

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE28 September 2023Report by Director of EducationREVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee on the impact of Pupil Equity Funding in East Renfrewshire.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the progress made with Pupil Equity Funding in East Renfrewshire Council.

**BACKGROUND**

3. As part of the Attainment Scotland Fund, the Scottish Government has allocated additional funding directly to schools, targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap since 2017. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) resource must be closely targeted at those children and young people who are experiencing disadvantage, with consideration for the principles set out in national and local guidance. Appendix 1 details each school's 2022/23 allocation.

4. In East Renfrewshire head teachers have access to their school's full allocated amount of Pupil Equity Funding and are advised to work in partnership with each other, and the Education Department, to agree the use of funding.

5. Pupil Equity Funding enables schools to deliver activities, approaches or resources which are clearly additional to funds devolved to them from the Council.

6. [National guidance](#) is provided annually by the Scottish Government to help schools plan how they invest their PEF allocation. This guidance contains a number of key principles including:

- Parents and carers, children and young people and other key stakeholders should be involved in the planning process;
- Funding must be provided for targeted support for children and young people affected by poverty to achieve their full potential; although PEF is allocated on the basis of free school meal eligibility, head teachers can use their professional judgement to bring additional children into targeted interventions; and,
- Schools must have plans in place at the outset to evaluate the impact of the funding.

7. The Education Department has provided additional local guidance to support schools in their use and reporting of Pupil Equity Fund. This is revised annually and is specific to our local circumstances. The advice is set in the context of the existing approaches to self-evaluation for school improvement and takes account of existing sources of research and evidence.

8. Head teachers are asked to plan how resources would be used to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to close the poverty related attainment gap. In developing these plans head teachers are asked to set out their rationale for the use of the funding, based on a clear contextual analysis which identifies the poverty related attainment gap in their schools and takes cognisance of evidence about what is known to be effective at raising attainment for children affected by poverty.

9. The Quality Improvement Team and Education Leadership Team, with the support of Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor, work alongside schools to provide support and challenge in formulating clear plans to support closing of the poverty related attainment gap.

## REPORT

10. As part of the Education Department's Quality Assurance activity, a thematic review of Pupil Equity Funding was undertaken in March 2023.

11. This review assessed the impact of PEF funding on children and young people experiencing poverty in East Renfrewshire. Evidence was gathered through:

- Quality Improvement visits to all schools together with the department's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor;
- Peer discussion groups involving all head teachers, Quality Improvement Officers and the department's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor;
- Two parent/carer focus groups, attended by parents from seven schools;
- Pupil questionnaires, completed by 38 pupils supported by PEF from seven schools;
- A pupil focus group;
- Analysis of attendance and exclusions data;
- Analysis of CfE and SQA attainment data;
- Analysis of school leaver destination data;
- Evaluation of school-level PEF planning and monitoring documentation and processes; and,
- Consideration of other relevant local and national review evidence, for example the ERC Review of Additional Support for Learning and Education Scotland's Thematic Review of PEF.

12. The refreshed mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.

Therefore the following 4 key questions were explored as part of the review:

- *How well is our PEF planning supported by a clear rationale which draws on robust data, knowledge of individuals and communities, and evidence of what is likely to be effective?*
- *How well do we involve families, communities and wider partners in collaborative processes for planning, implementing and measuring the impact of PEF money?*
- *How well do we measure progress, evaluate the impact of interventions and use this to inform our next steps?*
- *To what extent can we demonstrate a positive impact of PEF on improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty and on closing the poverty-related attainment gap?*

13. The review of the Impact of Pupil Equity Funding report identified key strengths in East Renfrewshire, along with some next steps for schools and the department.

## Key Strengths

- All schools have a clear rationale for their use of PEF which is based on thorough knowledge of pupils, families and their needs in their local context;
- The strong reliance on evidence-based approaches when planning interventions to improve equity;
- The pro-active approaches to improving school attendance and reducing exclusions, which are supporting children and young people to overcome barriers to accessing education;
- The high attainment rates of children and young people living with poverty in East Renfrewshire compared with the attainment rates of children and young people living with similar levels of poverty nationally;
- Cost of the School Day approaches are increasingly embedded into schools' self-evaluation, improvement planning and everyday practice;
- The very high rates of sustained positive destinations for socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers and the notable decrease in the deprivation gap in this measure over time;
- The very high quality of support to measure pupil wellbeing provided by the Educational Psychology team, which is helping schools to gather meaningful evidence of progress across a wider range of outcomes;
- The extensive support that school staff provide to help pupils engage well in their learning, underpinned by strong, nurturing relationships and high levels of professional commitment; and
- The support and encouragement provided by school staff for individual pupils to participate in wider achievement opportunities.

14. Next steps to ensure further improvement include:

## Schools

- Continue to improve the rigour of PEF planning to include SMART outcomes and measures, opportunities for review of impact during the school year, and detailed financial plans for full PEF allocations;
- Expand and improve the use of poverty risk factors to identify and support more children at risk of poorer outcomes, including lower participation;
- Continue to support practitioners to develop confidence in the gathering and analysis of data and evidence and the use of this data to inform learning, teaching and assessment practices that increase equity;
- Increase collaboration and pooling of resources in order to improve our collective ability to plan the most effective interventions for individual learners, for example by working collaboratively across clusters of schools to improve attendance;
- Increase opportunities for partners, including link Educational Psychologists and Community Learning and Development workers, to collaboratively plan and evaluate the success of PEF interventions;
- Increase the use of Participatory Budgeting to increase the involvement of children, young people and families in determining priorities for the use of PEF; and,
- In the secondary sector, identify ways in which PEF can be used to avoid the exclusion of children experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and those at greater risk of disadvantage.

## The Education Department

- Provide further opportunities for head teachers to share practice and support and challenge peers in the effective use of PEF;
- Provide further opportunities for class teachers and key groups of staff, such as Equalities Coordinators and ASN Coordinators, to develop confidence in the gathering and analysis of data and evidence to inform learning, teaching and assessment practices that increase equity;
- Continue to provide support and challenge for senior leaders to use data and intelligence effectively to develop robust, evidence-led plans for the use of PEF;
- Ensure ongoing sharing of effective practice in improving outcomes for learners, through planned opportunities for looking outwards to establishments across East Renfrewshire and beyond the local authority area;
- Provide opportunities for professional learning about participatory budgeting for key staff;
- Extend the range of opportunities for professional learning about poverty and poverty-aware practice for practitioners; and,
- Maintain a focus during regular Quality Improvement Visits on effective use of PEF and improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.

