Evaluation of Attainment Scotland Fund – Third interim report – Year 4

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

social research

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Executive Summary

Introduction

E1.   The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) was launched in February 2015 with the strategic aim of 'closing the poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least and most disadvantaged communities'. The £750 million Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) follows the duration of the SAC over the course of this Parliament, prioritising improvements in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing of those children adversely affected by poverty in Scotland's schools. Achieving excellence and equity in education are the key aims.

E2.   A programme of evaluation of the ASF is ongoing. The evaluation aims to provide learning about the overall implementation of the ASF and to assess progress towards the following long-term outcomes:

> 1. Embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap.
> 2. All children and young people are achieving the expected or excellent educational outcomes, regardless of their background.
> 3. An education system which is aspirational, inclusive in practice and approaches for all including teachers, parents and carers, children and young people.
> 4. Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.

E3.   This report focuses on the Year 4 (2018/19) evaluation of ASF across Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), Challenge Authority and Schools Programme Funding streams.

E4.   The report provides a narrative on progress from a range of evidence sources including:
- Administrative data;
- National Improvement Framework (NIF) quantitative measures on attainment and wellbeing;
- Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports;
- Surveys of headteachers and local authorities undertaken on an annual basis to explore perspectives on ASF.

Key findings

Approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap

E5.   There has been a move away from a focus on individual interventions to approaches to close the poverty-related attainment gap. There is increasing evidence of a focus on broader approaches implemented around literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing to close the poverty-related attainment gap rather than at

the intervention level. This includes local-authority wide developments such as whole school nurture approaches.

E6.   Approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap are being refined based on improvement and use of evidence. Enhancements or adaptations in approaches to literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing introduced to close the poverty-related attainment gap were based on the increasing use of a broad range of data, a focus on measuring impact, and a focus on building sustainability.

E7.   Tailoring to local context and sufficient resources are key factors associated with success. The ability to implement approaches relevant to the local/school context and having sufficient teaching and staffing resources were the most commonly cited factors contributing to progress. Staff time/workload and reduction in other resources were seen as the main factors limiting progress.

Culture change and ethos

E8.   There is evidence of systemic change in terms of culture and ethos towards development of a shared understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families, approaches to equity becoming more embedded within the school, a more collaborative system.

Long-term outcomes: Contribution to improvement and reduction of the poverty-related attainment gap

Perceptions of success

E9.   Continuing positive messages in terms of perceptions of success:
- Nine out of ten (91%) of headteachers reported to have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap as a result of ASF supported approaches, an increase of 13 points since 2017;
- Nearly all headteachers (98%) expect to see improvement in closing the gap over the next five years.

E10.   There are clear links between perceptions of success and positive culture change/ethos: headteachers most likely to report improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap were those who had seen a change in culture or ethos (such as embedding approaches to equity, broader strategies, more collaborative working) and where there was improved understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families.

E11.   There are clear links between perceptions of success and use of evidence in developing and evaluating ASF supported approaches: headteachers most likely to have seen an improvement as a result of ASF supported approaches were those who feel confident using evidence to inform the development of their approach, and always use evidence to measure the impact of these approaches.

E12.   There is variability across funding streams and urban/rural contexts including variations of perceptions from headteachers across the three funding streams in respect of reported progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, with

Schools Programme respondents most likely to report an improvement, whereas PEF-only schools and particularly those with a lower PEF allocation were least likely to report an improvement.

Quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing

E13.   On a number of NIF attainment measures, there is some progress in closing the attainment gap, although this is a varied picture depending on the measure under consideration. Overall, quantitative measures of the attainment gap do not yet show a consistent pattern of improvement.

E14.   Reported impacts/perceptions of success currently present a more positive picture of progress than are emerging through the NIF attainment gap measures.

Funding and sustainability

E15.   Funding continues to provide a focus. Whilst there are positive perceptions of the sustainability of focus on closing the attainment gap to some extent, it is recognised that funding is key in ensuring the resources to support improvements.

Conclusions and discussion

E16.   The ASF seeks to support progress towards the strategic aim and associated long term outcomes of SAC, alongside the wider range of national programmes and initiatives which form the SAC. The ASF evaluation report has sought to bring together evidence to assess progress towards achieving these long term outcomes and the overall aims of the fund.

E17.   The evidence has highlighted positive progress in a number of areas, including:

- development of embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap;
- positive developments across the education system towards aspirational, inclusive practice and approaches;
- positive reported evidence of perceptions of impact.

E18.   However, the overall trends emerging from the Official Statistics and other data demonstrate the challenge which remains in closing the poverty-related attainment gap between the most and least deprived pupils. This reaffirms that the commitment to closing the poverty-related attainment gap is a long term one with a need to work in partnership to facilitate, broker and support action to maximise the progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The evidence gathered points to the importance of continued focus on Maximising Progress.

E19.   Whilst it remains difficult to assess the reasons behind any observed improvement in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and whether these changes have occurred as a direct result of the fund, the evaluation helps to support our understanding of factors related to these improvements, and the contribution the fund made to the realisation of these factors.

E20.   A review of the ASF evaluation strategy is in progress. This will consider further analysis intended to strengthen future evaluation with a view to supporting the assessment of progress on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

E21.   Finally, the evaluation strategy review will consider how best to gather data on ASF Year 5 (2019/20) given the impact of Covid-19. It will also take account of the need to explore the impact of Covid-19 on both process and impact of the ASF in seeking to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

Chapter 1 Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

1.1 The Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) evaluation began in 2015 and follows the duration of the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC). An evaluation of the first two years of the ASF was published in March 2018, with the Year 3 (2017/18) evaluation published in June 2019.

1.2 This chapter provides detail on the aims of the evaluation, the overall approach and the structure of the Year 4 evaluation report.

Background

1.3 The SAC was launched by the First Minister in February 2015 to help close the poverty-related attainment gap. It is underpinned by the National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child. Backed by the £750 million ASF over the course of this Parliament, it prioritises improvements in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing of those children adversely affected by poverty in Scotland's schools. Achieving excellence and equity in education are the key aims.

1.4 The SAC leads system change through a tripartite shared leadership of national government, local government and the executive improvement agency, Education Scotland. The core aims of the programme are to support and empower headteachers, schools, local authorities and their partners to develop their own approaches, reflecting their own local circumstances.

1.5 The SAC has the following main strands:

- **Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)** provides £120m directly to schools for headteachers to use at their discretion on initiatives that they consider will help close the poverty related attainment gap. Over 95% of schools in Scotland have been allocated funding for pupils in Primary 1 through to third year of secondary school, based on the estimated numbers of pupils registered for free school meals.

- **The Challenge Authority and Schools Programmes** provide additional resource to nine local authorities, and 73[1] schools outwith those local authorities with the highest concentrations of deprivation. Each Challenge Authority/Schools Programme school receives funding and support to deliver improvement plans focused on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing to tackle the poverty related attainment gap.

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[1] At the start of the 2018/19 financial year, 74 schools were in receipt of Schools' Programme funding. During the course of the financial year one school closed and, therefore, did not have a full year's spend. At the end of the financial year there were 73 schools in receipt of Schools' Programme funding.

- **Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP)** funding for targeted initiatives, activities, and resources, designed to improve the educational outcomes of this group.

1.6 These strands have developed over the period of the SAC. Challenge Authority and Schools Programme were the initial funding streams which commenced in 2015, followed by the introduction of PEF in 2017/18.

1.7 Finally, the CECYP grant was introduced in 2018/19. Additionally, the SAC supports a number of national programmes, including: staffing supply and capacity; professional learning and school leadership; investment in Regional Improvement Collaboratives; and a small number of third sector-led initiatives.

1.8 The Scottish Government's 2019/20 Programme for Government included a commitment to continue funding the SAC at current levels in 2021/22, reinforcing their sustained focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Figure 1.1: Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation Reporting Timeline
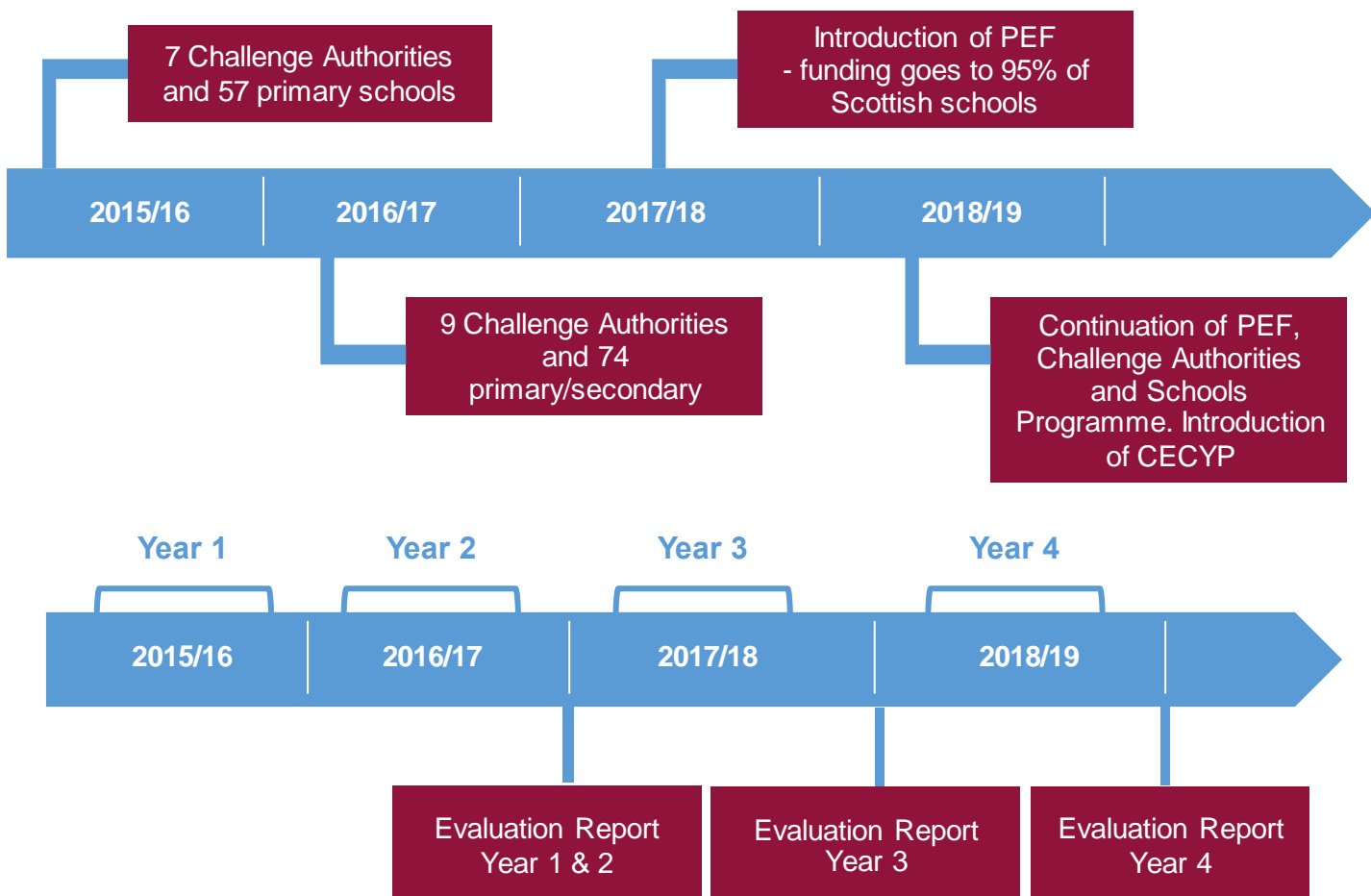
Methodology

1.9   The evaluation aims to provide learning about the overall implementation of the ASF and the extent to which the aims of the ASF have been met.

1.10   The evaluation has the following objectives:

- Assess the impact of the overall fund in improving attainment and health and wellbeing and reducing the difference between pupils from the most and least deprived areas;
- Assess the extent to which the further aims of the Fund have been met: promote capacity for data-based self-evaluation and improvement, and encourage collaboration between schools and local authorities;
- Provide learning and increase the Scottish evidence base of what does and does not work to improve attainment and health and wellbeing, especially of pupils from the most deprived areas;
- Provide learning on what did and did not work well in the process of implementing the Fund across participating Challenge Authorities and schools and which factors helped and hindered the fund achieving its outcomes.

1.11   It is recognised that there are limitations to the evaluation methodology, for example a focus on the specific 'interventions' being implemented by schools and local authorities and the outcomes of those interventions is out of scope. This is coupled with an approach to reporting that attempts to avoid burdening the education system with transaction by transaction analysis recognising the trust placed in the education profession to make the right judgements about how resources are used.

1.12   The current evaluation methodology aims to make the best use of existing data to support our understanding of factors that support improvement in closing the attainment gap. Whilst it remains difficult to assess the reasons behind any observed improvement in attainment or closing the poverty related attainment gap, and whether these changes have occurred as a direct result of the Fund, the evaluation continues to support our understanding of related factors and the contribution the Fund has made to the realisation of these factors.

1.13   The [Evaluation Strategy of the Attainment Scotland Fund](), published in 2018, sets out the intended approach to the evaluation, describing the research methods used between then and 2020 to address evaluation aims for Years 3 and 4 of the ASF[2]. A revised set of evaluation questions were developed for Year 4 to more clearly align the evaluation to the SAC logic model. This articulates short and medium-term outcomes and the long-term outcomes for the SAC[3]. Figure 1.2 sets out the long-term outcomes of the SAC.

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[2] The ASF Evaluation Strategy will be refreshed in 2020 for Year 5 onwards. This will align with the revised logic model and reflect the five point plan developed to maximise progress across Scotland, recognising that evidence available at this stage of the SAC programme reflects progress and impact.
[3] The Scottish Attainment Challenge logic model is currently unpublished. It is intended to publish this alongside the refreshed ASF Evaluation Strategy for Year 5 onwards.

Figure 1.2: Long-term outcomes for Scottish Attainment Challenge

1. Embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap	2. All children and young people are achieving the expected or excellent educational outcomes, regardless of their background	3. An education system which is aspirational, inclusive in practice and approaches for all including teachers, parents and carers, children and young people	4. Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

1.14   Evidence in relation to the ASF aims has been gathered from a range of sources and evaluated against a set of research questions. Following the publication of the Year 3 report, the logic model and research questions were revised to reflect the evolution of the SAC. The revised questions focus on the impact of approaches that schools and local authorities have implemented to address the poverty-related attainment gap, progressing from the initial focus on processes and inputs as the SAC programme has developed.

1.15   The sources used to inform progress in Year 4 of the ASF are set out below.

- **Administrative data:** Information gathered as part of the routine organisation of the ASF provides data primarily on the funding that local authorities and schools received from the different funding streams.

- **Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports**: Challenge Authorities and Schools Programme Progress Reports in March and September 2019.

- **Local Authority Survey 2019:** Between July and September 2019, all 32 local authorities were invited to take part in an online survey. The survey explored local authority perspectives on ASF and was published in November 2019. This was the third wave of the survey. The first wave took place in 2016 with Challenge Authorities only and the second wave was undertaken in 2018 with all local authorities.

    The third wave of the survey saw a move away from the 'mini survey' approach used previously to an expanded survey. This built on the findings of previous waves of the survey but in addition to considering existing themes (such as governance, funding, sustainability, PEF planning and implementation, and unintended consequences) also sought local authority perspectives of:

- o developing approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap
- o the extent to which data and evidence featured in decision making at the local level
- o the extent to which the Fund increased collaboration
- o factors supporting and mitigating progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap within local authorities

Views on planning and implementation of the CECYP Fund were also sought in the Local Authority Survey. The CECYP Fund is however outwith the scope of this evaluation report.

- **Headteacher Survey 2019:** In Autumn 2019 an online survey was distributed to headteachers of schools receiving Challenge Authority, Schools Programme and PEF funding. The purpose of the survey was to provide an insight into the experiences of headteachers in relation to ASF and to understand changes over time and across different respondent groups (funding stream; urban versus rural; primary versus secondary). This was the fourth year of the survey and 1,102 headteachers responded to the survey, representing a 47% response rate. The response rate increased by seven percentage points from 40% in 2018. The inclusion of all PEF-only schools for the first time in the 2019 survey resulted in approximately 1,000 more headteachers being invited to respond in 2019 than the previous year. The full report from the survey has been published online https://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-83960-894-0

- **Quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing:** The report draws on measures published in the National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report (NIFIER). Analysis focuses on patterns of attainment across Challenge Authorities non-Challenge Authorities and Scotland overall. The only change to reporting of attainment and wellbeing data for the Year 4 report is in relation to the Achievement of the Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data. Previous reports did not include analysis of changes in ACEL data over time at local authority level as the data was still in development. However, with the publication of ACEL data for 2018/19 the 'Experimental Statistics' label has been removed and analysis of changes between 2016/17 and 2018/19 has been included.

