the whole school journey which will be important to monitor, track and analyse going forward to have a robust understanding of how children and young people are performing and how we can support improvements to enable them to reach their full potential.
- 3.2** The first set of data to be examined is the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) update for 2024/5. This data set compares our current performance versus the national and comparator levels for 2023/4, as the statistical summary for Scotland and other local authorities will be published mid, December 2025. The statistical summary provides information on the proportion of school pupils who have achieved the expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels in literacy and numeracy relevant to their stage. The data is based on teachers' professional judgements for the percentage of pupils who have achieved the expected CfE levels in reading; writing; listening and talking; and numeracy in all Primary 1 (P1 - Early Level), Primary 4 (P4 - First Level), Primary 7 (P7 - Second Level) and Secondary 3 (S3 - Third Level) pupils in mainstream schools. Further information on the Broad General Education and Curriculum for Excellence can be found [here](#).
- 3.3** The second set of data is extracted from the Insight Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool which was updated in September 2025. Insight is the professional benchmarking tool for analysing attainment data in the senior phase, accessible by secondary schools and local authorities. It is designed to support improvement within schools and for young people in S4 to S6. There are two releases of Insight per year, the first of which is in September and provides year group-based attainment data for previous sessions. The second February update adds initial leaver destinations data for those who left school in the previous academic year, which allows for analysis of data on cohorts of young people at the point of exit from the Senior Phase. This report will cover the annual cohort level update for session 2024/5.
- 3.4** As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, local authorities set ambitious, achievable stretch aims for progress in overall attainment and towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap in each academic year. Stretch aims are targets we are aiming for in relation to learner attainment in literacy and numeracy, positive destinations, attendance and participation. These are embedded within the Education Service plan and school improvement plans and are shared annually with Scottish Government as part of the statutory plan and reporting process. Progress throughout the session is monitored by the central Quality Improvement Team working with their link schools. Schools receive support if needed to work towards their stretch aims. Detail on our stretch aims can be found in Appendix B.

4 Attainment Summary

- 4.1** Appendix B presents a more detailed summary of the attainment from the ACEL update. The following key messages provide some detail on children and young people's attainment:

4.1.1 ACEL – Literacy & Numeracy

There have been significant improvements across the board in both primary and secondary settings, for pupils achieving expected CfE levels in P1, P4, P7 and S3. In almost all cases, the figures for 2024/5 are the best on record, since the resumption of the collection of ACEL data in 2021-22. The most noticeable improvements have been in Literacy for P4, P7 and S3. Improvements have also been made in terms of closing the poverty-related attainment gap, with all literacy and numeracy measures closing and exceeding the stretch aim for 24/25.

4.1.2 Insight

a. Literacy & Numeracy

There have been significant improvements in S4, with Level 5 figures the highest over the five-year period. Almost all measures are significantly much greater than the Virtual Comparator (VC). In S5 there have been year-on-year improvements since 2022 for Numeracy at Levels 5 and 6. Most other figures are in line with the VC.

In S6, the figures for Numeracy Level 5 and 6 are the highest over the five-year period. Figures are all in line with the VC.

b. Improving Attainment for All

For almost all measures, figures are in line with the VC.

c. Breadth & Depth

Overall, S4 shows an improving picture, with figures comparing well to the VC. In S5, the figures are broadly in line with the VC. The significant improvements since 2023 have been consolidated. The figures for S6 are the highest over the five-year period.

d. Gap Measures

There is evidence of closing the poverty-related attainment gap for most measures, compared to 2024. In S4 of pupils in receipt of free school meals was the highest it has been in in 5 years. In S6 there was a significant reduction in the gap compared to the previous year.

4.2 In summary there have been considerable improvements in performance across most measures. The most significant improvements are in Literacy/Writing in P4, P7 and S3, and also in the performance of S4 pupils in most areas. There are however some areas to address in the coming session: addressing the slight decrease in Listening & Talking in P1; consolidating the improvements in S4 as pupils progress into S5; and supporting the highest-attaining 20% in S6 to achieve better quality passes. These are being addressed as set out in the education service plan.

4.3 Education priorities and developments to support raising attainment

Throughout 2025/26 education services, schools and settings are focused on a single priority to address improvements to attainment across our schools. This priority is “We will raise attainment and achievement to ensure that all children and young people in Midlothian achieve outcomes which lead to positive and sustained destinations.”

The Service Improvement Plan has two main workstreams. This gives clear direction to all activity around raising attainment. The workstreams are;

- 1 Inclusive Learning, teaching, assessment & curriculum (iLTAC)
- 2 Wellbeing, Support and Partnerships (WSPs)

The Excellence and Equity Board, chaired by the Education Chief Operating Officer, holds workstream leads and data and performance lead to account at termly meetings.

