East Lothian Council

REPORT TO: Council Committee for Education

MEETING DATE: 20 June 2023

BY: Executive Director, Education and Children's Services

SUBJECT: Raising Attainment in the Broad General Education

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To report to the Committee on the improvement measures implemented by the Education Service's Quality Improvement Team to provide support and challenge to East Lothian schools in improving levels of pupil attainment in the Broad General Education and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to:-

(i) Note the improvement in Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) in Literacy and Numeracy at key learner stages for June 2022 when compared to post-pandemic ACEL data for June 2021.

(ii) Commend the use of Progress and Achievement data by schools and the Education Team to track and monitor continued improvements in the rate of learner progress in Literacy and Numeracy, and thereby inform ongoing improvements for learners across East Lothian schools.

(iii) Acknowledge the impact of additional resources and interventions used by schools to address data informed learner attainment gaps in Literacy and Numeracy at school, Associated School Group and local authority level.

3 BACKGROUND

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy in East Lothian Schools

3.1 Pupil progress towards achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level in Literacy and Numeracy is based on the professional judgement of teachers.

Professional judgement of a pupil's progress is based on a broad range of assessment evidence for a pupil and evaluated against the standard

contained within the national Curriculum Benchmarks documents for Literacy and Numeracy.

Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level: Data Over Time

3.1.1 From Table A below, pre-pandemic levels of attainment for both P1-4-7 and P1-4-7-S3 measures were consistent for both 2017-18 and 2018-19 for Literacy and Numeracy.

3.1.2 When compared with post-pandemic levels of attainment, the 2020-21 data evidenced a reduction in attainment levels for P1-4-7. It should be noted that no S3 data was collected nationally for June 2021.

3.1.3 East Lothian schools identified many COVID-related reasons affecting their pupils' wellbeing and learning, including two periods of school closures during this time. In response, the local authority and schools invested in planned interventions to address pandemic related gaps in pupil learning in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The 'Recovery and Reconnect' focus taken by schools is reflected in the ACEL attainment data for 2021-22, indicating an improvement in pupil attainment levels compared to 2020-21.

Table A: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL)

	Primary 1- 4- 7 Combined		Primary 1-4-7 and S3 Combined	
	Literacy	Numeracy	Literacy	Numeracy
2017-18	70.9%	76.3%	74.4%	79.3%
2018-19	69.9%	76.9%	73.2%	79.8%
2019-20	*No data collected due to COVID school closures*			
2020-21	60.7%	68.8%	No S3 data collected	No S3 data collected
2021-22	62.8%	72.4%	68.8%	76.2%

3.1.4 Data for Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) June 2022 indicates that East Lothian learners achieved in line with national averages or below (see Table B).

➢ S3 attainment levels for Third Level were above national average in Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking, and Literacy overall. Attainment in Numeracy was in line with the national average measure.
➢ S3 attainment levels for Fourth Level were above national average in Reading, Writing, and Literacy. The equivalent measure was in line with the national average for Listening and Talking, and Numeracy.

3.1.5 Although the combined attainment measures for P1-P4-P7 in June 2022 were below national average across Literacy and Numeracy, there were improvements compared to the June 2021 measures. When comparing East Lothian attainment data with national data for June 2022 it can be noted that:

- For Primary 1 data there was a 2 percentage point gap in Literacy and a 3 percentage point gap in Numeracy when compared to national averages.
- For Primary 4 data there was an 8 percentage point gap in Literacy and a 4 percentage point gap in Numeracy when compared to national averages.
- For Primary 7 data there was an 8% point gap in Literacy and a 4 percentage point gap in Numeracy when compared to national averages.

