

Inspection of Local Authorities

How well is North Lanarkshire Council improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

July 2018

Introduction

In 2017, we introduced a new model of inspection of local authorities. [North Lanarkshire Council](#) was inspected during week commencing 12 March 2018. HM Inspectors and professional associates from education authorities, working in partnership with Audit Scotland, evaluated the education, youth and communities (EYC) service strategies to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap. These are the aims of the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#), a key Scottish Government programme introduced in 2015. Within this programme, North Lanarkshire Council is one of nine [Challenge Authorities](#).

As part of this inspection, we use the same framework to evaluate the contribution of the educational psychology service to the Scottish Attainment Challenge in North Lanarkshire Council. Our findings on this aspect are included throughout this report.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge has a total budget of £750 million over the period from 2015 to 2010-21. As a Challenge Authority, North Lanarkshire Council is allocated a significant proportion of this funding. The money is being directed to support the excellence and equity agenda. The aim is to close the attainment gap which currently exists between those living in Scotland's least and most deprived areas. This report is our findings on the progress North Lanarkshire Council is making and the capacity of the council to continue to make appropriate progress with this work. Whilst we worked in partnership with others to gather the evidence that underpins this, the report and the judgements in it belong solely to Education Scotland.

The [framework](#) for this inspection includes quality indicators which enable us to evaluate aspects of leadership and management, self-evaluation and improvements in performance. We use our evidence to answer two questions.

1. How effective is the education service's use of data to target, select and evaluate the impact of initiatives?
2. How effective is the education service's leadership, governance and management of resources to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap?

As a result, we are able to make an overall judgement about the extent to which North Lanarkshire Council is improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Context

The EYC service in North Lanarkshire Council is responsible for the education of 49,000 pupils across the local authority's primary, secondary and additional support needs schools and a further 6,518 children in early learning and childcare settings. The strategic lead for education across the council is the Assistant Chief Executive for EYC. Education is delivered through:

17 council-managed family learning centres

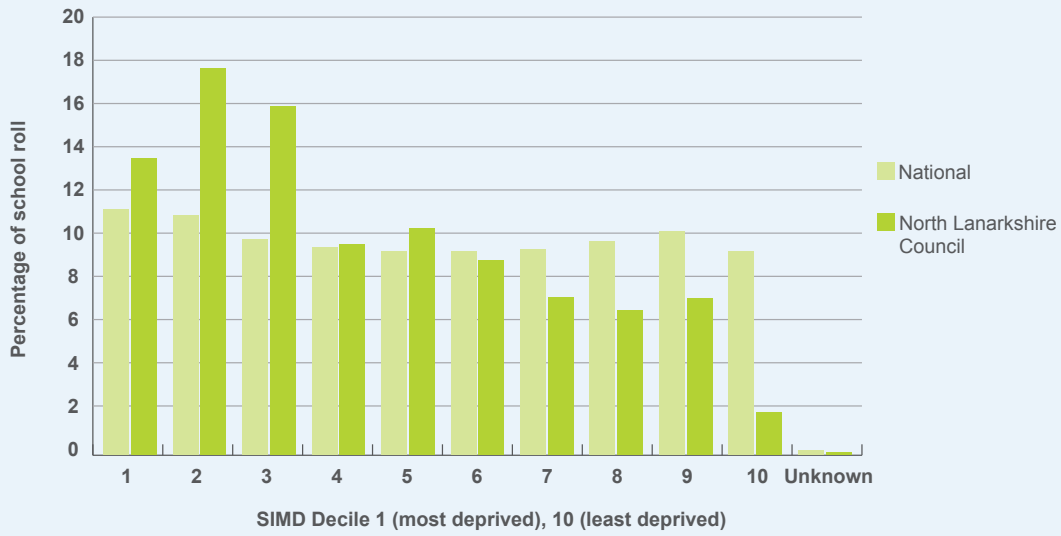
31 partner providers of early learning and childcare

120 primary schools, 10 with language and communication centres

23 secondary schools

13 additional support need schools and provision.

Percentage of pupils on the local authority roll in September 2016 living within Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 (most deprived) to 10 (least deprived), all sectors.