Raising Attainment Strategy

- In 2025-2026 we will continue to engage schools with the Raising Attainment strategy. The impact of the strategy will be closely monitored by the Excellence & Equity Board. There has been a continued focus on the use of data for raising attainment and an attainment data timeline ensures regular, robust data focused action at system level.
- Associated School Groups (ASGs) have focussed on joined up approaches to monitoring and promoting good attendance in school. There are refreshed approaches to reporting poor attendance to parents and explaining why attendance is linked directly to attainment and achievement.

Inclusive Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Curriculum

- The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) and Curriculum Strategies were co-constructed by a subgroup of school leaders and central officers and combined to form the draft Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Curriculum Strategy Paper. All senior leadership teams across our schools have engaged with the strategy paper which is now in use in our schools.
- Midlothian Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework has been launched this session. It has also been informed by research and extensive consultation with stakeholders. The Framework outlines the key features of highly effective and inclusive, learning, teaching and assessment. The Framework will be used by schools to improve inclusive learning, teaching and assessment where this is required. The Framework will also support our work to raise attainment, through effective and inclusive, learning, teaching and assessment. Professional Learning has been designed to support the use of the framework.

Moderation to support teacher judgements

- Every Midlothian primary school is being supported to effectively moderate teacher professional judgements. This activity is focussed on ensuring increasing confidence in learners' achievement of curriculum for excellence levels of attainment that are submitted annually to Scottish Government. This support is being provided by Local Authority officers building capacity through upskilling key staff in each school.
- There is greater confidence that schools' attainment data is more accurate. Data clinics in primary schools have supported this work.

Strengthen Leadership of inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Working with our national partner Education Scotland, secondary middle leaders have been offered "Self-evaluation for Continuous improvement" professional learning and ongoing support. All secondary schools have participated.
- The secondary middle leaders' network will focus on what very good Learning Teaching & Assessment looks like and on how to quality assure from the middle in a secondary school.
- The primary middle leaders' network will continue to focus on school improvement from the middle, including how to raise attainment.

Development of curriculum

- Key staff have been identified and are attending national groups to support implementation of national refreshed literacy and numeracy guidance 3-18.
- Pilot 3-18 curriculum pathway projects within ASGs are underway (e.g. Construction & Engineering Pathway, Creative Industries Pathway) for all learners.
- Pilot ASG BGE projects are established and progress being reviewed with ASG leads, including introduction to industry partners to support co-creation of curriculum pathways.
- Work is continuing with NHS Education and NHS Lothian colleagues around NHS careers pathway.
- Lead Teachers are in place and have reviewed and intervened where necessary to ensure appropriate coursing and completion of weekly reviews of trackers.

Learner & Parental Engagement

- Pupil Leadership Conferences took place for primary and secondary learners in September to launch the new pupil voice structure with plans set out for engagement across the year. In November, pupil representatives met to confirm the improvement priorities they wish to see taken forward. A Youth Cabinet meeting with political leaders is planned for November and December to progress pupils' priorities. Pupils are asked to consider how we can support them to achieve their best.
- Parent Council Chairs meetings have been relaunched in September using a new format suggested by the Chairs. There are meetings scheduled across the year to listen to the views of parent councils. This will strengthen the partnership with our families and enable us to hear all views about how best to support young people to achieve their best.
- The design of a website for families with information relating to Neuro-diversity has begun.

Support from the Raising Attainment Team

- The raising attainment team prioritise work in primary schools with the lowest attainment and/or schools who are in the improvement QI category. Numeracy attainment in P7 improved by 15% (average) in RA schools since June 24.
- A "Core Numeracy" programme has been established with support of the Raising Attainment team, which is a universal offer open to all teachers in Midlothian centred around the development of Midlothian core Numeracy principles.
- The raising attainment team continues to work alongside teachers and school leaders to improve inclusive learning, teaching and assessment in our Improvement category schools. The team's work was highlighted positively in recent school inspections.

Data Development

- Primary Schools have 4 tracking periods per year where they report each child's achievement levels. The analysis of this data provides each school's attainment levels. Using this data, the link officer for each school provides support and, where required, challenge for each school. This data helps determine which category each school falls into (Core, Enhanced or Improvement).
- The Data and Performance group have monitored progress and ensured systematic gathering, recording, analysis and sharing of data.
- Primary data dashboards and robust tracking and monitoring process is in place in all primary schools allows all primary HTs to make data informed decisions relating to attainment and interventions.

- Work is underway to scope secondary data dashboards that meet the data needs of secondary schools.
- Attainment meetings have been held with all secondary Headteachers (in trios) with elected Councillors and senior officers present and a summary of next steps shared to support improvement.