3.1.6 It should be noted that the calculation of Literacy levels across East Lothian schools is based on the number of pupils who have attained the appropriate level across all Literacy organisers (Reading, Writing, and Listening and Talking). In response to the 8 percentage point Literacy gap (compared to national averages) at Primary 4 and Primary 7 stages, further interrogation of attainment data at Associated School Group level and individual school level identified:

- For Primary 4 data there was a 9 percentage point gap at Writing attainment levels compared to 4 percentage point gap at Reading and at Listening and Talking when compared to national averages.
- For Primary 7 data there was a 10 percentage point gap at Writing attainment levels compared to 8 percentage point gap at Reading and 7 percentage point gap at Listening and Talking when compared to national averages.

3.1.7 Therefore, in response to the identified attainment gaps at Writing, and in order to raise overall Literacy attainment further, most schools have had a focus on developing and improving the Writing experience of learners, particularly at the P2-4 stages (CfE First Level) and P5-7 stages (CfE Second Level). Further details of universal and targeted supports in this area are explained below in section 3.6 of this report.

Table B - Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) June 2022 by Stage and Subject Area (East Lothian Schools compared to National Average)

	Reading		Writing		Listening and Talking		Literacy		Numeracy	
	ELC	Nat.	ELC	Nat.	ELC	Nat.	ELC	Nat.	ELC	Nat.
P1	80%	79%	74%	77%	89%	86%	72%	74%	81%	84%
P4	72%	76%	63%	70%	81%	85%	59%	67%	71%	75%
P7	71%	79%	63%	73%	79%	86%	58%	71%	65%	76%
P1-4-7 Combined	74%	78%	67%	73%	83%	85%	63%	71%	72%	78%
S3 – Third Level	90%	88%	89%	87%	90%	89%	87%	86%	88%	89%
Fourth Level	58%	54%	56%	52%	55%	55%	51%	48%	59%	59%

Projections for ACEL attainment across East Lothian schools for June 2023

3.2 Throughout each school session schools engage in moderation activities, individually and collectively, to assure the validity of assessment evidence and the professional judgement of teachers.

3.2.1 Through ongoing tracking of Progress and Achievement data by schools and the central team, it is expected that ACEL at P1-P4-P7-S3 levels for June 2023 will show continued improvement compared to the previous post-pandemic years.

Progress and Achievement Tracking Data

3.3 At key points during the year, schools will track the professional judgement of a pupil's progress to ensure appropriate pace of progress continues to be made based on the needs of individual learners. A pupil's progress is tracked within a CfE level (beginning to make progress; some progress; good progress; very good progress; and achievement of the level). This pupil progress is recorded within 'Progress and Achievement', part of the SEEMiS information system used by schools.

3.3.1 The pupil attainment data held within Progress and Achievement is used by the Quality Improvement Team to monitor the rate of progress made by pupils within and towards achievement of a CfE level on an individual school basis, collectively as an Associated School Group, and strategically as a local authority. Quality Improvement Officers also use this data to provide support and challenge to schools to ensure that attainment gaps are identified and addressed effectively during a school session.

How schools use the tracking and monitoring of attainment data to better inform the quality of learning and teaching

3.4 The expectation is that schools use attainment data regularly to monitor the rate of progress of individual pupils and plan and implement appropriate interventions to better meet the needs of pupils, where this is required. This may focus on a whole class, a particular group of learners or specific individual learners.

3.4.1 At key points during the academic session, Quality Improvement Officers quality assure this data with schools to evaluate the impact of planned interventions used by the school to improve the rate of pupil progress through a Literacy or Numeracy level. Discussions focus on the impact of different approaches used by class teachers to better meet the needs of pupils at a universal level in the classroom, or intervention programmes used by the school to target specific learning needs of individual pupils.

How are schools addressing the poverty related attainment gap?

3.5 Consistent with Strategic Equity Funding conditions, East Lothian schools have stretch aims to close the poverty related attainment gap. These aims relate to attainment in literacy and numeracy, leavers' qualifications, school exclusions, attendance and the use of part-time timetables. To support individual schools measure their progress towards stretch aims, they

receive a monthly tracking and monitoring update with data collated by the central Information and Research team. The Quality Improvement Officer for Equity has an overview of all schools' data and is able to use this to direct support and challenge to individual schools.