The Attainment Scotland Fund in North Lanarkshire Council

In year 1, a universal offer to all primary schools was established to support raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. All schools in North Lanarkshire benefited from the universal offer. Sixty-seven primary schools, with children living in the highest levels of deprivation, were identified as 'keys to success' or CANcan schools. These schools received additional support through what the local authority called 'layers'. These are improvement themes which have universal offers and targeted work.

Improvement theme	Linked targeted work
Nurture/mental health	Nurture self-evaluation Resilience toolkit Home school link worker
Literacy	Targeted literacy support Speech and language support
Numeracy/physical active health	Targeted numeracy support Physical and active health staff

In year 2 of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the universal offer was extended to include support around leadership and the use of data to monitor progress. This has been very successful in supporting staff to understand how data can inform developments. Through the evaluation of data, 35 primary schools, with children living in the most deprived areas of North Lanarkshire Council, remain as targeted schools with the continued opportunity to access enhanced support. All other primary schools in the council continue to be able to access universal support.

In terms of the financial framework for managing and monitoring Scottish Attainment Challenge, appropriate financial controls are in place for accounting for Scottish Attainment Challenge funding with a separate structure being created and expenditure being tracked and monitored on a four-weekly period. The Scottish Attainment Challenge fund is managed centrally and the officer responsible for leading each main initiative is responsible for the associated budget. Central finance officers monitor Scottish Attainment Challenge expenditure very well and liaise effectively with the relevant officers and the Education Committee.

Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding - primary schools

North Lanarkshire Council is now in its third year as a challenge local authority as Scottish Attainment Challenge primary school funding began in the 2015-16 financial year. Between 2015-16 and 2017-18, the local authority costed plans at £8.63 million. In this period, it drew down a total of £5.59 million from the Scottish Government to support Scottish Attainment Challenge primary initiatives. The difference was mainly due to the full year grant not being announced until the end of June 2015 and this timing, near the end of the school summer term, meant that there were delays in getting initiatives started and staff in post. There were also difficulties in recruiting staff, including teachers and other key roles identified in Scottish Attainment Challenge plans. Subsequent plans have been amended to increase staff recruitment and speed up the development of projects.

Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding - secondary schools

Scottish Attainment Challenge secondary funding began in 2016-17. Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, the local authority costed plans at £3.51 million. In this period, the local authority drew down £3.03 million from the Scottish Government to support Scottish Attainment Challenge secondary initiatives. Council and Scottish Attainment Challenge funds are being used to support a range of strategies to improve outcome for young people in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. For example, the Skills Academy is helping to raise levels of attendance, attainment and achievement of young people participating.

Pupil Equity Funding

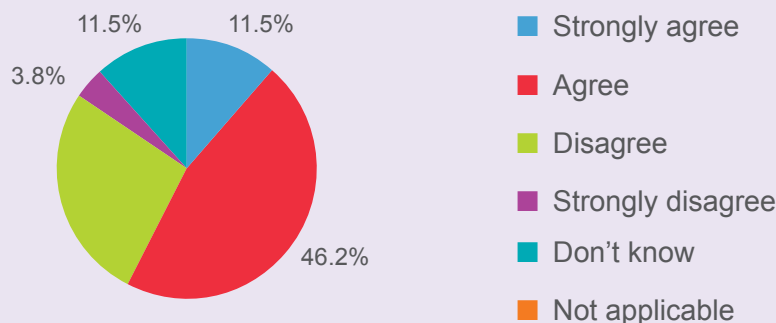
The local authority has developed a good financial framework for Pupil Equity Funding, which separates all Pupil Equity Fund expenditure from core school budgets. A separate cost centre and budget cost was created for every school receiving Pupil Equity Funding. This ensures that all such expenditure at a school level is not subsumed within the wider school budgets and can be easily tracked and monitored. This allows separate Pupil Equity Funding reports to be created. In 2017-18 schools spent approximately £4.8 million out of a total of £8.1 million of Pupil Equity Funding. It has been agreed that funding can be carried forward to 2018-19, and be utilised by the end of the school academic year. There are a number of reasons for this underspend including difficulty with recruitment to specific posts; headteachers taking the time to consider the best way to use their funding; and procurement of services or goods had to be managed efficiently and follow the local authority's agreed approach. This process can be prolonged, leading to circumstances where spend cannot be achieved within a set time period. The local authority should now ensure that a review of the experience of the first year of Pupil Equity Funding is undertaken to identify strengths and aspects for development in the management arrangements.

