



CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21

Main findings

Education outcomes for looked after children have improved over the last decade.
However, there are still large gaps compared with all pupils.

Leaver attainment

71%

Looked after school leavers with 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better

Down from
72%
in 2019/20



Compared with
96%
of all leavers 2020/21

Leaver destinations

86%

Looked after leavers went on to a positive initial destination

Up from
80%
in 2019/20



Compared with
95%
of all leavers 2020/21

Attendance

88%

Attendance rate for looked after children, when schools were open

Up from
87%
in 2018/19



Compared with
92%
of all pupils 2020/21

Exclusions

78

Cases of exclusion per 1,000 looked-after pupils

Down from
152
in 2018/19



Compared with
12
For all pupils 2020/21

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels

A lower proportion of looked after children achieve the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level relevant to their stage compared with all children.

The gap between Looked after children and all children ranges from

22 percentage points

in listening and talking, to

29 percentage points

in writing

Full results are available from the accompanying tables on the [scot.gov website](https://www.gov.scot).

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Introduction

Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, 'looked after children' are defined as those in the care of their local authority¹. Young people can become looked after for many reasons, including neglect, abuse, complex disabilities which require specialist care, or involvement in the youth justice system. Looked after children policy is part of Getting It Right For Every Child ([GIRFEC](#)) – a national approach to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. A core principle of this approach is working to ensure looked after children receive support and guidance in their learning as they grow and develop into successful learners.

Who are counted in these figures?

This publication reports on the education outcomes of children who were looked after by local authorities in Scotland between August 2020 and July 2021.

The first two sections of this publication give information on the education outcomes and post-school destinations of the estimated 1,083 young people who were looked after at any point between August 2020 and July 2021, and who were in the 2020/21 school leaver cohort. These looked after young people represent two per cent of the 50,746 school leavers in 2020/21.

The following sections present figures on school attendance and exclusions. Attendance figures provide information for the 10,603 pupils who were looked after within the last year. Exclusion figures provide information for the estimated 483 pupils who were looked after within the year at publicly-funded schools, and who experienced an exclusion.

The final section focuses on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels across three year groups of 3,988 young people who were looked after at some point during 2020/21. In 2020/21, data has been collected for Primary school (P1, P4 and P7) pupils only. Secondary school and special school data was not collected due to other pressures on these schools including implementation of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications Alternative Certification Model, which replaced exams in 2020/21 due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ The Each and Every Child Initiative aims to change how we speak about care experience. In this report, we use the current legal definition of 'Looked After Children' under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 – broadly defined as those in the care of their local authority. We are keeping the use of this language under review.

This report uses data provided by local authorities for the period 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 to identify children looked after in the last year. This means that figures presented here are a subset of the population of looked after children in Scotland, as only those who were looked after within the last year are included, rather than all children who have been looked after at some point in their lives.

In order to explore educational outcomes, looked-after children data is then linked to pupil census records, school leaver destination data and attainment data. More information on our data sources can be found in section 1 of the background notes.

Not all looked after children can be successfully linked to schools data, for a variety of reasons. For successful linking to occur, the Scottish Candidate Number of the child is needed to obtain data on their education outcomes. A Scottish Candidate Number is usually assigned to a child when they begin school. Some school-age looked after children have missing Scottish Candidate Numbers in the data provided to Scottish Government by local authorities. Therefore, these children are also not included in the figures. More information on our methodology can be found in section 2 of the background notes.

Educational attainment

Headline results

- In 2020/21, 37% of school leavers who were looked after within the year left school in S4 or earlier, compared to 11% of all school leavers.
- Attainment for school leavers who were looked after within the last year has risen over the last ten years, especially at SCQF levels 5 and 6. This follows a similar pattern to attainment levels for all children. However, looked after children continue to have lower attainment than all children at all SCQF levels.
- Looked after leavers who were in foster care or with friends or relatives had higher attainment than other placement types, especially at home with parents.

The national and local authority data used within this section covers pupils in publicly funded mainstream schools in the 32 local authorities, and one grant aided school.

Impact of COVID-19 on School Leaver Attainment

Grades awarded in National 5 (SCQF Level 5), Higher (SCQF Level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF Level 7) National Qualifications are typically assessed externally via examinations and/or coursework. In both 2020 and 2021 the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to the cancellation of exams and alternative approaches were taken to determining grades.

In 2021 the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) required teachers and lecturers to use their professional judgement of a learner's demonstrated attainment to determine provisional results in line with subject-specific guidance. SQA carried out national quality assurance on selected courses from each school. It is not possible to fully determine the extent to which the certification methods used in 2020 affected attainment levels of the 2019/20 school leaver cohort and therefore the impact on trends over time.

Age of school leavers

This section presents data on the educational attainment of the estimated 1,083 young people who were looked after during the period 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 who left school during 2020/21.

Chart 1a: Stage of those who were looked after and all school leavers, 2020/21

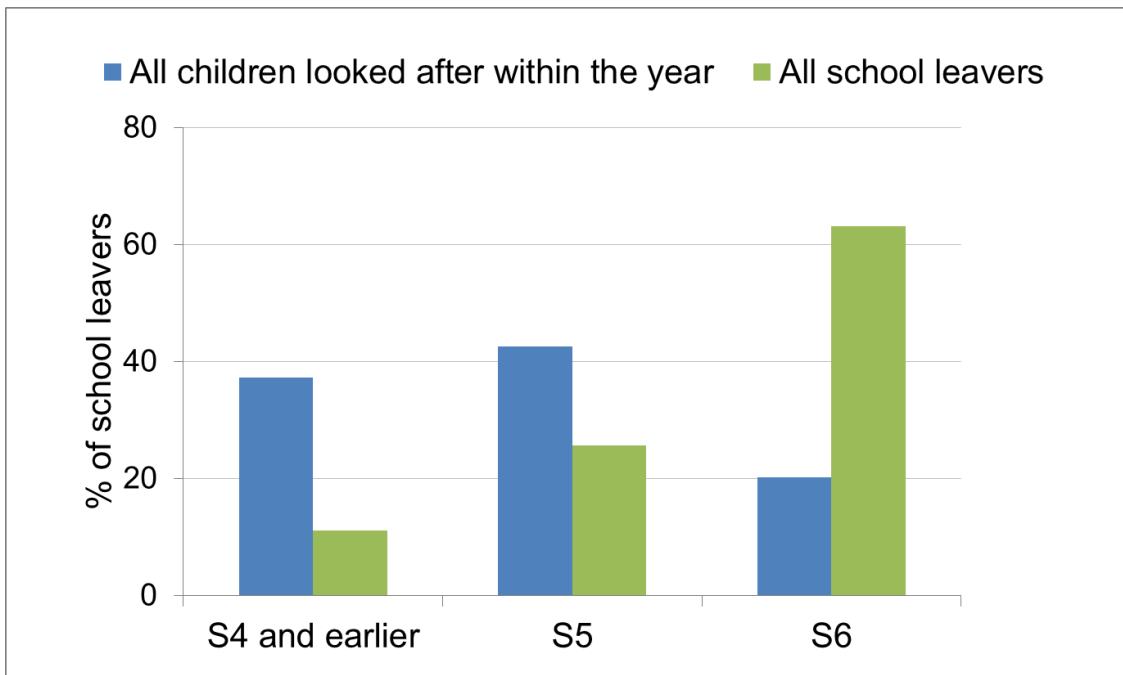
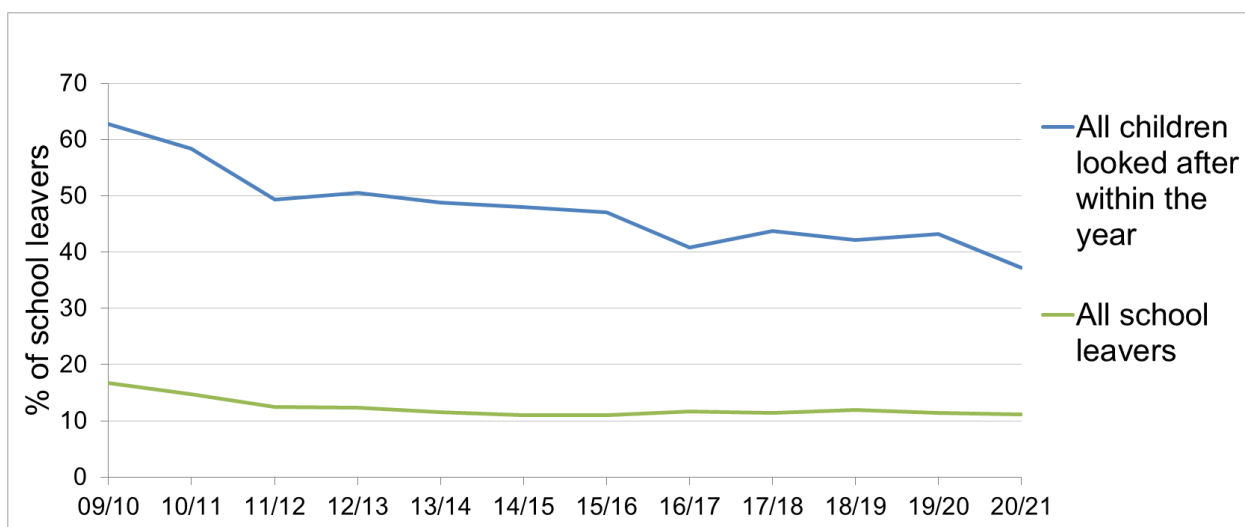