Professional Learning & Staff Support

- There is a comprehensive professional learning offer available to all staff that includes, for example, “Let’s Talk About…” sessions focussed on improving inclusive learning, teaching and assessment. Almost all schools are engaging with the extensive professional learning offer.
- Our Professional Learning website has been redesigned and relaunched to make it easier to access training by specific job role as well as by topic. A major focus is further development of leadership in our schools.
- Almost all schools have engaged with Inclusive Learning, Teaching & Assessment self-evaluation resources and identified next steps for improvement.
- Most schools shared training material on the in-service day with a focus on our newly launched Inclusive LTA Framework, which will strengthen universal approaches to inclusive learning, teaching & assessment across our schools. Remaining schools will carry out this training prior by the October break.
- Teachers have access to Midlothian Literacy & Numeracy Frameworks that support the improvement of learning, teaching, assessment and raising attainment. A comprehensive learning plan is in place for the Literacy and Numeracy Champions who represent every school in Midlothian.
- A deep dive into QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equity & Inclusion will take place across the Midlothian school system in Autumn 2025. The findings from these quality improvement visits will further inform how we support and challenge schools.
- A Play Pedagogy network has been set and all schools involved have audit materials to support development of play pedagogy in their school.
- Dyslexia guidance shared with a Professional Learning offer to support school staff being rolled out.
- The new Relationships for Learning policy launched across Midlothian settings in August 2025. A self-delivery in-service has enabled all schools to highlight the key principles and practices set out in the policy in a consistent way. New resources have arrived in all schools and ELCs to support relational practice. Almost all schools participated in Relationships for Learning Community of Practice along with partners, to support implementation of the policy, and build skills and capacity in more targeted relational practice. Feedback on the usefulness of the Community of Practice has been 100% positive.
- Safe, Connected and Ready to Learn professional learning programme was created to strengthen the trauma-informed relationships that promote learning and wellbeing across educational settings.
- Midlothian guidance has been drafted based on the national guidance with engagement with school staff and Trade Union representatives. Work is ongoing to finalise the guidance and identify the professional learning and support to support implementation.
- Practice guidance is in draft for post incident support with plans to review and further develop with school leads.
- Strengthened professional learning for schools to support inclusion and attainment through the launch of My Predictable Day and plans for use of SCERTS as framework for assessment and intervention.

Quality Improvement

- The Quality Improvement Framework has been updated in consultation with school leaders and trade unions. There is proportionate support and challenge provided for schools, depending on which improvement category they have been placed in (Core, Enhanced or Improvement).
- QI visit activity focuses on identified improvement and enhanced schools with detailed evaluative reports shared to support improvement.
- When schools require more support or challenge, this is provided by the Quality Improvement Team.
- QI 3.1 (Ensuring Wellbeing, Equity and Inclusion) visits started in September for all Enhanced and Improvement schools. Core school Headteachers will use our QI 3.1 self-evaluation materials to carry out quality assurance of this QI. These visits will measure the quality of this QI in our schools. The findings of these visits will inform our next steps in support and challenge for schools.
- Middle leaders' quality improvement and quality assurance approaches are this year's focus for our leadership networks and professional learning.
- Midlothian Council and three of our national partners (Scottish Borders Council, Highland Council/ Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd and Stirling Council) form one of the new National Improvement Framework "Quads". The Quads support and challenge each other to improve. Midlothian key staff have already visited Stirling Council and attended Quad meetings to share learning, agree an action plan and areas for collaborative improvement activity. This work continues throughout 2025-2026.

Developing a Digitally Skilled Workforce

- As of 30 August, 350 teachers are now engaging in a generative AI tool in education pilot, negotiated through the Equipped for Learning project. This is an increase of 79 teachers since June 2025.
- Six secondary schools are engaging with an AI research product to explore how this technology can reduce workload for leadership teams and streamline school improvement work.
- In August 2025, 107 staff engaged with annual digital safeguarding training, representing 100% of Midlothian's schools.
- Consultation with ASN teams and multiagency partners in September 2025 resulted in agreement that provision classes will be allocated five shared devices to best support communication work for young people.
- Onboarding meetings were held in September 2025 with four Midlothian schools engaging with a research project to understand the impact of digital tools on learning, teaching and assessment.
- 1,018 Primary 3 pupils have undertaken a three-week package of in-class digital support, designed to support them to use Chromebooks safely and with purpose.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Resource

There are no resource implications for this report.

5.2 Digital

Not applicable.

5.3 Risk

Not applicable.

5.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Not applicable.

5.5 Additional Report Implications

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Attainment Summary

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This will work towards the key priority of reducing the gap in learning outcomes.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The delivery of this plan will assist the council in meeting its best value duties. Most notably in the following Best Value themes: Governance and Accountability; Effective use of resources and partnerships and collaborative working.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Not applicable.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The content in this report and the continuous improvement to support improvement in attainment for all young people will assist in improving performance and outcomes for the council.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not applicable.