How effective is the education service's use of data to target, select and evaluate the impact of initiatives?

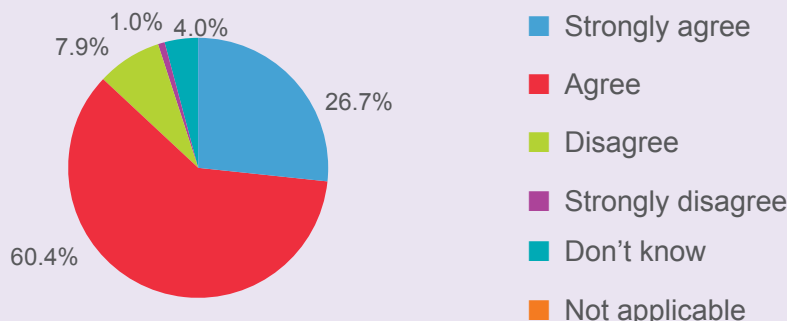
The Assistant Chief Executive has a clear understanding of the EYC service, including strengths and areas for development. She has a strong commitment to reviewing aspects of the service and seeking continuous improvement. For example, the introduction of the review of the Continuous Improvement Service and the [Self-Improving School \(SIS\) Network](#) are both resulting in improvement in leadership at all levels. As identified by the local authority, further work is continuing to develop consistency of practice at CIO level to ensure schools receive equitable levels of support and challenge. As a result of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the educational psychology service has appropriately developed their self-evaluation framework to link more closely to closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The educational psychology service, working with the research and data performance team, is making a strong contribution to self-evaluation to secure improvement and to raising the importance of research methodologies in supporting self-evaluation. Elected members demonstrate good knowledge of the council's vision and priorities relating to raising attainment. The Corporate Management Team works well to strengthen the active, positive engagement of elected members in scrutiny of aspects of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This provides a sound basis for them to scrutinise education performance.

The Assistant Chief Executive and her team have set out clear expectations for self-evaluation and school improvement, taking good account of local and national priorities including Pupil Equity Funding and Scottish Attainment Challenge. As a result, practitioners in a range of roles working with children and families are increasingly confident in their own skills in self-evaluation and that the right priorities are being taken forward. There is clear evidence that recent work is improving the service's approaches to self-evaluation for continuous improvement. There is greater and more effective alignment between the service's strategic vision and the day-to-day practice of staff working in varying roles across the service. High levels of commitment to sharing skills and expertise at all levels are evident and growing.

Elected members demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the quality of education (Chairs of Parent Council).



The education authority promotes and supports effective use of data to evaluate impact and outcomes.



The NIF Strategy Group ensures that leaders at various levels, including CIOs, are involved more fully in knowing what works well and what needs to improve. This empowerment of leaders has led to significant improvement for learners, including at the senior phase and planned changes to the school improvement planning process. The introduction and development of the SIS framework, including the SIS Network, as a professional learning network for headteachers, is leading to improvements in expectations and standards. The most obvious and effective example of this is in the sharing and analysis of data.

Across the EYC service there has been a significantly improved focus on the analysis and evaluation of intelligence and data. The quality and quantity of data available to schools, including the monitoring and tracking database, have supported a clearer focus on the progress of individuals and groups of children, particularly those affected by inequalities. Schools now have accurate and meaningful data which is being used effectively to monitor and track the progress of learners. This has been particularly evident at the primary stages. These improvements have resulted in increased expectations and growing staff confidence across the local authority at a variety of levels, including headteachers. There is strong evidence that, through the SIS Network, headteachers interrogate data regularly to support and challenge themselves and each other to raise attainment and close the poverty related attainment gap. There are also clear improvements in the organisation and delivery of the SIS Network, including through increased emphasis on professional reading and research on current practice, in order to support evidence-based improvements.

“ We are becoming more intelligent about how we use data, particularly in the broad general education in secondary schools. ”

secondary school teacher

The use of evidence-based evaluative methodologies, such as improvement science, is adding to the rigour of self-evaluation. Impacts of interventions are being effectively reviewed through support from the data performance and educational psychology service teams. Importantly, outcomes are fed back to staff at school and family learning centres to inform future approaches and progress. There are rigorous and systematic means of evaluating and reviewing the work of groups within the SIS Network. Senior leaders gather and analyse intelligence and data from all the groups within the SIS Network to ensure that good practice is shared and further improvements made. Staff are very positive about the increased use of data and the support from the local authority. The Know the Child, Follow the Child approach has ensured a clearer focus on individual children and the interventions required to support them. Building on the good practice in use and analysis of data in the SIS Network, there is now a need for this to be applied across different staff groupings, for example, at principal teacher and class teacher level. There is also a need to maintain the tracking and monitoring of all year groups across the authority to ensure there is effective forward planning to meet the needs of all children and young people.