3.5.1 The Strategic Equity Fund has created the new post of Principal Teacher of Equity in each secondary school. The Principal Teachers have a strategic overview of attainment data in their school with a particular emphasis on tracking, monitoring and providing early support and intervention for young people impacted by poverty who are 'off track' with their learning. The Principal Teachers of Equity are supported by the Quality Improvement Officer for Equity to evidence impact towards the achievement of stretch aims. Together with the Quality Improvement Officer for Equity, the Principal Teachers of Equity have formed a collegiate network to share good practice across schools and collectively take forward strategic priorities for session 23/24.

3.5.2 In four primary schools, identified on the basis of children impacted by poverty, the post of School and Family Support Worker for Equity has been created through the Strategic Equity Fund. The Family Support Workers provide in-school support with learning to identify children who are impacted by poverty and wider 'wrap around' support to their families. These posts are employed on a 52 week basis to provide valuable holiday support to children and their families and to mitigate the impact that the transition to and from holidays periods can have. Like the Principal Teachers of Equity, the Family Support Workers are supported by the Quality Improvement Officer for Equity and work collegiately to share best practice.

3.5.3 To support individual schools maximise the impact of their Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), new guidance has been developed to ensure a robust approach to Pupil Equity Funding planning and evaluation. The guidance also encourages the alignment of PEF supports and interventions with the Strategic Equity Funding stretch aims.

How do the quality improvement team use attainment data with schools to improve outcomes for pupils

3.6 **Associated Schools Groups (ASGs)**

East Lothian Schools are organised into one of six ASGs centred on Dunbar, North Berwick, Haddington, Tranent, Prestonpans and Musselburgh. Each ASG has a secondary school and local feeder primary schools.

3.6.1 The Quality Improvement Team uses attainment data in November and May of each year with Associated School Groups (Dunbar, Haddington, North Berwick, Tranent, Prestonpans and Musselburgh clusters). Interrogation and evaluation of the attainment data has empowered schools to collectively identify where local attainment gaps exist, and has informed decisions regarding the deployment of additional local resources to address these gaps, for example, locality Attainment Teachers.

3.6.2 Head Teachers use attainment data from Progress and Achievement to monitor progress towards closing identified attainment gaps throughout a school session, and to inform the effective strategic use of local resources in doing so.

Focused School Team Groups (STGs)

3.7 Depending on the sector, each school is allocated a place in either a primary or secondary School Team Group (STG). The purpose of the STG is to provide peer support and challenge on the Leadership of Change, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, and Curriculum.

3.7.1 Schools share their attainment tracking, based on current Progress and Achievement data as part of these activities to validate their ongoing self-evaluation evidence to their STG. STG partners will provide suggestions and guidance on continued improvement to the host school, focusing on the quality of learner attainment and achievement, as part of these activities.

Quality Improvement Team support and challenge to schools

3.8 Link Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs) visit each school regularly during a school session to support and challenge the ongoing self-evaluation of a school's improvement journey.

3.8.1 Attainment data for Literacy and Numeracy, along with other sources of information, support a school's evaluation of improvement and impact upon learners during a school session. This provides opportunities for improvement change, where necessary, to be amended during a school session to ensure meaningful positive impact upon outcomes for learners.

3.8.2 QIOs and school leaders use the data to monitor pupils' rate of progress through a CfE level for all stages. This focuses on specific classes, groups or individual learners and the impact of additional support or intervention strategies that have been introduced to address the rate of progress for these pupils.

School Reviews

3.9 The Quality Improvement Team have led a number of reviews across both secondary and primary schools this session 2023-24. The purpose of the review is to provide additional capacity and support to school leaders to evaluate the quality of leadership and management, learning provision, and successes and achievements of learners in their school.