APPENDIX B

Attainment Summary



Broad General Education: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels

The tables in this section show the percentage of pupils achieving the appropriate CfE level (or better) for their stage. The change in Midlothian's figures from 2024 to 2025 are shown, with colour added to show the level of change, from dark green for improvements of 5 percentage points and above, to dark red for decreases of more than 5pp.

For context, national figures are given, as well as the average figures for Midlothian's Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) "family group". Note that 2025 figures have yet to be published. More detail on this can be found [here](#).

Literacy is a combined measure of all literacy components, i.e. pupils must achieve all three components: Reading; Writing; and Listening & Talking (L&T) in order to achieve the overall Literacy level.

Table 1: Percentage of primary school pupils (P1/P4/P7 combined) achieving expected CfE levels in Literacy and Numeracy

P1/P4/P7 combined	Midlothian						Change since 2024
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	
Literacy	65.8%	68.2%	71.6%	72.3%	76.6%		4.3%
Numeracy	72.8%	76.1%	76.8%	76.8%	80.2%		3.4%

P1/P4/P7 combined	LGBF Average					National				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Literacy	63.8%	69.7%	71.7%	73.9%	TBC	66.9%	70.5%	72.7%	74.0%	TBC
Numeracy	71.4%	76.9%	78.1%	79.9%	TBC	74.7%	78.0%	79.6%	80.3%	TBC

There is a clear improving trend for Literacy and Numeracy, with the 2025 figures the best over the five-year period. The increases for both measures in 2025 compared to 2024 are also the most significant improvements over one single year for the period. We would anticipate that the 2025 figures will be above the LGBF and national averages, when they are published (assuming that current trajectories have been maintained within LGBF and nationally).

Table 2: Percentage of primary school pupils in P1 achieving expected Early Level in Literacy and Numeracy, including components of Literacy

P1 (Early Level)	Midlothian						Change since 2024
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	
Literacy	71.9%	70.4%	76.7%	76.3%	78.4%		2.1%
Reading	77.9%	76.3%	82.0%	80.9%	82.5%		1.6%
Writing	74.5%	73.0%	80.0%	78.8%	80.0%		1.2%
L&T	87.7%	85.4%	89.2%	89.5%	88.1%		-1.4%
Numeracy	81.7%	81.2%	84.6%	83.2%	85.5%		2.3%

P1 (Early Level)	LGBF Average					National				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Literacy	71.4%	74.3%	75.9%	77.4%	TBC	70.8%	74.0%	75.7%	76.9%	TBC
Reading	78.4%	81.3%	81.6%	82.9%	TBC	76.6%	79.4%	80.6%	81.2%	TBC
Writing	74.4%	77.8%	78.5%	80.1%	TBC	74.1%	76.9%	78.4%	79.4%	TBC
L&T	85.6%	87.4%	87.1%	88.3%	TBC	84.0%	86.1%	86.9%	87.3%	TBC
Numeracy	80.6%	83.8%	84.2%	85.8%	TBC	81.1%	83.6%	84.7%	84.9%	TBC

The figures for P1 in 2025 are the best on record, with the exception of the slight decrease for Listening & Talking. The biggest improvements overall are for Literacy overall and Numeracy. We would anticipate having closed the gap somewhat between Midlothian and both the LGBF average and national figures, once these are published

Table 3: Percentage of primary school pupils in P4 achieving First Level in Literacy and Numeracy, including components of Literacy

P4 (First Level)	Midlothian						Change since 2024
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	
Literacy	61.1%	65.9%	69.7%	70.9%	77.4%		6.5%
Reading	72.0%	73.3%	77.4%	78.4%	82.8%		4.4%
Writing	64.1%	69.0%	73.2%	73.4%	79.4%		6.1%
L&T	82.9%	84.8%	88.8%	87.9%	91.5%		3.6%
Numeracy	71.3%	72.6%	74.4%	75.6%	79.8%		4.2%

P4 (First Level)	LGBF Average					National				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Literacy	63.6%	66.3%	68.5%	70.6%	TBC	63.8%	67.2%	69.7%	71.4%	TBC
Reading	74.5%	76.5%	77.7%	79.7%	TBC	73.3%	76.0%	77.9%	79.0%	TBC
Writing	66.8%	69.6%	71.7%	73.2%	TBC	66.7%	69.7%	72.0%	73.5%	TBC
L&T	82.5%	84.4%	86.6%	85.6%	TBC	82.0%	84.5%	86.6%	87.0%	TBC
Numeracy	70.4%	74.0%	75.2%	76.4%	TBC	71.6%	74.9%	76.9%	78.1%	TBC

The improvements in P4 are the most significant across all primary year groups. The largest increases are for Literacy overall, followed by Writing. Their 2024 figures were roughly in line with LGBF/national so we would expect to be comfortably above both in 2025, given the scale of these improvements. There is a clear improving picture over time for all measures.