“ We now need to review and revise the cluster meetings. ”

headteacher

Through clear prioritisation, the EYC service has ensured an appropriate and sustained focus on learners and their successes and achievements. There is good evidence of improvement as a result of self-evaluation, including from headteachers and leaders at various levels. Headteachers reported that they feel empowered to make the right decisions for their local context, based on sound data and intelligence. Headteachers and practitioners report increased collaboration and a willingness to take more collective responsibility and shared ownership for improving outcomes for children, young people and families across the EYC service.

Strengthening self-evaluation and collaborative practice across the local authority is leading to an increase in the sharing of good practice through networking at a family, cluster and locality basis. Through strong professional learning and ongoing self-evaluation, children's individual needs are now being identified more effectively, interventions matched to need and support put in place. Staff at all levels could demonstrate aspects of improvement, improved attendance and raised attainment arising from interventions. Individual establishments reported the benefits and resulting impact of the use of new reading and writing approaches and ways of working with families. As a next step, the local authority should build on the improvements to self-evaluation to ensure continued and sustained progress over time.

The attainment of children at important points of transition is showing improving trends, particularly in reading and numeracy. The inspection confirmed the local authority's own self-evaluation that there has been an increase in attainment in reading at P3, P5 and P7, across all schools as shown in standardised test data¹. There is evidence that the poverty-related attainment gap is narrowing in reading in those schools, which are involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The most marked improvement in reading is in the literacy layer schools. The attainment gap in reading in P1 has shown the greatest reduction in literacy layer schools. In all layer schools in P5 and P7 there has been a reduction in the attainment gap in reading and numeracy.

¹ The data for the Broad General Education is taken from the local authority self-evaluation and the Curriculum for Excellence levels.

There is an increase in attainment in numeracy at P3, P5 and P7 as shown by standardised test data. There is evidence that the poverty-related attainment gap is narrowing in numeracy in those schools involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The most marked improvement in mental arithmetic was demonstrated in the numeracy layer schools. The attainment gap in numeracy in P1 has shown the greatest reduction in numeracy layer schools. Numeracy layer schools have shown the most marked reduction in children significantly below average from the start of P1 in numeracy.

Over the last five years, attainment in literacy and numeracy in the senior phase is showing positive signs of improvement. Young people who spoke with inspectors discussed how they felt more confident and how learning was improving through teachers using different approaches, and understanding better the needs of young people. However, outcomes for young people continue to be generally below authorities with young people from similar backgrounds and the focus on improving outcomes in the senior phase needs to be maintained rigorously.

“ I can accept failure but I can't accept not trying. ”

P4 learner

Leaders within the Scottish Attainment Challenge team identified the need to develop a system to track children's health and wellbeing. The evaluation of interventions related to children's health and wellbeing has shown a positive impact on the children and families, who were supported through a range of programmes, for example [PE Plus](#). Staff spoke positively about the use of frameworks to ensure that health and wellbeing is at the core of school improvement and staff development. This has allowed schools to become more confident in delivering and evaluating flexible approaches to differing needs. An evaluation led by the educational psychology service, gathered a range of evidence on staff and children which demonstrates the positive impact of this approach. This includes data linking health and wellbeing interventions to improved attainment outcomes for children in SIMD 1-2.

“ PE Plus has changed how I think and feel about life. ”

S4 learner

Staff are very well engaged in CLPL. This is helping them to apply and develop coherent approaches on which to build, sustain and embed into their practice. At all levels, and in collaboration with partners, staff plan and evaluate their professional learning. In so doing, they are looking at how to improve the quality and impact on learning and teaching in classrooms. This is having a direct impact and there is evidence of improvements for learners, particularly in early learning and childcare settings and in primary schools. There are a few examples where staff can demonstrate that for the most disadvantaged children and young people attainment was improving as a direct consequence of CLPL, such as the impact of literacy and numeracy champions. There is scope to find more examples and share effective practice across the authority.