Chart 1b: Percentage of pupils leaving school in S4 or earlier for those who were looked after and all school leavers, 2009/10 to 2020/21



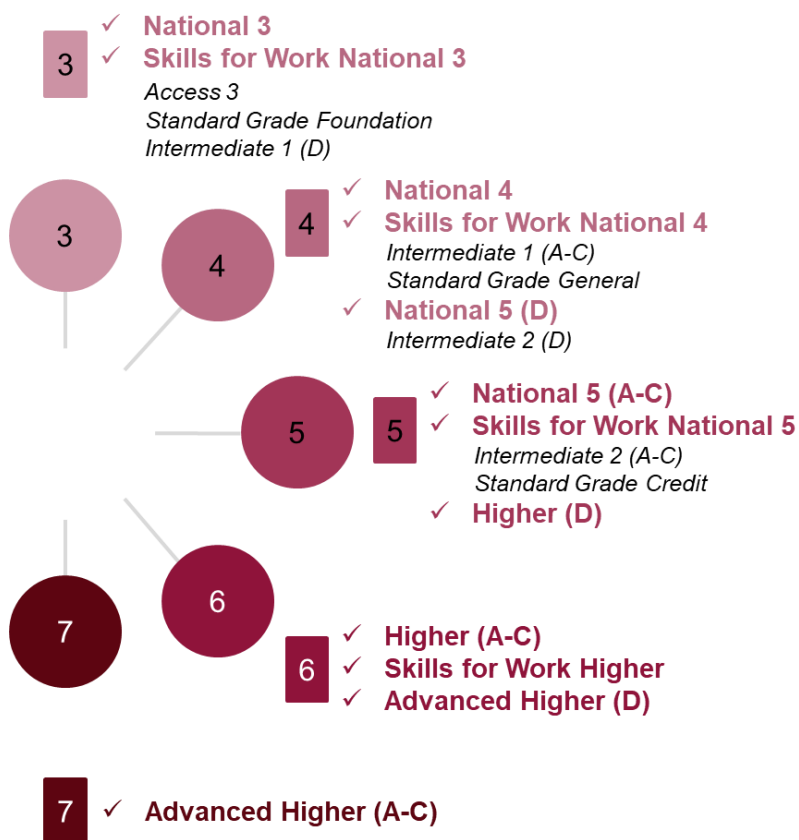
Looked after children tend to leave school at earlier stages, as shown in Chart 1a. In 2020/21, 37% of school leavers who were looked after within the year left school in S4 or earlier, compared to 11% of all school leavers.

As can be seen in Chart 1b above, the proportion of children looked after in the last year leaving school in S4 or earlier was fairly stable between 2016/17 and 2019/20. However, this year it has fallen by 6 percentage points (from 43% in 2019/20). Chart 1b also shows the proportion of looked after leavers who left school in S4 or earlier has remained considerably higher than for all school leavers.

Highest level of qualification

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland’s national qualifications framework, used as the basis for reporting attainment. The SCQF has 12 levels which indicate the level of difficulty of a particular qualification, and allow for broad comparisons to be made between qualifications (Illustration 1). It also allows learners, employers, and the public in general to understand the range of skills and learning that should be achieved at each level.

Illustration 1: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels



(Current qualifications are marked with a tick ✓)

Highers (SCQF Level 6) are generally taken in S5/S6 and Advanced Highers (SCQF 7) are generally taken in S6. Highers, sometimes along with Advanced Highers, are the Scottish qualifications required for entry into Higher Education.

Table 1.1: Percentage of those who were looked after and all school leavers, by highest level of attainment achieved, 2020/21

	School leavers looked after within the last year	All School Leavers
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 3 or better	84	98
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better	71	96
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 or better	38	88
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better	15	66
1 or more qualification at SCQF level 7	2	24
No passes at SCQF 3 or better	16	2

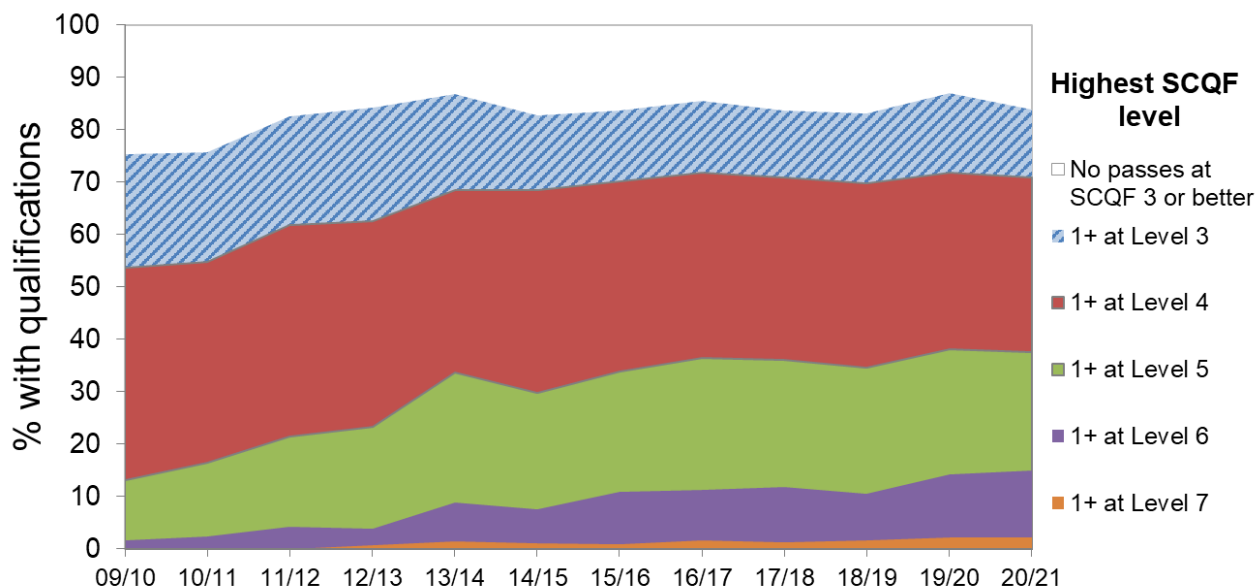
Almost all school leavers (96%) have at least one qualification at level 4 or better (see Table 1.1). This compares with 71% of young people looked after within the last year leaving school with the same level of qualifications. At the higher levels of qualification, 15% of looked after school leavers have at least one qualification at level 6 or better, compared with 66% of all leavers.

Chart 2a shows the percentage of school leavers who were looked after within the year who left school with one or more qualifications at each SCQF level and Chart 2b shows the same for all school leavers. The percentage of looked after school leavers achieving all SCQF qualification levels is consistently lower than all school leavers; however, the gap between educational attainment among looked after leavers and all school leavers has narrowed notably over the last ten years for SCQF levels 5 and below. Most of the improvement in attainment for looked after school leavers occurred between 2011/12 and 2013/14, but attainment at level SCQF 4 and above has improved slightly since 2013/14.

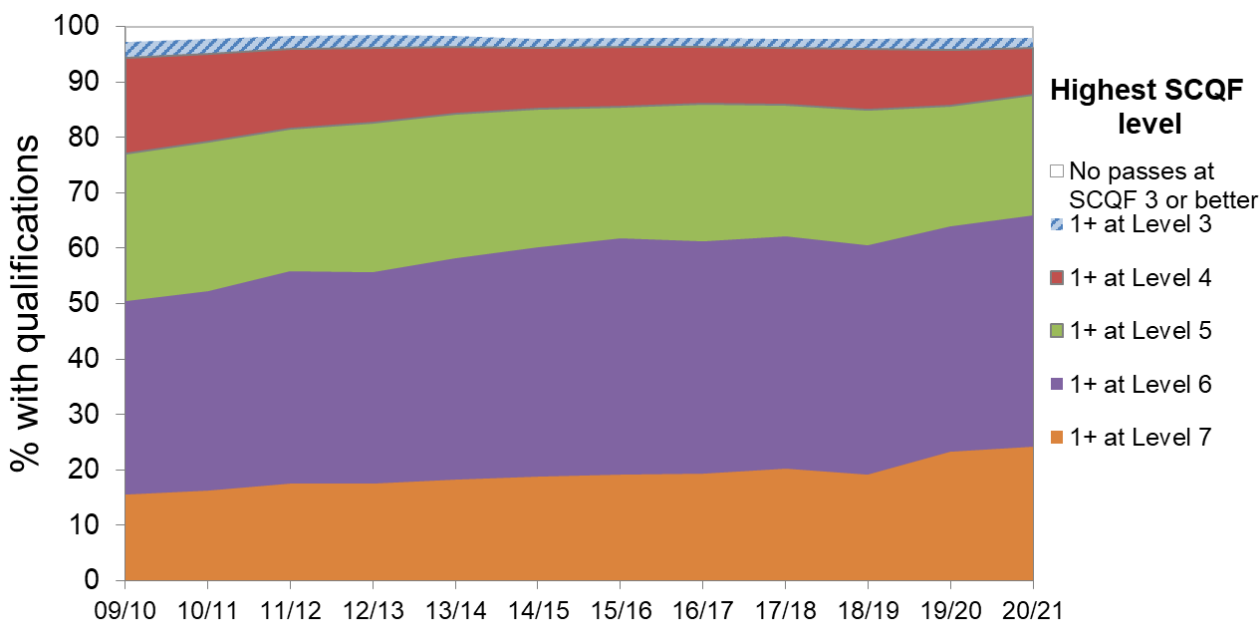
The proportion of leavers looked after within the year with no qualifications at SCQF 3 or higher decreased from 25% in 2009/10 to 17% in 2011/12. This figure has fluctuated around that level since then, and was 16% in 2020/21. Attainment at higher levels has increased since 2012/13: from 62% to 71% at SCQF level 4 or better in 2020/21, from 23% to 38% at SCQF level 5 or better, and from 4% to 15% at SCQF level 6 or better in 2020/21.