In session 2024-25 there was a focus on Literacy – in particular, Writing – as an area for improvement in P4 and P7, which was supported by professional learning sessions. It is therefore very encouraging to see the impact that these sessions had on pupil attainment in this area.

Table 4: Percentage of primary school pupils in P7 achieving Second Level in Literacy and Numeracy, including components of Literacy






P7 (Second Level)	Midlothian						Change since 2024
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	
Literacy	64.1%	68.3%	68.5%	70.2%	73.8%		3.6%
Reading	74.0%	78.4%	77.5%	77.1%	79.5%		2.5%
Writing	66.8%	71.6%	71.9%	72.3%	75.6%		3.3%
L&T	81.9%	86.1%	86.1%	86.0%	88.0%		2.0%
Numeracy	64.5%	74.0%	71.4%	72.3%	75.4%		3.1%

P7 (Second Level)	LGBF Average					National				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Literacy	67.2%	68.8%	71.1%	74.2%	TBC	66.4%	70.6%	73.0%	74.0%	TBC
Reading	76.7%	77.6%	79.8%	82.6%	TBC	75.7%	79.3%	80.8%	81.3%	TBC
Writing	70.5%	72.0%	74.0%	76.4%	TBC	69.0%	72.9%	75.2%	75.9%	TBC
L&T	84.0%	85.3%	86.0%	88.2%	TBC	82.2%	85.7%	87.0%	87.7%	TBC
Numeracy	71.1%	73.5%	75.5%	78.3%	TBC	71.9%	75.7%	77.7%	78.5%	TBC

Once again, there are clear and noticeable improvements in P7 and the 2025 figures are the best they have been over the five-year period. As with P4, the biggest improvements are for Literacy overall and Writing. The rate of improvement is the best we have seen since 2022. If we can sustain this rate of improvement, we would expect to be in line with LGBF/national in due course.

As with P4, it is encouraging to see the impact which targeted training has had on pupil achievement in Literacy/Writing in particular.

Table 5: Percentage of secondary school pupils in S3 achieving expected CfE levels in Literacy and Numeracy, including components of Literacy

S3 Third Level or better	Midlothian					Trend	Change since 2024
	2022	2023	2024	2025			
Literacy	80.7%	85.4%	84.4%	89.7%		5.3%	
Reading	87.3%	90.6%	88.1%	92.2%		4.1%	
Writing	85.1%	87.5%	87.1%	91.0%		3.9%	
L&T	85.8%	89.3%	89.2%	92.2%		3.0%	
Numeracy	88.5%	90.5%	91.6%	93.9%		2.3%	


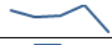


S3 Third Level or better	LGBF Average				National			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025
Literacy	86.1%	86.7%	88.2%	TBC	85.5%	87.8%	88.3%	TBC
Reading	89.4%	89.0%	89.3%	TBC	88.4%	90.1%	90.2%	TBC
Writing	87.9%	88.1%	88.9%	TBC	87.3%	89.2%	89.6%	TBC
L&T	90.4%	89.1%	90.5%	TBC	89.3%	90.5%	90.8%	TBC
Numeracy	88.2%	87.5%	87.4%	TBC	89.1%	89.6%	90.3%	TBC

(Note: CfE levels in S3 were not reported on in 2021.)

Once again, all measures are the highest they have been over the five-year period and we are able to celebrate significant improvements for all measures, with the biggest improvements evident in the Literacy components. Third Level Numeracy has consistently been above LGBF and national figures and we are confident that this will remain the case for 2025. The Literacy figures for 2025 are above LGBF/national for 2024 so we are hopeful that we will be in line with them for 2025. Should our rate of improvement continue, we would expect to be above both in due course.

Gap measures using FSM

The attainment gap in the table below is shown as a differential of the percentage of pupils attaining their expected level in receipt of free school meals versus those not in receipt of free school meals (FSM). Note that FSM is used as the measure of deprivation to give a more representative spread across Midlothian and the fact that SIMD is not an effective measure in all areas of the authority. Note also that there is no comparable data currently available nationally and for other authorities to allow us to look at how Midlothian compares.

Measure	Gap between pupils with FSM and other pupils					Trend
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Literacy - Primary	32.2%	26.8%	26.5%	31.3%	22.6%	
Numeracy - Primary	28.0%	24.3%	25.1%	30.9%	16.5%	
Literacy - S3		28.9%	28.6%	18.0%	16.5%	
Numeracy - S3		22.2%	16.5%	8.5%	8.0%	

The gap has closed for all measures, with the biggest improvements in Primary Literacy and Numeracy. The gap has closed year-on-year for S3 measures. Note that the gaps are lower for Numeracy than Literacy.