Staff's professional learning is supported effectively on a number of levels, for example, through networks, family learning groups, partnerships, and support from educational psychology service. The educational psychology service has contributed well to the up-skilling of staff across the local authority. Contributions

include coaching and mentoring approaches through [Video Enhanced Reflective Practice](#) and [Video Interaction Guidance](#) (ViG) aligned with literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing professional learning. The educational psychology service is currently engaged in an internal professional learning programme to ensure all staff are trained in ViG to meet the requirements of their framework of offers.

“ Staff are looking much more at nurture and trauma and have more of an understanding about attachment. They share this knowledge and help build capacity. ”

educational psychologist

The local authority’s professional learning focuses on raising attainment in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. There is a clear culture of collaborative professional learning which is focused on closing the poverty-related attainment gap across the local authority, for example, through networking, sharing practice and key findings from reviews and evaluations. In addition, North Lanarkshire Council schools are also linking well with schools from South Lanarkshire Council whose staff are involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This initiative by North Lanarkshire adds a different perspective which staff report enhances their knowledge base and increases opportunities for CLPL through staff sharing practice. Equity sessions in schools are enabling staff to collaborate with each other better, which in turn is having a positive impact on classroom practice, on learning and teaching and improved outcomes for children.

“ This Cosy Cottage (nurture room) is really working for me. ”

P3 learner

The CLPL in North Lanarkshire Council has a strong focus on using research findings and information from various sources to influence and impact positively on learning and teaching. Practitioners at various levels engage very well in professional learning. This supports them to improve learning and close the poverty related attainment gap. However, there is scope to continue to develop the use of data to support staff to engage further in conversations about what has improved as a result of CLPL, particularly in relation to children’s attainment. In moving forward, CIOs need to support staff to develop their confidence in talking about progress in literacy and numeracy as a result of improving pedagogy. The local authority should build on the good examples of systems to review the impact of CLPL on overall performance, to ensure all professional learning is impacting effectively on outcomes for children and young people.

Children, young people and parents who spoke with inspectors described improvement to their learning as a result of schools making changes to their practices. For example, children could speak about how different and effective ways of learning, including using aspects of outdoor learning, was helping them to better understand elements of literacy and numeracy. Young people spoke about having a better understanding of how to improve their mental health and how to be more resilient when things go wrong. Parents who met with inspectors could talk about new ways of teaching literacy, schools using speech and language therapy, music and digital learning to enhance their own learning as well as that of their children. There are positive examples of schools supporting parents to engage in learning

which helps them to support their children, including having access to resources to take home. Staff help parents to understand the challenges which their children can face. Effective contributions by community learning and development staff are also helping to improve home-school relationships. The introduction of [attainment mentors](#) is helping young people in secondary schools to focus more on improving their school work. School improvement plans, which now incorporate Pupil Equity Fund planning, provide a good focus for improvement activity. Moving forward, completed plans should be available on all school websites for parents and stakeholders to view and engage with.

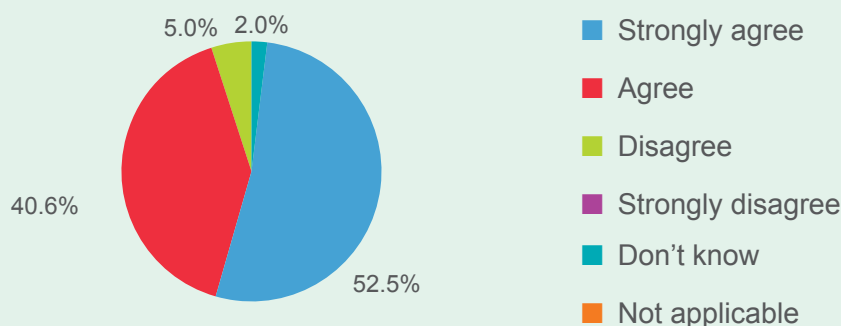
“ Involvement with the school is helping me to do some training. I have a food hygiene qualification and others have sporting/coaching certificates. ”

parent

How effective is the education service's leadership, governance and management of resources to improve learning, raise attainment and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap?