15. The review of PEF has identified scope for further improvement. In partnership with Education Scotland's Attainment Advisor, the Quality Improvement Team will provide a range of professional learning opportunities to support head teachers with PEF planning and action the next steps as detailed above.

16. The East Renfrewshire Attainment Challenge Team, through the actions detailed in the Strategic Equity Fund plan will take forward some of the identified next steps, alongside head teachers.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

17. This report provides evidence of improvements made as a consequence of additional funding from the Scottish Government, to support schools in closing the poverty related attainment gap. East Renfrewshire schools were allocated £1.48 million in 2022-23. Robust monitoring arrangements have been put in place for PEF, which ensure that the department and head teachers have regular oversight of school level expenditure. PEF expenditure is separated from core school budgets, ensuring spending is not subsumed within the overall school budget and can be easily tracked and monitored. At the end of financial year 2022/23, 83% (66% at March 2022) of available PEF funding had been spent with the remaining funds committed to be spent by the end of the academic session, in line with national guidelines.

18. PEF funding has been confirmed until 2025-2026 and the current methodology of allocations will remain over this period. Head teachers have been asked to consider ways in which they can develop and sustain improvements over this period while also taking account of the significantly increasing costs of resources associated with inflation, including staffing. There are no other specific financial implications arising from this report.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

19. This report focuses on the impact of Pupil Equity Funding in primary and secondary schools; however, many of the outcomes could not have been achieved without excellent partnership working across the Council, especially with parents/carers and other cluster schools.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

20. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the progress made with Pupil Equity Funding in East Renfrewshire Council.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
28 September 2023

**Convener Contact Details**

Councillor Anderson, Convener for Education, Equalities, Culture and Leisure  
Tel: 07341 640 825  
Tel: 0141 577 3107  
[andrew.anderson@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.anderson@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Report Author**

Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance)  
Tel: 0141 577 3204  
[Janice.Collins@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Janice.Collins@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**Appendices**

1. Pupil Equity Funding Allocation: 2022 – 2026
2. Review of the Impact of Pupil Equity Funding: June 2023

BLANK PAGE

**APPENDIX 1****PEF Allocations by School**

<b>School</b>	<b>Allocation 2022-23</b>
Braidbar Primary School	£ 22,050
Busby Primary School	£ 44,100
Calderwood Lodge Primary School	£ 17,150
Carlibar Primary School	£ 113,925
Carolside Primary School	£ 19,600
Crookfur Primary School	£ 36,750
Cross Arthurlie Primary School	£ 71,050
Eaglesham Primary School	£ 34,300
Giffnock Primary School	£ 28,175
Hillview Primary School	£ 57,575
Kirkhill Primary School	£ 32,400
Maidenhill Primary School	£ 18,375
Mearns Primary School	£ 54,000
Neilston Primary School	£ 58,800
Netherlee Primary School	£ 25,725
Our Lady Of The Missions Primary School	£ 33,480
St Cadoc's Primary School	£ 21,600
St Clare's Primary School	£ 29,400
St John's Primary School	£ 68,600
St Joseph's Primary School	£ 18,375
St Mark's Primary School	£ 118,825
St Thomas' Primary School	£ 26,950
Thornliebank Primary School	£ 29,400
Uplawmoor Primary School	£ 2,450
Barrhead High School	£ 69,825
Eastwood High School	£ 63,700
Mearns Castle High School	£ 41,650
St Luke's High School	£ 78,400
St Ninian's High School	£ 40,425
Williamwood High School	£ 41,650
Woodfarm High School	£ 39,960
Isobel Mair School	£ 129,850
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 1, 488,515</b>

BLANK PAGE



# Review of the Impact of Pupil Equity Funding

June 2023





Scottish Government has allocated additional funding in the form of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) directly to schools since 2017 with the aim of closing the poverty-related attainment gap. PEF resource must be closely targeted at those children and young people who are experiencing disadvantage, with consideration for the principles set out in national and local guidance.

The refreshed mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is ***to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap***. This review assessed the impact of PEF funding on children and young people experiencing poverty in East Renfrewshire, through:

- Quality Improvement visits to all schools together with the department's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
- Peer discussion groups involving all head teachers, Quality Improvement Officers and the department's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor
- Two parent/carer focus groups, attended by parents from seven schools
- Pupil questionnaires, completed by 38 pupils supported by PEF from seven schools
- A pupil focus group
- Analysis of attendance and exclusions data
- Analysis of CfE and SQA attainment data
- Analysis of leaver destination data
- Evaluation of school-level PEF planning and monitoring documentation and processes
- Consideration of other relevant local and national review evidence, for example the ERC Review of Additional Support for Learning and Education Scotland's Thematic Review of PEF.

The education department and schools follow annual guidance from Scottish Government which outlines how schools should approach the allocation of PEF and monitor its impact. The review considered the following questions, which reflect key priorities set out by Scottish Government:

- 1. How well is our PEF planning supported by a clear rationale which draws on robust data, knowledge of individuals and communities, and evidence of what is likely to be effective?**
- 2. How well do we involve families, communities and wider partners in collaborative processes for planning, implementing and measuring the impact of PEF money?**
- 3. How well do we measure progress, evaluate the impact of interventions and use this to inform our next steps?**
- 4. To what extent can we demonstrate a positive impact of PEF on improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty and on closing the poverty-related attainment gap?**

## **1. How well is our PEF planning supported by a clear rationale which draws on robust data, knowledge of individuals and communities, and evidence of what is likely to be effective?**

Almost all PEF plans for 2022-23 were underpinned by a clear, evidence-informed rationale and supported by robust contextual analysis. All head teachers understand the poverty-related attainment gap in their school and can describe how the school is working to raise the attainment of disadvantaged learners using interventions focused on improving literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Roles and responsibilities in implementing PEF plans were clearly defined in almost all schools.

Interventions planned to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are consistently based on evidence of what is likely to have a positive impact. Schools are increasingly developing systems to monitor and track pupil wellbeing, often with support from the Educational Psychology team, and are using this information to plan interventions to increase pupils' readiness to learn.

The majority of schools (66%) had developed plans that were focused on providing interventions, activities and approaches that are clearly additional to universal provision. A few head teachers highlighted the challenge of targeting support effectively in contexts where the number of pupils eligible for PEF is low, and shared concerns that pupils may feel stigmatised. Nevertheless there is a risk that universal support offered through PEF may in fact widen the poverty-related attainment gap. Schools would benefit from further opportunities to share practice, including examples of effective and sensitive targeting of small PEF awards that have brought about improvements for children and young people.