Senior Phase

Insight

The Insight analytical tool allows schools and Local Authorities to compare their performance using a Virtual Comparator (VC). The VC for Midlothian is made up of pupils from schools in other Local Authorities who have similar characteristics to the pupils in Midlothian. For most measures, Insight applies statistical significance testing to identify areas where performance is noticeably greater than or lower than the VC.

Note that in all tables in this section, S5 data is calculated on the basis of the S5 roll, and similarly S6 is based on S6.

Literacy & Numeracy

Stage	Measure	Midlothian						Virtual Comparator				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
S4	% Level 3 Literacy	95.23	96.16	94.99	95.47	96.15		94.82	94.65	94.22	93.53	94.20
	% Level 4 Literacy	92.02	93.66	91.65	90.18	93.29		92.59	92.64	91.91	90.27	90.81
	% Level 5 Literacy	68.91	68.59	75.79	73.28	79.43		74.10	73.71	74.94	74.71	76.18
	% Level 3 Numeracy	95.54	97.31	97.12	94.43	96.78		92.88	93.59	92.58	92.63	94.14
	% Level 4 Numeracy	89.53	92.12	92.76	88.95	90.25		86.97	88.20	87.62	87.19	88.87
	% Level 5 Numeracy	62.38	67.15	68.46	66.76	71.74		56.06	60.25	62.47	63.20	66.20
S5	% Level 4 Literacy	95.65	95.25	96.06	94.62	93.76		96.26	95.61	94.41	95.70	94.46
	% Level 5 Literacy	83.94	83.25	82.71	86.55	86.14		87.78	85.10	83.96	86.82	86.29
	% Level 6 Literacy	56.88	54.75	51.86	53.36	51.15		58.24	53.70	50.74	55.02	56.78
	% Level 4 Numeracy	94.44	93.75	95.71	96.08	94.11		93.88	92.35	91.43	93.07	92.71
	% Level 5 Numeracy	78.38	75.25	76.80	79.04	80.25		75.54	71.84	71.72	76.41	77.33
S6	% Level 6 Numeracy	22.83	19.88	21.11	24.55	25.29		25.92	24.46	23.89	26.28	29.80
	% Level 5 Literacy	95.72	94.01	95.03	94.38	94.50		95.97	95.26	94.79	95.31	95.30
	% Level 6 Literacy	76.17	77.23	78.19	79.65	78.01		79.84	79.33	77.58	78.12	78.16
	% Level 5 Numeracy	88.39	87.84	88.34	87.79	88.48		88.53	87.96	86.29	88.02	89.82
	% Level 6 Numeracy	38.29	33.56	36.72	36.82	40.25		40.31	38.46	38.32	41.63	43.79

Colour added if above/below VC according to Insight:

	Much greater than Virtual Comparator
	Greater than Virtual Comparator
	Lower than Virtual Comparator
	Much lower than Virtual Comparator

Commentary:

In S4, the figures for Level 5 Literacy and Numeracy are the highest they have been over the five-year period. All measures have increased compared to 2024 and five out of the six measures are significantly much greater than the Virtual Comparator.

In S5 there have been year-on-year improvements since 2022 for Numeracy at Levels 5 and 6. There have been slight drops in some other measures but these are in line with the corresponding figures for the same cohort in S4 in 2024. Most figures are in line with the VC. In S6, the figures for Numeracy Level 5 and 6 are the highest they have been over the five-year period. Figures are all in line with the VC.

Improving Attainment for All

Improving Attainment for All is a benchmarking measure which calculates an average “complementary tariff score” for the lowest 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% in each cohort. The complementary tariff score measures a student's attainment by calculating the points from (in most cases) their top five "best" qualifications, regardless of the number of subjects or qualifications taken. It is designed to provide a more consistent comparison of pupil performance across different schools and local authorities, irrespective of their specific curricula. More information on the scores assigned to each qualification can be found [here](#).

Stage	Average Complementary Tariff Score	Midlothian						Virtual Comparator				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
S4	Lowest 20%	100	110	113	91	100		107	105	100	90	98
	Middle 60%	317	304	313	310	320		331	320	316	314	321
	Highest 20%	428	427	421	435	432		430	425	425	425	426
S5	Lowest 20%	161	171	161	171	157		185	162	144	162	160
	Middle 60%	614	584	548	581	590		629	579	554	573	593
	Highest 20%	997	971	971	954	964		999	977	968	964	972
S6	Lowest 20%	359	328	340	340	351		376	360	336	338	349
	Middle 60%	933	920	924	896	902		929	920	886	891	894
	Highest 20%	1473	1414	1401	1356	1309		1407	1392	1388	1373	1384

Colour added if above/below VC according to Insight

	Much greater than Virtual Comparator
	Greater than Virtual Comparator
	Lower than Virtual Comparator
	Much lower than Virtual Comparator

Commentary:

In S4, figures have been in line with the VC for the last three sessions. The average complementary tariff score for the middle-attaining 60% is the highest it has been over the five-year period. The figure for the lowest 20% has increased from the drop in 2024 and the highest 20% remains strong.