The Assistant Chief Executive and her team have a strong commitment to improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Senior officers and leaders of the council's Education Committee provide clear direction for education underpinned by the [ASPIRE](#) vision set out by the council's Chief Executive. Scottish Attainment Challenge initiatives are clearly aligned with the local authority's strategic aims and priorities. The North Lanarkshire educational psychology service's revised vision and refreshed strategic aims and objectives effectively support the delivery of national and local authority priorities and are driven by the excellence and equity agenda.

The senior management team and staff in the education authority show a high level of commitment to improving education. (headteachers)



The Our Ambition document sets out well how the EYC service contributes to the delivery of the council's corporate priorities and links effectively to the priorities contained within the local outcome improvement plan. The resources and timings are clearly articulated in the EYC annual plan which all senior staff use as a guide for school improvement planning. This approach ensures that school improvement planning and outcomes are linked effectively to local council and national outcomes. Pupil Equity Fund planning is usefully incorporated within school improvement plans. A few headteachers suggested that the planning documents could be more succinct. The Assistant Chief Executive rightly identified the need to pull together the planning documents to demonstrate more clearly how they articulate and impact on children and young people. The National Improvement Framework (NIF) Strategy Group is looking to streamline planning further, taking into consideration the latest Pupil Equity Fund advice from the Scottish Government.

“ Our council is taking action to poverty proof. ”

central officer

Consistent leadership of improvement and change has proved challenging due to a number of staff changes and structural re-organisation. Currently, there are a number of acting positions within the continuing improvement officer (CIO) team which is impacting on the continuity and consistency of support and challenge provided to schools. Staff are developing a good understanding of the aims and working of the new council and service structure and this is beginning to have a positive impact on how services are delivered to support children and young people. An additional data analyst is being appointed to improve leadership and capacity in this area. This will provide increased support for staff to identify strengths and areas for development. Strengthening the link between the CIO team and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Core Group has provided good opportunities to share information. The service should continue to develop such links across core education functions and the leadership of Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund.

Over the last three years, strategic planning has been helped by an improving use and understanding of a range of data. This is well used by officers and effective continuing lifelong professional learning (CLPL) is supporting headteachers to use data to plan with increasing confidence. The local authority needs to have clearer targets and measures of success within planning documents to support CIOs to be more focused with their support and challenge, specifically around Pupil Equity Funding outcomes. It should continue to build on the good practice of a few schools which are involving their parents and pupils in planning, evaluation and discussion on spend. A number of Parent Councils would like greater opportunities to influence aims and plans for education in their community.

The drive from the Chief Executive is developing a strong corporate sense of responsibility for children and young people's progress. The 'one council' approach is working well and was reflected in a number of focus groups and school improvement plans. For example, headteachers identify and plan alongside a range of other council services to improve outcomes for children and young people. There is a clear governance and accountability framework for the Scottish Attainment Challenge which exists through the Core Operational Group, Project Board and Extended Senior Leadership Team (ELT). This framework is embedded within the overall council and governance framework and encompasses senior managers, school leaders, community planning and council committees. There are clear lines of accountability between what happens in schools and a number of council committees, including education, infrastructure, and policy and resources committees.

Groups such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge Core Group and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Board provide an effective means to support and challenge aspects of improvement. The council needs to specify more clearly for headteachers which group has oversight of the Pupil Equity Fund spending and impact. Minutes of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Core Group and Scottish Attainment Challenge Board evidence discussions which provide support, challenge and budget updates around Scottish Attainment Challenge. The groups monitor the progress of Scottish Attainment Challenge well and offer a means to discuss suggestions and support operational matters.

The education authority's risk management systems are developing well. There is an identified education risk champion and risk management is a standing agenda item at the ELT meetings. Whilst there is no separate risk register for Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding, these are part of the wider EYC

strategic risk register. Overall, risk management could be further developed and improved. Management and monitoring of risk at a school-level, particularly in relation to Pupil Equity Funding, needs to continue to be developed. The current governance arrangements to support raising attainment and specifically the Scottish Attainment Challenge project, have been changed numerous times since 2015-16 and a few headteachers would like further clarity about the governance of the Pupil Equity Fund and Scottish Attainment Challenge.

There is a need to ensure that when such changes have taken place they are clearly communicated across all groups of staff, particularly where there have been changes of personnel in key Scottish Attainment Challenge roles.

