

ITEM No ...6.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE – 2 MARCH 2026

REPORT ON: ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2024/25

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 48-2026

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report on Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels 2024/25 provides information on the proportion of pupils who have achieved their expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy relevant to their stage in academic session 2024/25.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Children and Families Committee notes the contents of this report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Curriculum for Excellence defines five levels of learning. The first four levels in the Broad General Education (BGE) phase are Early Level, First Level, Second Level, Third/Fourth Level; with progression to qualifications described under a fifth level, the Senior Phase.

4.2 The path pupils are expected to follow through the levels reflects the stages of maturation of pupils and the changing ways in which they engage with learning as they develop. Some pupils will start learning at these levels earlier and others later, depending upon individual needs and aptitudes. National expectation is

Table 1 BGE Curriculum Levels

Pre-School – Primary 1	Early Level
Primary 2 – Primary 4	First Level
Primary 5 – Primary 7	Second Level
Secondary 1 – Secondary 3	Third/Fourth Level

4.3 This report provides information in relation to the relevant Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) children’s services indicators and descriptions. These are:

- % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Literacy
- % of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving expected CFE Level in Numeracy
- Literacy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils
- Numeracy Attainment Gap (P1,4,7 Combined) - percentage point gap between the least deprived and most deprived pupils

4.4 Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data is based on teachers’ professional judgements of individual pupil performance. This report refers to the school year 2024/25; the data reflect what pupils have achieved by the end of the school year – i.e. June 2025. This report is based on data published by the Scottish Government on 9 December 2025. The Scottish Government note that: “The closures of schools between March 2020 and January 2021 because of the pandemic are likely to have had a negative effect on some pupils’ progress and attainment. It is therefore likely to have had an impact on the CfE levels some children achieved in 2020-21. The impact of this disruption will also have affected young people covered by the 2021-22

publication and it is possible that the impact of the pandemic has continued to affect the CfE levels some children and young people achieve.”¹

- 4.5 The full details of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data for Dundee’s primary pupils from 2020/21 to 2024/25 are available in Appendix 1. Table 2 shows the number of pupils in each stage in June 2025.

Table 2 No. of pupils at each stage in June 2025

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined	S3
Roll:	1,333	1,468	1,468	4,269	1,586

ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS 2024/25

5.0 LITERACY

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

- 5.1 It is important to note that a pupil is only reported to have achieved their expected level in literacy if they have achieved the expected level in all three of the literacy organisers: reading, writing, and listening and talking.
- 5.2 There was no collection of ACEL data in 2019/20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic both Dundee and Scotland have shown recovery in primary literacy levels.
- 5.3 The proportion of primary pupils in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (74%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire) which is 73%.

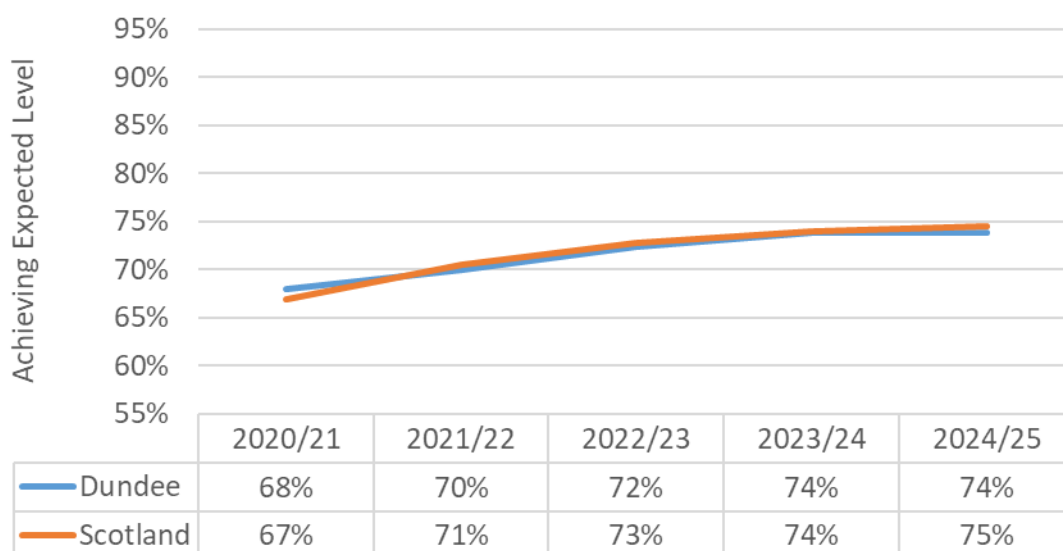


Figure 1: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving their expected level in Literacy

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

- 5.4 In 2024/25 in Dundee, 46% of primary pupils lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1 data zones (20% most deprived areas) – see Appendix 2; in Scotland overall, 23% of primary pupils lived in SIMD Quintile 1.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/achievement-of-curriculum-for-excellence-cfe-levels-2024-25-methodology/pages/3--impact-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/>

5.5 Since 2020/21 primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee have shown higher levels of literacy attainment than the Scottish average (Figure 2, below). This position has been maintained, with improvement, in 2024/25. Despite any residual impact of the pandemic, the proportion of pupils living in the most deprived areas in Dundee who have attained their expected level in literacy is the highest on record evidencing the impact of focused interventions and improvement actions in this area.

5.6 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (69%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (67%).