Table 1.1: Data Sources for the ASF Evaluation

Data Source	Coverage	Years covered			
		Year 1 (2015/16)	Year 2 (2016/17)	Year 3 (2017/18)	Year 4 (2018/19)
Administrative data (financial information)	All Challenge Authorities, Schools Programme local authorities and schools receiving PEF	✔	✔	✔	✔
Challenge Authority Progress Reports	All 9 Challenge Authorities	✔	✔	✔	✔
Local Authority Mini Survey	Year 1: (Challenge Authorities only) Year 3: Year 4:	✔		✔	✔
Headteacher Survey	Years 1 and 2: (Challenge Authorities and Schools Programme) Year 3: (Challenge Authority, Schools Programme funding plus sample of PEF-only schools) Year 4: All schools in receipt of ASF funding (Challenge Authority, Schools Programme, PEF-only)	✔	✔	✔	✔
Quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing	Analysis of attainment measures set out in the 2020 National Improvement Framework.	✔	✔	✔	✔

Report Structure

1.16   This report focuses on ASF in Year 4 (2018/19) of the SAC. Findings highlighted in the report seek to show changes over the duration of the fund to date encompassing changes in Year 4 from Year 3 and Years 1 and 2.

1.17   Similar to the Year 3 report, this evaluation report considers Challenge Authority, Schools Programme and PEF funding streams and seeks to highlight any emerging differences across the three funding streams.

1.18   The report is structured around the inputs, activities, short- to medium-term outcomes and long-term impact of the ASF. This reflects the revised research questions for Year 4 which are set out in the chapter structure overview below.

Chapter 1   Introduction, Background and Methodology

Chapter 2   Inputs: Governance and Funding

- What did and did not work well in the national and local governance and support as part of the Fund?
- How much funding did local authorities and schools receive, to what extent did they consider it adequate, supplement it with other funding sources, and use it in accordance with the fund's requirements?

Chapter 3   Activities and Outputs: Approaches

- How did schools and local authorities identify, select and implement their approach for addressing the poverty-related attainment gap?
- To what extent did the selected approach aim to support pupils (and parents) from the most deprived backgrounds?

Chapter 4   Short and medium term outcomes: Perceptions of success, collaboration, use of data and evidence

- To what extent did schools and local authorities involved with the fund feel the intended outcomes of their approach had been achieved?
- To what extent did stakeholders understand, engage and further the programme aims, and why?
- To what extent has the fund encouraged collaboration, and why?
- To what extent did schools and authorities use data, analysis and evidence to drive improvements as part of the fund?

Chapter 5   Long-term outcomes: Contribution to improvement and reduction of the poverty-related attainment gap, sustainability, unintended consequences

- To what extent did the fund contribute to an improvement in attainment and health and wellbeing, and a reduction of the gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas?

- To what extent can the focus on addressing the poverty-related attainment gap be sustained beyond the years of funding?
- Did the fund have any unintended consequences?

Chapter 6   Discussion and conclusions

Chapter 2 Inputs: Governance and Funding

2.1   This chapter focuses on how the ASF was organised and supported at both a national and a local level. It also outlines the financial inputs to the programme by funding stream.

Governance

2.2   The evaluation considers what did and did not work well in the governance of the ASF at national and local level and considers the part Attainment Advisors play in local governance. It reviews how national and local organisation and governance of the fund worked in Challenge Authorities, Schools Programme and PEF-only schools.

2.3   Evidence used to address this has been largely drawn from the Local Authority Survey and Challenge Authority progress reports. In terms of comments on national governance and the links between national and local governance arrangements, there was less evidence available in the submitted progress reports for Year 4. This is attributed to the current stage of the programme where governance arrangements associated with the Fund are largely embedded. Similarly, the Headteacher Survey 2019 questions were refocused in line with the revised evaluation approach and acknowledge that governance arrangements are now broadly established.

National Governance

2.4   National governance refers to the support provided by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland and the organisation and administrative requirements of the ASF. Local authority perspectives on what was working well and what could be improved in working with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland were broadly positive.

2.5   Looking back over Years 1 to 3 of ASF, there is a developing picture in relation to responses to Challenge Authorities being asked about Scottish Government governance arrangements. In Years 1 and 2, Challenge Authorities raised concerns about administrative requirements as well as challenging timescales. By Year 3, Challenge Authorities had reported that the reduction of reporting requirements and meetings was helpful. This theme continued in Year 4 with clear administration and established reporting procedures reflecting reduced bureaucracy; this could be attributed to an increasing refinement of the reporting procedures and commitment to resources in terms of Attainment Advisors.

2.6   In terms of what was working well in relation to Scottish Government governance, several themes emerged in local authority perspectives from the Local Authority Survey 2019. This included:

- the opportunity to share practice via events and meetings;

- the commitment to resources in terms of Attainment Advisors;
- the 'national direction' and relationships established with face-to-face meetings;
- school visits by Scottish Government officials were also noted as positives.

2.7   When asked about working with Education Scotland, local authorities responding to the 2019 survey were positive about their overall experience. The key highlights noted were the positive relationships between local authorities and Education Scotland and the advice, guidance and support received. Resources such as the National Improvement Hub and opportunities to attend national and local conferences and events were noted as positive. Strategic changes and restructuring of Education Scotland undertaken in 2018/19 were also highlighted. Changes introduced to ensure resources were more accessible outwith the central belt were viewed positively.

2.8   The Local Authority Survey 2019 also highlighted several areas of potential improvement to national support suggested by local authority respondents. This included:

- clear guidance on timescales and key dates at the beginning of the year;
- communication issues which were viewed as occasionally arising due to the number of individuals and departments involved (more strategic/streamlined communication from the organisation as a whole);
- further opportunities for good practice sharing and networking.

2.9   As noted, the Headteacher Survey 2019 provided more limited evidence on governance in 2018/19 in comparison with previous survey waves. However there were comments related to the administrative burden associated with PEF. Written comments indicated that this most commonly related to the time commitment required for planning, implementing and evaluating approaches. It was also perceived that there was insufficient guidance available to support schools in budget management with a reference made to lack of clarity around staffing and other costs at the planning stage.

Local Governance

2.10   Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports evidenced a range of embedded governance structures that provided support at the local level, such as SAC programme boards, leadership frameworks and leadership teams. Local governance structures were seen as positive in that they were vital for scrutiny and monitoring progress and impact with a visible line of accountability. The development of Principal Teacher roles was highlighted as important to lead and drive forward developments at the school level.

2.11   Staffing issues were highlighted in both the Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports, and this was also apparent in the Local Authority Survey. This related to recruitment and retention of staff, with considerable geographic variation in the local authorities reporting this (with local authorities outwith the central belt being more likely to raise this). Resource availability emerged

as a concern in the Local Authority Survey 2019. This was related to a perception of the development of a 'two-tier' system by a small number of authorities, in terms of the difference in resources for those local authorities receiving Challenge Authority funding in comparison with the non-Challenge Authorities.

2.12   The role of Attainment Advisors in respect of local governance was highlighted in the Local Authority Survey. Overall, local authority responses were broadly positive and the support provided by Attainment Advisors was welcomed in terms of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL), data analysis, strategic planning, policy development support and direct work with schools and learning communities. Their support was variously referred to in positive terms such as *'excellent', 'strong and focused'* and *'very proactive in seeking ways to support at both school and LA level'*. One example noted that Attainment Advisors were perceived as a core part of senior leadership teams and that they had influenced policy and practice on a variety of levels.

2.13   The Attainment Advisor role was viewed as providing a national perspective with the ability to bring this to the local level. Examples of this included assisting in making links outwith the local authority and assisting with sharing practice between schools and across the local authority.

2.14   Areas for further improvement focused on the availability of the Attainment Advisor resource with periods without an Attainment Advisor reported by a small number of local authorities. Lack of clarity on the Attainment Advisor role was also indicated along with - at times - limited capacity, as mentioned by several non-Challenge Authorities in responses to the Local Authority Survey 2019. However, several local authority respondents did describe improvements emerging in terms of staffing availability and where having access to Attainment Advisor time was very much welcomed, such as provision of support in measuring the impact of PEF. The Headteacher Survey reported that nearly 3 in 4 (74%) schools felt there was sufficient support in place to develop and implement their school plan for PEF. This represented an 18 percentage point increase on the 2017 survey where 56% felt there was sufficient support (66% in 2018).

Funding

2.15   This section looks in detail at the funding received by local authorities and schools through the ASF to date. This section seeks to consider evidence gathered in respect of the following evaluation question:

> *How much funding did local authorities and schools receive, to what extent did they consider it adequate, supplement it with other funding sources, and use it in accordance with the Fund's requirements?*

2.16   Evidence on funding is primarily drawn from Scottish Government administrative data. It also draws on the Local Authority Survey 2019, which explored local authorities' use of core education funding towards improving outcomes for pupils living in the most deprived communities. Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports have also informed the analysis. For the Year 1 and 2 interim report, qualitative research undertaken in Year 2 provided

specific evidence on a number of aspects of the above evaluation question. Without specific focused research undertaken in Year 4 which revisited these aspects, there is limited evidence on issues related to adequacy of funding, supplementation with other funding sources, and use in accordance with the Fund's requirements.

How much funding did local authorities and schools receive?

2.17   During the first two years of the ASF (2015/16 and 2016/17), approximately £52 million was distributed for the Challenge Authorities Programme and Schools Programme. In Year 3 (2017/18), following the introduction of PEF, around £165.3 million was distributed. PEF was allocated to schools on the basis of the number of children and young people from Primary 1 to Senior 3 who were eligible and registered for free school meals.

2.18   In Year 4 (2018/19), a total of £172.6 million was allocated. This included:

- £43.2 million Challenge Authority Programme;
- £7.1 million Schools Programme;
- £122.3 million PEF. This includes grant maintained schools. For PEF, where schools are unable to spend their full allocation during the financial year, any underspend can be carried forward to the new financial year. Approximately £47.8 million was carried forward from PEF underspend in 2017/18. There was therefore approximately £170 million PEF available in 2018/19.

2.19   In 2018/19, a further funding strand was introduced. CECYP[4] provides funding to local authorities to support work related to improving the educational outcomes of care experienced children and young people. As CECYP is outwith the scope of this evaluation report, data on this is not included in the tables below.

Table 2.1: Funding allocations to Challenge Authorities

Local Authority	Year 1 (2015/16)	Year 2 (2016/17)	Year 3 (2017/18)	Year 4 (2018/19)
Clackmannanshire	£718,000	£1,253,999	£1,548,000	£1,569,376
Dundee	£2,145,000	£4,041,682	£5,582,805	£6,224,790
East Ayrshire	-	£2,037,323	£2,760,659	£3,762,789
Glasgow	£3,030,000	£9,107,262	£7,665,677	£8,049,992
Inverclyde	£592,000	£2,103,269	£3,100,200	£3,505,999
North Ayrshire	£1,965,000	£3,490,024	£4,874,620	£5,889,762
North Lanarkshire	£2,241,000	£6,897,347	£7,274,968	£7,478,959
Renfrewshire	-	£1,711,919	£3,531,000	£4,658,000
West Dunbartonshire	£1,024,000	£1,850,410	£2,013,108	£2,043,815
Total	**£11,715,000**	**£32,493,235**	**£38,351,037**	**£43,183,482**

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[4] For further information on CECYP see: https://www.gov.scot/publications/care-experienced-children-and-young-people-fund-operational-guidance/.

2.20   The Challenge Authority Programme was extended in Year 2 to include East Ayrshire and Renfrewshire Council. There have been no further additions to the Challenge Authority Programme since then. However, the overall funding allocation to Challenge Authorities continues to increase. Between Year 2 and Year 3, there was an increase of £5.8 million (18% increase). Similarly, the allocation to Challenge Authorities overall increased between Year 3 and Year 4 by £4.8 million (12% increase). Table 2.1 above provides a breakdown of Challenge Authority Programme allocations by year and by individual Challenge Authority.

2.21   Funding allocations to the Schools Programme at the local authority level are provided in Table 2.2 below. As shown, there were no further allocations to either East Ayrshire or Renfrewshire Council through the Schools Programme following their introduction to the Challenge Authority Programme in Year 2 (2016/17). The overall Schools Programme allocation increased from £6.85 million in Year 3 to £7.14 million in Year 4, an increase of approximately £290,000 (4%).

Table 2.2: Funding allocations – Schools Programme by Local Authority

Local Authority	Year 1 (2015/16)	Year 2 (2016/17)	Year 3 (2017/18)	Year 4 (2018/19)
Aberdeen City	£157,500	£454,565	£597,938	£636,133
Argyll & Bute	£20,000	£19,944	£25,002	£23,895
Dumfries & Galloway	£45,000	£116,533	£139,494	£137,376
East Ayrshire	£291,470	-	-	-
Edinburgh	£304,645	£743,808	£800,742	£852,403
Falkirk	£73,000	£169,463	£282,768	£272,768
Fife	£416,112	£685,944	£965,687	£1,010,579
Highland	£92,700	£594,209	£965,565	£1,200,755
Renfrewshire	£231,120	-	-	-
Scottish Borders	£66,650	£166,620	£218,167	£188,744
South Ayrshire	£150,400	£299,580	£399,523	£399,523
South Lanarkshire	£548,690	£1,619,271	£2,019,374	£1,980,294
Stirling	£45,600	£166,581	£180,268	£181,816
West Lothian	£26,197	£188,139	£256,505	£256,429
Total	**£2,469,084**	**£5,224,657**	**£6,851,032**	**£7,140,713**

2.22   PEF is distributed to primary, secondary and special schools, as well as grant maintained schools. PEF allocations at both school level and local authority level are published online annually. Pupil Equity Funding is allocated to schools on the basis of the estimated number of children and young people in P1-S3 registered for free school meals under the national eligibility criteria. Whilst the funding is allocated on a per pupil basis headteachers can use their judgment to raise the attainment of their pupils in the schools as they see fit.

2.23   In the first year of PEF (2017/18), £120.2 million was distributed to schools (including grant maintained schools). The full details are available via the above link.

Of the £122.3 million PEF allocated in 2018/19, alongside the £47.7 million carry over from 2017/18, £132.3 million was spent across Scotland (78% of available funding). This is an increase from £72.5 million spent in 2017/18 (60%). Cumulatively, over 2017/18 and 2018/19, £204.8 million has been invested of the £242.5 million (84%) allocated PEF across the two years with £37.7 million carried forward into 2019/20. The chart below provides a breakdown of total spend per pupil across 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Pupil Equity Fund

Total Spend to date, 2017/18 - 2018/19

Spend per pupil (P1 - S3), by Local Authority

- £0 - £274.99
- £275.00 - £424.99
- £425.00 +

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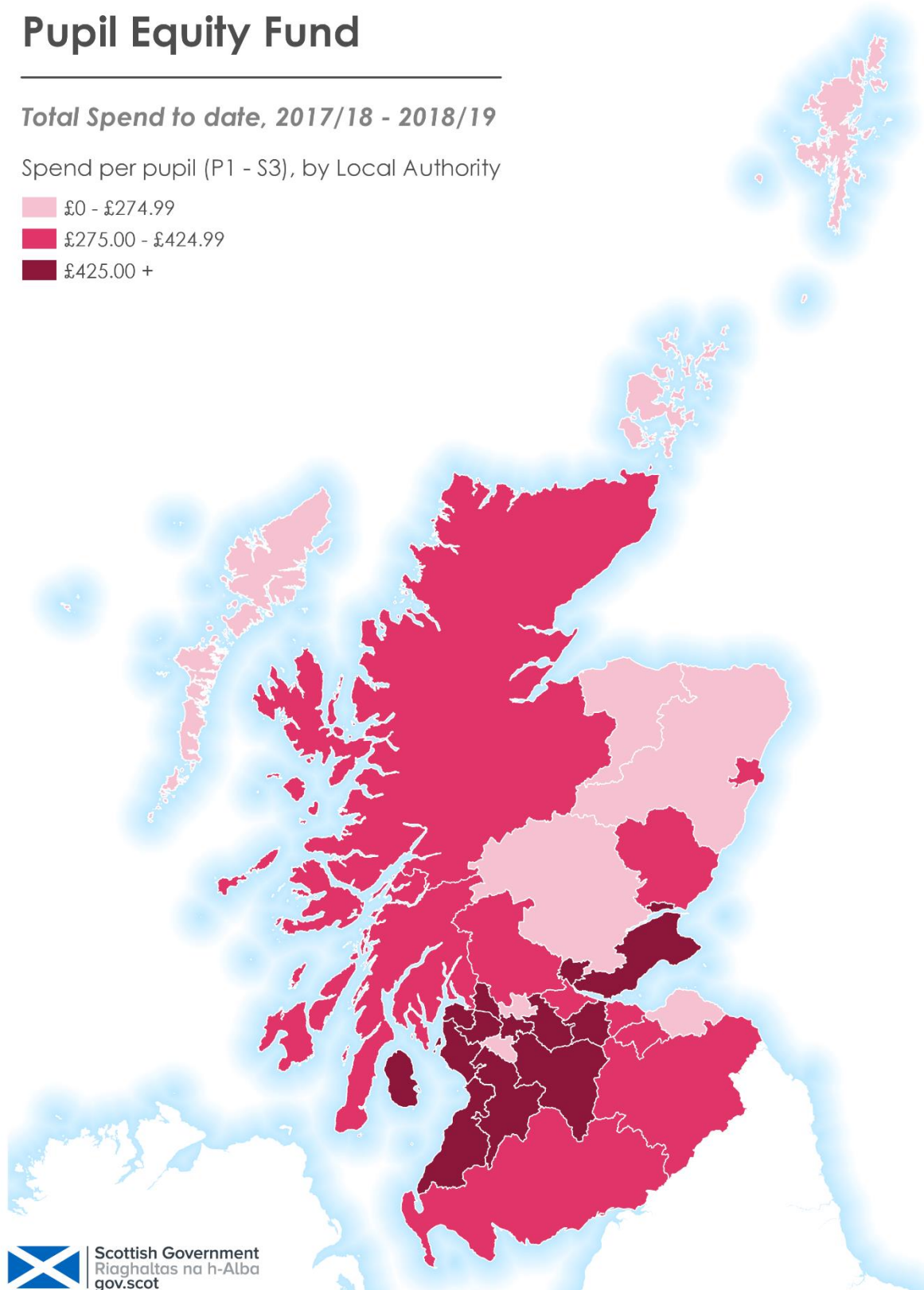
Was funding used according to requirements?