A minority of PEF plans for 2022-23 contained sufficiently detailed outcomes and measures to allow for ongoing evaluation of their impact. Many schools were continuing to develop their understanding and use of SMART outcomes, measures and baseline data throughout the session in order to lay the foundations for more rigorous planning for session 2023-24. Only a few plans outlined when there would be opportunities to review progress towards expected impacts during the school year.

There is a need to deepen and expand the interrogation of equity data to include all indicators of progress, and to further develop skills in tracking progress in key measures such as participation and engagement. Schools with smaller awards may wish to consider pooling resources with other schools with similar priorities in order to meet learners' individual needs more effectively. A system is in place to allow sharing of PEF plans and facilitate dialogue between schools as part of the department's quality assurance process and feedback from head teachers suggests it would benefit schools to continue this.

### **Case study: Effectively targeting PEF to meet children's needs at Carolside Primary School**

Carolside Primary School has a small PEF award of £19.6k. In order to target this resource effectively towards those pupils at risk of poorer outcomes, the school worked closely with the authority's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor to analyse available data about children's needs and identify which interventions which were most likely to bring about improvement. By using PEF to facilitate the use of a teacher to work flexibly with identified families, they have been able to provide additional support around a wide range of needs including support to attend school, 'soft starts', visiting pupils in their own homes and supporting both children's and parents' wellbeing. By aligning the remit of the teacher with very carefully planned SMART targets and measures of success, they are able to monitor and track the impact of the additional resource on improving identified outcomes for children.

A minority of schools had outlined their financial plans for the use of PEF and matched these to the school's PEF allocation for 2022-23. A more detailed approach to planning the use of PEF at the start of the session, including financial plans and contingency plans (e.g. in the case of difficulty recruiting), would be likely to result in a reduced underspend and greater benefit to those learners entitled to support in each academic year.

The majority of plans for 2022-23 included details of how the school is reducing the Cost of the School Day (CoSD), while qualitative evidence demonstrates that most schools are already working to reduce costs to families in a variety of ways. CoSD work is not necessarily funded by PEF with many schools using wider school funds to support cost-reducing initiatives, therefore CoSD is not always captured in PEF plans. 17 schools have engaged with support offered through the CoSD school leads online group since 2021 and CoSD approaches are becoming well embedded in the work of a majority of schools.

In pupil questionnaires, in response to the statement, 'The cost of attending school is affordable,' 66% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed, while 34% of pupils disagreed, strongly disagreed or didn't know.

## 2. How well do we involve families, communities and wider partners in collaborative processes for planning, implementing and measuring the impact of PEF money?

Half of all schools were able to share evidence of how they had involved stakeholders in planning how PEF monies would be spent. These schools had involved children, young people and families in a variety of ways ranging from informal dialogue and discussion to more formal participatory budgeting processes.

In parent and carer focus groups, awareness of PEF, its purpose and how it may be used was low. Schools should now work to increase awareness and improve the transparency of decision making related to PEF. There is a need to be mindful of confidentiality and avoid stigmatisation in working with parents on this sensitive issue, and not all decisions require to be made collaboratively or shared in detail. Further guidance and information about engaging with stakeholders about budgeting decisions can be found in the department's Guidance on Participatory Budgeting.

In pupil questionnaires, in response to the statement, 'I am able to contribute to decisions about buying new equipment and resources for learning,' 66% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed and 34% of pupils either disagreed or didn't know. In response to the statement, 'I regularly get the chance to give my views on what type of experiences I would like to have available and see that these are acted on,' 77% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed and 23% of pupils either disagreed or didn't know.

A frequent theme throughout parent and pupil focus groups was the importance of personalisation and the need for flexible solutions to support children and young people to overcome barriers. Both pupils and parents also spoke about the central importance of positive relationships and school staff knowing them very well. Pupils spoke about the positive impact of individual changes that had been made for them to help improve their wellbeing and their learning. They valued flexible and responsive types of support that took account of the individual challenges they faced in their lives. Parents repeatedly highlighted the importance of flexible approaches to uniform, flexible starts of days, and flexible two-way dialogue around any choices or changes that could be made to lower stress and improve young people's wellbeing.

Overall, the feedback from these focus groups demonstrated the vital importance of inclusion of children's and parents' voices and lived experiences in planning interventions to improve equity. Parents and pupils spoke passionately about occasions when their insights and experiences had been deeply listened to, understood and used to make changes that subsequently improved their ability to attend, engage and learn .



National guidance highlights the effectiveness of engaging wider partners to meet the needs of children and young people impacted by poverty. In 2022-23 a few schools (8%) used PEF to involve partners such as family outreach workers, youth workers and community food organisations in their work. The aims and intended outcomes of partnership working are usually shared informally, however all partners we spoke with had a clear sense of what they were working to achieve in partnership with the school and how they were improving equity.

The impact of interventions delivered together with partners is generally evaluated by schools as part of their annual self-evaluation and planning cycle. National guidance and feedback from East Renfrewshire partners and schools, suggests that partnership working is most effective when it is jointly planned with partners coming together around a child's or a family's specific needs. More formal involvement of partners in the evaluation of impact and the planning of next steps would be likely to enhance the quality and impact of partnership working, as well as the future availability of evidence of impact on children and young people's progress as a result of the partnership.

### Case study: Joint planning with CLD at Barrhead High School

Barrhead High School has been working in partnership with the Community Learning and Development service (CLD) to offer bespoke learning experiences for young people experiencing multiple disadvantages. Using the Youth Work Scotland Skills Framework, they have jointly agreed a rationale and a set of criteria to underpin their approach to the partnership. A joint planning tool has been developed which is used to identify for each programme the demographic profile of the learners involved, the key skills for learning, life and work being developed, and the SMART aims and measures that will be used to support and monitor the impact of each activity. As a result, the school is able to evaluate the impact of their curricular planning for young people together with youth workers and use this to plan next steps and ensure progression in learning. Based on the success of this approach, the school now intends to use PEF to recruit a youth worker.

## 3. How well do we measure progress, evaluate the impact of interventions and use this to inform our next steps?

### Planning to evaluate impact

All schools demonstrate deep commitment to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people and increasing the impact of PEF. All head teachers readily engage in dialogue about their PEF planning and show openness to sharing ideas and new approaches to improving equity.

A review of all PEF plans in October 2022 showed that a minority (16%) of plans outlined SMART outcomes, measures and baseline data including expected impact. A lack of detailed planning for ongoing measurement of progress and evaluation of impact, was limiting a majority of schools' ability to plan and adjust next steps responsively based on pupil needs.