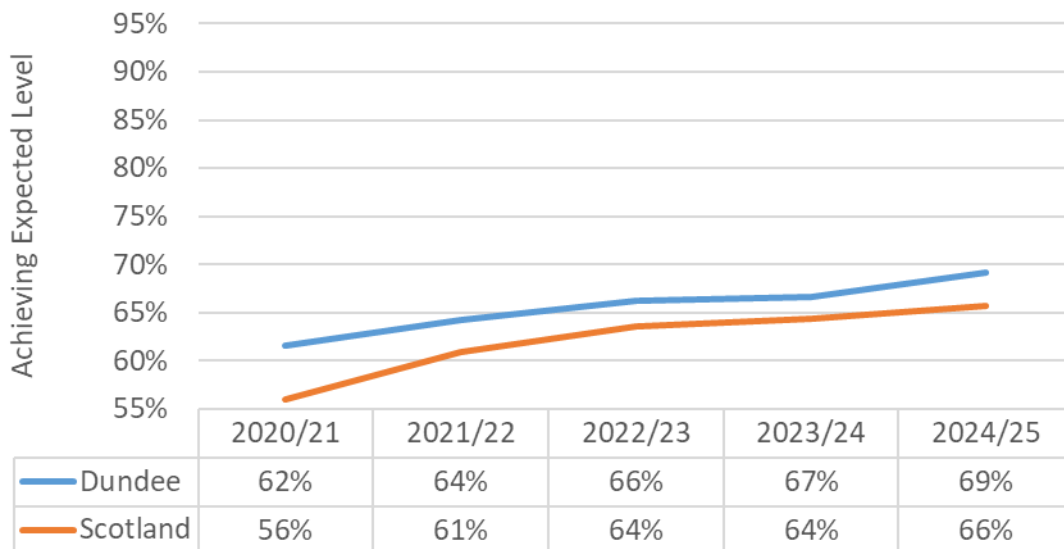


Figure 2: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving their expected level in Literacy.

5.7 From 2020/21 to 2022/23 primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas) in Dundee had also shown slightly higher levels of literacy achievement than the Scottish average (Figure 3, below). Dundee pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 saw a three percentage-point decline in achievement in 2023/24 and have remained at 83% now lying below the national average.

5.8 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (83%) is lower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (86%).

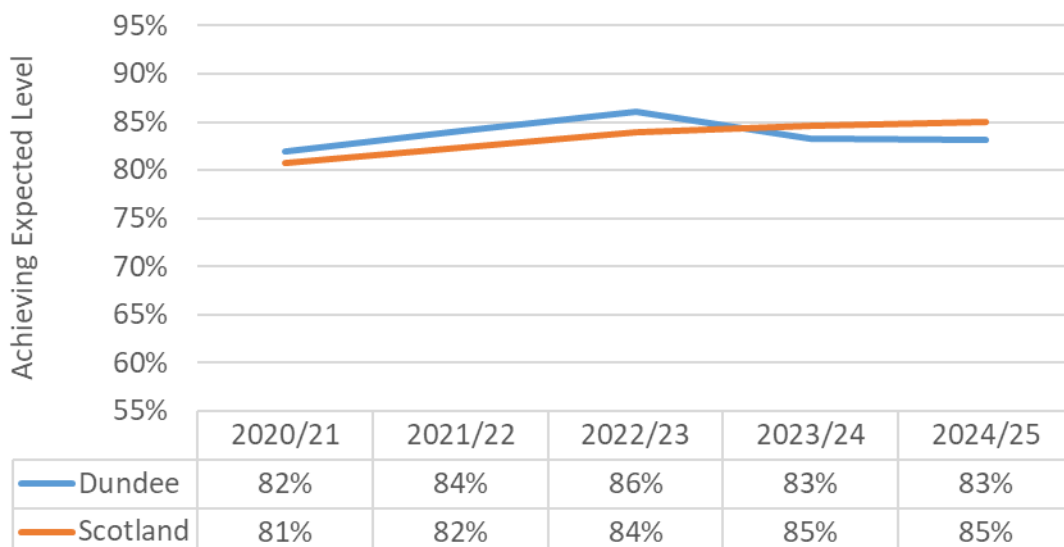


Figure 3: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving their expected level in Literacy.

5.9 The gap in literacy attainment between the most and least deprived areas in Dundee had been around 20 percentage points. It has now closed to less than 14 percentage-points (Figure 4, below). In 2024/25 this was a result of the increase in performance of pupils living in the most deprived areas. The poverty-related attainment gap within Dundee remains narrower than the national average.

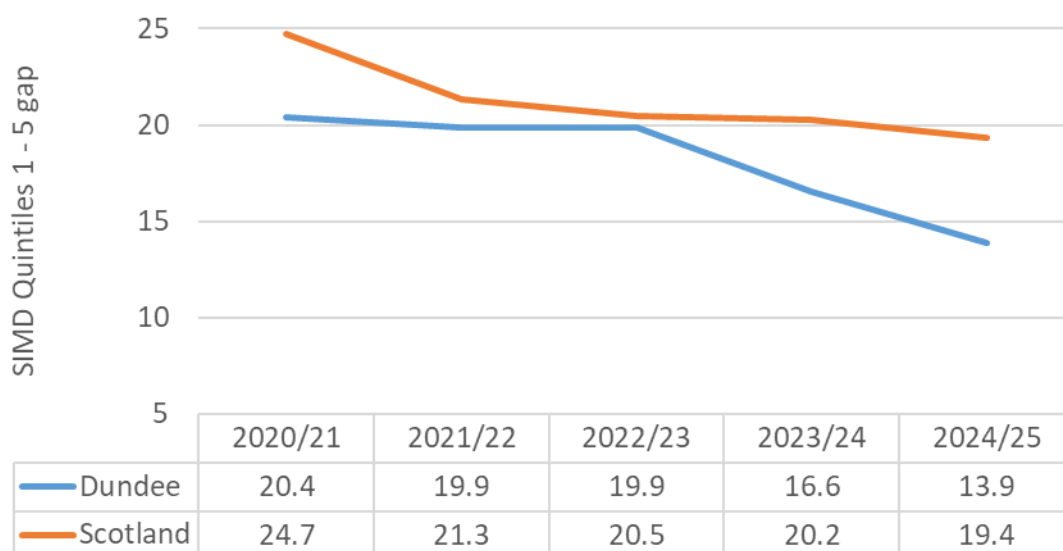


Figure 4: Percentage point gap between P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving their expected level in Literacy.

