Scottish Attainment Challenge Self-evaluation resource

Updated October 2023

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

Contents

Introduction

This resource was first published in December 2019. It has since been updated in September 2020 in recognition of the impact of COVID-19 and now in October 2023 to highlight the interconnections between Additional Support Needs (ASN), the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and poverty. The purpose of this self-evaluation resource is to support the achievement of equity in Scottish education for all learners, including those who require additional support. This resource is designed to assist early years settings, schools [1], local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives and local and national partners improve their work in relation to equity. The impact of COVID-19 since March 2020 and the following national cost of living crisis has resulted in a unique educational experience for Scotland's children and young people. Notwithstanding the best efforts of schools, local authorities and national organisations it is widely accepted that the poverty-related attainment gap has widened (Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2022). There is an interconnection between children impacted by poverty and children who have been identified as requiring additional support. This can be observed through research and data.

The document may be helpful as a stand-alone resource but it can also be used in conjunction with other self-evaluation frameworks and is not intended to replace other frameworks.

Background to the Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge[3] was established in 2015 to promote equity in education by ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. It is underpinned by The National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right For Every Child approach as well as legislations such as Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009). It focuses on improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

Initially the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) utilised a targeted approach through the Challenge Authorities SAC Programme and the Schools SAC Programme. They focussed on supporting pupils in the local authorities and schools of Scotland with the highest concentrations of deprivation. In 2017, the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) was launched and in 2018, the Care-Experienced Children and Young People Fund (CECYPF) began. Both are also part of the ASF. PEF is allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. Every council area is benefitting from PEF and almost all schools in Scotland receive this funding. CECYPF provides targeted funding for initiatives, activities, and resources, designed to improve the educational outcomes of this group of disadvantaged young people in every local authority area.

Although the first five years of the Scottish Attainment Challenge saw progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap, there was limited pace. The pandemic disrupted the learning of our children and young people and had a disproportionate impact on children affected by poverty. The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge programme was launched in March 2022, backed by a further commitment of £1 billion from Scottish Government. It aims to address these

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[1] The references to schools throughout this document can also include other types of educational establishment.

challenges and ensure equity lies at the heart of the education experience for all. As part of the refresh, an amended mission statement was published:

> "*to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap.*"

There was also recognition that all local authorities were impacted by poverty and the Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) was introduced. SEF is allocated directly to every local authority and distributed equitably based on Children in Low Income Families data for the 2019/20 financial year. The funding must be used to strategically plan and implement supports to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people affected by poverty and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.

Education Scotland's team of attainment advisors work collaboratively with every local authority to maintain a relentless focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The specific role of the attainment advisor is tailored to the needs of each local authority.

Towards an empowered system

One of the recommendations made by the International Council of Education Advisers[2] (ICEA) is for the Scottish Government to consider professional empowerment, responsibility, and ownership as policy imperatives. Work is ongoing to implement and embed this recommendation through the School Empowerment Steering Group. This group has representatives from local authorities, unions and Education Scotland.

An empowered system is one that grows stronger and more confident, working in partnership to lead learning and teaching that achieves excellence and equity for all learners. Empowerment and collaboration for improvement happen at all levels in an empowered system. There are eight key partners who contribute to an empowered system:

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[2] International Council of Education Advisers Report 2016-18

There are draft resources and guidance [available](). These resources support the recommendations of the ICEA, providing materials for all stakeholders to use to self-reflect on current practice and empower schools and local authorities to maximise progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap in Scotland.

Moving forward

In the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan Summary for 2023, the key priorities were amended to include a focus on children's rights. The priorities are as follows:

- Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education

- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

- Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

The 2022 NIF consultation on using data for improvement set out the need to recalibrate the original national stretch aims (set out in the 2018 National Improvement Framework). The purpose of this was to recognise the impact the pandemic had, not only on children and young people's attainment, but also on their health and wellbeing, and understand the scale of the challenge to recover and improve from there. As a consequence two new key measures were added: school attendance and initial leaver destination.

Within the SAC refresh in March 2022, the SAC Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress was introduced, and then amended in 2023, as an approach to tracking and monitoring the progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This framework introduces a requirement for local authorities to set trajectory and stretch aims for progress in overall attainment and towards closing the poverty related attainment gap between now and 2026.