Chart 2: Percentage of those who were looked after and all school leavers , by highest level of attainment achieved, 2009/10 to 2020/21

(a) School leavers looked after within the year



(b) All school leavers



Type of accommodation

When a young person is looked after, they can be ‘placed’ in various types of care setting. Placements can be at home with parents (where a child is subject to a Supervision Requirement and continues to live in their usual place of residence), foster care, kinship care (where they are living with friends or relatives) or

residential care. Table 1.2 presents the attainment level of leavers looked after within the last year by type of placement.

Educational attainment varies across the types of accommodation in which children who were looked after within the last year were placed. School leavers who were in foster care provided by the local authority over the last year had the highest rate of achieving at least one qualification at SCQF level 5 or higher of all looked after leavers (66%), and 64% those who were in foster care purchased by the local authority achieved at least one qualification at SCQF level 5 or better, compared with 38% of all looked after school leavers. School leavers staying with friends or relatives at some point over the last year achieved at least one qualification at SCQF level 5 or better at a higher rate than looked after leavers in general, at 53%.

School leavers who were looked after within the last year 'at home with parents' had lower levels of attainment compared with most other placement types, and the lowest attainment across all placement types up to SCQF level 5.

Children looked after in voluntary homes and in other residential accommodation at some point over the year saw large improvements in attainment compared to the year before. However, it is important to note when interpreting these figures that the overall number of children in residential accommodation types only represents a small proportion of looked-after children and may not be indicative of a wider pattern.

Table 1.2: Percentage of school leavers looked after within the year, by highest level of attainment achieved and placement type, 2020/21⁽¹⁾

	Looked after leavers					
	% No passes at SCQF 3 or better	% with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 3 or better	% with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better	% with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 5 or better	% with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 6 or better	% with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 7 or better
In the community (children with one placement)						
At home with parents	28	72	52	15	3	*
With friends or relatives	9	91	82	53	22	3
With foster carers provided by LA	4	96	91	66	35	6
With foster carers purchased by LA	10	90	88	64	37	7
In other community ⁽²⁾	*	*	*	*	*	*
Residential Accommodation (children with one placement)						
In local authority home	16	84	69	25	*	0
In voluntary home	8	92	85	31	0	0
In other residential ⁽³⁾	17	83	78	36	*	*
More than one placement	17	83	64	26	6	0
All looked after within the last year	16	84	71	38	15	2

(1) Cells containing * represent small numbers that have been suppressed to maintain confidentiality.

(2) Includes supported accommodation and with prospective adopters.

(3) Includes in residential school, secure care accommodation and crisis care.

Number of placements in the last year

Young people who are looked after may be looked after in different residences over time. Moving to a new residence or a new carer is recorded as a change in placement. Table 1.3 shows that a slightly higher percentage of leavers looked after within the year with one or two placements achieved at least one qualification at SCQF level 3 or better (84%) than did those with three or more placements (80%). A higher proportion of leavers with one placement within the year achieved qualifications at attainment levels SCQF 4 and above than those with 2 or 3 placements within the year.

Table 1.3: Percentage of school leavers looked after within the year, by highest level of attainment achieved and number of placements they had in the year, 2020/21⁽¹⁾

Number of placements	No passes at SCQF level 3 or better	1 or more qualification at SCQF level 3 or better	1 or more qualification at SCQF level 4 or better	1 or more qualification at SCQF level 5 or better	1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better	1 or more qualification at SCQF level 7 or better
1	16	84	72	39	16	3
2	16	84	67	27	8	0
3 or more	20	80	57	23	*	0
All looked after within the last year	16	84	71	38	15	2

Post-school destinations

Headline results

- Looked after school leavers are less likely to go to positive destinations than school leavers in general, especially higher education.
- 71% of looked after leavers had a positive follow-up destination in 2020/21, down from 75% the previous year.

This section presents data on the destinations of the estimated 1,083 young people who were looked after during the period 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021 and who left school during 2020/21. Information is collected on the destination of school leavers in the October after they leave school (initial destination) and again the following April (follow-up destination). School leavers who are engaged in higher education, further education, training, voluntary work, employment or are undertaking personal skills development are classified as having a 'positive destination'. Other destinations include unemployment. For some individuals their destination is not known. For more information on school leaver destination categories, see background note 3.7.

School leaver destination data is sourced from the 'Opportunities for All' shared dataset which is managed and hosted by Skills Development Scotland (SDS). Initial destinations relate to the activity being undertaken by young people approximately three months after the end of the school year (October 2021), and follow-up destinations relate to activities undertaken 9 months after the end of the school year (April 2022). These figures will reflect both choices made by pupils, and the educational, training and employment opportunities available to them when leaving school.

Impact of COVID-19 on School Leaver Destinations

For 2019/20 school leavers, the start dates for some opportunities were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting the destinations recorded for some pupils. The pandemic may also have affected the ability of local SDS staff to directly follow-up on the destinations of certain school leavers. More detail on COVID-19 disruption to education in 2019/20 can be found in [last years' publication](#).

For 2020/21 school leavers, delays to opportunities beginning and data collection issues are not thought to have affected destinations data. However, it is likely that

the pandemic will have continued to affect the choices made by some school leavers. The cancellation of certain opportunities due to the pandemic may have influenced pupils' decisions on when to leave school (for example, delaying leaving from 2019/20 to 2020/21), which may in turn have affected the choices and opportunities available to them. More detail on the impacts of the pandemic on education in 2020/21 can be found in the latest [school education statistics](#).

The impact of the pandemic on school leaver destinations should be kept in mind when making comparisons between 2020/21 and 2019/20, and when comparing with earlier years.

Initial destinations

A lower proportion of looked after children enter positive destinations than all school leavers, but this gap has narrowed considerably since 2009/10. The lower proportion of looked after children going into positive destinations is likely to be related to looked after young people tending to leave school at an earlier stage than all pupils and to their lower attainment levels (see above). 86% of young people looked after within the last year went on to a positive destination after leaving school, compared with 95% of all school leavers in 2020/21 (Table 2.1). The gap of 9 percentage points between all school leavers and those who were looked after in 2020/21 has narrowed from 30 percentage points in 2009/10, when 58% of looked after school leavers were in a positive initial destination, compared with 88% of all school leavers.

There are noticeable differences between the initial destinations for looked after and all school leavers. The most common initial destination for children looked after within the year was further education (47%), compared to 23% of all school leavers. Contrastingly, the most common initial destination for all leavers was higher education (45%), compared to just 8% for children looked after within the year. The lower proportion of looked after young people entering Higher Education is associated with leaving school at an earlier stage and lower levels of qualifications.

Table 2.1: Percentage of all school leavers and those who were looked after by initial destination (3 months after leaving school), 2020/21

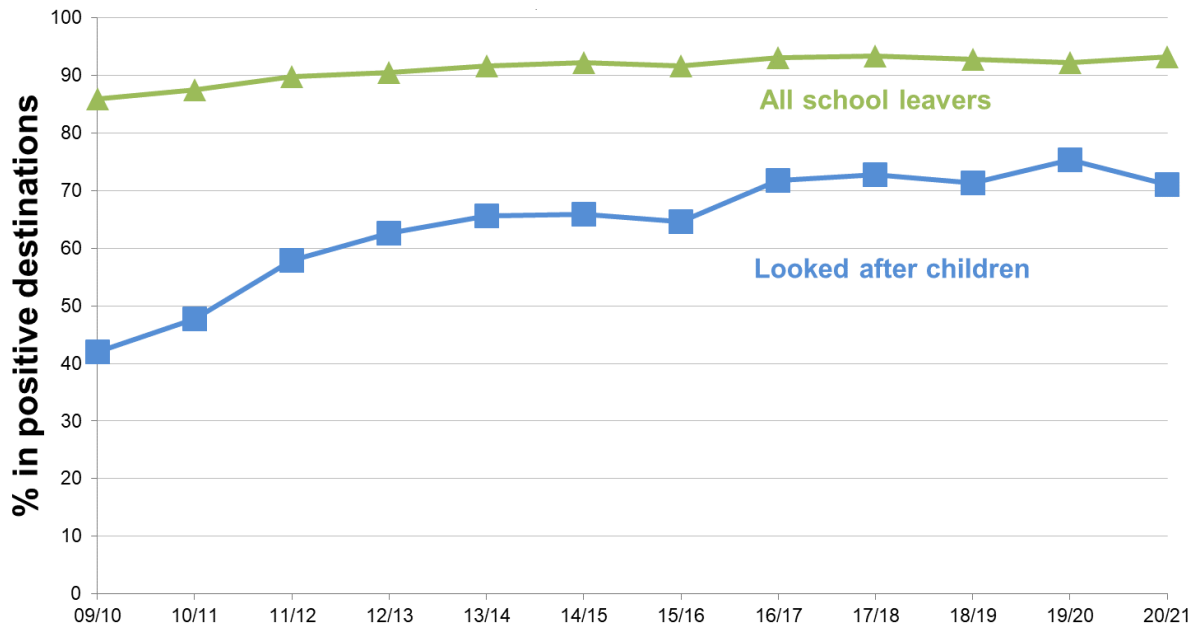
	School leavers looked after within the last year	All school leavers
Higher Education	8	45
Further Education	47	23
Training	15	4
Employment	12	23
Voluntary Work	*	0
Personal Skills Development	3	0
Unemployed Seeking	7	3
Unemployed Not Seeking	6	2
Unknown	*	0
% in a positive destination⁽¹⁾	86	95

(1) Positive destinations includes higher education, further education, training, voluntary work, employment and personal skills development.