2.24   Evidence provided in Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports suggests that funding was being used according to requirements, with clear workstreams and plans in place. Challenge Authorities reported that they were able to spend a greater proportion of their allocated funding in Year 4 than in the previous year, following reports from Challenge Authorities that a greater proportion of allocation had been spent in Year 3 than in Year 2.

2.25   Table 2.3 compares spend versus allocation across the four years by funding stream. This indicates that Challenge Authorities spent 94% of their allocated budget in 2018/19 overall, although there was some variation at the local authority level. Similarly, 94% of Schools Programme funding was spent in Year 4. As Table 2.3 below highlights, overall Challenge Authority and Schools Programme spend as a proportion of allocation had both increased between Year 3 (2017/18) and Year 4 (2018/19). There was a two percentage point increase for Challenge Authority spend as a proportion of allocation and a four percentage point increase for Schools Programme spend as a proportion of allocation.

Table 2.3: Funding allocation and spend Years 1 to 4

Year	Funding Stream	Allocation £ (Million)	Actual Spend £ (Million)	Spend vs Allocation (%)
Year 1 (2015/16)	Challenge Authorities	11.7	5.9	50%
	Schools Programme	2.5	2.3	92%
	PEF	-	-	-
	Total	**14.2**	**8.2**	**58%**
Year 2 (2016/17)	Challenge Authorities	32.5	25	77%
	Schools Programme	5.2	4	77%
	PEF	-	-	-
	Total	**37.7**	**29**	**77%**
Year 3 (2017/18)	Challenge Authorities	38.4	35.1	92%
	Schools Programme	6.9	6.1	90%
	PEF	120.1	72.2	60%
	Total	**165.3**	**113.5**	**69%**
Year 4 (2018/19)	Challenge Authorities	43.2	40.5	94%
	Schools Programme	7.1	6.9	97%
	PEF*	170 ^	132.3	78%
	Total	**220.3**	**179.7**	**82%**

^ Figure represents total distributed for PEF, including £47.8 million carry forward from 2017/18.

2.26   In terms of overall underspend for Year 4 (2018/19), this was considerably less than Year 3 (2017/18) due to an increase in PEF spend as a proportion of allocation in Year 4. In 2018/19, 78% of allocated PEF was spent, a substantial increase on the 60% allocated PEF spent in Year 3. Given PEF was introduced part way through the school year in 2017/18, it was understandable that schools took

time to effectively plan their spend, not least where PEF was used to recruit additional teaching staff, which can take time.

2.27   In terms of evidence regarding the extent to which the Fund was supplemented by other sources, in the Year 3 report it was noted that one Challenge Authority received funding from other sources, as had been the case in Years 1 and 2. As stated in the section introduction, there was limited relevant evidence to draw on for this aspect of funding.

Use of core funding towards equitable outcomes

2.28   There continues to be some evidence that local authorities have changed the way they use core funding as a result of the ASF.

2.29   In 2018, over half of local authority respondents to the Local Authority Survey had changed the way they used core resources, including core education funding, to improve outcomes for pupils experiencing poverty-related disadvantage. In 2019, local authorities were invited to indicate what changes, if any, had been introduced as a result of the ASF in terms of how resources (including core education funding) were being used to improve outcomes for pupils from the most deprived backgrounds. Of 23 respondents, four local authorities indicated there had been no change in terms of how resources were used as a result of the Fund. Other local authorities referenced continuation of an existing focus or priority on equity in terms of use of core funding, whilst a number noted a shift in use of core funding towards a greater focus on deprivation, as well as a more collaborative focus.

2.30   However, some concerns were also apparent in local authority responses to the survey question on use of core funding, relating to both reduction in central resource, and to a potential for emerging differentials between schools in terms of available resources.

Chapter 3 Activities and Outputs: Approaches

3.1   This chapter explores the development of approaches taken by schools and local authorities with regard to addressing the poverty-related attainment gap.

3.2   The first interim report (Years 1 and 2) and the second interim report (Year 3) included a focus on the types of interventions implemented as a result of the Fund and how these were planned for and targeted to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.

3.3   The evaluation was refocused at the end of Year 3 to consider how schools and local authorities identified, selected and implemented their approach for addressing the poverty-related attainment gap, resulting in a broader exploration of approaches rather than focusing on the intervention level. An associated evaluation question sought to explore the extent to which the selected approach aimed to support pupils and parents from the most deprived backgrounds.

3.4   Evidence is primarily drawn from the Challenge Authority and Schools Programme mid-year progress reports, Local Authority Survey 2019 and Headteacher Survey 2019.

How did schools and local authorities identify, select and implement approaches for addressing the poverty-related attainment gap?

3.5   Overall, evidence sources pointed to the wide variety of approaches implemented around literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Strategic approaches have been developed by Challenge Authorities tailored to fit local needs and circumstances. There was evidence of an increased focus on the development of local authority-wide approaches, such as whole school nurture approaches related to health and wellbeing. Other authority-wide approaches were also evident, such as the Cost of the School Day[5] project which has developed in several Challenge Authorities.

3.6   Further evidence on the development of local authority approaches is provided through the Local Authority Survey 2019. Local authorities provided their views on the extent to which the approach for addressing the poverty-related attainment gap had changed within their local authority over the period of funding. Of 27 local authority responses to this question, 20 viewed their approach as having changed either significantly or to some extent. A further seven viewed their approach as having changed to a limited extent. Specifically, with regard to the nine Challenge Authorities, two indicated their approach had changed significantly, three indicated the approach had changed to some extent, and four indicated limited change.

3.7   Local Authority Survey responses also indicated evidence of a shifting focus and streamlining of approaches towards those approaches where there was

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[5] Child Poverty Action Group Cost of the School Day is one of the national programmes funded through the SAC. An evaluation of Cost of the School Day is in progress.

evidence of effectiveness and impact. Challenge Authority progress reports similarly suggested evidence of change and continuity in approaches, highlighting the maturation of existing approaches in some instances and innovation in others. Innovation included pilot approaches/interventions in development as well as new approaches being rolled out on the basis of positive pilot evaluation. Challenge Authority progress reports clearly linked refinement of approaches to assessments of effectiveness. Where authorities indicated limited or no change in approach, this was primarily due to continuation of an existing approach.

3.8   Challenge Authority reports also pointed to decision-making processes in terms of selecting approaches and interventions. For example, one Challenge Authority had developed a local authority-wide 'menu' of potential interventions which was made available to headteachers throughout the local authority to support decisions at the school level in terms of selecting those approaches most appropriate to the local context.

3.9   It should be noted that Challenge Authorities, which were established in 2015 at the start of the ASF, have had longer to consider, develop and amend their approaches, as well as longer to put evaluation in place. However, non-Challenge Authorities, including some PEF-only local authorities, are also developing co-ordinated, local authority level approaches.

3.10   Enhancements or adaptations in approaches were based on the increasing use of a broad range of data, a focus on measuring impact, and a focus on building sustainability. This is illustrated in the following comment:

> '… a shift in focus from use of a wide range of interventions to narrowing the range of approaches ..[..]..informed by our experience and evidence gathering over the past three years' (Schools Programme local authority)

3.11   At the school level, the Headteacher Survey 2019 explored the development of approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap and addressing equity in education.

3.12   The survey findings point to high levels of understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by pupils affected by poverty amongst headteachers who responded to the survey. Ninety-six per cent of headteachers who responded to the survey indicated that they understood the challenges and barriers faced by pupils affected by poverty. This was consistent across most respondent groups, although those in rural areas were less likely to feel they understood these challenges. Similarly high levels of awareness of the range of approaches that can help to close the poverty-related attainment gap were evidenced through the survey, with 96% indicating good awareness of the range of approaches. There were similar variation in views across urban and rural areas, with headteachers in rural areas also less likely to have a good level of awareness.

3.13   Confidence amongst headteachers in selecting approaches to close the poverty-related attainment gap that would be most effective in their school setting were also found to be high. Ninety-three per cent of respondents to the Headteacher Survey indicated they felt confident to a great or moderate extent. This underlines

the importance of considering local context i.e. selecting approaches suited to their own school setting.

3.14   Change and consistency in approaches within schools to closing the poverty-related attainment gap were explored through the Headteacher Survey 2019. Headteachers were invited to indicate whether approaches within their school had continued at the same level as the previous year, had been scaled up in 2018/19, or had been newly introduced in 2018/19. Analysis of responses indicates that:

- Over half (58%) had scaled up their approaches within schools in 2018/19 from the previous year.
- Almost one third (31%) had continued their approach at the same level as the previous year, with 11% indicating a newly introduced approach in 2018/19.
- Similarly, approximately two thirds (67%) of headteacher respondents to the survey indicated there had been some change in their approach during the past year, including eight per cent whose approach had changed significantly.

Change and consistency in approaches varied according to funding stream, with PEF-only schools, particularly those with lower levels of PEF funding, less likely than Challenge Authority and Schools Programme schools to have changed their approach during the past twelve months. This may be due, in part, to the shorter length of time that PEF has been in operation in comparison with Challenge Authority and Schools Programme funding streams.

3.15   Factors associated with continuing or changing approaches were also explored in the Headteacher Survey. Analysis suggests that evaluation and measuring of impact was most commonly associated with schools changing their approach to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, ranging from the introduction of relatively minor changes through to the termination of specific approaches or interventions which were not perceived as delivering the anticipated impacts. Evaluation and use of evidence was similarly the most common reason for schools continuing with an existing approach, following the demonstration of positive impacts. There was evidence of improved skills in use of data and evidence associated with confidence within schools to change or retain approaches based on data and evidence.

3.16   Further evidence on the development of approaches at the school level was provided via Schools Programme progress reports. Nearly all Schools Programme mid-year progress reports reported on approaches and interventions around literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing within a number of different organising themes such as learning and teaching, leadership, and families and communities. As with other evidence sources, there was evidence of continuation and consolidation of existing approaches and interventions, maturation of approaches and interventions, refinement of approaches and also of innovation and new approaches being introduced. For example, some Schools Programme progress reports highlighted the introduction of new activities/interventions in response to needs identified through previous/existing ASF-funded activity, exemplifying the potential for responsiveness within the Schools Programme at the school level to meet local needs.

To what extent did approaches selected aim to support pupils and parents from the most deprived backgrounds?

3.17   The evaluation sought to explore the extent to which selected approaches aimed to support pupils and parents from the most deprived backgrounds with evidence sought from a range of sources.

3.18   Whilst some approaches focused on universal provision, others were more focused in support of pupils from the most deprived backgrounds. The Headteacher Survey 2019 provides some evidence in support of this, with the finding that targeted support for individual pupils was the most common focus. Around three out of four headteachers who responded to the survey indicated that they had a 'strong focus' on targeted support.

3.19   A focus on parental and family engagement has formed a key part of the approach developed in some schools. This has included, for example, approaches aimed at supporting pupil attendance and engagement, and improving pupil aspirations. Headteacher Survey 2019 findings suggest the need for a clear commitment to parental engagement, and recognition of the time required to build relationships with families, not least given negative associations with the school environment which may be held by some parents. However, there was also evidence of the benefits of parental engagement, such as parents being more willing to engage with school activities, and viewing the school as a source of help and support.

3.20   There were a number of specific approaches to achieving and maintaining parental engagement highlighted in headteacher comments, including use of extra-curricular and physical/sports activities, and ensuring free access to activities. The importance of enabling parents to engage with schools in ways parents felt comfortable with was also highlighted. However, there was also the perception raised by some headteachers of the need for greater clarity in terms of how parents can positively support learning without it being overly burdensome.

3.21   Follow-up qualitative feedback gathered as part of the Headteacher Survey highlighted the considerable extent to which achieving equity had been central to schools' approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap. However, it also pointed to complexity in understandings of equity in the context of diverse school populations. The following quote illustrates the role played by ASF in encouraging discussions related to equity:

> *"ASF support has opened the equity conversation out among the wider parent body, through dialogue with school staff and pupils. It has built staff awareness of the pupils most at risk, and what we can do long-term to make a positive impact."*

3.22   At the local authority level, approaches to targeting were reported on within Challenge Authority progress reports. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) was used most widely as a mechanism to ensure support focused on pupils and parents from the most deprived backgrounds. A number of local authority-wide specific tracking systems have also been developed to target support.

Chapter 4 Short and medium term outcomes

4.1   This chapter considers the impact of the ASF in terms of making progress towards the short- and medium-term outcomes. Following on from Chapter 3 which explored the development of approaches taken by schools and local authorities with regard to addressing the poverty-related attainment gap, and the extent to which approaches focused on supporting parents and pupils from the most deprived backgrounds, this chapter considers local authority and school perceptions of success in meeting their agreed outcomes.

4.2   This is followed by an exploration of two of the key further aims of the ASF, as outlined in the SAC logic model. This includes the extent to which the fund encouraged collaboration, and secondly the extent to which data and evidence were used to drive improvements as part of the fund.

Perceptions of Success

4.3   This section explores evidence collected in respect of the following evaluation question: *'to what extent did schools and local authorities involved with the Fund feel the intended outcomes of their approach had been achieved?'*

4.4   Evidence from Challenge Authority progress reports show a shift away from earlier reported short- and medium-term outcomes focused on the professional developments of teachers or support staff. Challenge Authorities all reported on approaches and interventions being implemented around literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. Evidence of the shift away from outcomes prioritised in previous years are the strategic approaches which were identified by a number of local authorities which they had specifically tailored to fit their local needs and circumstances. For example, one local authority cited an intention to have a system wide model of change and improvement which focused on building capacity at all levels and another local authority referred to a whole school approach to nurture across the sector.

4.5   Other priority areas that were identified in Challenge Authority Progress Reports under different work streams included:

- Leadership
- Capacity Building
- Families and communities (including parental engagement)
- Primary to secondary transition
- Early years
- Care experienced pupils
- Data analysis

4.6   Similar to the Challenge Authority progress reporting there was evidence in Schools Programme progress reports of continuation and consolidation of existing approaches and interventions and a general maturation and refinement of

approaches. For example it was evident that in some schools new interventions were being introduced in response to need identified through previous or existing SAC funded activity and interventions. This demonstrates some evidence of responsiveness to emerging needs within the schools programme at the local level.

4.7   The extent of embedding of approaches to achieve equity in education within schools was explored in the Headteacher Survey 2019. A large majority of headteacher respondents (84%) were of the view that their approach to achieving equity in education was embedded in their school community with only 2% disagreeing. There was however some variation in views amongst respondent groups, with headteachers of PEF-only schools and those with lower PEF allocations being significantly less likely to feel the approach to achieving equity is embedded.

4.8   Follow-up qualitative feedback in the Headteacher Survey highlighted the extent to which achieving equity had been central to schools' approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, with some schools suggesting that a focus on equity was already a key aspect of their approach. Around 9 in 10 (91%) of schools reported having seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap and/or health and wellbeing as a result of ASF supported approaches. A minority (19%) have seen a lot of improvement to date, while 1 in 3 (37%) have seen or are expecting to see a lot of improvement. This is considered further in Chapter 6 (reported impacts).

Collaboration

4.9   One of the further aims of the Fund is the encouragement of collaboration between schools and local authorities, with a stated medium-term outcome articulated in the SAC logic model being:

'Increased evidence of collaboration across the education system (between schools, local authorities, third sector, other delivery partners and professionals such as social work) to deliver and evaluate approaches aimed at closing the poverty-related attainment gap'.

4.10   This section considers the extent to which the ASF encouraged collaboration amongst those receiving funding through Challenge Authority, Schools Programme and/or PEF. It also considers where such collaborations were developing.

4.11   Evaluation evidence reported on regarding the earlier years of the ASF highlighted the positive contribution of the Fund to both the level and nature of collaboration, with collaboration within and across schools, and with external partners commonly reported.