It is important that schools can make timely adjustments to interventions where these are not having the intended impact. Throughout the session the Quality Improvement Team and the department's link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor have been working with schools to further develop plans, to ensure these include details of how and when success will be measured. A number of professional learning opportunities are on offer to support senior leaders to further develop and refine the use of outcomes and measures in their planning.



Effective measurement of progress and evaluation of impact requires a detailed knowledge of individual learners and the ways in which they demonstrate progress across different areas of learning. As the staff members who know learners best, class teachers have access to a wider range of emerging evidence than senior leaders and are best placed to both gather and respond to this with timely adjustment of next steps. Senior leaders including head teachers have identified a need to continue to strengthen teacher ownership and use of data so that all staff are well equipped to observe and evaluate the impact of PEF interventions in the classroom, using this evidence to plan next steps and adjust interventions in response.

### Recruitment and staff cover

In many cases, PEF monies are used to fund members of staff to deliver planned literacy, numeracy and HWB support or to oversee the implementation of the school's PEF plan as a whole. In 2022-23:

- 15 schools used PEF to fund PSAs
- 13 schools used PEF to fund PTs or top up a teacher's pay to PT salary
- 18 schools used PEF to fund teachers to improve literacy/extra teachers/nurture teachers
- 5 schools used PEF to fund EAL support.

Due to the ongoing impact of the global pandemic, high rates of staff absence and staff availability have negatively affected recruitment of these key staff. Where staff have been appointed, their availability to undertake the planned work continuously throughout the school year has often been disrupted by the need to provide staff cover. As a result, many schools have experienced challenges in delivering, sustaining and evaluating the impact of their PEF interventions.

It is hoped that disruption resulting from staff absence will decrease as the global pandemic subsides. As a next step, schools are encouraged to include contingency plans within their PEF planning to ensure that in the event of recruitment difficulties, pupils can still receive appropriate support through PEF during that academic year.





## 4. To what extent can we demonstrate a positive impact of PEF on improving outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

65

Pupil Equity Funding is allocated based on a formula linked to Free Meal Entitlement (FME). While FME is a useful indicator of deprivation, not all pupils living with poverty are entitled to free school meals. In addition, not all families who are entitled to free meals claim these, particularly in the earlier years of primary school when all children are automatically entitled to a free meal (Primary 1 to Primary 5). For this reason the data analysis below takes account of both FME and also the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD can be used to identify patterns and trends in the attainment of children and young people who are living in areas of high deprivation. This information can be used to augment and refine what we know based on FME.

### Poverty risk factors

In line with Scottish Government guidance, East Renfrewshire schools are encouraged to consider a wide range of data and intelligence in deciding how to allocate PEF, including six poverty risk factors:

- Lone parent families
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with a young mother
- Families with a child under one
- Larger families (3+ children).

The consideration of poverty risk factors allows schools to identify more learners who are at risk of poorer education outcomes due to socioeconomic disadvantage. It should be noted however that this intelligence is often highly contextualised, nuanced and only known to school staff working directly with families; as a result it is not possible to carry out performance analysis for all poverty risk factors across the local authority.

Through PEF plans and head teacher discussion groups it can be seen that schools are beginning to make good use of poverty risk factors to identify more pupils who would benefit from support through PEF, based on their knowledge of the circumstances of individual children and families. Schools should continue to develop and expand this practice with support from the Quality Improvement team, to ensure that hidden learning, achievement and participation gaps can be identified and addressed.

## 66 Case study: Poverty Risk Factors at Braidbar Primary School

Braidbar Primary School has a small PEF allocation of £22k. Previously, 14 children were identified as being entitled to support through PEF with a range of interventions focused on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In 2022 the head teacher and SLT refreshed their approach to PEF planning and used poverty risk factors to look systematically at the needs of all pupils in at-risk groups. Through one-to-one interviews, they found that a number of pupils who were attending and attaining well, were in fact missing out on important life experiences due to home circumstances. As part of its PEF plan for 2022-23 the school is using PEF to address this participation gap and an additional 22 pupils are now included in targeted work to improve a wide range of learning outcomes. Qualitative evidence shows that this is having a positive impact on pupils' participation and aspirations for their futures. The use of PEF is bespoke to the needs of individual learners and includes their voice in deciding how to use the funding.

**As part of national scrutiny of local authority progress with the Scottish Attainment Challenge, officers worked with a link Education Scotland Attainment Advisor in June 2022 to evaluate the progress made in tackling educational inequity over the period from 2019-22. The resulting Education Scotland Recovery and Progress Report highlights the following key strengths in East Renfrewshire:**

- The impact of the reading recovery programme on pupil engagement and attainment
- Numeracy and literacy progress as measured through Curriculum for Excellence levels
- Improvement in attendance, pupil motivation, engagement, confidence and self-esteem
- Professional learning and collaborative opportunities for practitioners to support equity
- The development of the Child Poverty Delivery Improvement Group, established in 2019 to support coordinated working across services to reduce the impact of child poverty
- An increase in collaborative working with other establishments, partners, parents and local businesses
- Leadership opportunities which have resulted in increased understanding of poverty-related barriers to learning, motivation and job satisfaction.





## Evaluating outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty

The mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge is ‘to improve education outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap’.

National Guidance has identified the following five key indicators of improvement for children and young people impacted by poverty:

- **ATTAINMENT**
- **ATTENDANCE**
- **INCLUSION**
- **ENGAGEMENT**
- **PARTICIPATION.**

In analysing available data for the last 5 years, it is important to note the disruptive impact of the global pandemic. In particular, trends in attainment and attendance have been impacted not only by periods of school closure, but also by changes to the ways in which learners were assessed and different processes for recording attendance during some periods of time. As a result, it is most useful to compare the most recent annual data (2021-22) with the last pre-pandemic year (2018-19).

It should also be noted that in many instances, the significant additional challenges of the pandemic are likely to mask gains made by individual learners during this period.

## Primary Curriculum for Excellence Levels: Equity

With the exception of writing, the attainment of pupils registered for free school meals across the main curricular areas has decreased over the last three years. For pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2, attainment has decreased significantly across the main curricular areas except in numeracy (see Appendix 1 Table 1).

From 2018-19 to 2021-22, overall attainment across the four curricular areas has decreased for all pupils and for pupils registered for free school meals and living in SIMD deciles 1-2. However, it has decreased for the latter two groups at a faster rate. As a result, the poverty related attainment gap has grown for our most disadvantaged primary aged pupils in P1, P4 and P7 over the last three years (see table below).