The core local stretch aims are a subset of the 13 key measures in the National Improvement Framework, plus a locally identified health and wellbeing aim:
- Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) literacy for P1, P4, P7 (combined)
- ACEL numeracy for P1, 4 and 7 (combined)
- School leavers, 1 or more pass at SCQF 5 or better based on Insight (All SCQF) awards
- School leavers, 1 or more pass at SCQF 6 or better based on Insight (All SCQF) awards
- The proportion of 16-19 year olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure produced by Skills Development Scotland
- A locally identified aim for health and wellbeing, to be measured using local datasets

In addition to these core aims, local authorities set additional aims which recognise that progress is identified in a broader range of ways at local level than those set out nationally. These aims are of equal importance to core aims.

In order to achieve these trajectory and stretch aims, the SAC Framework emphasises the importance of local authorities, schools and partners setting these aims together and working collaboratively. The framework also emphasises the importance of ensuring children and young people's voices are part of SAC and provides further supports for schools and local authorities in the form of Scotland's Equity Toolkit and PEF: looking inwards, outwards and forwards. These resources provide up-to-date information on good practice and research in closing poverty-related attainment gaps.
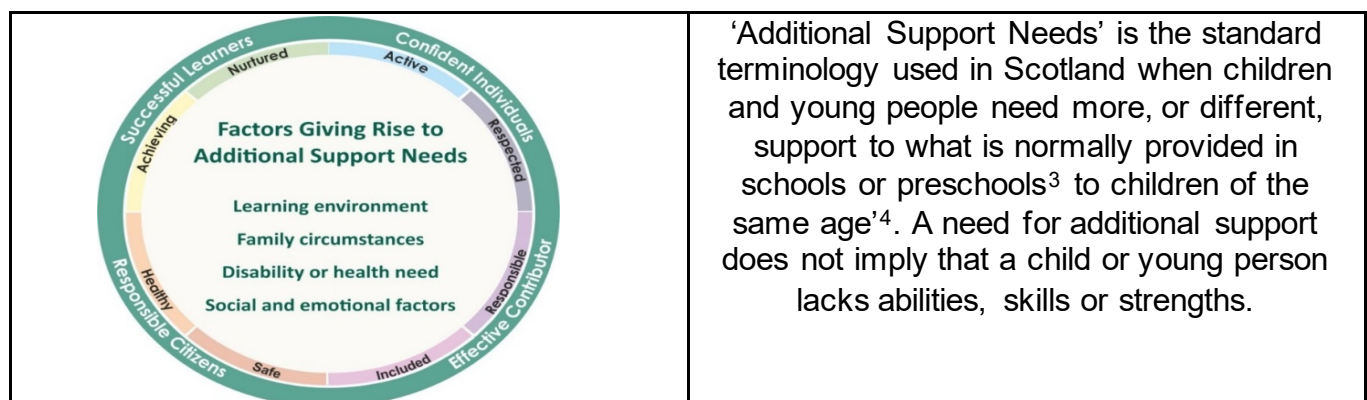
Additional support needs & poverty

Scottish education is:
- Based on the belief that education is a human right and that all children and young people should be supported to reach their fullest potential.
- Designed to be an inclusive one for all children and young people in Scottish schools, with or without additional support needs.

Scotland has a ground-breaking, rights widening legislative and policy framework which supports children who face additional barriers to learning and to fulfilling their potential. This includes the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (as amended 2009) (ASfL Act) which provides the legal framework to support all children and young people who require some help with their learning.

Additional support needs is a broad, inclusive term which covers a wide range of needs, which can be long or short term. The four factors which give rise to additional support needs are highlighted in the table below and Appendix 1 provides an overview of the interconnection between the ASfL Act 2004 (as amended 2009) and the Equality Act 2010.

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	'Additional Support Needs' is the standard terminology used in Scotland when children and young people need more, or different, support to what is normally provided in schools or preschools[3] to children of the same age'[4]. A need for additional support does not imply that a child or young person lacks abilities, skills or strengths.

The highest percentage of children and young people with ASN in mainstream and in special schools are in deciles 1 (14.8%) and 2 (13.2%). This decreases according to decile. (Pupil census: supplementary statistics - gov.scot (www.gov.scot). Poverty intersects with all four

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[3] * The ASfL 2009 Act uses the term preschool, which is now referred to as Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

[4] The ASL code of practice has full details of this: Additional support for learning: Statutory Guidance 2017 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

factors giving rising to additional support needs. For example, there are strong links between the experience of child poverty and poor mental health with some studies suggesting that children living in low-income households are nearly three times as likely to suffer mental health problems than their more affluent peers (Audit Scotland, 2018).