4.12   This section draws on a number of evidence sources to explore the extent to which these positive findings in relation to collaboration continued in Year 4. This includes the Local Authority and Headteachers Surveys for 2019, as well as Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports.

4.13   Collaboration is explored in a number of different aspects, both within and across levels in the education system and between aspects of the education system and other organisations including partner agencies, universities and others.

To what extent did the fund encourage collaboration?

4.14   Overall, collaborative working in schools was viewed by headteachers to have increased as a result of the Fund. This has been a consistent evaluation finding since the introduction of ASF. The majority of headteachers had seen an increase in collaborative working in their school as a result of ASF. Approximately two thirds (64%) of respondents to the Headteacher Survey indicated this, including approximately a quarter (27%) of respondents who felt there had been a large increase in collaborative working in their school as a result of the fund.

4.15   There was significant variation across funding streams with regard to the extent to which ASF support has led to an increase in collaborative working in schools. For example, headteacher respondents to the 2019 survey receiving support via Challenge Authority and Schools Programmes were more likely to have seen an increase in collaborative working (77% and 78% respectively), whilst PEF-only schools were least likely to have seen such a change (58%). This reflects a continuing trend of variation by funding stream from previous years. Schools with a lower PEF allocation were also found to be significantly less likely to have seen an increase in collaborative working in their school.

Figure 4.1: Collaborative Working in Schools

The majority of headteachers had seen an increase in collaborative working in schools as a result of the Fund
(Source: Headteacher Survey 2019)

Challenge Authority — 77%
Schools Programme — 78%
PEF only — 58%
All — 64%
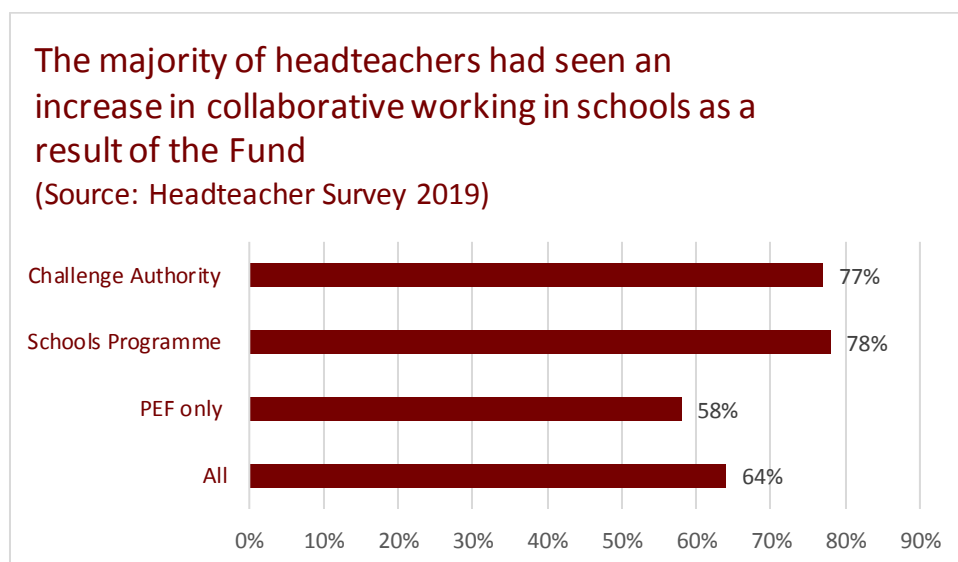
4.16   Whilst an increase in collaborative working in schools has been a consistent finding since the introduction of ASF, there is noted variability over time, ranging from 71% in 2016 to 77% in 2017, then falling to 71% in 2018 and to 64% in 2019. However, the introduction of PEF in 2017/18 and subsequent inclusion of headteachers whose schools received PEF-only support in the survey may be an explanatory factor.

4.17   At the local authority level, perceptions of the extent of collaboration as a result of the Fund emerged strongly from responses to the Local Authority Survey 2019. Of 27 responses to a question about collaboration, 22 indicated that the fund had increased collaboration. Ten perceived the fund to have increased collaboration to a great extent, 12 to some extent and five to a limited extent. In terms of the nine Challenge Authorities, seven perceived the fund had increased collaboration to a great extent, with the remaining two indicating the fund had increased collaboration to some extent.

Locus of increased collaboration

4.18   In terms of perceptions of where collaboration had increased, schools noted increased collaborative working mostly with other schools in their local authority. Sixty-four percent of headteachers who responded to the Headteacher Survey 2019 indicated such an increase. This was particularly the case for Challenge Authority schools.

4.19   Headteachers who responded to the survey also reported increased collaborative working with families and communities (51%), with third sector organisations (34%) and with professionals in health, social work, and educational psychology (29%). There was less evidence of collaboration with other schools outwith the local authority, with only 17% indicating the existence of such collaborations. There was also little increase in collaboration between schools and universities, with only 6% of headteacher respondents to the Headteacher Survey 2019 indicating such an increase.

4.20   Schools Programme progress reports also provided evidence regarding the level and nature of collaboration:

- within schools
- between schools
- between primary and secondary schools
- within local authorities

4.21   The extent of partnerships, particularly with other professionals (e.g. Speech and Language Therapists) and with third sector organisations was also evident in Schools Programme progress reports. Partnerships with third sector organisations tended to be related to the contracting and delivery of specific interventions or projects, and were seen across a whole range of areas with many different partner organisations. Partnerships appeared particularly prevalent in relation to Health and Wellbeing-related activities and interventions.

4.22   Collaboration continued to feature strongly as a theme within Challenge Authority progress reports and provided some further detail on mechanisms to facilitate collaboration. For example, there was evidence of established networks within local authorities (such as networks linking headteachers to colleagues working at authority-wide SAC programme level), as well as specific collaborations (such as networks linking those with responsibilities for data and evidence).

4.23   Partnerships with universities, third sector organisations and other public sector professionals were also commonly reported within Challenge Authority progress reports. The importance of partnerships with third sector organisations to deliver specific interventions or projects as part of authority work-streams was highly evident in many reports.

4.24   In addition, collaborations beyond the local authority level were also highlighted in progress reports. For example, Schools Programme progress reports highlighted examples of wider collaborations, such as schools collaborating at the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) level (e.g. good practice sharing at RIC level regarding Family Link Worker interventions). The role of RICs in facilitating increased collaboration with regard to ASF will be further explored as part of the forthcoming review of RICs.

4.25   A broad number of themes emerged from the Local Authority Survey 2019 in terms of local authority perspectives on collaboration with respect to the Fund:

- Funding viewed as a driver of collaboration;
- PEF viewed as a driver of collaboration in PEF-only authorities;
- Mechanisms developing to support more strategic and systematic collaboration such as Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL), leadership training, capacity building and local support networks;
- Collaboration enabling sharing of practice;
- Collaboration evident at different levels of the system and between different levels of the system, for example: within schools/between school clusters/within local authorities/between schools and wider partners such as third sector organisations and universities/between local authorities;
- Identified benefits of collaboration such as enabling best use of resources and enabling a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people through working collaboratively with other services.

4.26   An illustration of increased opportunities for collaboration at different levels and the focus on improving outcomes is offered through the following quote from a local authority respondent (Challenge Authority) to the 2019 survey:

'The fund has brought new opportunities for teams to work together, particularly in literacy and numeracy and [health and wellbeing]. Our cross-council working has also increased and we have been able to develop new relationships with other services to strengthen outcomes for young people.'

4.27   Despite many positives associated with increased collaboration as outlined above, local authority responses also made reference to potential concerns and barriers associated with increased collaboration. For example, collaboration was noted as time consuming, and also requires considerable staff availability.

Use of Data and Evidence

4.28   This section explores the extent to which schools and local authorities have used data, analysis and knowledge of what works to monitor and inform their activity

related to closing the poverty-related attainment gap in order to address the following evaluation question:

> 'To what extent did schools and authorities use data, analysis and evidence to drive improvements as part of the Fund?'

4.29   A number of evidence sources were considered including Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports, annual Headteacher Survey and Local Authority Survey findings.

4.30   Continuing the positive trend demonstrated since the inception of the ASF in the first interim report for Years 1 and 2, and the second interim report in Year 3, data and evidence are utilised increasingly in a variety of ways to support ASF activity.

Data and evidence supporting decision-making

4.31   At local authority level, evidence drawn from the Local Authority Survey 2019 suggests that data and evidence relevant to the local context featured in **local authority decision-making** with regard to the ASF to a great extent for the majority of local authorities, and for all of the Challenge Authorities.

Figure 4.2: Data and Evidence in Decision Making in Local Authorities

Data and evidence relevant to local context featured in decision-making for the majority of local authorities
Source: Local Authority Survey 2019 (Base = 28)

- To a great extent
- To some extent
- To a limited extent
- Not at all
- No response
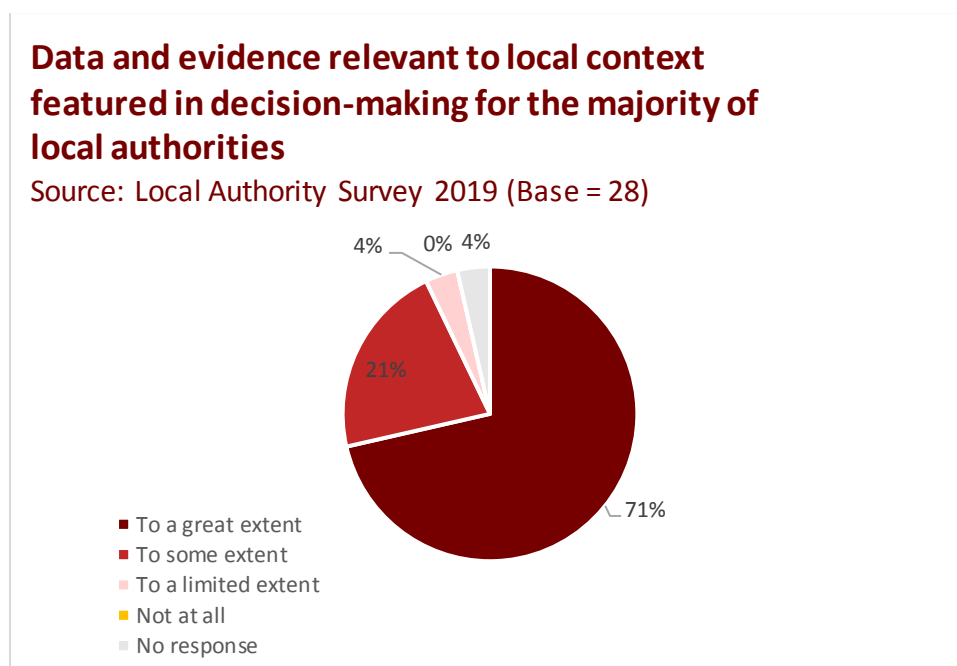
4.32   Progress reports also provide evidence of local authority level use of data and evidence within Challenge Authorities. The continued and expanding use of data to support targeting, monitoring and evaluation of work-streams, initiatives and approaches was evident across Challenge Authority mid-year progress reports, pointing to the increased focus on data and evaluation to support decision-making and focus on improvement.

4.33   Within Schools Programme progress reports, the use of data to support targeting, monitoring and evaluation of ASF approaches and interventions was also clearly evident. Although the extent varied widely, reports described approaches involving extensive data analysis. Examples of approaches included:

- A school which had identified gaps through data analysis which had led to the development of focus for Schools Programme- and PEF-related activity within the school;
- A 'positive destinations' model within a school utilising Insight virtual comparator data to develop rigorous tracking and monitoring for pupils in SIMD 1 and 2 with a focus on early interventions to prevent negative destinations.

4.34   Evidence on schools' use of data and evaluation in relation to ASF supported activity drawn from the Year 4 Headteacher Survey explored use of evidence in evaluating approaches. At the school level, consistent with 2018 findings, 90% of Headteacher Survey respondents indicated they always used available evidence to measure the impact of interventions.

4.35   Evaluation plans were in place to measure the impact of ASF supported approaches in the great majority of schools, with 95% of Headteacher Survey respondents indicating the presence of a plan. There were a number of reasons for the absence of an evaluation plan provided by the remaining 5%, including referenced changes to schools' approach or indicators requiring the production of a new plan, changes in leadership or staffing constraints delaying production, or difficulty identifying success measures for approaches being implemented.

4.36   Increasingly rich data environments were suggested by evidence sources, with a range of mechanisms for using data including combining of data from different sources and different levels within the system. An increasing focus on, and availability of local data was also apparent. Feedback gathered from headteachers as part of the Year 4 survey indicated use of a range of data tools including BGE toolkit[6] and Insight[7], alongside evidence relating to participation rates, attendance, and progress through specific ASF programmes and interventions.

The role of data and evidence in driving improvements

4.37   The importance of using data and evidence to support decision-making at different levels of the education system, with a focus on driving improvement was clear across evidence sources.

4.38   For example, improvement-related benefits of enhanced data and evidence use were evident in responses to the Local Authority Survey. A number of themes were highlighted related to improvement in terms of data and evidence use:

- Targeting resources for improvement
- Driving change and improvement

[6] BGE toolkit – data tool for Broad General Education
[7] Insight – data tool for Senior Phase

- Identifying gaps and priorities
- Measuring impact
- Tailoring planning to local contexts

4.39   At the school level, increased use of data and evidence appeared part of a wider change of culture/approach within schools resulting from the introduction of ASF which had created opportunities for the use of data in terms of reflecting on existing practice, introducing changes based on evidence, and measuring the impact of changes.

Improvements in data capability

4.40   Improved capability across the system to use data and evidence was also evident. Challenge Authority progress reports highlighted many examples of such increased capability, including upskilling at various levels, from classroom teachers through to the continuing development of data specialist posts in some instances.

4.41   The Headteacher Survey 2019 explored the extent to which headteachers felt confident using data. Confidence in use of data and evidence to support and inform ASF approaches has continued to increase year-on-year, with 93% of headteachers responding to the survey indicating increased confidence using evidence to inform the development of approaches to ASF in 2019, a three point increase on 2018 findings and a nine point increase on 2017 findings.

4.42   The Headteacher Survey also explored the extent to which knowledge and skills in relation to use of data and evidence have increased as a result of the Fund. Reported improvements in skills and knowledge in utilising data and evidence for teaching, planning, evaluation and improvement at the school level continue, with two-thirds (66%) of respondents indicating improvements in the 2019 survey. This represents an increase on 2018 survey findings, when 60% of headteacher respondents indicated an increase in skills and knowledge regarding data and evidence utilisation. However, evidence of any longer term upwards trend in skills and knowledge is less apparent, given that 69% of headteachers responding to the 2017 survey indicated improved skills and knowledge.

4.43   In terms of variation by funding stream, headteacher respondents from Schools Programme schools were typically more positive than those in Challenge Authority or PEF-only schools in terms of increased confidence in using evidence and in terms of perceptions of increased skills and knowledge regarding data and evidence.

Issues and challenges in use of data and evidence

4.44   Despite the many positives outlined above related to the use of data and evidence, and clear evidence of improving capability and capacity, there was some evidence of potentially overwhelming volumes of data in some local authorities. Challenges related to the use of data and evidence also emerged through qualitative feedback gathered as part of the Year 4 survey. For example, schools pointed to challenges in terms of evaluating the impact of specific interventions, not least related to difficulties attributing impact to interventions.

Chapter 5 Long-term outcomes: Contribution to Improvement and Reduction of the Poverty-related Attainment Gap, Sustainability, and Unintended Consequences

5.1   This chapter explores evidence around improvement in attainment and health and wellbeing, and the gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas, whilst recognising it remains difficult to assess the specific reasons behind any observed improvement in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Evidence of impact draws on both analysis of quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing, based on agreed measures for monitoring progress on closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and on reported impacts from survey evidence.

5.2   The first section provides analysis of quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing based on the measures for monitoring progress on closing the poverty-related attainment gap as set out in the National Improvement Framework.

5.3   The second section explores evidence of impact provided by local authorities and schools, based primarily on survey data drawn from the Headteacher Survey 2019 and the Local Authority Survey 2019.

Evidence of impact: attainment and wellbeing

5.4   Evidence of impact draws on analysis of quantitative data on attainment and wellbeing based on the agreed measures for monitoring progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap set out in the National Improvement Framework. This sets out a basket of key measures and sub-measures to assess progress. The measures with available data for this (and previous) reporting periods are shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: National Improvement Framework Measures

	Measure	Age group(s)	Years reported				
			Pre ASF 2014/15	Year 1 (2015/16)	Year 2 (2016/17)	Year 3 (2017/18)	Year 4 (2018/19)
Attainment	Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels	P1, P4 and P7 S3			✔	✔	✔
	School leaver attainment in National Qualifications – SCQF Level 5 or better, 6 or better and 7 or better*	School leavers		✔	✔		✔
	Annual Participation Measure	16-19 year olds			✔	✔	✔
Health & Wellbeing	Attendance rates	Primary Secondary	✔		✔		✔
	Exclusion rates	Primary Secondary	✔		✔		✔

* Level 4 is not included within the attainment related measures – see Evaluation Strategy for Year 3 and 4 Table 2.1. Specifically it is 'the proportion of school leavers receiving 1 or more award at Level 5, and those receiving 1 or more at Level 6'.