3.9.1 School review teams use a range of self-evaluation evidence provided by the school, along with learning visits to classes, focus groups with learners, parents and carers, and school staff to support this process. The purpose of these activities is to evaluate and validate the school's self-evaluation of improvement and the impact upon learners' attainment and achievement.

3.9.2 As part of this process, review teams provide additional suggestions and guidance for continued improvement, based on their findings, to the school to support continued improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and learner attainment and achievement. The most common areas that have been identified from school reviews this session have focused on the

further development of classroom approaches to active learning, differentiation to better meet the needs of all learners, and the use of formative assessment to better inform all learners of their progress.

How have schools been supported to reduce identified attainment gaps in Literacy and Numeracy?

3.10 **Pedagogy Team**

3.10.1 The Pedagogy Team, consisting of five Principal Teachers, was established in March 2022 to support recovery and to build capacity in schools in order to help raise attainment. The team provides support at a universal level to all schools through professional learning, as well as strategic Numeracy and Literacy developments and more targeted support working collaboratively with focus schools.

3.10.2 Focus schools are prioritised through a range of data including information within School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Standards and Quality reports (SQRs), the school attainment profile, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), Free Meal Entitlement (FME), evaluation visits by Quality Improvement Officers (QIOs), information from school reviews or inspections by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Schools also request support from the Pedagogy Team on a universal and targeted basis.

3.10.3 During session 22/23, the Pedagogy Team has worked with 11 focus schools from Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary sectors. The support was planned in collaboration with the individual schools in response to identified needs. This included professional learning, curriculum development, team teaching, collaborative planning, assessment and moderation, shared quality assurance and research based interventions.

3.10.4 The impact of the collaborative work on outcomes for learners and staff professional learning is evidenced through baseline and follow-up measures undertaken by the team. In literacy, there are improvements in learner engagement and pupil confidence which has improved the quality and the quantity of writing. This is leading to improved attainment at first and second level. In numeracy, the focus on improvements in pedagogy is leading to improved planning, use of manipulatives, further differentiation and formative assessment. This is leading to improved learner experiences and increased expectations for progression in numeracy.

National Writing Improvement Programme

3.11 Two cohorts of East Lothian primary schools have engaged with the National Writing Improvement Programme during 2022-23. The programme is provided in collaboration with the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative from the Scottish Government and focuses on raising pupil attainment in First Level Writing at the Primary 4 level.

3.11.1 The programme is research based and has been successful in other local authorities in previous years. The Quality Improvement Team, supported by the authority's Education Scotland Attainment Advisor, identified nine primary schools to participate based on their post-pandemic attainment data for Writing at the Primary 4 stage.

3.11.2 The Quality Improvement Team supported this programme, along with two local authority programme leads, and provided in-person and virtual training to teachers from the cohort primary schools. The training was based on a support programme for class teachers in the use of quality improvement methodology in the delivery of 'Writing Bundle' principles when teaching writing to Primary 4 pupils.

3.11.3 Frequent tracking of the impact of the intervention upon the quality of pupils' writing has evidenced significant improvements in the rate of pupil progress towards achievement of First Level in Writing for most targeted pupils.

Quality Assurance of First Level Writing - Working Group

3.12 Link QIOs for schools and NWIP Authority Leads have collaborated with Education Scotland to support the quality assurance of Primary 4 Writing across four schools in East Lothian. The purpose of the project is to investigate possible contributory factors to overall Writing attainment levels, and therefore overall Literacy attainment levels, of lower SIMD Primary 4 pupils.

3.12.1 This work is currently ongoing, but early indications suggest that there is scope for future improvements in moderation practices, used in and across schools, to further enhance the validity and reliability of teacher professional judgement of pupil attainment levels. This in turn will lead to further improvements in data accuracy for the purposes of tracking the rate of pupil progress and confirmation of achievement of a CfE level at the Primary 4 stage.

4 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

5 **INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial – None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

7   BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1   None

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