5.10 As detailed in Appendix 2, Dundee has higher levels of Literacy attainment in P1, P4 & P7 combined for SIMD Quintiles 1 to 4 than the Scottish average.

5.11 The gap between primary pupils living in SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 in Dundee achieving their expected literacy levels (13.9 percentage-points) is narrower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (17.5 percentage-points).

% of S3 pupils combined achieving CfE Third Level or better in Literacy

5.12 Following a decline in 2022/23, the proportion of Dundee S3 pupils achieving CfE Third Level or better in literacy has been improving. It currently lies 8 percentage points below Scotland as a whole.

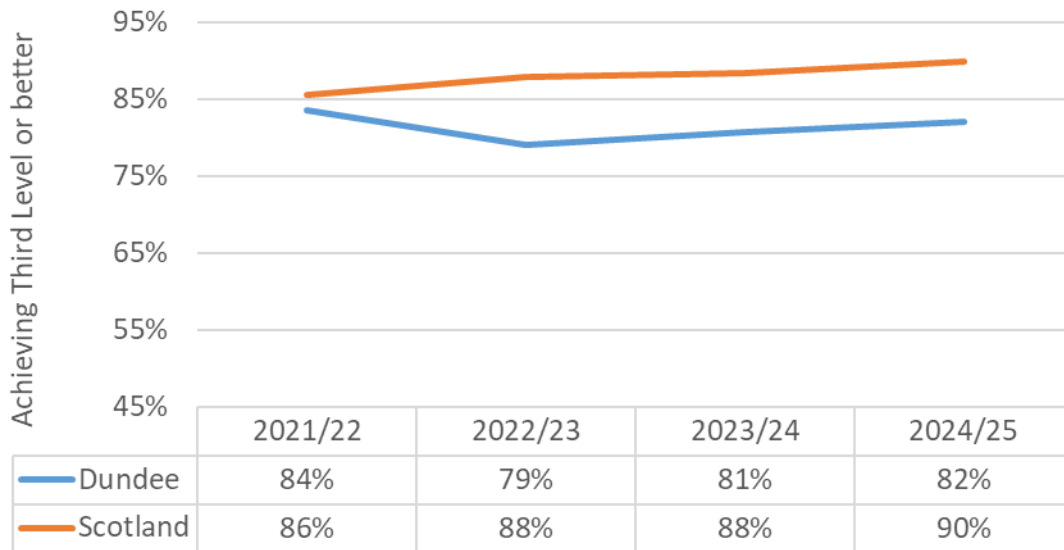


Figure 5: Percentage of S3 pupils achieving CfE Literacy Third Level or better

Closing the attainment gap in literacy: S3

5.13 In 2024/25 the percentage of Dundee pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 achieving CfE Third level or better in literacy improved year on year in 2024/25 for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic. The percentage of Dundee pupils from SIMD Quintile 5 achieving CfE Third level or better in literacy is the same as Scotland overall. The improvement seen in SIMD Quintile 1 has led to a reduction in the poverty related attainment gap, though not yet back to that seen in 2022/23.

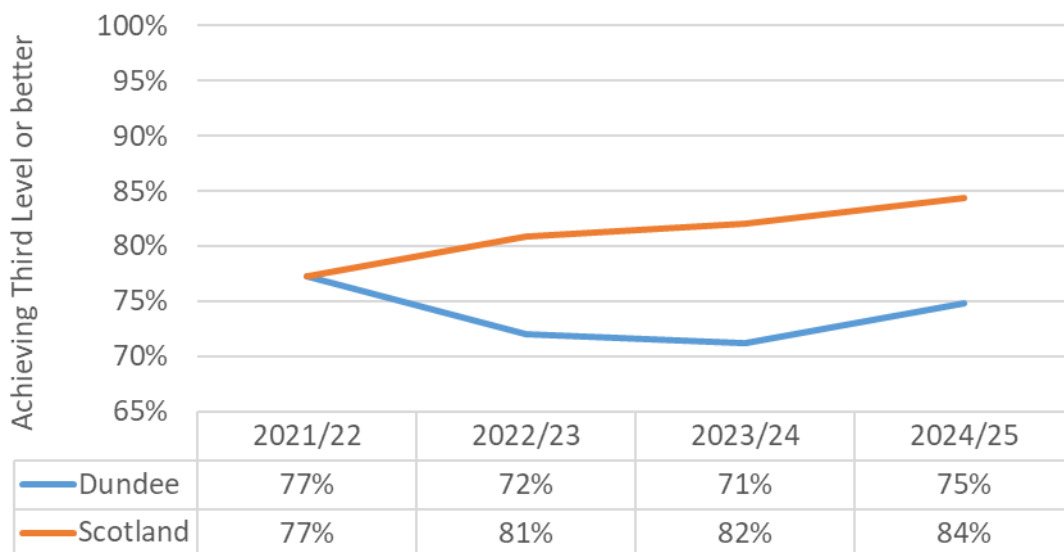


Figure 6: Percentage of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving Third level in Literacy.