In S5, figures have been in line with the VC for the last four sessions. The figure for the middle 60% is the highest since 2021, and the highest 20% increased after the drop in 2024.

In S6, figures for the lowest-attaining 20% and middle 60% remain in line with the VC and show improvement on 2024. However, the score for the highest 20% is significantly lower than the VC for the first time. Internal analysis suggests that the difference is due to the quality of passes which young people in S6 are achieving.

Breadth & Depth

Stage: S4		Midlothian						Virtual Comparator				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SCQF Level 5 or better	1 or more	82.90%	82.23%	85.62%	83.85%	83.81%		85.42%	84.48%	84.49%	84.21%	85.49%
	2 or more	74.82%	73.10%	78.20%	76.30%	79.34%		78.15%	76.04%	76.24%	76.54%	77.96%
	3 or more	67.25%	64.75%	70.41%	68.37%	74.60%		70.74%	68.51%	68.55%	68.94%	70.64%
	4 or more	59.38%	57.06%	62.89%	61.00%	68.25%		62.97%	61.14%	60.57%	61.27%	63.25%
	5 or more	49.33%	48.03%	53.34%	53.82%	60.82%		54.08%	53.12%	52.48%	53.34%	55.53%

Stage: S5		Midlothian						Virtual Comparator				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SCQF Level 6 or better	1 or more	72.95%	70.00%	66.13%	75.34%	73.44%		73.96%	68.91%	68.10%	71.30%	74.38%
	2 or more	62.44%	61.13%	56.03%	64.35%	61.43%		63.39%	58.86%	56.73%	59.81%	62.62%
	3 or more	53.14%	51.00%	45.24%	55.72%	53.00%		53.53%	49.55%	47.04%	50.31%	52.93%
	4 or more	42.15%	37.88%	36.66%	45.96%	43.88%		41.17%	38.54%	37.16%	39.50%	42.38%
	5 or more	28.14%	25.13%	22.97%	34.53%	29.45%		27.09%	25.41%	25.37%	27.48%	30.24%

Stage: S6		Midlothian						Virtual Comparator				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SCQF Level 6 or better	1 or more	91.24%	91.61%	90.50%	92.25%	92.91%		92.14%	91.54%	90.80%	91.01%	91.93%
	2 or more	86.76%	85.45%	85.31%	87.98%	88.83%		86.15%	85.22%	84.43%	85.04%	86.44%
	3 or more	79.02%	79.62%	78.83%	81.78%	85.46%		80.08%	78.77%	77.15%	78.53%	80.28%
	4 or more	72.51%	72.26%	73.00%	75.97%	77.13%		71.69%	70.48%	68.98%	70.87%	72.84%
	5 or more	59.47%	63.01%	64.36%	67.05%	68.97%		62.67%	60.12%	60.17%	62.25%	63.72%
SCQF Level 7	1 or more	44.81%	45.55%	43.84%	43.41%	45.74%		42.38%	42.69%	41.25%	41.90%	43.03%

Colour added if above/below VC by more than 5% or 10%

	10% or more above VC
	5% or more above VC
	5% or more below VC
	10% or more below VC

Commentary:



Overall, S4 shows an improving picture, with the percentage of young people achieving 2, 3, 4 and 5 or more awards being the highest they have been over the five-year period. The biggest increases are for 4 and 5 or more awards. In 2021, just under 50% of S4 pupils achieved 5 or more awards at SCQF Level 5, and this has now increased to just over 60%. Figures compare well to the VC.

In S5, the figures are broadly in line with the VC. The significant improvements since 2023 have been consolidated.



The figures for S6 are the highest they have been over the five-year period, in line with the gains made in S5 in 2024. There is an improving trend over time for most measures. The figures have been above the VC, sometimes significantly so, for the past two sessions.