Fig 2. ASN and SAC interconnections
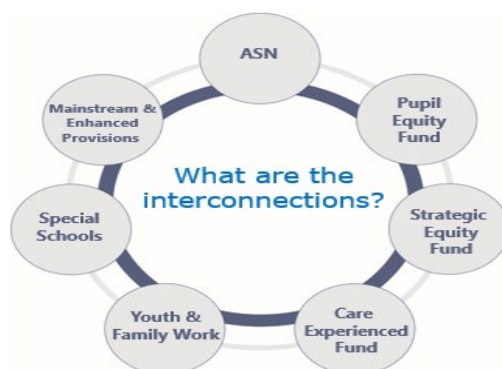
All care experienced children and young people who are looked after[5] by the local authority have additional support needs unless the education authority has established through assessment that they do not.

This revised self-evaluation resource will support the education system to take a closer look at the interconnections between ASN and poverty and make the most of effective approaches to achieving equity. The following questions remain at the heart of self-evaluation:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

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[5] Section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (c.36)).

Self-evaluation for equity
How to use this self-evaluation resource

When using this resource in conjunction with other Education Scotland self-evaluation frameworks, schools and others may find it helpful to use different themes to focus on aspects of their work in relation to achieving equity. The features of highly effective practice and challenge questions provide the opportunity to drill deeper into the evidence that supports their conclusions to strengthen on-going self-evaluation. The themes can also be linked to the quality indicators in other self-evaluation frameworks but should not be confused with, or considered to be, quality indicators in themselves.

Features of highly effective practice are included in Figure 3 to illustrate examples of evidence of impact towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The examples are drawn from the wide range of evidence listed earlier and based on the work going on in schools and local authorities across Scotland. The examples are not a definitive list under each of the themes.

Challenge questions have also been included within this resource to support professional dialogue and point to aspects of practice that might require further improvement. Some of the challenge questions may be more relevant depending on your own context, who is using them and for what exact purpose. Some of the questions are particularly focused on schools and classrooms while others are provided to focus on local authority and regional improvement. These can be used independently or with others from within the resource. All questions can be adapted and used by a wide variety of people including class teachers, attainment advisors, local and regional quality improvement teams, HM Inspectors and partners.
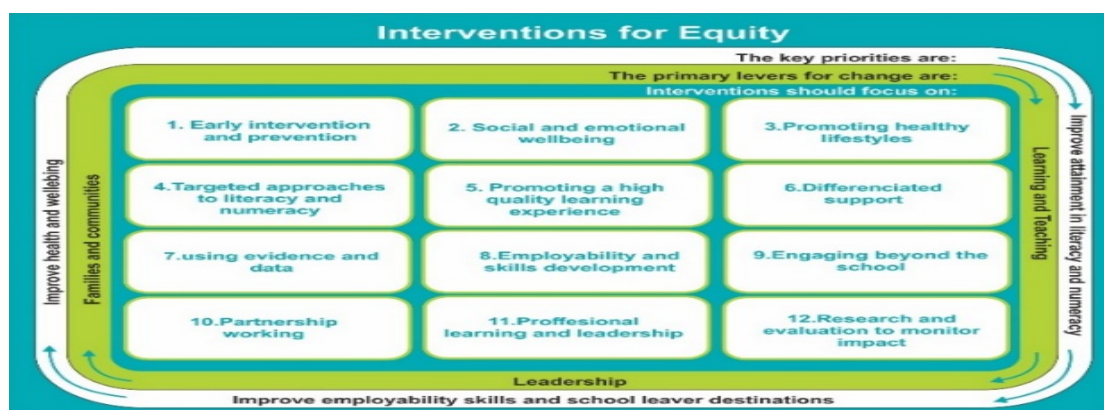

Figure 3 Interventions for Equity

The features of highly effective practice and challenge questions are grouped under themes related to the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework. The themes include a mixture of the primary levers for change, interventions for equity and policy priorities. It should be noted that each of the themes are inter-related and different aspects could easily sit under more than one theme.

Themes

Leadership
a) Governance and management
b) Data and closing the gap
c) Self-evaluation and research
d) Pupil Equity Funding.

Learning and teaching
e) Learning, teaching and assessment
f) Professional learning and sharing practice.