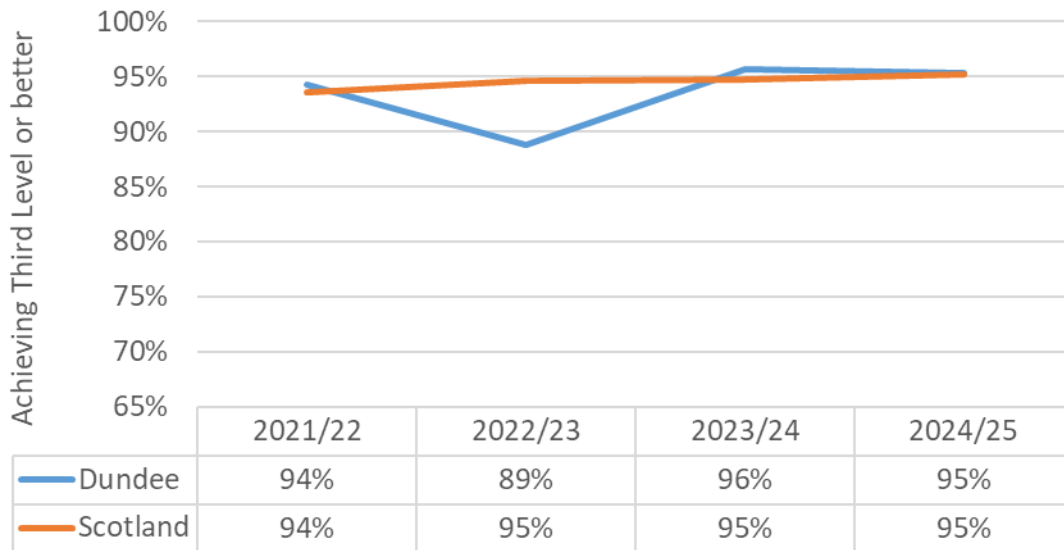


Figure 7: Percentage of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving Third level or better in Literacy.

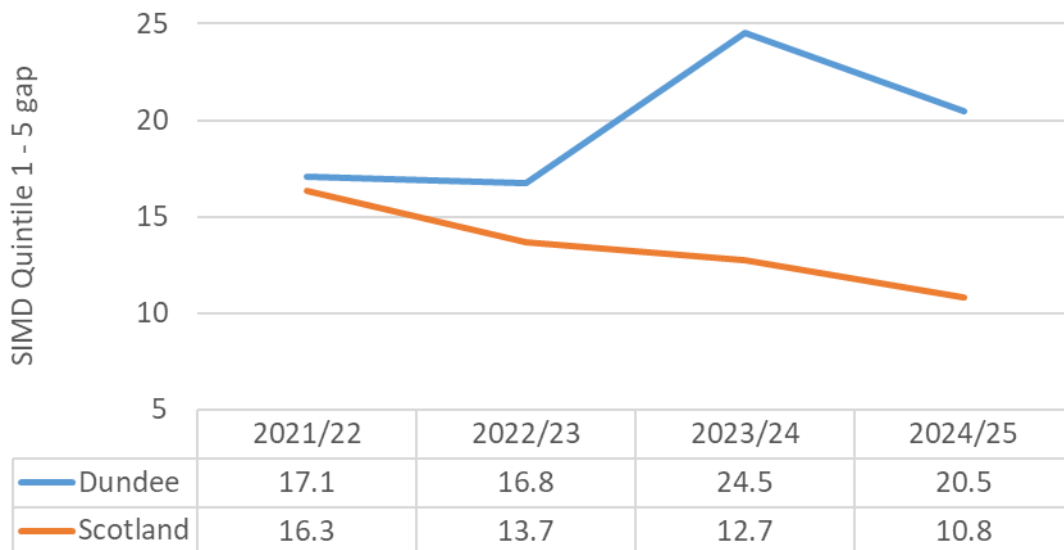


Figure 8: Percentage point gap between S3 pupils from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving Third level or better in Literacy.

6.0 NUMERACY

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

- 6.1 Dundee has shown improvement in primary numeracy achievement levels from 77% in 2020/21 to 80% in 2024/25 (Figure 9). This is a broadly similar picture to that seen in Scotland overall.
- 6.2 The proportion of primary pupils living in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (80%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (79%).

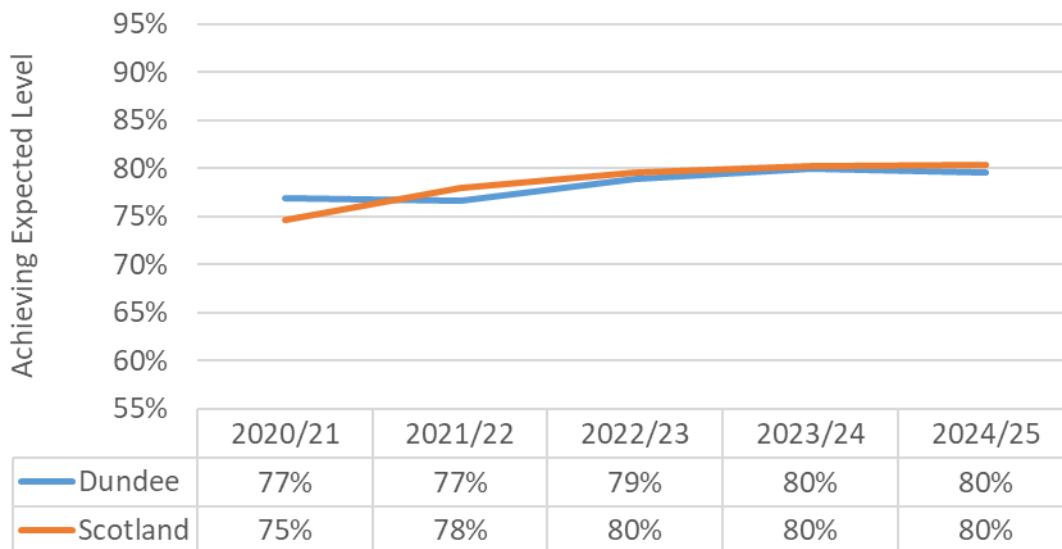


Figure 9: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

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

- 6.3 Dundee primary school pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived areas) have seen an improvement in numeracy attainment from 71% in 2020/21 to 76% in 2024/25 (Figure 10, below). Since 2020/21 Dundee has had a higher proportion of primary pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 achieving their expected level in numeracy than Scotland's average.
- 6.4 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 1 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (76%) is higher than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (74%).