Gap Measures using FSM



Stage: S4	FSM					Non-FSM				
Level 5 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 or more	63.50%	51.47%	66.01%	56.43%	62.07%	86.11%	86.85%	88.86%	88.03%	87.82%
3 or more	41.61%	26.47%	40.52%	29.29%	42.53%	71.50%	70.50%	75.35%	74.32%	80.51%

Stage: S4	Gap					
Level 5 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend
1 or more	22.61%	35.38%	22.85%	31.60%	25.75%	
3 or more	29.89%	44.03%	34.83%	45.03%	37.98%	

Stage: S5	FSM					Non-FSM				
Level 6 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 or more	39.19%	43.62%	37.50%	44.44%	44.44%	76.26%	73.51%	68.73%	78.80%	76.07%
3 or more	13.51%	23.40%	16.67%	25.56%	19.44%	57.03%	54.67%	47.85%	59.10%	56.05%

Stage: S5	Gap					
Level 6 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend
1 or more	37.07%	29.89%	31.23%	34.36%	31.63%	
3 or more	43.52%	31.27%	31.18%	33.54%	36.61%	

Stage: S6	FSM					Non-FSM				
Level 6 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 or more	69.23%	64.10%	73.81%	67.86%	79.07%	92.47%	93.58%	92.16%	93.65%	94.05%
3 or more	50.00%	41.03%	57.14%	57.14%	62.79%	80.65%	82.39%	81.00%	83.20%	87.33%

Stage: S6	Gap					
Level 6 or better	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend
1 or more	23.24%	29.48%	18.35%	25.79%	14.98%	
3 or more	30.65%	41.36%	23.86%	26.06%	24.54%	

Commentary:

In S4, the percentage of pupils in receipt of Free School Meals who achieve 3 or more awards at SCQF Level 5 or better, was the highest it has been over the five-year period (43%). The gap between the figures for FSM and non-FSM decreased for both measures, compared to 2024.

The gap in S5 reduced by roughly 3 percentage points for 1 or more awards at Level 6, **but increased by roughly 3 percentage points for 3 or more awards.**

In S6, the gap for 1 or more awards at Level 6 was the smallest it has been over the five-year period (roughly 15 percentage points), a significant reduction compared to the gap in 2024. There was also a slight reduction of the gap for 3 or more awards at Level 6.

Stretch Aims 2025 with trajectory to 2026/27

	Attainment for all	Poverty Gap (PRAG)
Broad general Education	On track to meet SA	On track to meet SA
P1/P4/P7 literacy combined	Oct 25: 76.6% 26/27 SA: 75%	June 26: 22.6% 26/27 SA: 19%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall stretch aim for 26/27 (75%) has been exceeded by 1.6% (76.6%) The quintile 1 stretch aim for 26/27 (61.5%) is not on track by 2.4% (59.1%) The quintile 5 stretch aim for 26/27 (80.5%) has been exceeded by 2.7 % 		
P1/4/7 numeracy combined	Oct 25: 80.2% 26/27 SA: 82%	June 26: 16.48% 26/27 SA:15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall stretch aim for 26/27 (82%) and is not on track by 0.8% (80.2%) The quintile 1 stretch aim for 26/27 (69%) and is not on track by 2.6% (66.4%) The quintile 5 stretch aim for 26/27 (84%) and has been exceeded by 2.1% (86.1%) 		
Senior Phase (All SCQF awards)		
1 or more award at SCQF Level 5	Feb 25: 86.18% 24/25 SA: 89%	Feb 25: 21.38% 24/25 SA: 23.5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2023/24 overall figures published in Feb 2025 indicate the 2023/24 stretch aim of 87% has not been met by 0.82% The quintile 1 (numbers are low) stretch aim for 24/25 (70%) has been met and exceeded by 5.51% (75.51% in 2023/24) The quintile 5 stretch aim for 24/25 (93.5%) has been met and exceeded by 3.39% (96.89% in 2023/2) The stretch aim of 23.5% for the PRAG has been met and exceeded by 2.12% based on 23/24 figures. The stretch aim of 23.5% for the PRAG has been met and exceeded by 2.12% based on 23/24 figures. 		
1 or more award at SCQF Level 6	Feb 25: 62.61% 25/26 SA: 66%	Feb 25: 40.19% 25/26 SA: 41%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2023/24 overall figures published in Feb 2025 indicate the 2023/24 stretch aim of 64% has not been met by 1.39% (62.61%) The quintile 1 (numbers are low) stretch aim for 24/25 (42%) has been met and exceeded by 2.90% (44.90% in 2023/24) The quintile 5 stretch aim for 24/25 (84%) has been met and exceeded by 1.09% (85.09% in 2023/24). The stretch aim of 41% for the PRAG has been met and exceeded by 0.81% based on 23/24 figures. 		
Attendance (All)		
Attendance (Primary)	Q2 Sept: 94.76% 26/27 SA: 95%	
Attendance (Secondary)	Q2 Sept: 88.90% 26/27 SA: 90%	
ACEL S3		
ACEL S3 literacy	June 25: 89.7% 25/26 SA: 91%	June 25: 16.5% 26/27 SA 24.5: %
ACEL S3 numeracy	June 25: 93.9% 25/26 SA:93%	June 25: 8% 26/27 SA:17.5 %
ACEL S3 literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall stretch aim for 25/26 (91%) is not on track by 1.3% ACEL S3 numeracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall stretch aim for 25/26 (93%) is on track by 3.9% 		