5.5   Data is drawn from measures reported on in the 2019 National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report. All of the measures are available at both Scotland and local authority level. Patterns of attainment in Challenge Authorities, who have been involved with ASF since 2015, and non-Challenge Authorities are outlined in this analysis.

5.6   To address the research questions, each of the measures outlined in the above table are considered in terms of:

- Overall attainment
- Attainment for pupils from most and least deprived SIMD quintiles
- Percentage point gap between the most and least deprived

5.7   In addition, data for the following groups will be shown.

- Each of the nine Challenge Authorities
- Non-Challenge Authorities
- Scotland Level

5.8   Previous ASF evaluation reports did not include changes over time for ACEL data at local authority level as the data was still in development. However, with the publication of ACEL data for 2018/19, the experimental label has been removed and therefore comparisons over time can be explored. It should be noted that the robustness and accuracy of ACEL data has improved over time, and this should be taken into consideration when making comparisons between years. It is also important to note in respect of ACEL and Senior Phase Attainment data that we are often talking about very small percentage point changes, which should be borne in mind when considering changes in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

5.9   A range of additional factors influence the extent to which different measures provide us with an accurate and up to date assessment of progress:

- There is a delay in terms of the progress of the ASF and the evaluation. The evaluation is retrospective, in that data reported has been collected for the previous year.
- Some of the data is only available over a small time period, and therefore it is difficult to start ascertaining broader trends. In addition, data is not gathered at each year stage. For example, an authority/school could have been targeting P2 which would not be seen in ACEL for at least two years as this is only gathered at P1, P4 and P7.
- The differential implementation of ASF at local authority/school level (based on the funding streams) also introduces a further level of complexity, and affects the extent to which meaningful trends can be inferred from the data. For example, it is notable that implementation in the secondary sector did not begin until Year 2 of the ASF.
- The introduction of PEF in 2018/19 brings further complexity: the assessment of progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap based on comparison of Challenge Authorities versus non-Challenge Authorities was valuable in the early years of the ASF. However, by Year 4, such comparisons between Challenge Authorities and non-Challenge Authorities are not appropriate when assessing progress.

Primary school attainment

5.10   The attainment of primary pupils (P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined) for literacy and numeracy are outlined below, based on analysis of ACEL 2018/19 data.

5.11   In terms of primary school pupils' literacy and numeracy performance, Table 5.2 compares percentages between Challenge Authorities (Challenge Authorities combined and Scotland overall), from 2016/17 to 2018/19. As Table 5.2 shows, the proportion of primary pupils achieving the expected level in literacy has steadily increased in Challenge Authorities, from 67.5 per cent in 2016/17 to 69.1 per cent in 2017/18, and 70.8 per cent in 2018/19. Over the same period of time, this proportion has also increased in non-Challenge Authorities (70.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 73.0 per cent in 2018/19) and Scotland overall (69.2 per cent in 2016/17 to 72.3 per cent in 2018/19).

5.12   In terms of numeracy, the proportion of primary pupils achieving the expected level increased in Challenge Authorities from 74.8 per cent in 2016/17, to 76.8 per cent in 2017/18, and 78.2 per cent in 2018/19 and Scotland overall (76.4 per cent in 2016/17 to 79.1 per cent in 2018/19). Similar to literacy levels, there was also an increase in non-Challenge Authorities over the same time period (77.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 79.5 per cent in 2018/19).

Table 5.2: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of primary pupils achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy, 2016/17 – 2018/19

	Literacy				Numeracy			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Percentage point change between 2016/17 and 2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Percentage point change between 2016/17 and 2018/19
Clackmannanshire	56.8	72.1	71.2	14.4	64.0	77.0	76.8	12.8
Dundee	64.6	65.5	71.8	7.2	70.2	73.8	77.7	7.5
East Ayrshire	61.3	58.6	65.0	3.7	67.3	68.0	72.5	5.2
Glasgow	68.4	68.8	68.9	0.5	76.8	77.8	77.1	0.3
Inverclyde	72.3	73.5	75.7	3.4	79.0	80.0	82.2	3.2
North Ayrshire	69.5	72.4	73.8	4.3	77.2	79.5	79.4	2.2
North Lanarkshire	67.6	69.0	71.1	3.5	74.0	75.8	78.7	4.7
Renfrewshire	72.7	76.4	76.1	3.4	79.7	82.8	83.7	4.0
West Dunbartonshire	63.7	66.8	68.2	4.5	72.1	74.0	76.2	4.1
Challenge Authorities	**67.5**	**69.1**	**70.8**	**3.3**	**74.8**	**76.8**	**78.2**	**3.4**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**70.1**	**72.5**	**73.0**	**2.9**	**77.1**	**79.1**	**79.5**	**2.4**
Scotland	**69.2**	**71.4**	**72.3**	**3.1**	**76.4**	**78.4**	**79.1**	**2.7**

The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

5.13   Tables 5.3 and 5.4 below show the size of the gap between the proportion of primary pupils (P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined) from the most and least deprived areas that have achieved the expected level in literacy and numeracy. For Challenge Authorities overall, the gap in literacy widened from 19.8 percentage points in 2016/17 to 20.9 percentage points in 2017/18, and narrowed to 20.2 in 2018/19. At Scotland level, the gap has narrowed between 2016/17 and 2018/19. The literacy attainment gap for non-Challenge Authorities narrowed from 24.7 percentage points in 2016/17 to 22.6 percentage points in 2017/18, and further narrowed to 22.2 percentage points in 2018/19.

5.14   For numeracy the gap widened slightly for Challenge Authorities overall from 15.8 percentage points in 2016/17 to 16.2 percentage points in 2017/18, increasing slight to 16.4 percentage points in 2018/19. At Scotland level the gap reduced between 2016/17 from 17.6 percentage points to 16.8 percentage points and remained at 16.8 percentage points in 2018/19. For non-Challenge Authorities the numeracy attainment gap decreased from 19.2 percentage points in 2016/17 to 17.9 percentage points in 2017/18 and increased slightly to 18.3 percentage points in 2018/19.

Table 5.3: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of primary pupils achieving the expected level in literacy, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	20/1617	20/1718	20/1819
Clackmannanshire	47.5	63.3	62.4	65.3	78.4	84.8	17.8	15.0	22.4
Dundee	58.1	58.9	65.5	75.0	79.8	84.5	16.9	20.8	19.2
East Ayrshire	49.8	47.4	54.6	77.1	77.1	77.2	27.3	29.7	22.6
Glasgow	64.1	64.5	64.5	86.5	84.9	85.4	22.3	20.3	20.9
Inverclyde	64.8	62.6	67.4	86.4	88.9	88.1	21.6	26.3	20.7
North Ayrshire	62.6	65.5	67.6	82.1	83.2	89.6	19.5	17.6	22.0
North Lanarkshire	57.7	59.8	63.0	78.2	83.1	81.7	20.5	23.3	18.7
Renfrewshire	62.7	67.6	66.2	84.6	85.6	86.7	21.9	18.1	20.4
West Dunbartonshire	59.2	60.3	62.2	71.8	81.4	75	12.5	21.1	12.8
Challenge Authorities	**61.0**	**62.2**	**64.1**	**80.8**	**83.1**	**84.3**	**19.8**	**20.9**	**20.2**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**56.8**	**60.7**	**61.4**	**81.5**	**83.3**	**83.6**	**24.7**	**22.6**	**22.2**
Scotland	**59.3**	**61.6**	**63.1**	**81.4**	**83.3**	**83.7**	**22.1**	**21.6**	**20.7**

The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

Table 5.4: Challenge Authorities Percentage of primary pupils achieving the expected level in numeracy, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Clackmannanshire	51.9	69.1	68.2	75.3	81.8	85.9	23.4	12.7	17.7
Dundee	65.7	68.7	71.8	76.6	85.3	88.0	10.9	16.6	16.2
East Ayrshire	56.8	58.8	62.7	78.4	81.7	84.1	21.6	22.8	21.4
Glasgow	74.0	75.0	73.7	91.4	88.9	88.6	17.4	13.9	14.9
Inverclyde	70.4	70.7	75.7	91.5	94.5	93.2	21.0	23.8	17.5
North Ayrshire	72.4	74.7	74.5	84.7	88.6	91.6	12.3	13.9	17.1
North Lanarkshire	66.0	68.3	72.2	85.0	87.8	87.2	18.9	19.4	15.0
Renfrewshire	70.3	75.0	75.7	89.4	90.4	92.9	19.1	15.4	17.3
West Dunbartonshire	68.0	67.4	71.1	83.1	87.6	88.0	15.1	20.3	16.9
Challenge Authorities	**69.7**	**71.7**	**72.7**	**85.5**	**87.9**	**89.1**	**15.8**	**16.2**	**16.4**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**67.3**	**69.8**	**70.1**	**86.4**	**87.7**	**88.4**	**19.2**	**17.9**	**18.3**
Scotland	**68.7**	**70.9**	**71.7**	**86.3**	**87.7**	**88.5**	**17.6**	**16.8**	**16.8**

The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

Secondary school (S3) attainment

5.15   S3 attainment in literacy and numeracy is outlined below, based on analysis of attainment across Challenge Authorities (combined), non-Challenge Authorities and Scotland, from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

5.16   As Table 5.5 shows, the proportion of secondary school (S3) pupils achieving the expected level in literacy has remained broadly the same in Challenge Authorities, from 87.2 per cent in 2016/17, to 87.1 per cent in 2017/18, and 86.9 per cent in 2018/19. Over the same period of time, this proportion has increased slightly in non-Challenge Authorities (87.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 88.4 per cent in 2018/19) and increased slightly at Scotland level (87.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 87.9 per cent in 2018/19).

5.17   From 2016/17 to 2018/19, the proportion of S3 pupils achieving the expected level in numeracy has increased slightly in Challenge Authorities (combined), from 86.6 per cent in 2016/17, to 87.2 per cent in 2017/18 and 87.3 per cent in 2018/19. Over the same period of time, this proportion has increased in non-Challenge Authorities (combined) (88.9 per cent in 2016/17 to 91.5 per cent in 2018/19) and at Scotland level (88.2 per cent in 2016/17 to 90.2 per cent in 2018/19).

Table 5.5: Challenge Authorities Percentage of S3 pupils achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy, 2016/17 – 2018/19

	Literacy				Numeracy			
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/9	Percentage point change between 2016/17 and 2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Percentage point change between 2016/17 and 2018/19
Clackmannanshire	80.1	83.4	82.8	2.7	64.1	80.4	77.3	13.2
Dundee	89.1	84.2	89.0	-0.1	83.7	80.5	84.9	1.2
East Ayrshire	82.1	82.6	78.6	-3.5	84.6	90.5	89.0	4.4
Glasgow	83.5	86.4	83.4	-0.1	85.8	84.3	86.0	0.2
Inverclyde	87.1	90.5	90.5	3.4	82.0	85.6	90.2	8.2
North Ayrshire	85.8	90.8	92.5	6.7	80.9	91.6	89.9	9.0
North Lanarkshire	91.6	86.7	87.9	-3.7	93.2	90.1	84.8	-8.4
Renfrewshire	91.8	93.7	95.2	3.4	92.8	92.9	94.7	1.9
West Dunbartonshire	88.7	83.4	83.5	-5.2	84.5	82.6	90.1	5.6
Challenge Authorities	**87.2**	**87.1**	**86.9**	**-0.3**	**86.6**	**87.2**	**87.3**	**0.7**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**87.1**	**87.4**	**88.4**	**1.3**	**88.9**	**89.8**	**91.5**	**2.6**
Scotland	**87.1**	**87.3**	**87.9**	**0.8**	**88.2**	**89.0**	**90.2**	**2.0**

The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

5.18   Tables 5.6 and 5.7 show the size of the gap between the proportion of S3 pupils from the most and least deprived areas that have achieved the expected level in literacy and numeracy, from 2016/17 to 2018/19, for Challenge Authorities (combined) and Scotland.

5.19   For literacy, Table 5.6 shows that the gap within Challenge Authorities (combined) widened from 11.3 percentage points to 12.8 percentage points in 2017/18, and further increased to 13.5 percentage points in 2018/19. For non-Challenge Authorities, the literacy gap narrowed each year from 2016/17 (17.2pp), 2017/18 (15.5pp) to 2018/19 (15.2pp). Literacy remained broadly stable at a Scotland level, with a slight narrowing from 13.6 percentage points in 2016/17 to

13.3 percentage points in 2017/18, followed by an increase to 13.8 percentage points in 2018/19.

5.20   As seen in Table 5.7, the gap in numeracy attainment between pupils from the most and least deprived areas has closed for Challenge Authorities (combined), and Scotland overall. For non-Challenge Authorities, the gap reduced from 16.4 percentage points in 2016/17 to 14.6 percentage points, and to 13.1 percentage points in 2018/19. The gap for Challenge Authorities reduced slightly from 13.9 percentage points in 2016/17 to 13.6 percentage points in 2017/18, and further narrowed to 13.3 percentage points in 2018/19.

Table 5.6: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of S3 pupils achieving the expected level in literacy, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19[8]

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2017	2018	2019
Clackmannanshire	73.3	76.5	69.0	90-100	89-100	91.1	-	-	22.0
Dundee	83.5	76.7	84.6	94.9	94.9	100	11.4	18.3	15.4
East Ayrshire	73.9	73.7	66.9	96.3	89.4	86.8	22.3	15.7	19.9
Glasgow	81.5	83.5	80.5	88.2	96.2	95.5	6.7	12.8	15.0
Inverclyde	83.3	87.7	85.7	90.9	93-100	94-100	7.6	-	-
North Ayrshire	82.0	90.5	89.0	95.5	96-100	*	13.4	-	-
North Lanarkshire	87.7	81.8	84.5	96.5	95.7	94.5	8.8	13.9	10.0
Renfrewshire	89.0	89.9	90.3	96.2	96.7	98-100	7.2	6.8	-
West Dunbartonshire	84.8	78.6	78.7	88-100	90-100	*	-	-	-
Challenge Authorities	**83.0**	**82.8**	**81.9**	**94.3**	**95.6**	**95.5**	**11.3**	**12.8**	**13.5**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**77.2**	**78.8**	**79.4**	**94.5**	**94.3**	**94.6**	**17.2**	**15.5**	**15.2**
Scotland	**80.7**	**81.2**	**81.0**	**94.3**	**94.5**	**94.7**	**13.6**	**13.3**	**13.8**

* = suppression due to small numbers
- = unable to calculate figure due to suppression
The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

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[8] Figures showing 90-100 (for example) is due to data suppression because of small numbers. In ACEL, one of the suppression techniques is to provide a range in which the value lies in order to give as much information as possible without giving the actual number. Some of the 'percentage point gap' figures are missing as it is not possible to provide the gap in these cases.

Table 5.7: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of S3 pupils achieving the expected level in numeracy, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19[9]

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Gap Percentage points		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2017	2018	2019
Clackmannanshire	52.7	79.2	61.4	81.3	89-100	89.5	28.6	-	28.1
Dundee	76.3	75.0	78.6	94.9	87.1	96.1	18.6	12.1	17.5
East Ayrshire	76.5	84.8	83.3	95.0	96-100	97-100	18.5	-	-
Glasgow	83.5	80.4	83.8	96.0	96.3	97.2	12.5	15.9	13.4
Inverclyde	76.2	82.5	86.4	89.8	93-100	94-100	13.6	-	-
North Ayrshire	74.7	90.9	86.8	94.0	96-100	*	19.3	-	-
North Lanarkshire	88.6	84.9	76.7	98.2	96.3	93.6	9.6	11.4	16.9
Renfrewshire	87.9	86.6	90.8	97.5	98.3	98-100	9.6	11.8	-
West Dunbartonshire	77.6	75.0	84.7	88-100	90-100	*	-	-	-
Challenge Authorities	**81.5**	**82.0**	**82.6**	**95.9**	**95.6**	**95.9**	**13.9**	**13.6**	**13.3**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**78.9**	**81.1**	**83.3**	**95.3**	**95.6**	**96.4**	**16.4**	**14.6**	**13.1**
Scotland	80.5	81.6	82.9	95.4	95.7	96.3	14.9	14.0	13.5

* = suppression due to small numbers
- = unable to calculate figure due to suppression
The robustness and consistency of these statistics have increased over time. This should be kept in mind when making comparisons between years.

Senior Phase attainment: percentage of school leavers achieving awards by SCQF level

5.21   The attainment of school leavers in Scotland is based on the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 2: 2020 Edition, published 25 February 2020. This data includes attainment in National Qualifications achieved throughout all stages of a pupil's schooling.