It should be noted that the numbers of those children registered for Free School Meals and/or living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2 represent a small percentage statistically (approximately 6%) of this demographic in East Renfrewshire.

	Percentage Change from 2018-19 to 2021-22		
	All Pupils	Pupils registered for Free School Meals	Pupil living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2
<b>Reading</b>	2% decrease	3% decrease	10% decrease
<b>Writing</b>	1% decrease	11% decrease	11% decrease
<b>Talking &amp; Listening</b>	1% decrease	21% decrease	14% decrease
<b>Numeracy</b>	1% decrease	4% decrease	8% increase

The department also compares the performance of pupils living in the areas of highest deprivation (SIMD 1-2) with pupils living in the areas of lowest deprivation (SIMD 9-10). This data shows an increase in the gap between the most and least disadvantaged pupils across all skills since 2017-18, although here has been a reduction in the gap in numeracy since the last pre-pandemic year (2018-19) (see Appendix 1 Table 2).

At third level, from 2018-19 to 2021-22 with the exception of numeracy for pupils living in SIMD 1 and 2, the attainment of disadvantaged secondary pupils increased at a lower rate than the overall cohort. This demonstrates an increase in the poverty related attainment gap for pupils at this level.

At fourth level, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in numeracy either decreased, or increased at a significantly lower rate than for all pupils. Conversely, attainment in Writing increased at a higher rate than for all pupils, indicating a reduction in the poverty-related attainment gap in this skill.

### Third Level

	Percentage Change from 2018-19 to 2021-22		
	All Pupils	Pupils registered for Free School Meals	Pupils living in deciles 1 and 2
Reading	0.4% decrease	0.3% decrease	3.2% decrease
Writing	0.7% increase	2.3% decrease	4.5% decrease
Talking & Listening	0.1% increase	2.4% decrease	0.9% decrease
Numeracy	1.9% increase	1.8% increase	2.8% increase

### Fourth Level

	Percentage Change from 2018-19 to 2021-22		
	All Pupils	Pupils registered for Free School Meals	Pupils living in deciles 1 and 2
Reading	1.7% increase	0	3.5% increase
Writing	3.1% increase	3.3% increase	7.3% increase
Talking & Listening	0.1% increase	0.3% increase	1.9% decrease
Numeracy	5.1% increase	3.1% decrease	0.8% increase

Comparison of the performance of pupils living in the areas of highest deprivation (SIMD 1-2) with pupils living in the areas of lowest deprivation (SIMD 9-10) shows a significant reduction in the gap between the most and least disadvantaged across all skills since 2016-17, which was the session before PEF was introduced. Since 2017, the gap between the most and least disadvantaged has either remained steady or has decreased in all skills except numeracy, where the gap has increased since 2017-18 but remains lower than 2016-17 (see Appendix 1, Table 5).

## SQA Qualifications

The education department uses a number of different measures of SQA attainment to evaluate the poverty-related attainment gap. Nationally, stretch aims for the proportions of young people achieving one or more qualification(s) at SCQF levels 5 and 6 are negotiated annually between the education department and Scottish Government. This allows for comparative analysis of the poverty-related attainment gap across the country. Locally, the department also sets challenging targets for schools based on the proportions of young people attaining five passes at SCQF Levels 5 and 6, including specific targets for young people in key equity groups.

This thematic review considered the following SQA attainment measures, selected from the range of equity measures used in local attainment targets for schools and national stretch aims:

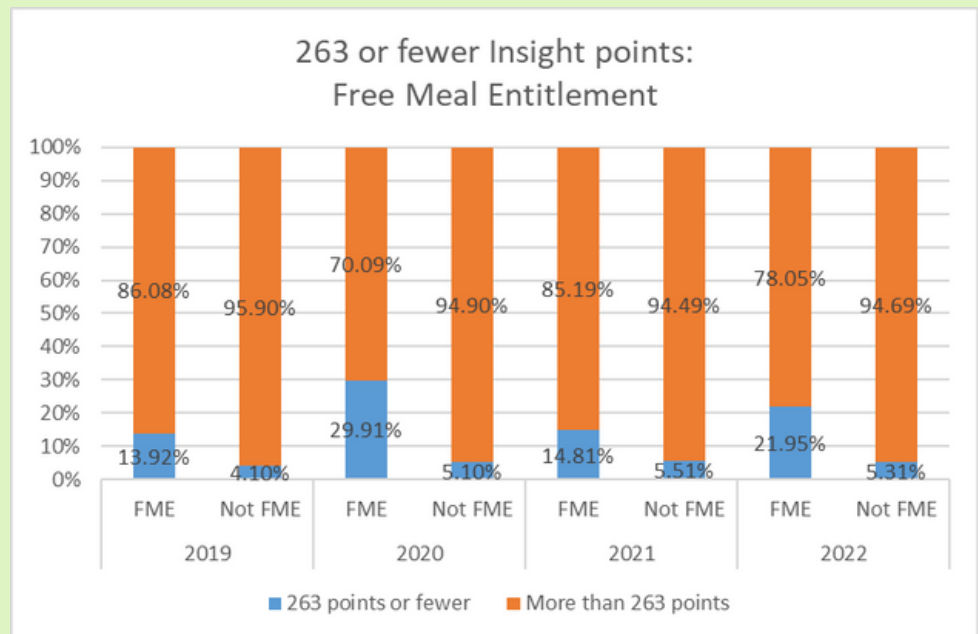
- the proportion of S4 pupils with cumulative Insight points of 263 or fewer
- the proportion of S4 pupils attaining five or more passes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 or better
- the proportion of pupils attaining five or more passes at SCQF Level 6 by the end of S6
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more awards at SQA Level 5 Grade C or better
- the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more awards at SQA Level 6 Grade C or better.

### 263 or Fewer Insight Points

The number of cumulative Insight points associated with 8 passes at National 4 (Level 4) is 264. The department sets targets for schools to decrease the proportion of pupils attaining 263 or fewer Insight points. This is one way in which schools are challenged to not only to maximise the performance of candidates within each level, but to also ensure young people are presented at the highest level at which they are capable of attaining.

The overall percentage of pupils with cumulative Insight points of 263 or fewer by the end of S4, increased from 5.2% in 2018-19, to 7.1% in 2021-22.

The adjacent chart shows the proportions of free meal entitled (FME) pupils attaining greater than and fewer than 264 Insight points from 2019 to 2022, compared with pupils who are not entitled to free meals. Amongst all pupils (those entitled to free meals and those not entitled to free meals), the proportion attaining more than 263 points is significantly higher than the proportion attaining 263 or fewer.