Follow-up destinations

From 2009/10 to 2013/14, the percentage of looked after school leavers in positive follow-up destinations (in the April following the end of the school year) increased rapidly from 42% to 66%, then stabilised for three years, before increasing to 72% in 2016/17 (see Chart 3). Over the last five years, the percentage of leavers looked after within the year in positive follow-up destinations has stayed around this level, but fell to 71% in 2020/21, down from 75% the previous year. Over the same time period, the proportion of all school leavers has remained higher, increasing from 86% in 2009/10 to 92% in 2013/14 and remaining at 92-93% each year since (93% in 2020/21).

Chart 3: Percentage of those who were looked after and all school leavers in positive follow-up destinations, 2009/10 to 2020/21^(1,2)



1 Positive destinations includes higher education, further education, training, voluntary work, employment and personal skills development.

2 Follow-up destinations refer to recorded activity of a leaver, 9 months after the end of the school year.

In 2020/21, 71% of school leavers looked after within the last year were in a positive follow-up destination, down from 86% in a positive initial destination (table 2.2). The reduction is also present for all school leavers, but to a lesser extent (93% in a positive follow-up destination, down from 95% in positive initial destinations).

Table 2.2: Percentage of school leavers by follow-up destination (9 months after leaving school), for all school leavers and those who were looked after children, 2020/21⁽¹⁾

	School leavers looked after within the last year	All school leavers
Higher Education	7	40
Further Education	35	18
Training	11	2
Employment	17	32
Voluntary Work	*	0
Personal Skills Development	*	0
Unemployed Seeking	10	3
Unemployed Not Seeking	10	2
Unknown	9	1
% in a positive destination	71	93

(1) Positive destinations includes higher education, further education, training, voluntary work, employment and personal skills development.

Initial and follow-up destinations by type of placement

Table 2.3 shows the percentage of school leavers looked after within the last year in positive initial and follow-up destinations by placement type. Those in foster care placements had the highest proportion in positive initial and follow-up destinations, while young people who were looked after in a voluntary home, at home with parents, or in other residential accommodation, such as secure care, had the lowest proportion in positive destinations.

The largest decreases between the proportion in positive initial and follow-up destinations were seen in those young people in a local authority home, decreasing from 86% in a positive initial destination to 65% at follow-up, and young people living at home with parents, decreasing from 82% in a positive initial destination to 64% at follow-up.

Table 2.3: Positive initial and follow-up destinations among school leavers looked after within the year, by placement type, 2020/21⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

	Initial survey		Follow-up survey	
	Number	% in a positive destination	Number	% in a positive destination
In the community (children with one placement)				
At home with parents	336	82	336	64
With friends or relatives	229	90	229	77
With foster carers provided by LA	168	95	168	86
With foster carers purchased by LA	73	92	72	82
In other community ⁽³⁾	*	*	*	*
Residential Accommodation (children with one placement)				
In local authority home	83	86	81	65
In voluntary home	*	*	*	*
In other residential ⁽⁴⁾	36	78	36	64
More than one placement	146	76	146	60
All looked after within the last year	1086	86	1083	71

(1) Some children who were included in the initial destination survey could not be contacted at the time of the follow up destination survey. This is why the total number of children in each survey differs.

(2) Cells containing * represent small numbers that have been suppressed to maintain confidentiality.

(3) Includes supported accommodation and with prospective adopters.

(4) Includes in residential school, secure care accommodation and crisis care.

School Attendance

Headline results

- The attendance rate for looked after children increased from 86.8% in 2018/19 to 87.9% in 2020/21, despite a slight decrease in attendance for pupils overall from 93% in 2018/19 to 92% in 2020/21.
- The attendance rate for pupils looked after in a foster care placement was higher than the attendance rate for all pupils.

Information on attendance and absence is collected biennially, and covers all publicly funded local authority schools in Scotland and Jordanhill, the grant-aided mainstream school. It does not cover grant-aided special schools or independent schools. An extract of pupils' attendance records for the whole school year is usually obtained from schools' management information systems. However, during the 2020/21 school year daily extracts of pupils' attendance reports were taken by Scottish Government to monitor impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools. 12 of the 32 local authorities chose to use this daily data for the 2020/21 attendance and absence collection rather than having a new extract taken covering the whole year. This section compares attendance for all pupils with 10,603 pupils who were looked after within the last year.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on attendance

During 2020/21 there was disruption to school attendance caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This disruption included the closure of most school buildings in Scotland between January and April 2021, other school closures following local outbreaks, and individual pupils being absent with COVID-19 or when self-isolating.

While school buildings were closed to pupils, education continued via home-learning for the majority of pupils. Vulnerable pupils who would benefit from being in school and children of key workers were allowed to attend school buildings. To account for these changed circumstances, new attendance and absence codes were made available to schools to allow them to more accurately record COVID-19 related absence and home learning provision. Schools then pass this information to Local Authorities and the Scottish Government as part of this national data collection. Due to the fast pace of their introduction, it is known that use of these codes was inconsistent between different schools and local authorities, including a general under-reporting of absence from home learning.

The attendance rates for the times when schools were open to pupils is not affected by the known under-reporting of absence from home-learning, and is methodologically consistent with attendance rates from previous years. Therefore the reporting and commentary in this section refers only to the times in which schools were open to pupils, unless stated otherwise.

Chart 4: Percentage attendance of pupils who were looked after within the year and all pupils, 2009/10 to 2020/21

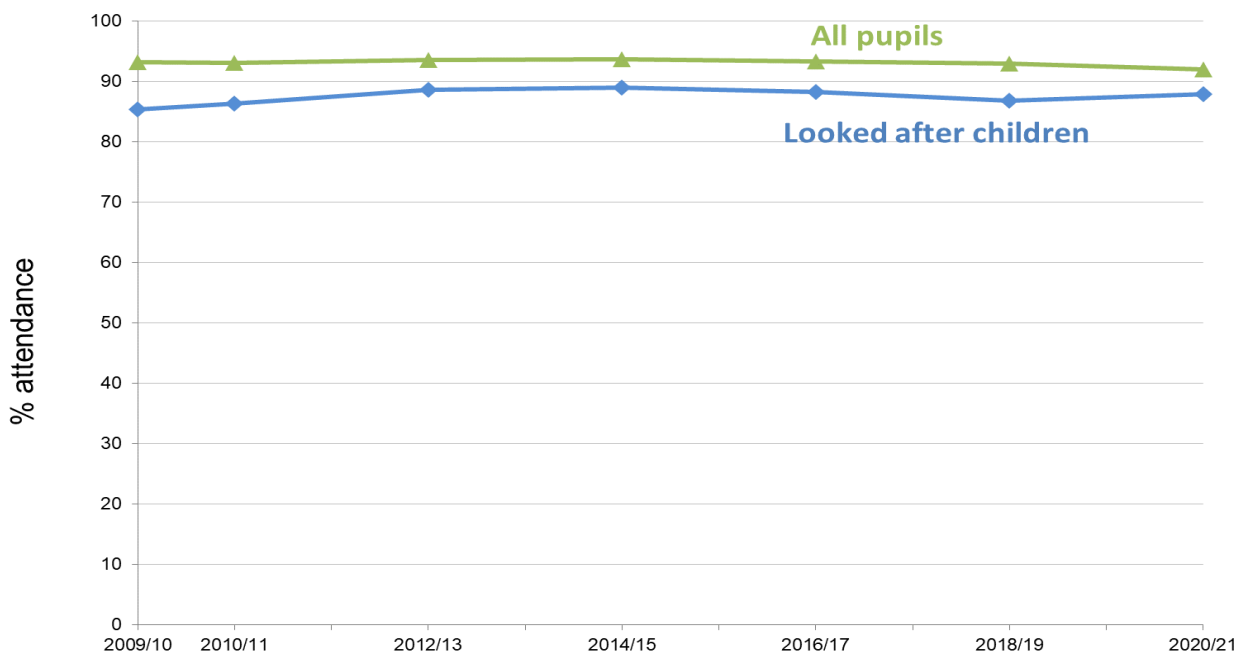


Chart 4 shows that the rate of attendance for pupils looked after within the year has been consistently below the rate for all pupils, however this gap is notably smaller than for other indicators. The gap in attendance rate between these groups decreased slightly between 2018/19 and 2020/21 from 6.2 percentage points in 2018/19 (93.0% for all pupils and 86.8% for looked after pupils) to 4.1 percentage points in 2020/21 (92.0% for all pupils and 87.9% for looked after pupils).

Sector

Table 3.1: Percentage attendance of all pupils and those who were looked after, by stage/sector, 2020/21 (1)(2)(3)

Stage/ Sector	Pupils looked after within the last year	All Pupils
Primary	91.9	94.0
Secondary	83.4	89.1
Special	86.8	89.3
Scotland	87.9	92.0

(1) All figures have been updated to account for improved data identifiers. While the data in these tables are comparable, figures should not be compared with previously published figures.

(2) Due to the effects of rounding some totals will not equal the sum of their parts.

(3) The figures reported for 2020/21 refer to attendance during the periods in which schools were open to all pupils.