5.22   This section will consider the proportion of school leavers attaining one or more pass at SCQF Level 5 to 7 in Challenge Authorities (combined), non-Challenge Authorities (combined) and Scotland overall, from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

5.23   As seen in Table 5.8 the proportion of school leavers attaining one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better for Challenge Authorities (combined) slightly decreased in 2017/18 (84.8 per cent in 2016/17 to 84.2 per cent in 2017/18) before decreasing further in 2018/19 (83.7 per cent). A similar pattern was seen at Scotland level with a slight decrease in 2017/18 (86.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 85.9 per cent in 2017/18) before decreasing further in 2018/19 (85.1 per cent). Non-Challenge Authorities saw a slight increase from 86.6 in 2016/17 to 86.7 percent in 2017/18 and decreased to 85.6 percent in 2018/19.

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[9] As above

Table 5.8: Percentage of school leavers achieving 1 or more passes at SCQF Level 5 or better, 2016/17 to 2018/19

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Clackmannanshire	79.4	76.1	78.8
Dundee	82.7	76.8	78.8
East Ayrshire	83.4	82.4	80.0
Glasgow	83.2	83.8	83.2
Inverclyde	88.9	89.1	89.5
North Ayrshire	84.7	86.2	83.3
North Lanarkshire	85.5	85.2	84.4
Renfrewshire	88.3	88.2	88.2
West Dunbartonshire	87.9	83.1	85.6
Challenge Authorities	**84.8**	**84.2**	**83.7**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**86.6**	**86.7**	**85.6**
Scotland	**86.1**	**85.9**	**85.1**

5.24   Table 5.9 shows the proportion of school leavers attaining one or more pass at SCQF Level 6 or better has seen a similar trend across Challenge Authorities (combined), and Scotland overall, from 2016/17 to 2018/19. This trend has featured an increase from 2016/17 to 2017/18, followed by a decrease in 2018/19. In Challenge Authorities, the proportion increased from 59.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 59.8 per cent in 2017/18, and decreased to 58.7 per cent in 2018/19. In non-Challenge authorities there was an increase from 62.1 per cent to 63.1 per cent in 2016/17 to 2017/18, and then a decrease to 61.3 per cent in 2018/19 (see Table 5.9).

5.25   As seen in Table 5.10, from 2017/18 to 2018/19, the proportion of school leavers attaining or more one pass at SCQF Level 7 or better for Challenge Authorities (combined), non-Challenge authorities (combined) and Scotland increased slightly in 2017/18 and decreased marginally in 2018/19. In Challenge Authorities, the proportion slightly increased from 15.4 per cent in 2016/17 to 15.9 per cent in 2017/18, and decreased to 14.8 per cent in 2018/19. In non-Challenge authorities there was an increase from 21.0 per cent to 22.0 per cent in 2016/17 to 2017/18, and then a decrease to 20.9 per cent in 2018/19. At Scotland level there was an increase from 19.3 per cent to 20.2 per cent in 2016/17 to 2017/18, and then a decrease to 19.1 per cent in 2018/19.

Table 5.9: Percentage of school leavers achieving 1 or more passes at SCQF Level 6 or better, 2016/17 to 2018/19

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Clackmannanshire	53.5	49.7	54.4
Dundee	58.1	48.9	53.6
East Ayrshire	58.4	60.5	58.1
Glasgow	55.9	59.6	58.5
Inverclyde	64.8	68.0	67.4
North Ayrshire	57.6	59.9	56.6
North Lanarkshire	59.3	60.7	59.0
Renfrewshire	65.6	65.7	63.1
West Dunbartonshire	64.2	57.6	58.1
Challenge Authorities	**59.1**	**59.8**	**58.7**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**62.1**	**63.1**	**61.3**
Scotland	**61.2**	**62.2**	**60.5**

Table 5.10: Percentage of school leavers achieving 1 or more passes at SCQF Level 7, 2016/17 to 2018/19

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Clackmannanshire	13.9	14.9	19.1
Dundee	15.9	12.8	14.4
East Ayrshire	15.0	16.9	15.4
Glasgow	13.7	15.0	13.7
Inverclyde	19.1	19.1	17.9
North Ayrshire	17.1	17.5	15.5
North Lanarkshire	13.9	15.2	12.3
Renfrewshire	19.2	19.3	20.6
West Dunbartonshire	16.9	14.8	14.3
Challenge Authorities	**15.4**	**15.9**	**14.8**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**21.0**	**22.0**	**20.9**
Scotland	**19.3**	**20.2**	**19.1**

5.26   At SCQF Level 5 (Table 5.11), the percentage point gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining one or more pass has reduced for Challenge Authorities and at Scotland level between 2017/18 to 2018/19. The gap widened for Challenge Authorities (combined) from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (18.3 to 18.8 percentage points), however it decreased again slightly in 2018/19 (18.5 percentage points). A similar pattern is seen at Scotland level with 19.3 percent in 2016/17 increasing to 20.3 percent in 2017/18, and slightly decreasing in 2018/19 to 20.2 percent. In non-Challenge authorities (combined), the gap increased from 21.7 percentage points in 2016/17, to 22.7 percentage points in 2017/18 and increased to 22.9 percentage points in 2018/19.

5.27   At SCQF Level 6 or better (Table 5.12), the gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas that have attained one pass or more narrowed across Challenge Authorities (combined), and Scotland overall. In Challenge Authorities (combined), the gap declined steadily from 2016/17 (37.9

percentage points), 2017/18 (36.3 percentage points) to 2018/19 (35.2 percentage points). At Scotland level the gap narrowed slightly from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (37.6 to 37.4 percentage points) and closed in 2018/19 (35.8 percentage points). The gap widened in non-Challenge Authorities (combined) from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (40.3 to 41.1 percentage points), and subsequently decreased in 2018/19 (39.6 percentage points).

5.28   The gap at SCQF Level 7 (Table 5.13) or better for Challenge Authorities (combined) decreased between 2016/17 and 2017/18 and subsequently closed further between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The gap narrowed for Challenge Authorities (combined) from 2016/17 to 2017/18 (20.9 to 20.4 percentage points), and decreased again in 2018/19 (18.8 percentage points). A similar decrease between 2017/18 to 2018/19 was seen at Scotland level with 25.3 percent in 2016/17 increasing to 25.5 percent in 2017/18, before decreasing in 2018/19 to 23.7 percent. In non-Challenge authorities (combined), the gap reduced slightly from 26.8 percentage points in 2016/17, to 26.6 percent in 2017/18 and further to 24.3 percentage points in 2018/19.

Table 5.11: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of pupils achieving SCQF Level 5, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	20/1617	20/1718	20/1819
Clackmannanshire	63.6	64.0	64.2	96.6	95.0	94.5	33.0	31.0	30.4
Dundee	71.7	65.0	68.0	94.8	93.0	93.5	23.2	28.0	25.4
East Ayrshire	72.1	69.9	64.7	96.6	94.5	96.2	24.5	24.6	31.6
Glasgow	79.6	79.3	79.4	93.8	94.9	94.8	14.2	15.5	15.4
Inverclyde	83.6	83.4	82.3	94.9	95.4	96.3	11.4	12.0	14.1
North Ayrshire	76.1	79.8	74.6	96.1	97.7	95.5	20.0	17.9	20.9
North Lanarkshire	76.5	74.7	75.2	96.1	95.9	93.4	19.6	21.2	18.2
Renfrewshire	75.2	79.5	79.5	96.0	96.8	95.5	20.9	17.3	16.0
West Dunbartonshire	80.7	77.4	80.4	98.1	95.6	94.2	17.4	18.2	13.8
Challenge Authorities	**77.3**	**76.7**	**76.2**	**95.6**	**95.5**	**94.7**	**18.3**	**18.8**	**18.5**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**72.8**	**72.6**	**71.6**	**94.6**	**95.3**	**94.5**	**21.7**	**22.7**	**22.9**
Scotland	**75.5**	**75.0**	**74.4**	**94.8**	**95.4**	**94.6**	**19.3**	**20.3**	**20.2**

Table 5.12: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of pupils achieving SCQF Level 6, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	20/1617	20/1718	20/1819
Clackmannanshire	36.4	33.6	36.6	77.6	77.5	76.4	41.2	43.9	39.8
Dundee	42.3	33.3	39.0	82.0	75.5	75.7	39.7	42.2	36.7
East Ayrshire	38.2	45.3	39.5	84.2	82.8	80.6	46.0	37.5	41.2
Glasgow	48.6	51.3	51.7	82.2	87.4	83.3	33.6	36.1	31.6
Inverclyde	47.9	53.8	53.6	83.5	89.7	85.4	35.7	35.8	31.8
North Ayrshire	40.3	46.0	43.2	83.8	86.3	81.8	43.5	40.2	38.6
North Lanarkshire	43.5	45.0	42.7	82.8	83.1	83.2	39.3	38.1	40.5
Renfrewshire	41.0	47.9	43.6	84.1	84.4	82.1	43.1	36.4	38.5
West Dunbartonshire	53.2	46.9	46.8	88.5	80.0	88.5	35.3	33.1	41.6
Challenge Authorities	**45.2**	**47.2**	**46.5**	**83.1**	**83.5**	**81.7**	**37.9**	**36.3**	**35.2**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**39.6**	**40.3**	**39.1**	**79.9**	**81.4**	**78.7**	**40.3**	**41.1**	**39.6**
Scotland	**43.0**	**44.4**	**43.5**	**80.6**	**81.8**	**79.3**	**37.6**	**37.4**	**35.8**

Table 5.13: Challenge Authorities - Percentage of pupils achieving SCQF Level 7, by local authority and deprivation, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Percentage point gap		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	20/1617	20/1718	20/1819
Clackmannanshire	9.3	6.4	9.0	22.4	22.5	30.9	13.1	16.1	22.0
Dundee	7.7	7.5	8.4	27.0	18.0	19.6	19.3	10.5	11.2
East Ayrshire	6.4	8.6	7.3	25.4	29.7	27.4	19.0	21.1	20.1
Glasgow	9.3	10.4	9.0	34.2	34.8	29.6	24.9	24.4	20.6
Inverclyde	8.8	9.6	7.2	34.2	37.9	34.1	25.4	28.3	27.0
North Ayrshire	9.9	9.0	7.8	31.2	35.9	27.3	21.3	26.9	19.5
North Lanarkshire	8.0	8.1	8.1	26.6	24.8	21.1	18.6	16.8	13.0
Renfrewshire	9.6	9.9	10.4	31.8	33.7	33.2	22.3	23.8	22.9
West Dunbartonshire	11.9	10.6	7.9	38.5	31.1	34.6	26.6	20.5	26.7
Challenge Authorities	**9.0**	**9.4**	**8.5**	**29.8**	**29.8**	**27.4**	**20.9**	**20.4**	**18.8**
Non-Challenge Authorities	**7.7**	**8.8**	**8.8**	**34.5**	**35.3**	**33.1**	**26.8**	**26.6**	**24.3**
Scotland	**8.6**	**9.1**	**8.7**	**33.8**	**34.7**	**32.4**	**25.3**	**25.5**	**23.7**

Annual Participation Measure

5.29   The **Annual Participation Measure (APM)** is another measure for considering progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, set out in the National Improvement Framework. Since August 2017 the APM has been the source of the National Performance Framework Indicator, 'Percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training or employment'. It is produced by Skills Development Scotland and reports on the economic and employment activity of the 16-19 year old cohort. When considering the APM as a measure in the ASF Evaluation it is important to highlight that the ASF funding started in 2015, therefore a lag occurs between intervention at school level and impact on APM (mostly post school).

5.30   This section reports on the participation rate for Scotland overall and at local authority level. For school pupils, local authority relates to the location of the school they are attending. For those who have left school local authority continues to relate to location of their school up to 12 months after leaving, and thereafter the individual is reported against the local authority linked to their postcode.

5.31   All local authority level data disaggregated by SIMD is available online and therefore the focus in this report is specifically on the Challenge Authorities, who have been involved with the ASF for the longest period of time.

5.32   Table 5.14 below shows the proportion of 16-19 year olds participating in education, training or employment was 91.6% in 2019. This represents a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to the 2018 figure (91.8%). Despite the reduction the 2019 figure remains higher than in 2017 (91.1%) and 2016 (90.4%).

5.33   Looking specifically at the participation rate in the Challenge Authorities, six of the nine recorded a slight increase between Year 3 and Year 4 of the ASF. This reflects a similar trend to 2018 when seven out of the nine recorded an increase between Year 2 and Year 3 of the ASF.

Table 5.14: Challenge Authorities Percentage of 16-19 year olds participating, by local authority, 2017 - 2019

	Participation rate			Percentage point change between 2017 and 2019
	2017	**2018**	**2019**	
Clackmannanshire	89.7	89.3	90.1	0.4
Dundee	87.6	88.7	88.2	0.6
East Ayrshire	88.1	89.3	88.7	0.6
Glasgow	88.2	88.8	89.2	1
Inverclyde	91.9	91.6	91.8	-0.1
North Ayrshire	90.3	91.1	90.5	0.2
North Lanarkshire	90.2	90.5	90.1	-0.1
Renfrewshire	91.4	91.6	91.7	0.3
West Dunbartonshire	88.3	90.1	90.3	2
Challenge Authorities	89.3	89.9	89.9	0.6
Non-Challenge Authorities	91.9	92.8	92.4	0.5
Scotland	**91.1**	**91.8**	**91.6**	**0.5**

Source: Annual Participation Measure, Skills Development Scotland

5.34   At Scotland level as shown in Table 5.15 between Year 3 and 4 of the ASF, there was an overall reduction in the participation gap between those living in the most deprived areas compared to those living in the least deprived areas (10.5 percentage points in 2019, 10.8 percentage points in 2018, 11.6 percentage points in 2017). This was due to a slight increase in the rate of participation amongst those within the most deprived areas and a slight decrease amongst those in the least deprived areas. With regards Challenge Authorities Table 5.15 shows the following:

- In Year 4 of the ASF, three Challenge Authorities had a smaller participation gap compared to Scotland
- Between Year 3 and 4 of the ASF, the participation gap narrowed in six Challenge Authorities

- In Year 4 of the ASF, the participation rate for those living in the 20% most deprived areas was higher or similar in four Challenge Authorities, compared to Scotland
- Between Year 3 and 4 of the ASF, the participation rate for those living in the 20% most deprived areas increased or was maintained in seven Challenge Authorities

Table 5.15: Challenge Authorities percentage of 16-19 year olds participating, by local authority and deprivation, 2017, 2018, 2019

	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD)			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD)			Gap Percentage points		
	2017	**2018**	**2019**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Clackmannanshire	82.0	81.6	84.5	95.6	93.9	96.6	13.6	12.3	12.1
Dundee	82.4	82.9	83.4	96.2	95.6	96	13.8	12.7	12.6
East Ayrshire	82.7	83	83.1	94.2	97.2	96.2	11.5	14.1	13.1
Glasgow	85.5	86.1	86.3	96.3	96.1	95.5	10.9	10.0	9.2
Inverclyde	88.2	87.4	88.3	96.4	96.3	96.3	8.2	8.9	8.1*
North Ayrshire	85.9	87.6	87.8	97.5	96.4	94.7	11.6	8.8	6.9
North Lanarkshire	85.0	85.6	84.3	96.2	95.8	96.7	11.2	10.2	12.4
Renfrewshire	85.5	86.6	85.1	96.5	96.9	97.3	11.0	10.3	12.1*
West Dunbartonshire	84.8	85.7	85.7	95.5	96.9	98.9	10.7	11.2	13.2
Scotland	**84.8**	**85.7**	**85.8**	**96.3**	**96.5**	**96.3**	**11.6**	**10.8**	**10.5**

Source: Annual Participation Measure, Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

*SDS published figures used which are calculated with absolute percentages.

Health and wellbeing: attendances and exclusions

5.35   This section reports on two health and wellbeing related measures: attendance and exclusions rates. The ASF interim report for Years 1 and 2 also reported on the total difficulties score in the Scottish Health Survey and Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS), as well as the Mental Wellbeing Score from SALSUS. SALSUS is conducted on a biennial basis with the fieldwork for the 2018 survey having taken place between November 2018 and January 2019. Data from additional waves is not yet available and will be reported on in the Year 5 evaluation report.