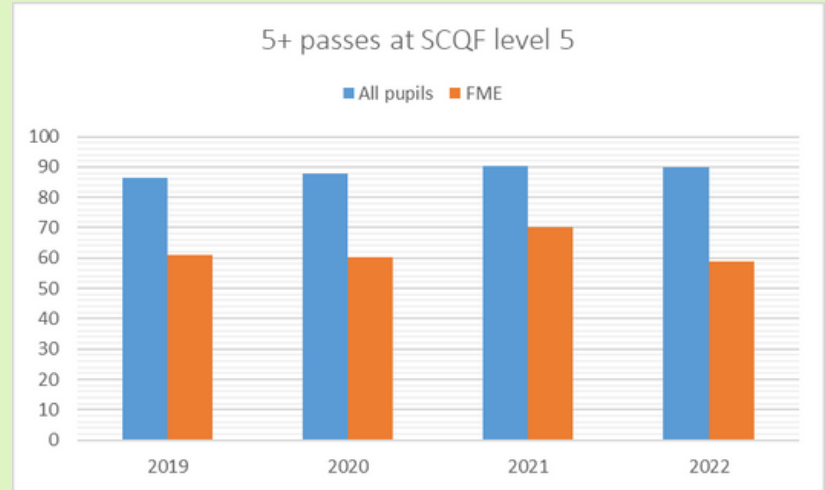


**5+ passes at SCQF Level 5: FME**

The proportion of S4 free meal entitled (FME) pupils achieving 5 or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better in S4, remained relatively stable from 2019-2022, notwithstanding an increase in 2021 during the SQA Alternative Certification Model (ACM).

The attainment of all pupils in East Renfrewshire increased over this period from 86.3% in 2019 to 90% in 2022. 58.9% of FME S4 pupils in East Renfrewshire achieved 5 or more passes at SCQF level 5 in 2022. This indicates an attainment gap of 31.1 percentage points between FME pupils and all pupils in this measure in 2022.

Nationally, the proportion of FME pupils achieving five or more passes at level 5 was significantly lower than in East Renfrewshire, at 25.4%.

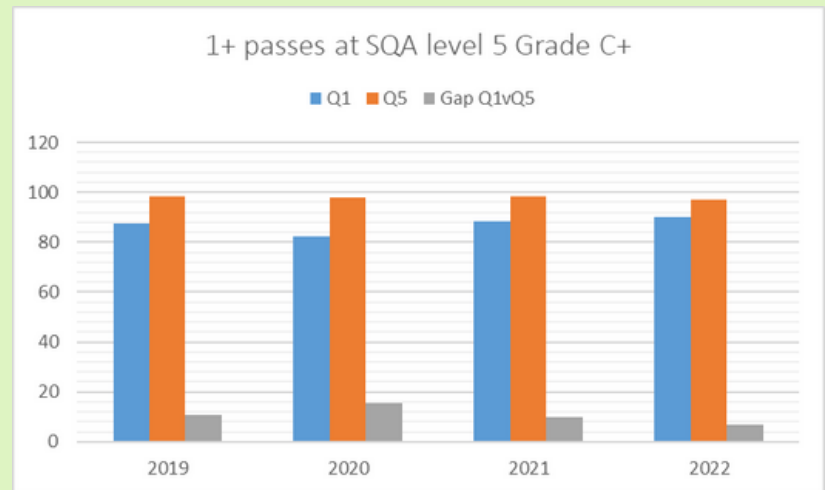


*S4 ERC All Pupils-FME 2019-22, 5+ SCQF Level 5*

**1+ SQA Level 5 Grade C+: SIMD Quintile 1 v Quintile 5**

The overall proportion of all school leavers attaining one or more passes at SQA Level 5 Grade C or better remained at a very similar level from 2019-2022, with values occurring in a narrow range from 95.5% to 96.5%.

90.2% of pupils living in SIMD 1-2 (Quintile 1) achieved at least one pass at SQA level 5 grade C or better in 2022 while 97.1% of pupils living in SIMD 9-10 (Quintile 5) achieved this measure. This indicates an attainment gap of 6.9 percentage points in 2022. This was slightly lower (by 3.7 percentage points) than in the last pre-pandemic year (2019).



*S4-6 ERC Leavers Q1vQ5 2019-22, 1+ SQA Level 5 Grade C+*

### 5+ SCQF Level 6: FME

The percentage of FME pupils attaining five or more passes at SCQF Level 6 or better by the end of S6 (based on S4 roll), remained reasonably stable from 2019-2022 with values of 34.7% in 2019, 36.8% in 2020, and 34.3% in 2022. A slightly higher proportion of this group (39.2%) achieved five or more passes during the SQA Alternative Certification Model (ACM) in 2021.

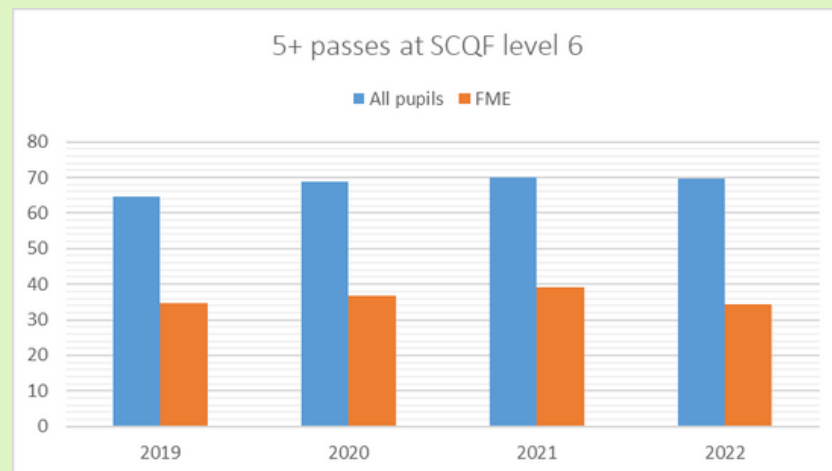
69.6% of all S5/6 pupils in East Renfrewshire attained five or more qualifications at SCQF Level 6 or better in 2022, indicating an attainment gap of 34.3 percentage points between FME pupils and all pupils in this measure. Nationally, the proportion of FME learners achieving five or more passes was significantly lower than in East Renfrewshire, at 17%.