Looked after children had a lower attendance rate than all pupils in all school sectors (Table 3.1). This difference is smallest for primary schools, with the attendance rate for pupils looked after within the year and all pupils being 91.9% and 94.0% respectively in 2020/21.

For special schools, the attendance rate for pupils looked after within the year was 86.8%, while the rate for all pupils was 89.3%.

In secondary schools, the difference in attendance rate between looked after children and all pupils was greater than in primary schools and special schools. Pupils looked after within the year had an attendance rate of 83.4%, compared with a rate of 89.1% for all pupils. However, the gap in attendance rates between looked after pupils and all pupils in secondary schools had narrowed to 5.7 percentage points in 2020/21 (from 9.7 percentage points in 2018/19).

Placement type and sex

Table 3.2 shows the attendance rates for pupils looked after within the year by their type of placement and sex. For this table figures are shown for the period in which schools were open to all pupils, as well as when schools were closed for most pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions but home learning was available. When schools were open, the highest attendance rates were for young people in 'other community' placements (including those with prospective adopters) and in a foster care placement, both provided by and purchased by local authorities. The attendance rates of 95.3%, 95.0% and 95.1% respectively for these pupils were

higher than the rate for all pupils (92.0%). When schools were open, pupils looked after at home with their parents (78.0%) had the lowest attendance rates.

When schools were closed there was less variation in attendance rates (for home learning), with all accommodation types having had at least 95.6% attendance. When schools were closed, the highest attendance rates were for young people in 'other community' placements (including those with prospective adopters) and in a foster care placement, both provided by and purchased by local authorities. The attendance rates of 99.7%, 99.4% and 95.5% respectively for these pupils was similar to the rate for all pupils (99.4%). When schools were closed, pupils in voluntary homes (95.6%) had the lowest attendance rates. However, as noted above, there was an under-reporting of absence when schools were closed. Therefore attendance rates reported for 'Schools Closed (Home Learning)' will be higher than the actual attendance rates, and any variation between groups could be reflective of differences in the recording of attendance as opposed to variation in attendance itself.

There was very little difference in attendance by sex. When schools were open, female pupils who were looked after within the year had a slightly higher attendance rate than male pupils looked after within the year, with an attendance rate of 88.2% compared with 87.6%. For pupils looked after in all residential accommodation placement types, however, males had a higher rate of attendance.

Table 3.2: Percentage attendance for looked after pupils, by accommodation type and sex, 2020/21 (1)

Accommodation type	Schools open			Schools Closed (Home Learning) (1)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
In the community (children with one placement)						
At home with parents	78.3	77.7	78.0	97.4	97.5	97.5
With friends or relatives	90.0	89.4	89.7	99.2	98.7	99.0
With foster carers provided by LA	95.0	95.0	95.0	99.4	99.3	99.4
With foster carers purchased by LA	95.5	94.9	95.1	99.5	99.6	99.5
In other community ⁽²⁾	95.3	95.3	95.3	99.8	99.6	99.7
Residential Accommodation (children with one placement)						
In local authority home	84.2	87.6	86.3	97.8	97.7	97.7
In voluntary home	84.1	87.6	86.8	98.9	94.3	95.6
In other residential ⁽³⁾	87.9	88.9	88.5	99.0	99.1	99.0
More than one placement	87.9	87.2	87.5	97.8	98.4	98.1
All looked after within the last year	88.2	87.6	87.9	98.7	98.5	98.6
All Pupils	92.0	92.1	92.0	99.4	99.4	99.4

(1) Refers to the period during the COVID-19 pandemic in which schools were closed for most pupils and home learning was commenced.

(2) Includes 'with prospective adopters'.

(3) Includes 'in residential school', 'in secure care accommodation', and 'crisis care'.

Number of placements

It should be noted that the majority of pupils looked after within the last year had only one placement (83.2% in 2020/21). Pupils looked after within the year who experienced one or two placements had higher rates of attendance than pupils with three or more placements (Table 3.3). This pattern was similar for both male and female pupils. Attendance rates were highest among pupils with two placements (88.4%) and one placement (87.9%) and lowest for those with five or more placements (77.0%).

Table 3.3: Percentage attendance for looked after pupils, by number of placements within the year and sex, 2020/21

Number of placements	Female	Male	Total
1	88.2	87.7	87.9
2	89.1	87.8	88.4
3	84.9	85.1	85.0
4	82.7	86.4	84.4
5 or more	76.9	77.2	77.0
All looked after within the last year	88.2	87.6	87.9

School exclusions

Headline results

- Exclusion rates for pupils looked after within the year have fallen over the last 11 years, with a marked reduction between 2018/19 (152 exclusions per 1,000 pupils) and 2020/21 (78 exclusions per 1,000 pupils). This is likely to be largely due to the lower amount of time spent in school during the pandemic.
- The exclusion rate for looked after pupils was more than six times the rate for all pupils in 2020/21, but this gap has reduced since 2012/13.

Exclusions data is collected every two years. This section presents data on the numbers and rates of exclusions of the estimated 483 pupils who were looked after within the year at publicly-funded schools, and who experienced an exclusion.

Table 4.1 shows the number of exclusions per 1,000 pupils. As children can be excluded more than once per year, a single child may be counted more than once in these figures. The rate of exclusions among pupils looked after within the year was 78 per 1,000 pupils in 2020/21. This is more than six times as high as the rate of 12 per 1,000 pupils for all pupils.

The exclusion rate was lowest for pupils looked after within the year in primary school in 2020/21, at 20 per 1,000, compared with 122 per 1,000 pupils for those in secondary school and 187 per 1,000 for those attending a special school.

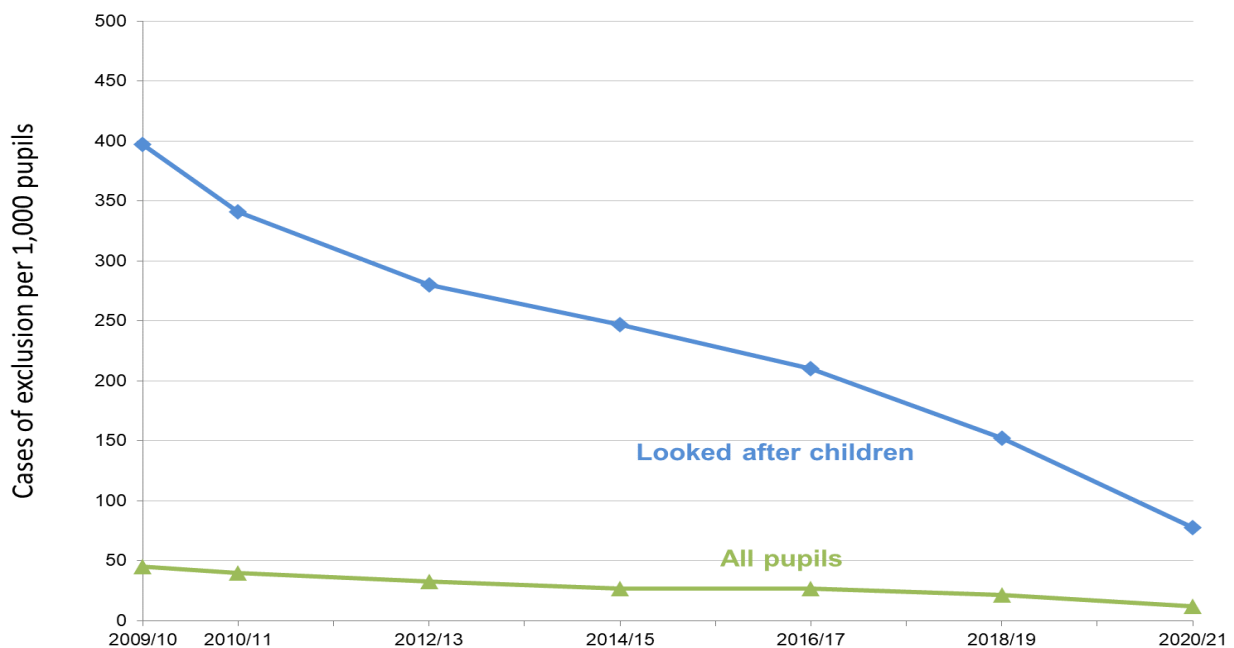
Table 4.1: Number of exclusions per 1,000 pupils by all pupils, looked after children and sector, 2012/13 to 2020/21

Sector	2012/13	2014/15	2016/17	2018/19	2020/21
All looked after within the year					
Primary	83	83	84	56	20
Secondary	467	383	317	230	122
Special	565	553	355	309	187
Scotland	280	247	210	152	78
All pupils					
Primary	10	9	11	8	4
Secondary	58	50	48	40	22
Special	148	126	94	62	32
Scotland	33	27	27	22	12

The rate of exclusion cases for looked after pupils fell substantially in previous years, from 397 per 1,000 pupils in 2009/10 to 152 per 1,000 pupils in 2018/19. This was followed by a particularly large reduction between 2018/19 and 2020/21 with the exclusion rate almost halving to 78 per 1,000 for looked after pupils. There was also large reduction seen in the exclusion rate for all pupils between 2018/19 and 2020/21 (Chart 5). This decrease has been seen across all sectors (Table 4.1). Since 2009/10, the gap between all pupils and those who were looked after has narrowed, although the exclusion case rate for pupils looked after within the year still remains much higher than for all pupils.