Over the last three years, governance arrangements supporting the Scottish Attainment Challenge have continuously improved and now provide good support and challenge to staff involved. Over the period reviewed (2016-2018), the general governance arrangements in place for the Education Committee effectively supported elected members to scrutinise and challenge progress in raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. However, there is a need to continue to support elected members to use the information provided to positively engage with the increasing information on both Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding. For example, sight of plans for ensuring the sustainability of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund initiatives, and more detailed information on the progress of the initiatives against planned outcomes, should help elected members to further scrutinise these programmes. Effective working relationships across political groups need to continue to be improved. There needs to be a clear focus on the commitment to raising attainment and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap being for the local authority as a whole and not only the administration of the time. This is central to the local authority being able to make as much progress as it can.

Underpinning each of the Scottish Attainment Challenge initiatives is a good focus on developing the capacity and expertise of staff to ensure the approaches to learning and teaching are embedded and impacting on children and young people. Each of the overarching initiatives has a good focus on developing teacher practice and in-house school leadership capacity to drive initiatives and interventions which contribute to the closing of North Lanarkshire Council's poverty-related attainment gap. Specific examples of how capacity is being built include: using additional temporary teachers for Scottish Attainment Challenge to release permanent experienced staff to undertake the role of champions in a curriculum area; and embedding CLPL into schools to support sustainability should funding cease. Whilst the local authority has given consideration to the issue of sustainability, it would also be helpful for headteachers to consider exit strategies should the funding be discontinued. There is no guarantee of continued funding from either the Scottish Government or the local authority.

The local authority has provided a good menu of evidence-based interventions and strategies to inform headteachers how they could potentially utilise their Pupil Equity Funding. This helpful guidance also includes information about interventions that were funded via Scottish Attainment Challenge monies and were known to be working well. Schools have spent Pupil Equity Funding on a range of appropriate areas such as staff, resources, and equipment. Where additional teaching staff have been appointed, many of these are acting principal teacher appointments of existing staff, rather than new staff. This means when funding ends, these staff will still have a post and it is more likely that the learning will be embedded and impact on children and young people. A range of support staff have been appointed under Pupil Equity Funding. There is a risk that when their temporary contracts end, schools may lose that support if continued funding cannot be found. Therefore, there is a need for headteachers to continue to think creatively about how Pupil Equity Funding will be used in future years given the ongoing challenges associated with recruitment.

The contribution of the North Lanarkshire educational psychology service to the Scottish Attainment Challenge

Education Scotland is confident that the educational psychology service is making a very strong contribution to closing the poverty-related attainment gap in North Lanarkshire, particularly in relation to research, data analysis and evidence-based practice. The strengthening synergy between the educational psychology service and the educational priorities of the local authority has led to a clear and shared vision for improvement in relation to Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund developments. The effective leadership of the principal educational psychologist, along with the strong support from the Assistant Chief Executive has a positive impact on the quality of service delivered to children, young people and families, and instilled confidence in educators seeking support in relation to Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund initiatives. The very good use of evidence-based practice, combined with effective partnership working has led to a range of high-quality interventions selected to suit the needs of the North Lanarkshire context.

To what extent is the education service improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap?

North Lanarkshire Council is making good progress with improving learning, raising attainment and narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. HM Inspectors are confident that the evidence and evaluation to date indicates the following strengths and aspects for development.

Strengths

- The clear vision and drive of the Assistant Chief Executive and her team, within North Lanarkshire's one council approach to delivery of services, leading to improvement in outcomes for children across the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding programmes.
- The increasing use of data and developing approaches to self-evaluation are providing more rigorous evidence to plan and review Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund interventions.
- Effective CLPL and strong support for families is resulting in improvement in aspects of attainment and closing of the poverty-related attainment gap.
- The work of the educational psychology service, within the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme, is having a significant impact on improved outcomes for targeted groups of children and young people.

Aspects for development

- Further develop the Continuous Improvement Service to maximise consistency of support and challenge for Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund.
- Build on the positive start made to closing the poverty-related attainment gap for children and young people as they progress through their learning.
- Strengthen the positive engagement of elected members in working for better outcomes for children and young people across North Lanarkshire Council by continuing to provide relevant information to the Education Committee on the funding provided, and progress of Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund.

What happens next?

Education Scotland is confident that the evidence and evaluation to date indicates that North Lanarkshire Council is making good progress in improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. We are confident that the local authority's self-evaluation processes are robust and leading to improvements. As a result we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection.

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July 2018

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