### 1+ SQA Level 6 Grade C+: SIMD Quintile 1 v Quintile 5

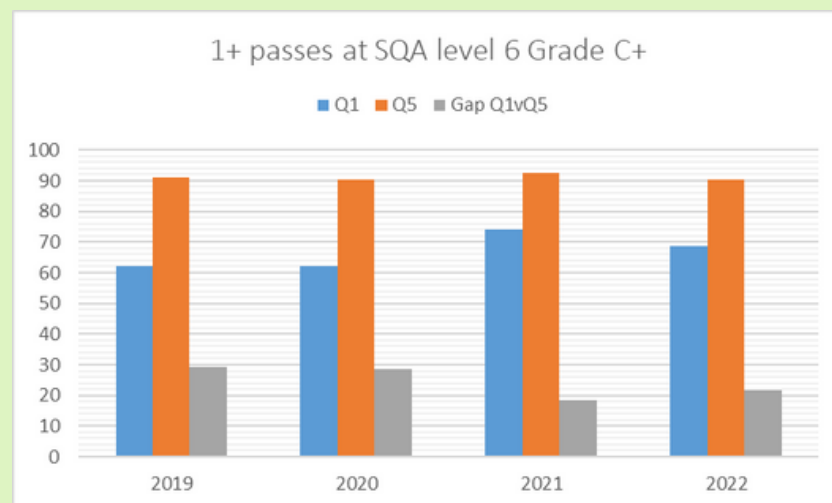
The overall proportion of all school leavers attaining one or more passes at SQA Level 6 Grade C or better by the end of S6, remained relatively stable from 2019-2022 with values falling in a narrow range from 84.4% to 86.6%.

68.6% of pupils living in SIMD 1-2 (Quintile 1) achieved at least one pass at SQA level 6 Grade C or better in 2022, while the comparable figure for pupils living in SIMD 9-10 (Quintile 5) was 90.4%. This indicates an attainment gap of 21.8 percentage points in this measure.

The attainment gap increased slightly (by 3.4 percentage points) from 2021 to 2022, but was 7.3 percentage points lower in 2022 than in the last pre-pandemic year (2019).



*S5/6 ERC All Pupils-FME 2019-22,  
5+ SCQF Level 6*



*S4-6 ERC Leavers Q1vQ5 2019-22,  
1+ SQA Level 6 Grade C+*



The above analysis identifies the nature and extent of the poverty-related attainment gap in East Renfrewshire according to key measures and trends over time. The attainment trends in East Renfrewshire are set in a context of increasing inequality nationally during the pandemic and post-pandemic period; nevertheless, an urgent and concerted response is required to reduce increasing levels of educational inequality and ensure all learners have an equal chance to succeed.

As part of the Local Improvement Plan 2023-26 the education department has committed to a number of specific actions focused on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap, including:

- Supporting and challenging schools to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap through effective use of PEF
- Supporting improvements in analysis of data and in learning, teaching and assessment through the Strategic Equity Fund
- Implementing a new Social Justice Strategy.

Evaluation of feedback and analysis of school improvement plan priorities suggests that the department's strategic focus on equity and social justice during 2023-24 is influencing school improvement priorities and is therefore beginning to increase the focus on improving equity and social justice at school level. Continued support for schools to enact plans for improvement will be needed, including professional learning and support for practitioners, and this is outlined in the department's SAC Strategic Equity Funding Plan 2023-26.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance prior to the pandemic showed a broadly stable picture, with average attendance for all pupils across primary and secondary sectors of 95.1% in the three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

For pupils in receipt of free school meals, attendance remained stable over this period at around 91.0%. Overall, attendance data shows that prior to the pandemic, attendance was lower by around 4.5 percentage points for children and young people entitled to free school meals (FME), and was around 3.8 percentage points lower for pupils living in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas (SIMD Q1 v Q5). In 2021-22, these gaps have increased to 5.6 points (based on FME) and 5.2 (based on SIMD). Average attendance for pupils registered for free meals in 2021-22 was 87.7%.

Analysis of PEF plans and discussions with head teachers show that improving attendance was a priority in 59% of schools in 2022-23. A few schools have brought about significant improvement in attendance through a range of targeted interventions and supports for pupils and their families. Continued focus on improving attendance is planned through the Strategic Equity Funding Plan with the further development of the Learn Well service to tackle emotionally based school absence. Evidence from successful interventions suggests home-school liaison is of vital importance in working to improve attendance.

## INCLUSION

All East Renfrewshire schools have adopted an inclusive approach to education based on children's rights, with 100% of schools participating in UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools. Evidence gathered through local authority review activities, Education Scotland inspections and school-level self-evaluation activities consistently finds evidence of strong practice across the authority area in promoting the inclusion of all children and young people.

In 2021-22 the education department carried out a review of Additional Support for Learning (ASL). This review examined the theme of inclusion in depth and identified a number of improvement priorities for the department and schools. Due to the correlation between additional support needs and socio-economic deprivation, the outcomes of the ASL review are highly relevant to the decisions schools make about the most effective use of PEF.

The ASL working group is working at pace to take forward the recommendations of the ASL review, and is sharing progress at regular intervals with head teachers. Moving forwards, it will be important that schools take cognisance of further developments in our shared understanding of inclusion in order to continue to increase the inclusion of children and young people living with poverty, and particularly those who experience multiple inequalities.

### **Exclusion data**

In 2021-22 the rate of exclusions in East Renfrewshire schools remained very low, despite an increase in the overall number of exclusion incidents from 2020-21. East Renfrewshire had the second lowest exclusion rate of all local authorities in Scotland in 2021-22 at a rate of 1.2 incidents per 1000 pupils across all sectors.

All exclusions in 2021-22 involved secondary pupils. 19.5% of incidents involved pupils registered for Free School Meals (FSM). This is higher than would be expected given 7.7% of secondary pupils were registered for FSM.

24% of all exclusion incidents in the secondary sector involved children from an ethnic minority background. Minority ethnic groups make up approximately 27% of the overall secondary cohort.

## ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

### Leaver Destinations

Since 2017 the proportion of school leavers registered for free school meals progressing to a sustained positive post-school destination has increased from 86.4% in 2017 to 100% in 2022. The gap between the sustained positive destinations of pupils registered for free school meals and all other pupils has decreased fairly steadily over this period, notwithstanding a spike in 2020 directly following the first period of school closure, to a negative gap of -1.6% in 2022. This measure represents very strong evidence that schools are successfully improving outcomes for young people impacted by poverty.