While the reduction in exclusion cases between 2018/19 and 2020/21 for both looked after children and all pupils continues the trend seen since 2009/10, the particularly low number of exclusion cases during 2020/21 could be largely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many local authorities citing the lower amount of time spent in school as a reason for the reduction in their case numbers.

Chart 5: Number of exclusions per 1,000 pupils for those who were looked after within the year and all pupils, 2009/10 – 2020/21



Where Table 4.1 presents data on the number of exclusions, including potential multiple counts of the same child, Table 4.2 presents data on the number of individual children excluded; the number of pupils excluded per 1,000 pupils shown in Table 4.2 are therefore lower than the number of exclusions per 1,000 pupils shown in Table 4.1.

In 2020/21, the rate of pupils excluded was 46 per 1,000 pupils for children looked after within the year. This is around five times as high as the rate of 9 per 1,000 pupils for all pupils. Because pupils looked after within the year are five times as likely to be excluded compared with all pupils, but the exclusion case rate is more than six times as high, pupils looked after within the year who are excluded are more likely to be excluded multiple times than all pupils who are excluded.

Table 4.2: Number of pupils excluded and exclusion rate per 1,000 pupils for all pupils and those who were looked after by sector, 2020/21

Stage	Number of pupils excluded	Rate of pupils excluded per 1,000 pupils
All looked after within the last year		
Primary	72	15
Secondary	379	73
Special	32	65
Scotland	483	46
All Pupils		
Primary	1,014	3
Secondary	4,873	16
Special	113	16
Scotland	6,000	9

Placement type and number of placements

As with attendance rate, there is a similar disparity in rates of exclusion according to the type of accommodation in which pupils looked after within the year are placed. Children in residential accommodation and at home with parents tend to have higher rates of exclusions than those looked after in foster care or with friends or relatives or in other community placements (including with prospective adopters). (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Cases of exclusions per 1,000 pupils for pupils looked after within the year, by accommodation type, 2020/21 ⁽¹⁾

Accommodation type	Total exclusions for looked after children	Exclusions case rate per 1,000 pupils who were looked after
In the community (children with one placement)		
At home with parents	296	112
With friends or relatives	168	54
With foster carers provided by LA	59	31
With foster carers purchased by LA	17	18
In other community ⁽²⁾	*	*
Residential Accommodation (children with one placement)		
In local authority home	67	233
In voluntary home	*	*
In other residential ⁽³⁾	41	189
More than one placement	164	120
All looked after within the last year	825	78

(1) Cells containing * represent small numbers that have been suppressed to maintain confidentiality.

(2) Includes supported accommodation and with prospective adopters.

(3) Includes in residential school, in secure care accommodation, and crisis care.

Pupils who were looked after within the year with a greater number of placements tended to have a higher rate of exclusion (Table 4.4). There were 72 cases of exclusion per 1,000 pupils for pupils with only one placement, increasing to 381 cases of exclusion per 1,000 pupils for pupils with five or more placements.

Table 4.4: Cases of exclusions per 1,000 pupils looked after within the year, by number of placements within the year, 2020/21

Number of placements	Total exclusions for looked after children	Exclusions case rate per 1,000 pupils who were looked after
All looked after within the last year		
1	661	72
2	108	103
3	38	159
4	10	179
5 or more	8	381
Scotland	825	78

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels

Headline results

- A lower proportion of looked after children achieve the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level relevant to their stage compared with all children across all organisers (subjects). The size of the gap between looked after children and all children varies across the different subjects.
 - In reading 48% of children looked after within the last year obtained the CfE level relevant to their stage, compared with 75% of all children
 - In writing 40% of children looked after within the last year obtained the CfE level relevant to their stage, compared with 70% of all children
 - In listening and talking 60% of children looked after within the last year obtained the CfE level relevant to their stage, compared with 83% of all children
 - In numeracy 46% of children looked after within the last year obtained the CfE level relevant to their stage, compared with 75% of all children
- Achievement of CfE levels is lowest for those looked after at home and those looked after in residential accommodation.

This section presents data on the achievement of CfE levels for aspects of literacy (reading, writing, and listening and talking) and numeracy of the estimated 1,996 young people who were looked after at some point between 1 August 2020 and 31 July 2021, and who were in Primary 1, Primary 4 or Primary 7 during the 2020/21 school year. The national and local authority data used within this section covers pupils in publicly funded mainstream schools in the 32 local authorities, and one grant aided school.

Impact of COVID-19 on CfE Levels

For 2020/21 data was collected for Primary school (P1, P4 and P7) pupils only. Secondary school and special school data was not collected due to other pressures

on these schools including implementation of the SQA National Qualifications Alternative Certification Model which was used to award National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers in 2021.

Comparison with CfE levels in 2018/19

Across all stages and organisers, the percentage of Primary 1, Primary 4 and Primary 7 children who achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage fell or stayed the same between 2018/19 and 2020/21 - for both children looked after within the last year, and all pupils (table 5.3).

For primary 1 pupils, the gap between the percentage of children look after in the last year who achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage and all pupils increased across all curriculum organisers between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

The opposite was true for Primary 4 and Primary 7 pupils, where the percentage point difference in achievement between children looked after in the last year and all pupils narrowed between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

Table 5.3: Percentage of Primary 1, Primary 4 and Primary 7 children who were looked after within the last year achieving the CfE level relevant to their stage, by curriculum organiser, 2018/19 - 2020/21

Primary 1

	2018/19		2020/21	
	All looked after in the last year	All pupils	All looked after in the last year	All pupils
Reading	59	82	54	77
Writing	55	79	49	74
Listening & Talking	72	87	65	84
Numeracy	67	85	59	81

Primary 4

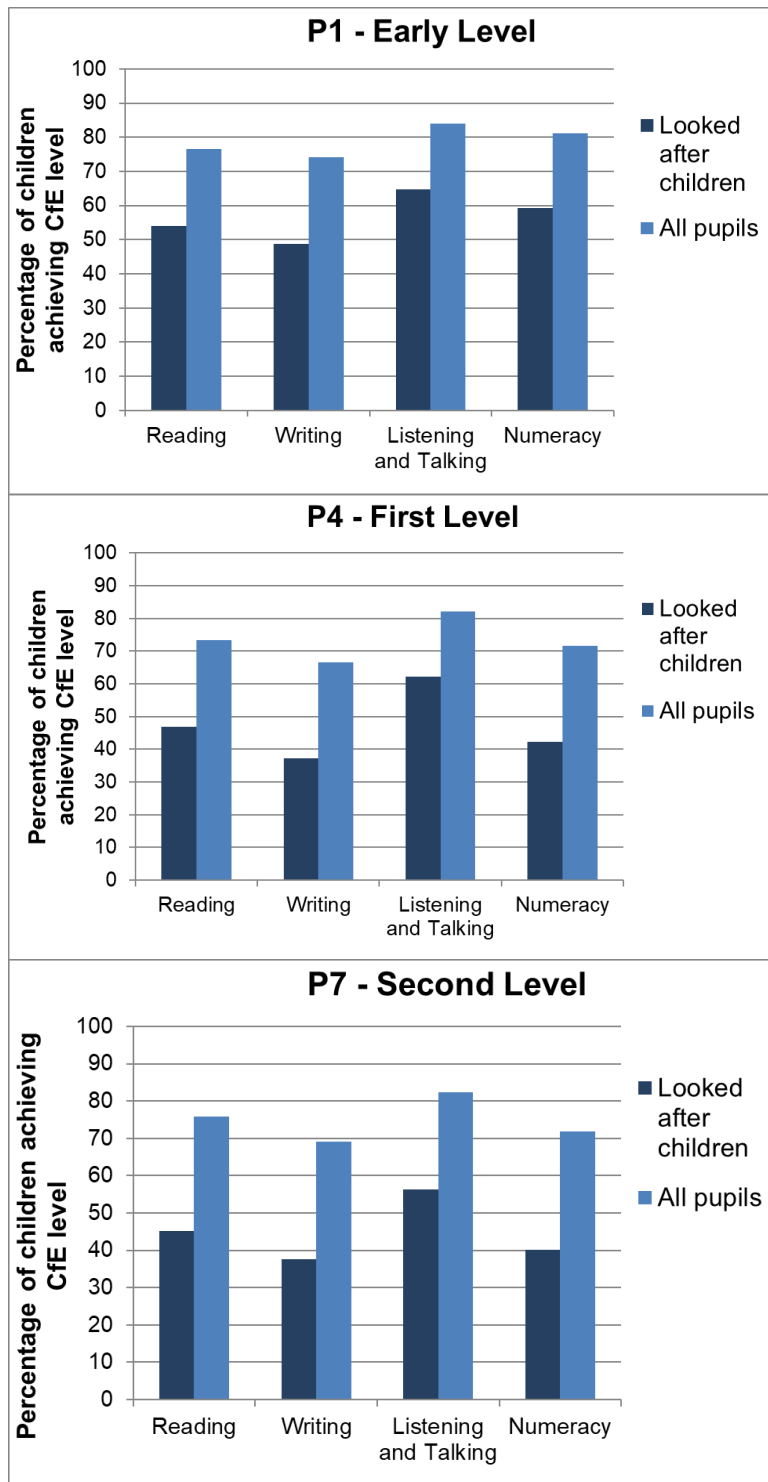
	2018/19		2020/21	
	All looked after in the last year	All pupils	All looked after in the last year	All pupils
Reading	49	78	47	73
Writing	37	73	37	67
Listening & Talking	64	85	62	82
Numeracy	46	77	42	72

Primary 7

	2018/19		2020/21	
	All looked after in the last year	All pupils	All looked after in the last year	All pupils
Reading	48	80	45	76
Writing	38	74	38	69
Listening & Talking	59	86	56	82
Numeracy	42	76	40	72

Stage

Chart 6: Percentage of those who were looked after and all pupils achieving the CfE level relevant to their stage⁽¹⁾, by stage, 2020/21



(1) See background notes for information regarding the CfE levels relevant to a pupil's stage.