5.36   Information on attendance and exclusion from schools is collected on a biennial basis. In the first interim report, data was analysed for 2014/15 – the year prior to the ASF. In this section, consideration is given to how these figures changed between Years 1- 4 of the ASF. It is important to note that policy around exclusions changed in 2017 following Scottish Government guidance and this has resulted in a reduction in exclusions. As a result of this some local authority figures have been suppressed in the official statistics, so as not to be disclosive. It is therefore difficult to draw conclusions from the exclusions data.
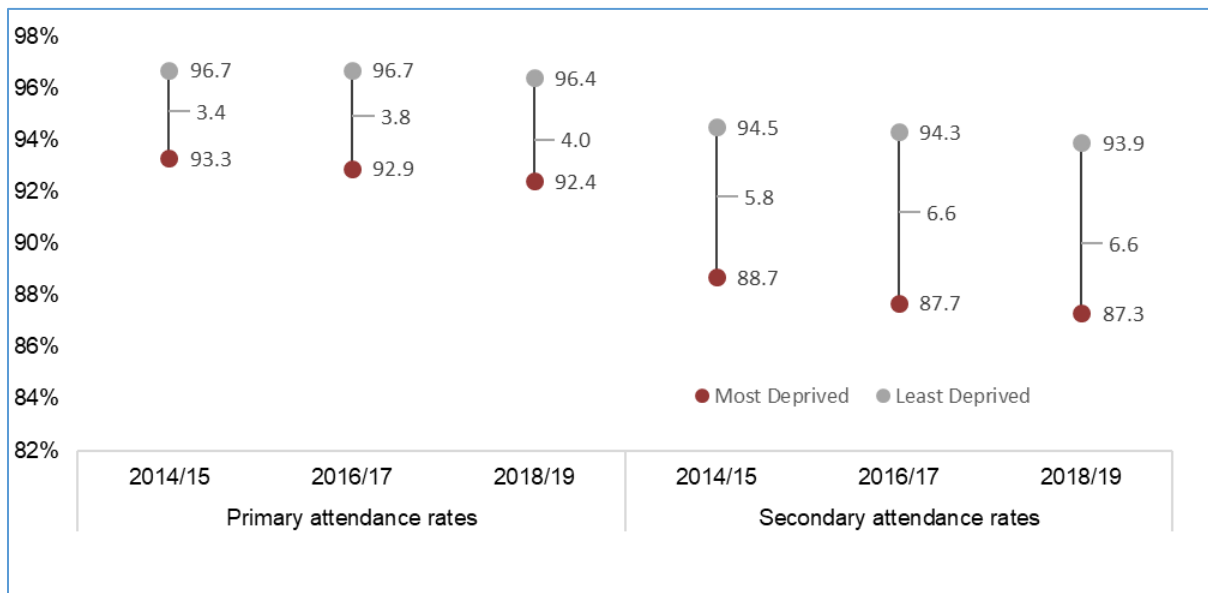
Attendance rates

5.37   The figure below shows the attendance levels for primary and secondary schools, by deprivation and by year.

5.38   As the attendance data shows, pupils from the most deprived areas had lower attendance rates. The effect was greater in secondary schools.

5.39   The gap in attendance rates increased over time for primary school children and, whilst the effect is greater in secondary schools, the gap has remained the same in years 2016/17 – 2018/19. Whilst the attendance of pupils from the least deprived areas remained fairly stable over time, the attendance rate of the most deprived pupils decreased.

Figure 5.1: Total Attendance Rates, by deprivation, 2014/15 & 2016/17 and 2018/19

Source: Summary Statistics for Schools, Scottish Government

5.40   Table 5.16 below shows attendance rates for primary pupils, disaggregated by deprivation and Challenge Authority.

Table 5.16: Primary Attendance Rates – By local authority and deprivation, 2014/15 – 2018/19

Primary attendance rates	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD) %			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD) %			Gap Percentage points		
	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19
Clackmannanshire	93.4	93.7	93.1	96.1	96.2	95.8	2.7	2.5	2.7
Dundee City	93.3	92.9	92.6	96.5	96.6	96.2	3.2	3.7	3.6
East Ayrshire	93.8	93.6	92.4	96.5	96.6	96.0	2.7	3.0	3.6
Glasgow City	93.1	92.8	92.3	96.8	96.5	96.4	3.7	3.7	4.0
Inverclyde	93.3	93.2	93.1	96.9	96.3	96.0	3.6	3.1	2.9
North Ayrshire	94.2	93.5	93.0	96.3	96.7	96.5	2.1	3.2	3.5
North Lanarkshire	92.8	92.3	91.9	96.7	96.5	96.4	3.9	4.2	4.5
Renfrewshire	94.2	94.0	93.3	97.1	96.8	96.7	2.9	2.8	3.4
West Dunbartonshire	94.0	93.3	93.2	97.1	96.5	96.5	3.1	3.2	3.3
Scotland	**93.3**	**92.9**	**92.4**	**96.7**	**96.7**	**96.4**	**3.4**	**3.8**	**4**

Source: Summary Statistics for Schools, Scottish Government

5.41   In relation to the gap in attendance rates for primary pupils:

- In Year 4 of the ASF, seven Challenge Authorities had a smaller gap compared to Scotland;
- Between 2014/15 (pre-ASF) and Year 4, the gap narrowed in one Challenge Authorities.

5.42   The attendance rate for primary pupils from the least deprived areas was fairly consistent across Challenge Authorities (~96%).

5.43   Attendance rates for primary pupils in the most deprived areas was somewhat more varied. In Year 4, the attendance rate of pupils from the most deprived areas was higher or similar in eight Challenge Authorities compared to Scotland overall (up from 6 in Year 3).

5.44   Table 5.17 below shows the attendance rates for **secondary pupils**, disaggregated by deprivation and Challenge Authority.

Table 5.17: Secondary Attendance Rates – By local authority and deprivation, 2014/15, 2016/17, 2018/19

Secondary attendance rates	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD) %			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD) %			Gap Percentage points		
	2014/15	2016/17	2018/19	2014/15	2016/17	2018/19	2014/15	2016/17	2018/19
Clackmannanshire	88.2	86.8	88.9	94.0	94.4	94.0	5.8	7.6	5.1
Dundee City	87.3	87.1	86.4	93.7	93.9	93.5	6.4	6.8	7.1
East Ayrshire	87.7	87.0	86.0	94.5	93.9	93.3	6.8	6.9	7.3
Glasgow City	90.1	89.6	89.4	95.1	95.0	94.9	5.0	5.4	5.5
Inverclyde	88.7	87.7	87.7	94.5	94.3	92.8	5.8	6.6	5.1
North Ayrshire	89.1	87.5	87.6	93.9	93.0	92.6	4.8	5.5	5
North Lanarkshire	87.8	85.3	84.2	94.5	92.7	92.2	6.7	7.4	8
Renfrewshire	87.5	87.1	86.8	93.7	93.4	93.3	6.2	6.3	6.5
West Dunbartonshire	87.3	86.1	86.2	93.4	92.6	92.7	5.3	6.5	6.5
Scotland	**88.7**	**87.7**	**87.3**	**94.5**	**94.3**	**93.9**	**5.8**	**6.6**	**6.6**

Source: Summary Statistics for Schools, Scottish Government

5.45   In relation to the gap in attendance rates for secondary pupils:

- In Year 4 of the ASF, six Challenge Authorities had a smaller gap compared to Scotland
- From the year prior to ASF (2014/15) to Year 4 of the ASF, the gap between attendance rates in the most deprived and the least deprived areas narrowed in two Challenge Authorities

Exclusion rates

5.46   Full details on exclusion rates disaggregated by local authority and SIMD are available on the National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report.

5.47   Overall, exclusion rates were higher for pupils from the most deprived areas compared to those from the least deprived. Secondary schools had a higher exclusion rate than primary schools and the gap in exclusion rates was also higher in

secondary schools. Due to suppression of figures it is difficult to draw conclusions from the exclusion rate figures.

5.48   In terms of the primary exclusion rates for Challenge Authorities, by deprivation and year, it is not possible to offer a full analysis of the gap in relation to exclusion rates due to disclosure control.

5.49   From the year prior to ASF (2014/15) to Year 2 of the ASF (2016/17), the primary exclusion rate for pupils from the most deprived areas decreased for 4 Challenge Authorities.

Table 5.18: Primary Exclusion Rates per 1,000 pupils - By local authority and deprivation, 2014/15, 2016/17, 2018/19

Primary exclusion rates per 1000 pupils	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD) %			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD) %			Gap Percentage points		
	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19
Clackmannanshire	68.0	48.5	*	5.7	*	0.0	62.3	-	-
Dundee City	29.9	20.4	9.0	2.1	*	7.7	27.8	-	1.3
East Ayrshire	54.2	52	37.2	3.8	*	0.0	50.4	-	37.2
Glasgow City	12.8	18.3	6.3	3.5	4	*	9.3	14.3	-
Inverclyde	3.9	3.1	*	0.0	*	*	3.9	-	-
North Ayrshire	8.8	9.1	10.8	0.0	*	*	8.8	9.1	10.8
North Lanarkshire	17.7	19.8	18.8	1.9	3	*	15.8	16.8	-
Renfrewshire	5.3	16.9	11.8	0.4	0	*	4.9	16.9	11.8
West Dunbartonshire	13.8	22.7	16.5	0	0	0.0	13.8	22.7	16.5
Scotland	**19.0**	**22**	**14.4**	**2.1**	**3**	**2.36**	**16.9**	**19**	**12.04**

Source: Summary Statistics for Schools, Scottish Government
* = suppression due to small numbers
- = unable to calculate figure due to suppression

5.50   Table 5.13 shows the secondary exclusion rates for Challenge Authorities, by deprivation and year. The gap in secondary exclusion rates narrowed in 5 of the 8 Challenge Authorities between 2014/15 and 2016/17. Due to suppression of the figures we cannot fully analyse the gap for year 4.

Table 5.19: Secondary Exclusion Rates per 1,000 pupils - By local authority and deprivation, 2014/15, 2016/17, 2018/19

Secondary exclusion rates per 1000 pupils	Most deprived (bottom 20% SIMD) %			Least deprived (top 20% SIMD) %			Gap Percentage points		
	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19	2014/ 15	2016/ 17	2018/ 19
Clackmannanshire	110.3	42	*	36.7	24.1	0.0	73.6	17.9	-
Dundee City	228.1	123.5	70.2	22.8	32.1	24.0	205.3	91.4	46.2
East Ayrshire	131.8	147.1	21.7	26.7	15.5	*	105.1	131.6	21.7
Glasgow City	78.3	60.1	32.0	7.6	18.9	6.0	70.7	41.2	26
Inverclyde	61.2	54.7	51.7	9.6	20.9	13.1	51.6	33.8	38.6
North Ayrshire	66.4	57.4	27.9	19.9	*	*	46.5	-	-
North Lanarkshire	95.9	85.6	98.6	18.0	19.5	17.8	77.9	66.1	80.8
Renfrewshire	56.0	79.3	107.7	9.6	19.1	20.2	46.4	60.2	87.5
West Dunbartonshire	81.0	132.9	78.3	23.3	29.6	*	57.7	103	-
Scotland	**95.2**	**85**	**64.69**	**15.1**	**18**	**15.93**	**80.1**	**67**	**48.76**

Source: Summary Statistics for Schools, Scottish Government

** = suppression due to small numbers*

- = unable to calculate figure due to suppression

Evidence of impact: reported evidence of impact

5.51   Throughout the Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports there was considerable variance in terms of the level and nature of data reported to provide evidence of impact. In general, there were broad statements and affirmations regarding the extent to which implemented approaches and interventions were positively impacting on raising attainment and closing the opportunity gap within their school.

5.52   With regards to perceived success in meeting outcomes, the Headteacher Survey 2019 showed that 91% of headteachers reported to have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap as a result of ASF supported approaches, which is a 13 point increase since 2017.

Figure 5.2: Improvement in Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap
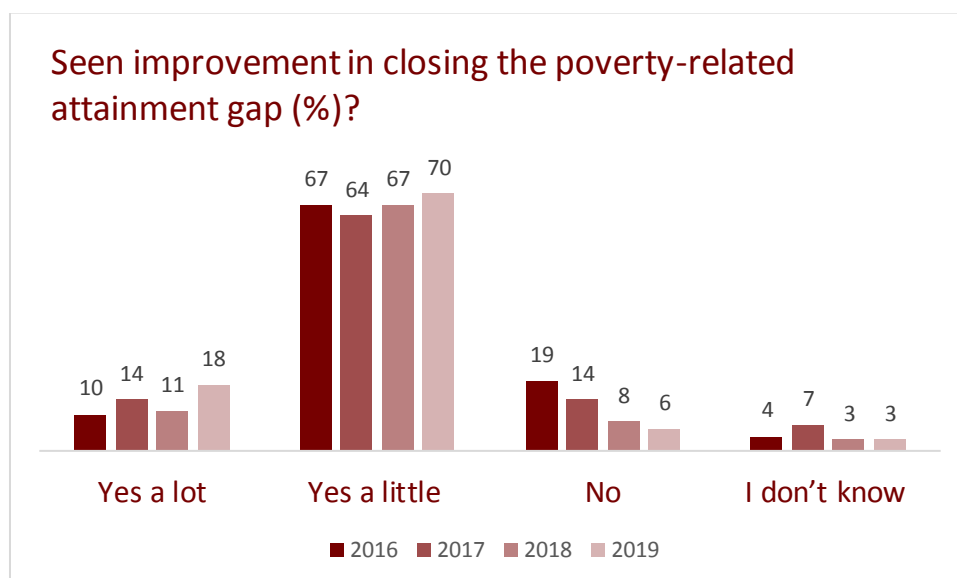
5.53   Nearly all schools (98%) expected to see improvement in closing the gap over the next five years. The survey found that the headteachers that were **most** likely to report improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap were:

- those who had seen a change in culture or ethos which would for example include embedding the approach to equity within the school itself and broader strategies and/or more collaborative working
- those who have improved their understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families

In addition, the following subgroups were significantly more likely to have seen improvement as a result of ASF supported approaches.

Respondents most likely to have seen progress in closing the gap:

- Feel confident using evidence to inform the development of their approach
- Feel they have sufficient support to develop their school plan for PEF
- Always use available evidence to measure the impact of approaches

5.54   The survey showed some variation across the three funding streams in respect of progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Schools Programme respondents were most likely to report an improvement, whereas PEF-only schools and particularly those with a lower PEF allocation were least likely to report an improvement.

Influencing Factors

5.55   Evidence on the factors that local authorities and schools thought helped interventions to be successful or not in closing the poverty-related attainment gap were gathered from the Headteacher Survey, the Local Authority Survey and Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports.

5.56   The Headteacher Survey 2019 asked respondents their views on factors that contribute to or hinder the success of their ASF approaches. The three main supporting factors identified were:

- the ability to implement approaches relevant to school (58%)
- teaching and staffing resources (52%)
- higher quality learning and teaching (45%)

More than half the respondents felt that the ability to implement approaches relevant to the school context and availability of staffing resources contributed most to their progress (58% and 52% respectively).

5.57   In respect of hindering factors, staff time and workload, and reduction in other services or resources, were seen as the main factors limiting progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap. Both of these factors were mentioned by 44% of respondents. Other factors that were mentioned commonly by respondents included staffing resources and recruitment, level of PEF received and staff absences.

5.58   There were similar findings from the Local Authority Survey 2019 where in terms of factors supporting progress the benefits of new posts and new central structures, greater use of data and increased data literacy, increased collaboration and leadership were all highlighted. The benefits of a greater emphasis on strategic links, such as to child poverty strategies and increased focus and understanding of the impact of poverty were cited as key factors supporting progress. Mention was also made of the introduction of specific models and approaches – for example the creation of specific new procurement frameworks and increased focus on working with families and communities.

5.59   The factor hindering success mentioned in the Local Authority Survey 2019 were largely similar to previous years and comparable with the Headteacher Survey findings. For example, recruitment difficulties, staff turnover and funding uncertainty in the longer term along with appropriate levels of data literacy were cited.

5.60   Broader considerations raised referred to the scale of the challenge in terms of poverty and need for wider community and societal interventions (recognition of the length of duration required and continuation of support needed to address the scale of the challenge), and factors related to rurality and poverty (concerns regarding the measurement of poverty in rural areas using existing SIMD measure).

Additionality

5.61   In terms of the extent to which ASF was seen as additional, there was limited direct evidence gathered regarding perceptions of additionality. However, the Headteacher Survey 2019 included a question to determine headteachers' views on whether PEF had provided additional resource needed to address the poverty-related attainment gap, with 86% of respondents indicating they felt this was the case. There was some variation across key respondent groups, with headteachers of PEF only schools less likely to feel that PEF has provided an additional resource. This issue would warrant further exploration through future evaluation activity.

Sustainability

5.62   Sustained and embedded practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap is one of the high level long-term outcomes of SAC.

5.63   This section explores sustainability in the context of the ASF from a number of aspects. Firstly, the extent to which sustainability has featured in planning and developing approaches to the ASF is considered. Following this, the related aspect of sustainability of focus on addressing the poverty-related attainment gap beyond the years of the Fund is explored. Sustainability is then considered in terms of impact i.e. the sustainability of any improvements beyond the years of the Fund. Finally, factors which may impact on sustainability are explored.

5.64   Evidence on sustainability is drawn primarily from the Local Authority Survey 2019 and Headteacher Survey 2019. Challenge Authority and Schools Programme progress reports have also been considered.

To what extent has sustainability featured in planning and developing approaches to addressing the poverty-related attainment gap?

5.65   Actions to support, encourage and/or plan for sustainability were explored in Local Authority Survey 2019 responses. As well as affirmations of a commitment to sustainability, there were also statements of specific actions both at local authority and at school level.

5.66   There was evidence of both strategic approaches and actions towards sustainability, and actions at a more local level and within specific initiatives. Sustainability was being considered at many levels, including:

- mainstreaming plans both at local authority and school level
- schools considering the sustainability of interventions when planning and implementing PEF
- support to schools from Attainment Advisors to consider sustainability of PEF
- sustainability as a key feature of discussions within schools

5.67   Sustainability was linked with the prioritisation of interventions with the greatest impact by local authorities.

5.68   Within Challenge Authority progress reports, several made explicit mention of the extent to which authorities were considering and/or addressing sustainability in their local authority. This included, for example, specific actions such as taking steps to rationalise interventions, or develop an exit strategy, as well as broader aspects around focus on culture change and ethos, partnership working, capacity building such as provision of CLPL to staff groups, and focus on leadership.