Schools monitor the engagement and participation of pupils in a variety of ways such as:

- Levels of engagement and effort in class
- Completion of tasks in school and at home
- Interaction with teachers and peers
- Results of surveys using wellbeing scales and measures (e.g. Leuven scales, Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing profiles)
- Participation in extra-curricular activities
- Participation in school committees and groups
- Wider achievement beyond school
- Leaver destinations.

This information is primarily gathered and evaluated at school level so that pupils who are identified as having lower engagement or participation can be supported effectively. There is no single measure of engagement or participation across schools which would allow for analysis of these outcomes for all children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

Qualitative evidence gathered during the review process suggests that pupils and parents/carers of pupils supported by PEF receive a high level of support to engage and participate in all aspects of school life. For example, parents shared many examples of members of staff going ‘over and above’ to ensure children and young people were fully included and had access to wider opportunities. Pupils spoke passionately about the positive impact of initiatives to support them to talk about their mental wellbeing and apply a growth mindset to their learning.

In questionnaires, 91% of pupils either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I get the support I need to learn well.’

89% pupils either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘Staff encourage me to get involved in areas that are of interest to me and help overcome any barriers that might present me taking part.’

97% pupils either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘Everyone in our school can take part in a group, clubs, team or activity beyond normal class time if they want to.’



## KEY STRENGTHS

77

- All schools have a clear rationale for their use of PEF which is based on thorough knowledge of pupils, families and their needs in their local context.
- The strong reliance on evidence-based approaches when planning interventions to improve equity.
- The pro-active approaches to improving school attendance and reducing exclusions, which are supporting children and young people to overcome barriers to accessing education.
- The high attainment rates of children and young people living with poverty in East Renfrewshire compared with the attainment rates of children and young people living with similar levels of poverty nationally.
- Cost of the School Day approaches are increasingly embedded into schools' self-evaluation, improvement planning and everyday practice.
- The very high rates of sustained positive destinations for socio-economically disadvantaged school leavers and the notable decrease in the deprivation gap in this measure over time.
- The very high quality of support to measure pupil wellbeing provided by the Educational Psychology team, which is helping schools to gather meaningful evidence of progress across a wider range of outcomes.
- The extensive support that school staff provide to help pupils engage well in their learning, underpinned by strong, nurturing relationships and high levels of professional commitment.
- The support and encouragement provided by school staff for individual pupils to participate in wider achievement opportunities.

## NEXT STEPS

### Schools should:

- Continue to improve the rigour of PEF planning to include SMART outcomes and measures, opportunities for review of impact during the school year, and detailed financial plans for full PEF allocations.
- Expand and improve the use of poverty risk factors to identify and support more children at risk of poorer outcomes, including lower participation.

- Continue to support practitioners to develop confidence in the gathering and analysis of data and evidence and the use of this data to inform learning, teaching and assessment practices that increase equity.
- Increase collaboration and pooling of resources in order to improve our collective ability to plan the most effective interventions for individual learners, for example by working collaboratively across clusters of schools to improve attendance.
- Increase opportunities for partners, including link Educational Psychologists and Community Learning and Development workers, to collaboratively plan and evaluate the success of PEF interventions.
- Increase the use of Participatory Budgeting to increase the involvement of children, young people and families in determining priorities for the use of PEF.
- In the secondary sector, identify ways in which PEF can be used to avoid the exclusion of children experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and those at greater risk of disadvantage.

### **The Education Department should:**

- Provide further opportunities for head teachers to share practice and support and challenge peers in the effective use of PEF.
- Provide further opportunities for class teachers and key groups of staff, such as Equalities Coordinators and ASN Coordinators, to develop confidence in the gathering and analysis of data and evidence to inform learning, teaching and assessment practices that increase equity.
- Continue to provide support and challenge for senior leaders to use data and intelligence effectively to develop robust, evidence-led plans for the use of PEF.
- Ensure ongoing sharing of effective practice in improving outcomes for learners, through planned opportunities for looking outwards to establishments across East Renfrewshire and beyond the local authority area.
- Provide opportunities for professional learning about participatory budgeting for key staff.
- Extend the range of opportunities for professional learning about poverty and poverty-aware practice for practitioners.
- Maintain a focus during regular Quality Improvement Visits on effective use of PEF and improving outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty.

**Table 1**

**Primary Attainment: Equity**

Based on number of pupils registered for Free School Meals (FME) and the number of pupils living in deciles 1 and 2 (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

	Pupils registered for Free School Meals			Pupils living in SIMD deciles 1 and 2		
	2018-19	2020-21*	2021-22	2018-19	2020-21*	2021-22
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Reading	71	74	68	78	73	68
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Writing	64	67	64	73	69	62
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Talking & Listening	85	84	64	91	83	77
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Numeracy	74	71	70	60	75	68

\*No data was collected for 2019-20 as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic

**Table 2**

**Primary Sector (P1, P4 and P7 Combined)**

Curricular Area	Q1 vs Q5 Gap			
	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21*	2021-22
Reading	14%	15%	21%	25%
Writing	14%	19%	23%	29%
Listening and Talking	10%	6%	13%	19%
Numeracy	12%	33%	19%	26%

\*ACEL data was not gathered in 2019-20.

**Table 3**

**Secondary Attainment: Equity**

Based on number of pupils registered for Free School Meals (FME) and the number of pupils living in deciles 1 and 2 (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

**Third Level**

	Pupils registered for Free School Meals		Pupils living in deciles 1 and 2	
	2018-19	2021-22*	2018-19	2021-22*
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Reading	90.0	89.7	97.7	94.5
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Writing	92.0	89.7	97.7	93.2
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Talking & Listening	93.0	90.6	95.4	94.5
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Numeracy	88.0	89.8	93.1	95.9

\*No data was collected for S3 in 2019-20 or 2020-21 as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Table 4**

**Fourth Level**

	Pupils registered for Free School Meals		Pupils living in deciles 1 and 2	
	2018-19	2021-22*	2018-19	2021-22*
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Reading	65.0	65	60.9	64.4
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Writing	60.0	63.3	59.8	67.1
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels – Talking & Listening	63.0	63.3	69.0	67.1
% Attaining or Exceeding Expected Levels - Numeracy	54.0	50.9	54.0	54.8

\*No data was collected for S3 in 2019-20 or 2020-21 as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 5

**Secondary (S3, CfE Level 4)**

Curricular Area	Q1 vs Q5 Gap			
	2016-17*	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
Reading	40%	21%	19%	21%
Writing	43%	20%	20%	18%
Listening and Talking	47%	21%	13%	9%
Numeracy	42%	27%	30%	35%

*\*ACEL data was not gathered at this level in 2019-20 or 2020-21, therefore an additional year has been included.*