Across all stages and organisers, a lower proportion of children who were looked after within the year achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage compared with all pupils (Chart 6).

The proportion of children looked after within the year achieving the CfE level relevant for their stage is highest for listening and talking at all stages, and lowest for writing across all primary stages. This is also the case for all pupils, although with a higher proportion achieving the level relevant to their stage.

The gap between all pupils and those who were looked after within the year is lowest amongst P1 pupils (Early Level), with gap across the four organisers ranging from 19 to 25 percentage points. The gap was highest for P7 (First Level), where the gap ranges from 26 to 32 percentage points.

Type of placement

Achievement of CfE levels varies across the types of accommodation in which looked after children are placed. Generally, a higher proportion of pupils looked after within the year who lived in other community accommodation (including with prospective adopters) achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage across most organisers than in other placement types. (Table 5.1).

A lower proportion of pupils at home with parents achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage compared with all pupils looked after within the last year.

Table 5.1: Percentage of Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3 children who were looked after within the last year achieving the CfE level relevant to their stage⁽¹⁾, by accommodation type, 2020/21⁽²⁾

Accommodation type	Reading	Writing	Listening & Talking	Numeracy
In the community (children with one placement)				
At home with parents	44	38	57	43
With friends or relatives	51	42	62	48
With foster carers provided by LA	47	38	57	44
With foster carers purchased by LA	48	41	70	49
In other community ⁽³⁾	74	68	84	68
Residential Accommodation (children with one placement)				
In local authority home	*	*	*	*
In voluntary home	50	50	50	0
In other residential ⁽⁴⁾	*	*	*	*
More than one placement	49	42	62	47
All looked after within the last year	48	40	60	46

(1) See background notes for information regarding the CfE levels relevant to a pupil's stage.

(2) Cells containing * represent small numbers that have been suppressed to maintain confidentiality.

(3) Includes supported accommodation and with prospective adopters.

(4) Includes in residential school, in secure care accommodation, and crisis care.

Number of placements

A higher proportion of pupils looked after within the year who had two placements over the year achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage than those with 1 and 3 or more placements (Table 5.2). This pattern was consistent across all curriculum organisers.

Table 5.2: Percentage of Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3 children who were looked after within the last year achieving the CfE level relevant to their stage⁽¹⁾, by number of placements 2018/19

Number of placements	Reading	Writing	Listening & Talking	Numeracy
1	48	40	60	46
2	50	44	63	47
3 or more	47	34	57	47
All looked after within the last year	48	40	60	46

(1) See background notes for information regarding the CfE levels relevant to a pupil's stage.

Background notes

1. Sources and coverage

1.1 This document summarises the education outcomes of Scotland's looked after children. It links information from:

- Looked After Children statistics, 2020/21
- Pupil Census records, 2021
- School Leaver Initial and Follow-up Destination data, October 2021 and April 2022
- Attainment data throughout school education

1.2 The looked after children data held by the Children and Families team is linked to the educational outcomes data using a child's Scottish Candidate Number (SCN). However, local authorities cannot always supply an SCN for every looked after child. For example, if a child is under five they are unlikely to have a SCN. Children also might not have a SCN if they have been educated at home, in an independent school, outside Scotland or have already left school. It may also not be possible for a SCN to be provided for a child if they have left school.

We estimate that the Scottish Candidate Numbers (SCNs) provided by local authorities represented 91% of the possible matched records for school-age children. By imputing data from previous years from some local authorities we estimate that 91% of looked after school-age children had matchable SCNs. There was variation between local authorities in the percentage of SCNs provided, ranging from 76% to 99%.

Table 6.1: Percentage of children aged 5 to 15 with Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) present, by local authority, 2020/21⁽¹⁾

Local Authority	SCN provided in 2020/21	Total SCNs after processing
Aberdeen City	97.8	97.8
Aberdeenshire	97.2	97.2
Angus	85.9	85.9
Argyll and Bute	92.1	92.1
City of Edinburgh	93.2	93.4
Clackmannanshire	91.9	91.9
Dumfries and Galloway	92.2	92.2
Dundee City	86.5	86.5
East Ayrshire	76.4	79.8
East Dunbartonshire	97.7	97.7
East Lothian	96.6	96.6
East Renfrewshire	94.7	94.7
Falkirk	89.3	90.0
Fife	95.4	95.6
Glasgow City	76.1	76.1
Highland	91.7	91.7
Inverclyde	88.9	88.9
Midlothian	98.9	98.9
Moray	84.0	84.0
Na h-Eileanan Siar	95.1	95.1
North Ayrshire	87.6	87.6
North Lanarkshire	97.1	97.1
Orkney Islands	93.5	93.5
Perth and Kinross	98.8	98.8
Renfrewshire	99.2	99.2
Scottish Borders	94.9	94.9
Shetland Islands	95.5	95.5
South Ayrshire	95.1	95.1
South Lanarkshire	95.6	95.6
Stirling	87.4	87.4
West Dunbartonshire	95.6	95.6
West Lothian	98.1	98.1
Scotland	90.6	90.7

1.3 The **looked after children** statistics were collected by Children and Families statistics team in the Scottish Government from local authorities. Demographic information on all children looked after (including the most recent data covering children who were looked after between 1 August 2020 and 31 July 2021) are published as part of [children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21](#).

The survey forms, data specifications and guidance notes for the data presented in this publication (and previous years' publications) are available on the gov.scot website.

1.4 The **qualifications** data were provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The grade boundaries and publication schedules of this information is available on the [SQA website](#).

1.5 The **leaver destinations** data were collected by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) on each young person identified as being a school leaver in October 2021 (initial destination, approximately three months after leaving school) and April 2022 (follow-up destination, approximately nine months after leaving school). The time of year that a young person leaves school can affect their destinations in these surveys, as a young person leaving school in May who starts a course in the following January could be counted as being in another destination in the initial survey, but a positive destination in the follow-up survey.

1.6 **Leaver destinations** [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations](#), and [for follow-up leaver destinations for 2022](#) are published online.

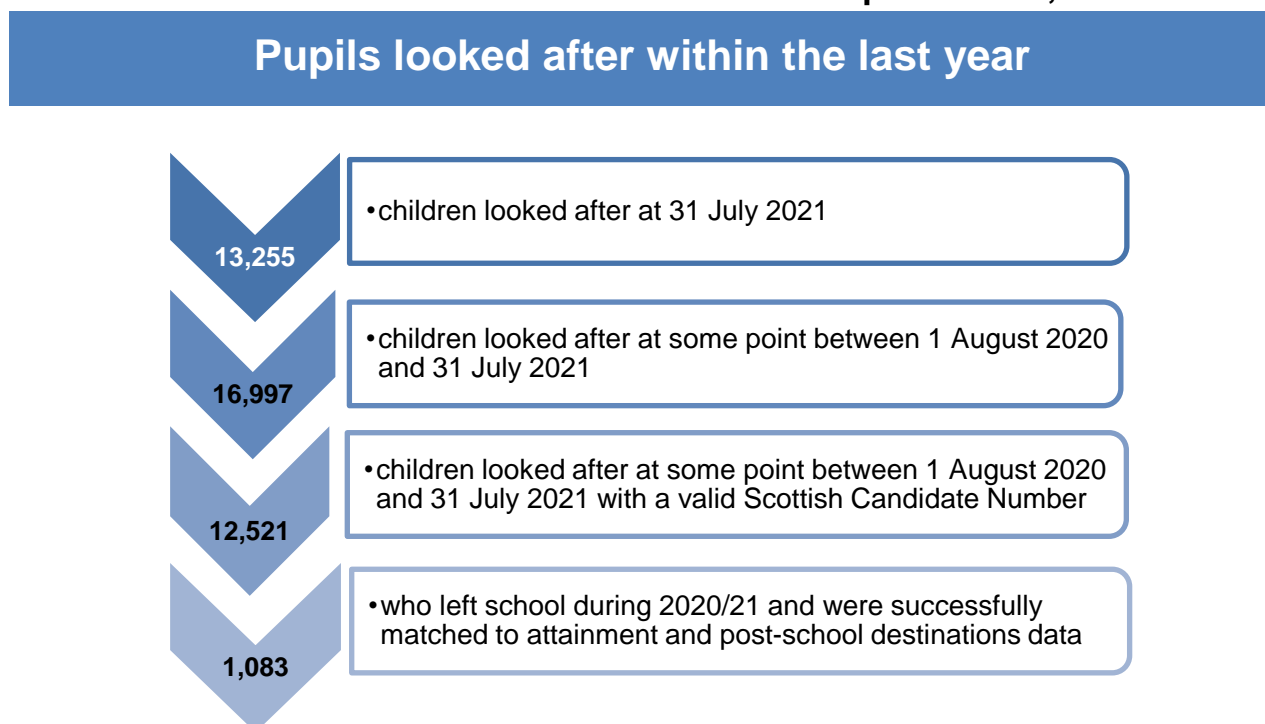
1.7 **Achievement of CfE Levels** data were gathered by the Scottish Government, and relates to achievement in the Broad General Education (BGE) based on teacher professional judgements regarding pupil's achievement in literacy and numeracy against CfE levels. A very small proportion of children have long term significant and complex additional support needs that mean that it is unlikely that they will progress through the CfE levels during their time in education. These children are recorded as 'child following individual milestones' and are included in the data. However, children for whom the teacher has been unable to make a professional judgement are not included.