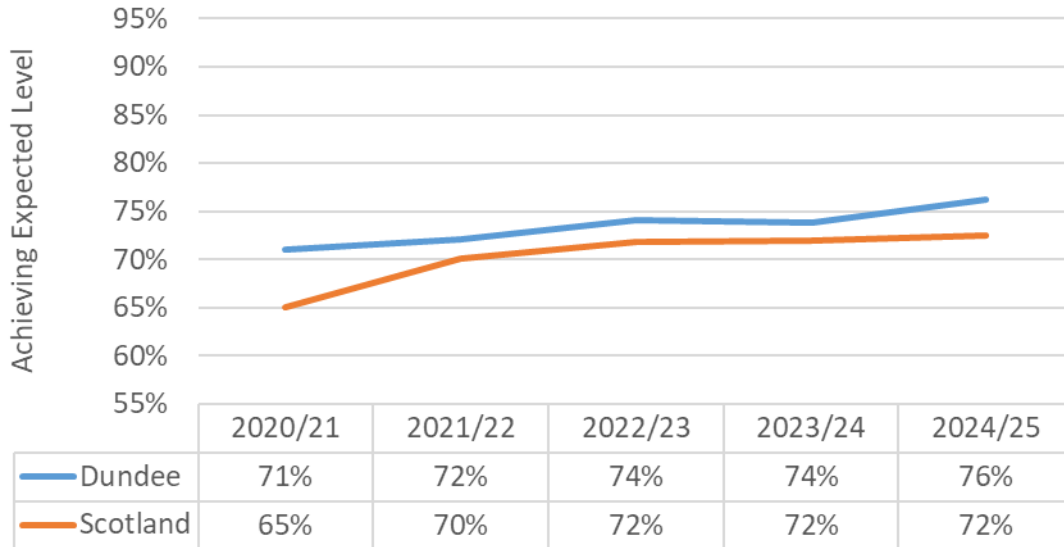


Figure 10: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

- 6.5 Dundee primary school pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) have seen declines in achievement in numeracy over the last two years, from 90% in 2022/23 to 86% in 2024/25 (Figure 11, below).
- 6.6 The proportion of primary pupils living in SIMD Quintile 5 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (86%) is lower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (88%).

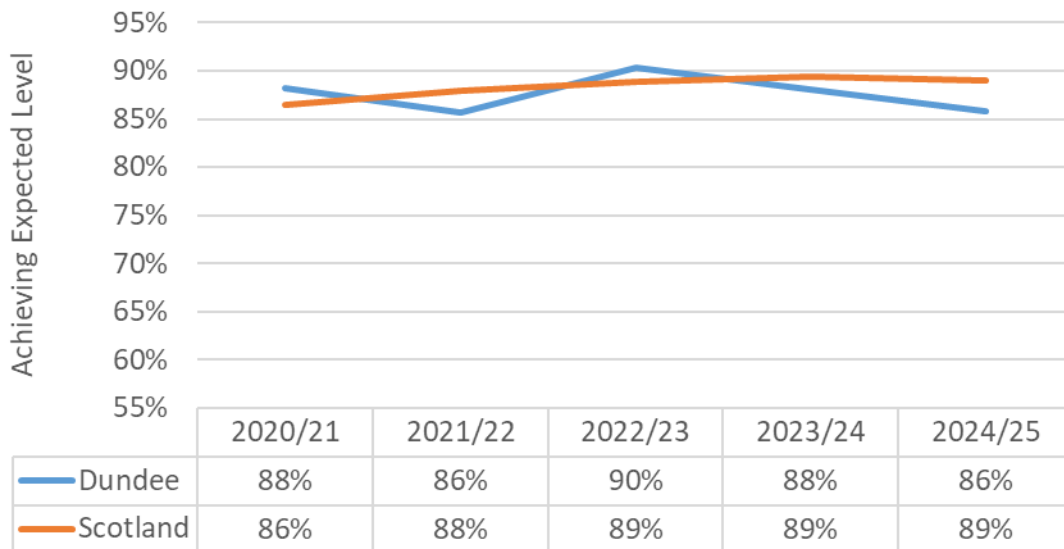


Figure 11: Percentage of P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

6.7 The poverty-related attainment gap has narrowed over the last two years and is now 7 percentage points narrower than that seen in Scotland overall (Figure 12, below).