5.69   Local authorities had also in a number of instances given consideration to an exit strategy.

5.70   Schools Programme progress reports varied in the extent to which they explicitly mentioned sustainability. Several explicitly described their school's approach to considering sustainability at the level of specific interventions. There were instances where sustainability was linked to building capacity within wider staffing groups through the provision of CLPL.

5.71   The emerging shift of focus from the level of intervention to broader approaches which is clear across evidence sources may also be consistent with a greater emphasis on sustainability, such as the development and embedding of whole school nurture approaches.

Sustainability of focus

5.72   At the local authority level, evidence from the Local Authority Survey 2019 indicated that local authorities were broadly positive regarding the extent to which the focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap would be sustainable beyond the years of the fund. All 24 local authorities who responded to this survey question were of the view that the focus would be sustainable (eight to a great extent, 11 to some extent and five to a limited extent). Of the seven Challenge Authorities who responded to this question on sustainability of focus, three viewed the focus would be sustainable to a great extent, and four to some extent.

5.73   Factors which might impact on the sustainability of focus were also explored in the Local Authority Survey. Staffing and budget were key concerns related to sustainability following withdrawal of funding. However, local authority respondents also indicated that collaboration, 'pooling' of resources, good practice sharing, building capacity and focusing on staff professional development would be sustainable to some extent.

5.74   At the school level, a great majority of headteachers responding to the Headteacher Survey 2019 expected the focus to be sustainable to some degree. 41% expected the focus to be sustainable to a great or moderate extent, and a further 43% felt that the focus would be sustainable to some extent beyond the funding period. The remaining 15% did not feel that the focus would be sustainable (12% not very well/3% not at all). There was some variation by funding stream in terms of perceptions of sustainability, with headteacher respondents from Schools Programme schools more positive than those from either Challenge Authority or PEF-only schools in terms of sustainability of focus.

Sustainability of improvements

5.75   Headteacher perspectives on the sustainability of improvements associated with their school's approach beyond the years of the fund were gathered in the Headteacher Survey 2019. This question around sustainability of improvements has been included in the Headteacher Survey since its introduction resulting in time series data availability from 2016 to 2019. This shows that headteacher perspectives of sustainability of improvements rose from 2016 to a high of 58% in 2017 but then fell to 42% in 2018 and remained at a similar level (41%) in 2019. The data suggests a correlation between views on sustainability and perceived improvement to date, with those who had seen improvement to date in the poverty-related attainment gap

being significantly more likely to expect improvements to be sustainable beyond the funding period.

5.76   As with the sustainability of focus question, there was some variation by funding stream in terms of perceptions of sustainability. Headteacher respondents from Schools Programme schools were more positive than Challenge Authority or PEF-only schools about sustainability of improvement on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Factors associated with sustainability

5.77   Headteacher perceptions of factors associated with sustainable improvements and/or focus beyond the funding period included staff training, development and capacity-building. Over half of headteacher respondents to the Headteacher Survey who expected their approach to be sustainable made reference to staff training/development and capacity-building. References were made to schools having specific focus on developing existing staff, including embedding practice, to ensure sustainability of focus, and to developing capacity for provision of training and development to ensure new staff can support and contribute to the approach.

5.78   Perceptions of sustainability beyond the period of funding was also associated with awareness raising and change of culture/ethos. Across evidence sources, there were indications of broader culture change and ethos which may lead to an ongoing focus on addressing poverty-related attainment gap.

5.79   Follow on qualitative feedback gathered for the Headteacher Survey highlighted the importance of the focus on equity, and a shared understanding of equity, as key to sustainability of approach. The development of a strong overall vision and plan, which would remain in place post-funding, was viewed as particularly important in ensuring sustainability. Conversely, loss of staffing and skills was the primary factor associated with perceptions of limited sustainability beyond the period of funding.

Unintended Consequences

5.80   This section explores the unintended consequences of the Fund, both positive and negative. It also considers the impact of these unintended consequences on the outcomes and implementation of the Fund and focuses on whether the negative unintended consequences could have been mitigated (and if they were).

5.81   Reporting of unintended consequences shows a consistent pattern across Year 1 to 4 of the ASF. Evidence for this section has been drawn from the Local Authority Survey and the Headteacher Survey. It is important to note that the responses should be considered in the context of respondents being asked to highlight consequences which were not intended or anticipated in their own planning, rather than commenting on the wider policy intentions of the ASF. It is also important to note that a number of the consequences such as improved collaboration and partnership working are key policy intentions for the Fund.

5.82   The Local Authority Survey highlighted the following as positive unintended consequences:

- Partnership working and collaboration
- Culture change
- Improved data use
- Increasingly skilled classroom practitioners
- Increased understanding of poverty and its impact

5.83   Similar positive unintended consequences were reported in the Headteacher Survey, which showed that around one in three (33%) of respondents had seen unintended positive consequences as a result of ASF funding and around one in eight (13%) had seen unintended negative consequences. The most common responses were consistent with previous reporting and included better collaboration and partnership working (25%), training and skills development for staff (15%) and improved engagement with parents and families (13%) being most commonly mentioned. Additionally, more leadership opportunities for staff (13%) and improved pupil engagement and attendance were often cited (12%).

5.84   Unintended negative consequences were reported in a similar way to previous years with concerns around workload, staffing concerns and wider resources being reported. The Local Authority Survey reported the following unintended negative consequences;

- Workload
- Reporting demand/bureaucracy
- Staffing concerns
- Level of funding in more affluent areas where there is still need/hidden poverty
- Concerns about future sustainability

5.85   The headteacher responses were also broadly consistent, with negative unintended consequences reported in previous surveys with additional workload (26%) and reporting requirements (5%) remaining unchanged from previous years. Other responses frequently referred to were the reduction in wider school budgets and external supports (15%) and difficulties in staff retention and recruitment (11%).

Chapter 6 Discussion and conclusions

6.1 As described in the introductory section of the report, the evaluation aims to provide learning about the overall implementation of the ASF and the extent to which the aims of ASF are being met in terms of closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

6.2 The ASF evaluation report 2019 has sought to bring together a range of evidence which provides the basis for assessing the extent to which progress has been made towards the overall aims of the fund. The concluding section:

- draws together the key findings related to the assessment of progress and learning about the process of implementing the Fund, together with consideration of contextual/background material (where appropriate to support this assessment)
- provides final reflections on progress to date
- offers some commentary on the evaluation and its future direction

Key findings

6.3 **There has been a move away from a focus on interventions to approaches to close the poverty-related attainment gap.** There is increasing evidence of a focus on broader approaches implemented around literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing to close the poverty-related attainment gap rather than at the intervention level. This includes local-authority wide developments such as whole school nurture approaches.

6.4 **Approaches to closing the poverty-related attainment gap are being refined based on improvement and use of evidence.** Enhancements or adaptations in approaches to literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing introduced to close the poverty-related attainment gap were based on the increasing use of a broad range of data, a focus on measuring impact, and a focus on building sustainability.

6.5 **Tailoring to local context and sufficient resources are key factors associated with success.** The ability to implement approaches relevant to the local/school context and having sufficient teaching and staffing resources were the most commonly cited factors contributing to progress. Staff time/workload and reduction in other resources were seen as the main factors limiting progress.

6.6 **Culture change and ethos.** There is evidence of systemic change in terms of culture and ethos towards development of a shared understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families, approaches to equity becoming more embedded within the school, and a more collaborative system.

6.7 **Perceptions of success.** There are continuing positive messages in terms of perceptions of success:

- Nine out of ten (91%) of headteachers are reported to have seen an improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap as a result of ASF supported approaches, an increase of 13 points since 2017
- Nearly all headteachers (98%) expect to see improvement in closing the gap over the next five years

6.8 **Clear links between perceptions of success and positive culture change/ethos.** Headteachers most likely to report improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap were those who had seen a change in culture or ethos (such as embedding approaches to equity, broader strategies, more collaborative working) and where there was improved understanding of barriers faced by pupils and families.

6.9 **Clear links between perceptions of success and use of evidence in developing and evaluating ASF supported approaches.** Headteachers most likely to have seen an improvement as a result of ASF supported approaches were those who feel confident using evidence to inform the development of their approach, and always use evidence to measure the impact of these approaches.

6.10 **Variability across funding streams and urban/rural contexts.** This included variations of perceptions from headteachers across the three funding streams in respect of reported progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, with Schools Programme respondents most likely to report an improvement, whereas PEF-only schools and particularly those with a lower PEF allocation were least likely to report an improvement.

6.11 **Funding continues to provide a focus.** Whilst there are positive perceptions of the sustainability of focus on closing the attainment gap to some extent, it is recognised that funding is key in ensuring the resources to support improvements.

6.12 **Closing the attainment gap – the quantitative measures.**
The analysis presented in Section 5 indicates that on a number of measures, there is progress in closing the attainment gap, although this is a varied picture depending on the measure under consideration. Progress in closing the attainment gap is assessed through a 'basket' of measures. This basket of measures, introduced at the start of the ASF evaluation, looks at various National Improvement Framework attainment measures and considers how the data collected and the trends in data over time can provide illumination on the gap overall – by subject, by age, and by local authority. Quantitative measures of the attainment gap do not yet show a consistent pattern of change. A summary is provided below.

Summary of Quantitative Measures

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL)

6.13   In Primary schools, the proportion of primary pupils achieving the expected level in both literacy and numeracy steadily increased between 2016/17 and 2018/19 in Challenge Authorities, non-Challenge Authorities and in Scotland overall.

6.14   The gap between the proportion of Primary pupils from the most and least deprived areas that have achieved the expected level in literacy narrowed for Challenge Authorities, non-Challenge Authorities and Scotland overall between 2017/18 and 2018/19. For numeracy the gap widened slightly for Challenge Authorities and non-Challenge Authorities between 2017/18 and 2018/19, and remained the same at Scotland level.

6.15   In secondary schools, S3 pupils achieving the expected level in literacy has decreased slightly in Challenge Authorities between 2016/17 and 2018/19, but increased in non-Challenge Authorities and at Scotland level. In numeracy, the proportion achieving expected levels has risen in Challenge Authorities, non-Challenge Authorities and at Scotland level.

6.16   The gap between the proportion of Secondary pupils from the most and least deprived areas that have achieved the expected level in numeracy narrowed across Challenge Authorities, non-Challenge Authorities and at Scotland level. The gap in literacy narrowed in non-Challenge Authorities, but has widened slightly in Challenge Authorities and at Scotland level.

Senior Phase (SCQF) levels

6.17   The size of the gap between the proportion of school leavers from the most and least deprived areas attaining one or more pass varies by SCQF Level. At SCQF level 5, the size of the gap has narrowed slightly for Challenge Authorities and Scotland level and widened slightly for non-Challenge Authorities. At SCQF levels 6 and 7, the gap has narrowed across Challenge Authorities, at Scotland level and for non-Challenge Authorities.

Participation Measure

6.18   The Annual Participation Measure reports the percentage of young adults (16-19 year olds) participating in education, training or employment. Between 2017 and 2019, there was an overall reduction in the participation gap between those living in the most deprived areas compared to those living in the least deprived areas. This was due to an increase in the rate of participation amongst those within the most deprived areas compared to a slight decrease amongst those in the least deprived areas. Six of the nine Challenge Authorities recorded a slight increase between Year 3 and Year 4 of the ASF. This reflects a similar trend to 2018 when seven out of the nine recorded an increase between Year 2 and Year 3 of the ASF.

Attendance and Exclusion

6.19   The gap in attendance rates increased over time for primary school children and, whilst the effect is greater in secondary schools, the gap has remained the same in years 2016/17 – 2018/19. Whilst the attendance of secondary school pupils from the least deprived areas remained fairly stable over time, the attendance rate of the most deprived pupils decreased.

6.20   Overall, exclusion rates were higher for pupils from the most deprived areas compared to those from the least deprived. Secondary schools had a higher

exclusion rate than primary schools and the gap in exclusion rates was also higher in secondary schools. Due to suppression of figures it is difficult to draw conclusions from the exclusion rate figures.

6.21   Therefore, the assessment of progress in terms of whether the gap has been closed is nuanced and impacted by many contextual factors as described in Section Five. Given the timescales for some data collections, it can be difficult in the short to medium term to assess the extent of progress. Some impacts may not emerge in terms of data until the longer term (for example, Level 5 and 6 qualifications data will not emerge for a considerable number of years for current primary pupils).

6.22   Reported impacts/perceptions of success currently present a more positive picture of progress than are emerging through quantitative measures.

Reflections on progress to date

6.23   The strategic aim of the SAC is 'closing the poverty-related attainment gap between children and young people from the least and most disadvantaged communities' and at a wider policy level links to the National Performance Framework shared aim of improving outcomes for children and young people. As outlined in the introductory section, the SAC logic model articulates the following long-term outcomes:

Long Term Outcome 1: Embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap

Long Term Outcome 2: All children and young people are achieving the expected or excellent educational outcomes, regardless of their background

Long Term Outcome 3: An education system which is aspirational, inclusive in practice and approaches for all including teachers, parents and carers, children and young people

Long Term Outcome 4: Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged young people

6.24   The ASF seeks to support progress towards the strategic aim and associated long term outcomes of SAC, alongside the wider range of national programmes and initiatives which form the SAC. This report has outlined evidence of progress towards achieving these long term outcomes.

6.25   The evidence presented in the report has highlighted positive progress in a number of areas, not least with regard to clear signs of the development of embedded and sustained practices related to addressing the impact of the poverty-related attainment gap, and positive developments across the education system towards aspirational, inclusive practice and approaches.

6.26   In terms of evidence related to closing the poverty-related attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged young people, there are aspects which

indicate positive progress, particularly in terms of the reported evidence of impact as outlined in the key findings above.

6.27   However, the overall trends emerging from the attainment data demonstrate the challenge which remains related to closing the poverty-related attainment gap between the most and least deprived pupils. This reaffirms that the commitment to closing the poverty-related attainment gap is a long term one with a need to work in partnership to facilitate, broker and support action to maximise the progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

6.28   This evaluation report focused on the 2018/19 academic year and as such presents evidence introduced prior to the introduction of the Maximising Progress priorities at the start of the 2019/20 academic year. Whilst in this respect this report is retrospective, the evidence gathered points to the importance of continued focus on Maximising Progress.

Evaluation and further research: reflections and future direction

6.29   The section below will seek to address the following questions:

- What are the limitations of the evaluation approach and its scope?
- How do we assess the strength of evidence, and the balance of qualitative versus quantitative evidence gathered?
- What are the gaps in the research evidence and how should these gaps be addressed?
- What areas are emerging for further consideration?

6.30   As described in the introduction to this report, the evidence presented in this report is based on the Year 3 and 4 Evaluation Strategy. A review of the current Evaluation Strategy is being undertaken with the aim of developing a refreshed Evaluation Strategy for the next two years of ASF. In setting out the assessment in this report, it is noted that the scope of the evaluation is limited to addressing the core evaluation questions and so is not comprehensive in its approach. It must also be recognised that it remains difficult to assess the reasons behind any observed improvement in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap, and whether these changes have occurred as a direct result of the fund. However, the evaluation helps to support our understanding of factors which are related to these improvements, and the contribution the fund made to the realisation of these factors.

6.31   The evaluation is necessarily high level and may not capture the full picture at the local level. It is however recognised that there is considerable evidence at the local level which is not reflected in the national evaluation to date. Opportunities to increasingly reflect this in the evaluation going forward are being considered as part of the evaluation strategy refresh which is currently taking place.

6.32   It is also recognised that there are a number of aspects of analysis which it is intended to strengthen in future evaluation. It is recognised that the balance of quantitative and qualitative research requires to be addressed in future years.

6.33   A key issue for consideration for the future direction of the evaluation is the impact of Covid-19. This will include consideration of how best to gather data on the 2019/20 academic year given the impact of Covid-19, as well as exploring the impact of Covid-19 on both process and impact of the ASF in seeking to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

6.34   Ensuring the evaluation reflects the views of wider stakeholders is also a further aspect for consideration. For example, going forward we will seek to ensure the voices of parents and pupils feed in to the evaluation process more comprehensively. In addition, involvement of stakeholders representing communities, third sector and other partners will be considered in the evaluation strategy refresh.

6.35   It will be important that the 'beyond the school' context in terms of closing the poverty-related attainment gap is more fully recognised and explored in future evaluation, in particular the role of families (including parental involvement and engagement) and communities.

6.36   Another aspect for strengthened focus which will be considered in the evaluation strategy refresh will relate to children's health and wellbeing.

6.37   The key importance of focusing on attendance in continuing to support progress on closing the poverty-related attainment gap suggests a need to explore issues affecting attendance in greater detail going forward.

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