2. Methodology

Matching looked after children data to school outcomes

2.1 As reported in [Children's Social Work Statistics 2020-21](#), there were 13,255 children looked after on 31 July 2021. The population used in this publication was established through the following process:

Illustration 2: Looked after children included in this publication, 2020/21



2.3 The looked after children data provided to Scottish Government annually includes the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) for each child, where available. This is used to link information on looked after children to various data from schools held by Scottish Government. Data are based only on pupils where there was a match on SCN and the age of the child in the looked after children dataset was appropriate for the stage associated with the SCN in the matched dataset. For example, if there was a record in the looked after children dataset for a ten year-old that matched a record in schools data for a pupil in S4, this record would be excluded from the analysis.

2.4 There are many more children looked after within the last year than those matched in this publication. Children are assigned a Scottish Candidate Number when they start primary school. If a child is under five they are unlikely to have a Scottish Candidate Number. Children also might not have a Scottish Candidate Number if they have been educated at home, in an independent school, outside

Scotland, or have already left school. Of looked after children aged 5 to 15 years old, 91% had a valid Scottish Candidate Number present (Table 6.1).

3. Definitions and notation

Children Looked After

3.1 Local Authorities have a responsibility to provide support to certain vulnerable young people, known as looked after children. A young person may become looked after for a number of reasons, including neglect, mental, physical or emotional abuse, parental substance misuse or poor parenting skills, complex disabilities which require specialist care, or involvement in the youth justice system. The definition of a 'looked after child' is set out in section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 ("the 1995 Act"), as amended by the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") and Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

3.2 Supervision Requirement – A children's hearing is a lay tribunal which considers and makes decisions on the welfare of the child or young person before them, taking into account all the circumstances including any offending behaviour. The hearing has to decide on the measures of supervision which are in the best interests of the child or young person. If the hearing concludes compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, it will make a Supervision Requirement which will determine the type of placement for the child. In most cases the child will continue to live at home but will be under the supervision of a social worker. In some cases the hearing will decide that the child should live away from home with relatives or other carers.

3.3 Types of placement

Community placements

- At home with parent(s): at home with parent(s) or 'relevant person(s)' as defined in Section 93(2)(b) of the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995
- With friends/relatives: placed with friends or relatives who are not approved foster carers. Also referred to as 'kinship care'.
- With foster carers provided by the local authority
- With foster carers purchased by the local authority
- With prospective adopters
- Other community: such as supported accommodation, hospital (e.g. at birth)

Residential placements

- Local authority home: in local authority children's home/hostel, local authority home/hostel for children with learning disabilities, local authority home/hostel for physically disabled children
- Voluntary home: in voluntary children's home/hostel, in voluntary home/hostel for children with learning disabilities, in voluntary home/hostel for physically disabled children
- Residential school: in local authority residential school (home/hostel), in voluntary residential school (home/hostel), in private school, in independent school
- Secure accommodation
- Crisis care: for example: in women's refuge, in local authority hostel for offenders, in voluntary hostel for offenders, in local authority hostel for drug/alcohol abusers, in voluntary hostel for drug/alcohol abusers
- Other residential: a known residential setting but does not fit with one of the above

3.4 There is information on the process by which children come to be looked after and legislation governing this on the [Scottish Government website](#).

School information

3.5 Scottish Candidate Number – A unique number created by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and assigned to each child by their school when they enter the Scottish School Education System (usually in Primary 1).

School leaver destinations

3.6 School leaver – A young person of school leaving age who left a publicly funded secondary school during or at the end of the school year. Age of school leavers was calculated as at 30 June 2020. Young people of school leaving age who left a publicly funded special school are not counted in this publication.

3.7 Post-school destinations – Destinations data collected by Skills Development Scotland using a combination of administrative data sharing by partners, contact centre follow up and the traditional follow up by operational staff. More information is available from the latest [Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations](#) publication.

The broad categories for leaver destinations are:

- Higher Education – includes leavers following HND (Higher National Diploma) or HNC (Higher National Certificate) courses, degree courses, courses for the education and training of teachers and higher level courses for professional qualifications. It includes programmes at a level higher than the standard of the National Qualifications, i.e. above SCQF Level 7. Leavers with a deferred, unconditional place in higher education have also been included in this category..
- Further Education – includes leavers undertaking full-time education which is not higher education and who are no longer on a school roll. This may include National Qualifications.
- Training – includes leavers who are on a training course and in receipt of an allowance or grant, such as the Employability Fund national training programme. It also includes leavers who are on local authority or third sector funded training programmes that are in receipt of a training allowance or those participating in Community Jobs Scotland. From 2018/19, this category includes school leavers receiving support that would previously have been recorded as ‘Activity Agreements’. This means that the proportion of school leavers with a destination category of Training from 2018/19 cannot be directly compared to the proportion recorded for previous years. Further information can be found in the Activity Agreements definition below.
- Employment – employed and in receipt of payment from their employers.
- Voluntary Work - includes those undertaking voluntary work/volunteering which will involve a young person giving of their time and energy through a third party with or without financial allowance.
- Activity Agreement – Activity Agreements were ‘agreements between a young person and an advisor that the young person will take part in a programme of learning and activity which helps them to become ready for formal learning or employment’. From 2018/19, Activity Agreements are no longer recorded as a post-school destination. Instead, school leavers receiving this support who left during or at the end of the academic year are recorded in the Training category.
- Personal Skills Development - The way in which school leavers undertaking Personal Skills Development activity are counted in these statistics changed in the 2018/19 publication. In previous publications, young people participating in Personal Skills Development (PSD) were individually mapped to destination categories; this mapping was carried out by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Scottish Government analysts based on details of the PSD activity recorded on the SDS Customer Support System (CSS). Depending on the evidence, a leaver could be mapped to a positive

destination or an unemployed seeking or unemployed not seeking destination. This meant that school leavers from special units within mainstream schools, specifically those with severe and complex needs, participating in PSD were not always being classified as in a “positive destination”. In light of user feedback, we undertook to consider the categorisation of school leavers in PSD. Historic data back to 2009/10 were revised in the 2018/19 report to allow comparison over time on a consistent basis, and are provided on that consistent basis in this publication.

- Unemployed seeking – includes those known by Skills Development Scotland or their partners to be seeking employment or training. This includes those receiving support from SDS, Department of Working and Pensions and other partners. It is based on regular contact between the supporting organisation and the individual. This does not refer to the definition of ‘unemployed’ used by the Department of Work and Pensions to calculate published unemployment rates.
- Unemployed not seeking – includes all those individuals who are not yet ready or are unavailable to enter the labour market for a range of reasons. The reasons may involve ill health/sickness, prison, pregnancy, caring for children or other dependents or taking time out.
- Unknown – destination is not known either to Skills Development Scotland or to the school attended.

3.8 Positive destinations – includes higher education, further education, training, employment, voluntary work, Personal Skills Development and (between 2010/11 and 2017/18) Activity Agreements.

3.9 The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is designed to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum for children and young people aged from 3 to 18. The curriculum includes the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated.

CfE Level	Stage
Early	The final two years of early learning and childcare before a child goes to school and P1, or later for some.
First	To the end of P4, but earlier or later for some.
Second	To the end of P7, but earlier or later for some.

Third and Fourth	S1 to S3, but earlier or later for some. The Fourth Level broadly equates to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 4. The Fourth Level experiences and outcomes are intended to provide possibilities for choice and young people's programmes will not include all of the Fourth Level outcomes.
Senior Phase	S4 to S6, and college or other means of study.

Further information on Curriculum for Excellence can be found on the [Education Scotland website](#).

Curriculum for Excellence defines five levels of learning. The first four levels are described in the Experiences and Outcomes, with progression to qualifications described under a fifth level, the senior phase- further information on the senior phase can be found on the [Education Scotland website](#).

While children and young people should feel that the transition from one stage of learning to another is smooth, they should still be able to look forward to the excitement of starting nursery, primary school and secondary school, and finally to moving on to positive and sustained destinations. Further information on Scotland's 16+ learning choices policy and practice framework can be found on the [Education Scotland website](#).

4. Data Quality

4.1 This is an Official Statistics Publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. These statistics undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. The results contained in this publication are deemed fit for purpose, but may be revised in future years where updates are made to the data. This publication has not yet been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority.

4.2 There is more information on the administrative sources underlying this publication on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Cross-UK comparisons

4.3 Differences in the education systems of Scotland and the rest of the UK make cross-UK comparisons invalid. Links to the most similar figures from across the UK are provided below:

England - [Statistics: looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Wales - [Educational qualifications of care leavers \(gov.wales\)](#)

Northern Ireland - [Children's services statistics | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

4.4 Information on the differences between each administration's looked after children statistics is available on the [Scottish Government children's statistics web site](#).

5. Enquiries

The information in this publication is available on [the Children's social work statistics page](#) online.

Email any requests for **further analysis** to children.statistics@gov.scot.

If you would like to receive notification of forthcoming statistical publications, please register your interest on [the Scottish Government ScotStat website](#).

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest on [the ScotStat website](#). Details of forthcoming publications can be found on our [Statistics and research page](#).

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

- are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot
- are available via background tables
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@gov.scot.

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ISBN: 978-1-80435-783-5 (web only)

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Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1114343 (07/22)