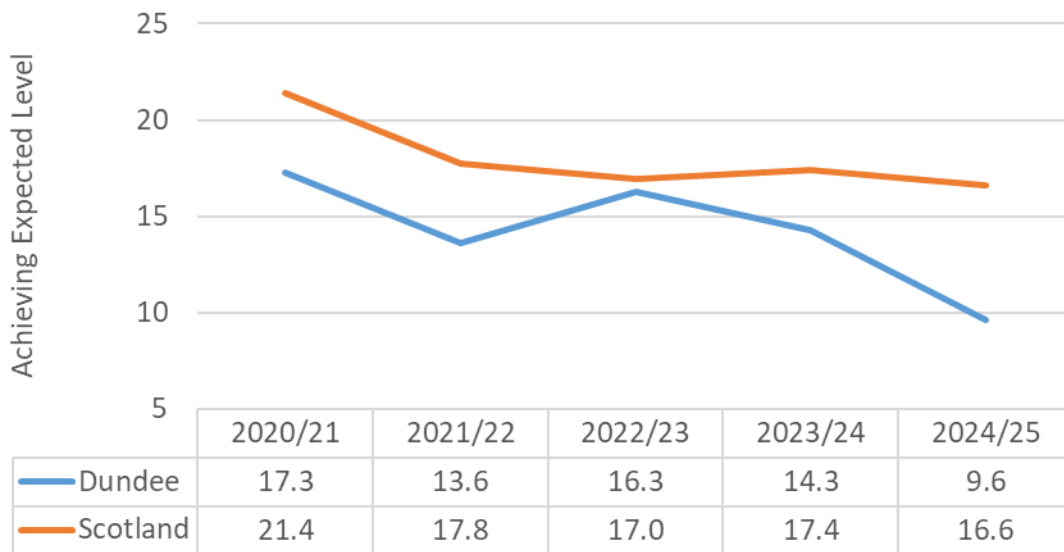


Figure 12: Percentage point gap between P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving their expected level in Numeracy.

6.8 As detailed in Appendix 2, Dundee has higher levels of Numeracy attainment in P1, P4 & P7 combined for SIMD Quintiles 1, 3 and 4 than the Scottish average.

6.9 The gap between primary pupils living in SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 in Dundee achieving their expected numeracy levels (9.6 percentage-points) is narrower than the average for the original nine Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) challenge authorities (14.5 percentage-points).

% of S3 pupils combined achieving CfE Third Level or better in Numeracy

6.10 It is important to note that a pupil is only reported to have achieved their expected level in literacy if they have achieved the expected level in all three of the literacy organisers: reading, writing, and listening and talking.

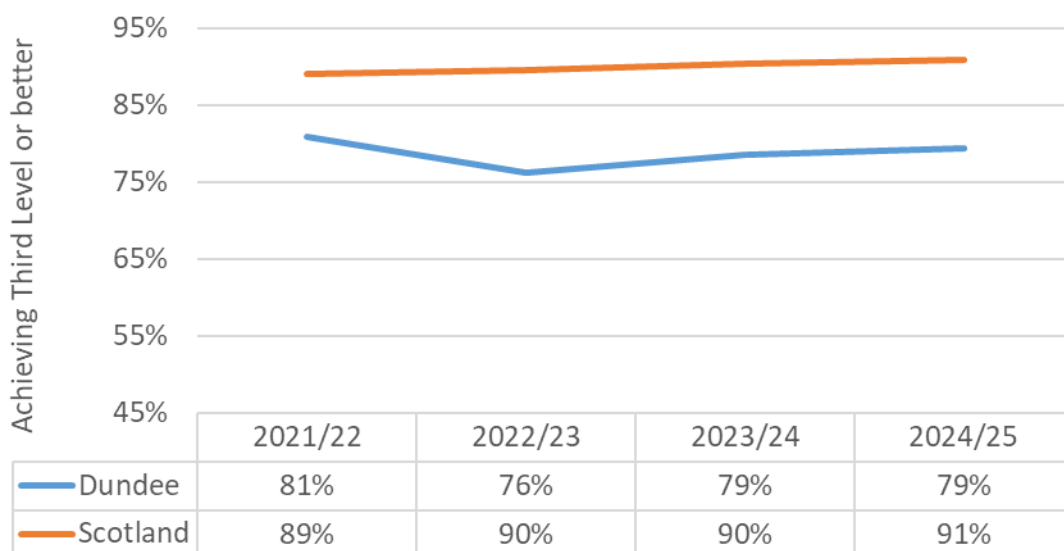


Figure 13: Percentage of S3 pupils achieving CfE Numeracy Third Level or better

Closing the attainment gap in numeracy: S3

6.11 The proportion of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 achieving CfE Third level or better in numeracy improved in 2024/25 and is now at its highest level since the covid-19 pandemic. It still lies 13 percentage points below the Scottish average. The proportion of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 5 achieving CfE Third level or better in numeracy declined by 2 percentage points in 2024/25. The overall effect of this was a continued closing of the numeracy poverty related attainment gap.

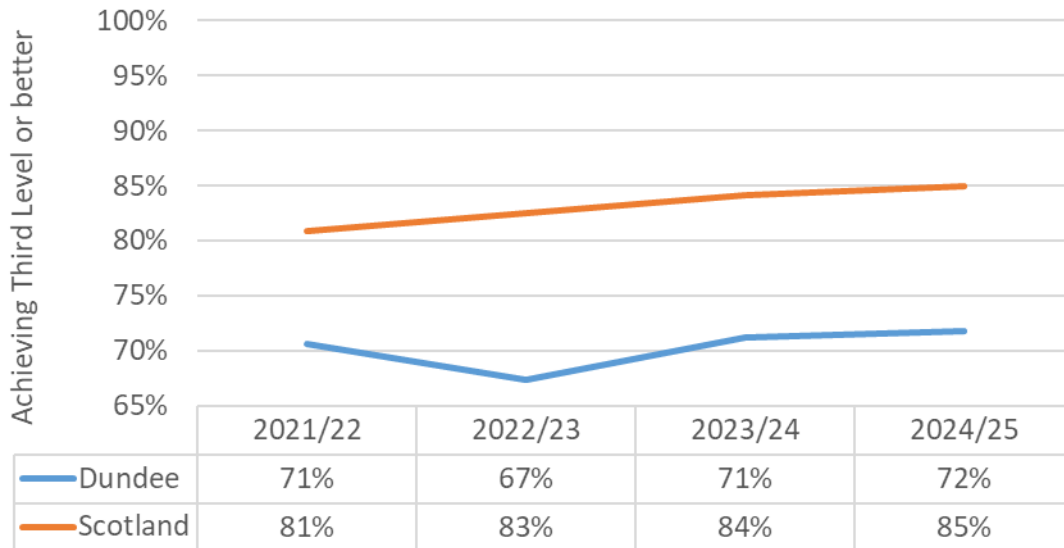


Figure 14: Percentage of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived) achieving Third level in Numeracy.

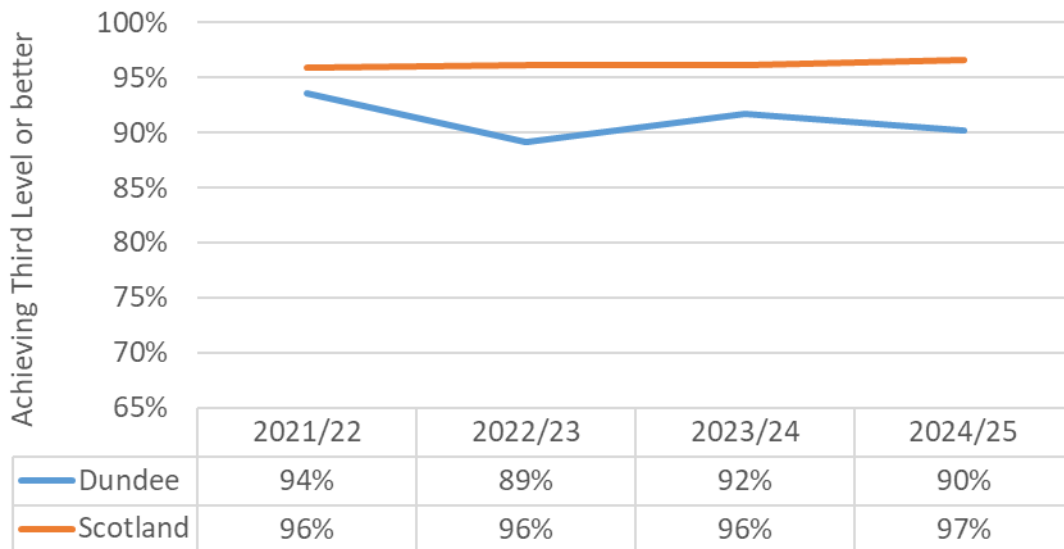


Figure 15: Percentage of S3 pupils from SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) achieving Third level or better in Numeracy.

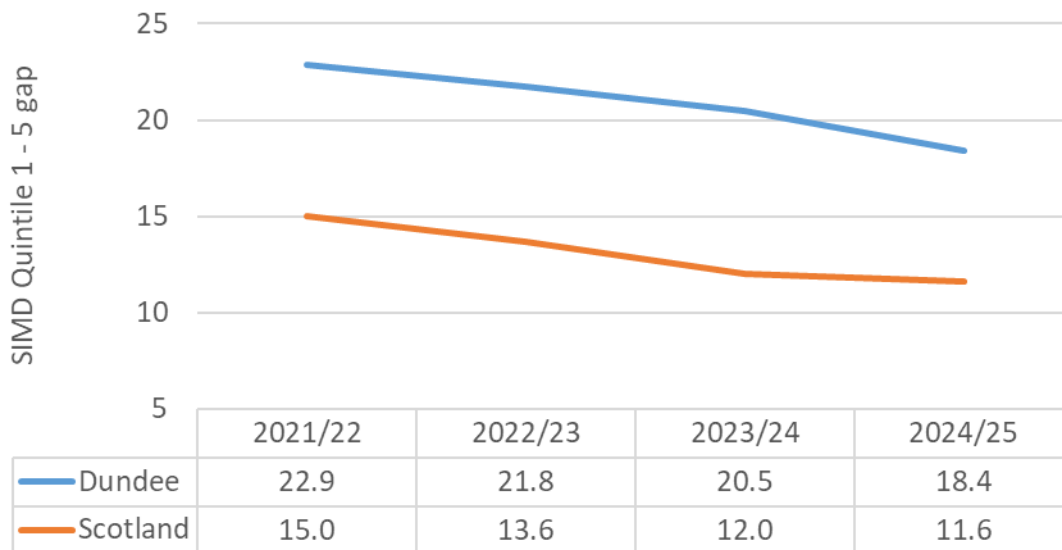


Figure 16: Percentage point gap between S3 pupils from SIMD Quintiles 1 and 5 achieving Third level or better in Numeracy

7.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

7.1 There continues to be clear progress made in relation to increasing the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels in literacy and numeracy relevant to their stage. Performance among pupils living in the most deprived areas has improved to its highest recorded level, contributing to a continued narrowing of the poverty-related attainment gap. Building on this progress, the Service will sustain its focus on high-quality learning, teaching and assessment; strengthened attendance and engagement; targeted, data-informed interventions; and collaborative improvement activity to further improve outcomes for all pupils.

7.2 These approaches and actions include:

- Continue to embed the Service’s ‘Every Dundee Learning Matters’ (EDLM) Improvement Strategy, with support from University of Glasgow Professors, with a focus on ensuring that classroom teachers have increased opportunities to share, and learn from, practice that improves the presence, participation, and progress of pupils in Dundee schools.
- The Service, working in partnership with Education Scotland, has ten schools (across two cohorts in academic session 2025/26) involved in the Quality Improvement National Writing programme. The learning is now being shared across additional target primary schools as well as engaging in the national secondary pilot programme. Education Scotland’s Attainment Advisor and the Service’s Pedagogy Team provide additional support and challenge to all schools involved.
- All schools continue to have a focus on improving the presence (attendance and engagement) of their pupils, implementing learning from engagement in the national programme during 2024/25 as well as from evidence from what has worked in other schools in Dundee.
- The Service’s Pedagogy Team will continue to provide professional learning at universal and targeted levels informed by data (attainment data and teacher feedback) and school improvement plans; the team will also support all Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs) to ensure a sound understanding of the learning, teaching, and assessment cycle.
- Education Scotland’s Attainment Advisor, working alongside central officers, will continue to provide bespoke support to targeted schools as a result of quality assurance activity, directed and overseen by the Chief Education Officer.
- Strengthen primary–secondary progression pathways, particularly from P7 into S1 and across S1–S3, to ensure continuity in literacy and numeracy learning and support improved outcomes for pupils in the Broad General Education.

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

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

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services, or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

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

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Head of Service – Education, Learning & Inclusion

18 February 2025

APPENDIX 1

ACEL RETURNS

The full details of Dundee's BGE Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data from 2020/21 to 2024/25 are presented in the table below. NB there was no national collection of ACEL levels for S3 pupils in June 2021.

Table 3: Percentage of Dundee pupils achieving their expected CfE Levels, 2020/21 to 2024/25, by Stage and CfE Organiser.

Organiser	Stage	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2025/26
Reading	P1	79%	82%	81%	81%	82%
	P4	76%	79%	80%	81%	82%
	P7	78%	79%	82%	84%	82%
	P1,4,7 combined	78%	80%	81%	82%	82%
	S3	-	85%	82%	83%	83%
Writing	P1	74%	77%	77%	77%	79%
	P4	69%	70%	73%	74%	75%
	P7	72%	71%	76%	77%	75%
	P1,4,7 combined	71%	72%	75%	76%	76%
	S3	-	85%	81%	83%	84%
Listening & Talking	P1	85%	87%	86%	88%	86%
	P4	87%	83%	86%	87%	87%
	P7	82%	87%	88%	88%	87%
	P1,4,7 combined	85%	86%	87%	88%	87%
	S3	-	87%	83%	84%	84%
Literacy	P1	71%	74%	72%	74%	76%
	P4	65%	66%	71%	72%	73%
	P7	68%	70%	74%	75%	73%
	P1,4,7 combined	68%	70%	72%	74%	74%
	S3	-	84%	79%	81%	82%
Numeracy	P1	81%	83%	84%	84%	84%
	P4	75%	73%	76%	79%	78%
	P7	74%	74%	77%	78%	77%
	P1,4,7 combined	77%	77%	79%	80%	80%
	S3	-	81%	76%	79%	79%

In June 2025 the number of pupils in each stage was:

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined	S3
Roll:	1,333	1,468	1,468	4,269	1,586

APPENDIX 2

ACHIEVEMENT OF CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LEVELS BY QUINTILE

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL)

P1, P4 and P7 combined

% achieving expected level in

Literacy

		'20/21	'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	'24/25
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	62%	64%	66%	67%	69%
	Scotland	56%	61%	64%	64%	66%
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	67%	68%	70%	76%	71%
	Scotland	61%	65%	68%	70%	70%
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	71%	72%	77%	81%	80%
	Scotland	66%	70%	73%	74%	75%
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	75%	79%	80%	81%	82%
	Scotland	73%	76%	78%	79%	79%
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	82%	84%	86%	83%	83%
	Scotland	81%	82%	84%	85%	85%



Numeracy

		'20/21	'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	'24/25
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	71%	72%	74%	74%	76%
	Scotland	65%	70%	72%	72%	72%
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	77%	76%	76%	82%	77%
	Scotland	70%	74%	76%	77%	77%
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	80%	79%	83%	85%	85%
	Scotland	74%	78%	80%	81%	81%
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	84%	84%	85%	88%	87%
	Scotland	80%	82%	84%	85%	85%
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	88%	86%	90%	88%	86%
	Scotland	86%	88%	89%	89%	89%



S3

% achieving Third Level or better level in

Literacy

		'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	'24/25
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	77%	72%	71%	75%
	Scotland	77%	81%	82%	84%
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	84%	79%	79%	82%
	Scotland	82%	85%	86%	88%
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	89%	84%	88%	85%
	Scotland	86%	88%	88%	90%
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	87%	88%	88%	88%
	Scotland	90%	92%	91%	93%
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	94%	89%	96%	95%
	Scotland	94%	95%	95%	95%



Numeracy

		'21/22	'22/23	'23/24	'24/25
SIMD Quintile 1	Dundee	71%	67%	71%	72%
	Scotland	81%	83%	84%	85%
SIMD Quintile 2	Dundee	82%	75%	74%	80%
	Scotland	87%	87%	88%	89%
SIMD Quintile 3	Dundee	85%	84%	80%	88%
	Scotland	91%	91%	91%	91%
SIMD Quintile 4	Dundee	90%	85%	88%	85%
	Scotland	93%	93%	94%	94%
SIMD Quintile 5	Dundee	94%	89%	92%	90%
	Scotland	96%	96%	96%	97%



In June 2025 the number of pupils in each SIMD Quintile was:

Stage:	P1	P4	P7	P1, 4, 7 combined	S3
Quintile 1:	591	685	667	1,943	162
Quintile 2:	261	253	294	808	47
Quintile 3:	118	123	113	354	21
Quintile 4:	168	187	161	516	28
Quintile 5:	174	203	220	597	21
Quintile unknown:	21	17	13	51	13

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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