Families and communities
g) Parental engagement
h) Collaborating with partners
i) Cost of the school day.

Leadership

a) Governance and management

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Features of highly effective practice

- A shared vision and commitment with a clear focus on achieving equity for all children and young people living in the most deprived communities and circumstances.
- Strong and effective leadership at all levels driving forward improvement in the outcomes of children and young people.
- Effective robust governance structures that provide sufficient opportunities for support and challenge at all levels.
- Time and space for innovation and creativity to achieve equity.
- Building the leadership capacity of staff through professional learning and collaboration.
- A smaller number of very focused interventions and approaches with clear outcomes and measures in place.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
- How well do staff at all levels clearly focus and commit to achieving equity? - To what extent are school decision-making structures clear and transparent to all stakeholders? - To what extent are we considering and ensuring long-term sustainability as part of our planning to achieve equity? - To what extent are staff at all levels clear and specific about the outcomes they are trying to achieve? - If we are having difficulty recruiting additional staff, how are we considering alternative approaches and creative solutions? - Do all staff have a shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19 and cost of living crisis on educational experience and attainment?	- To what extent are local authority decision making structures clear to all stakeholders for SEF, PEF and Care Experienced Children and Young People's Funding? - Do we have a vision for what we want to achieve long-term for all children impacted by poverty? Is this sustainable? - In considering our approaches to planning, to what extent do we ensure that our plans are straightforward, clear and distinctly focused on equity? - How effectively do our quality assurance processes provide support and challenge, and empower schools and partners, to focus on equity? - How effectively do we keep our elected members and others informed about progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap? - How do we ensure there is sufficient scrutiny by elected members of the Scottish Attainment Challenge work in the local authority and schools? Does this include all aspects of funding through the Scottish Attainment Challenge?[6]

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[6] This challenge question could be applied to any Attainment Scotland funding stream at the time of publication or at any point in the future should funding structures change.

Leadership

b) Data and closing the gap

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Features of highly effective practice

- Effective use of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence to understand the poverty-related attainment gap and the interconnections between additional support needs and poverty.
- Interventions are effective because they are informed by robust analysis of data.
- Sharing and analysing data collegiately and with partners as part of ongoing self-evaluation.
- Clear analysis and understanding of the poverty-related attainment gap at all levels including local authority, establishment and in the classroom or setting.
- Building the capacity and confidence of staff through professional learning, peer collaboration and close working with data specialists.
- Local authorities and schools making the greatest progress are able to show that attainment overall is improving, and the equity gap is beginning to narrow.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• How confident are we that all of our staff and partners understand how to use data effectively? This includes understanding the interconnections between poverty-related attainment gaps and ASN? • How confident are we that all of our staff and partners understand how to monitor the impact of our interventions and approaches for all children and young people? • To what extent is our self-evaluation underpinned by a shared strong understanding of our data? • Are there sufficient opportunities for professional discussion of data and evidence as part of our self-evaluation processes at all levels? • To what extent is our effectiveness in using data and evidence enabling us to set out clear outcomes and measurable targets for all children and young people? • How well are we making progress at improving the attendance and reducing rates of exclusion of children and young people living in our most deprived communities and circumstances?	• How effectively do we support schools to access and analyse a range of data that will help them to focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap for all children and young people? • To what extent do we provide robust support and challenge to our schools? • How effectively do we use data and evidence across the local authority and region to encourage collaboration to achieve equity? • How clear are we that we are making progress towards achieving equity at school, local authority and regional level? • How confident are we from our data analysis that the poverty-related gap is closing over time and that progress is being sustained? • Are we clear from the analysis of our data to what extent we are making progress in both our universal and targeted approaches?

- Is progress evident at all stages from early years to post school? Is progress sustained beyond the intervention?
- How confident are we that our interventions and approaches, whether universal or targeted, are leading to improvement? How effectively do we change our approaches if they are not having the intended impact?
- To what extent are we narrowing the attainment gap in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing? What can we do to ensure that we make sufficient progress over time in all three of these areas using the national measures and stretch aims?
- How confident are we that all children and young people, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, are accessing a wide range of learning experiences and pathways? Are they progressing to positive, equitable and sustained destinations?

- How effectively do we use the national measures[7] and stretch aims to monitor our progress and support increased understanding of where we want to get to?
- How effectively are we collaborating with other local authorities, to ensure that the needs of children and young people educated outwith the authority who look after them, are considered?
- Are we collaborating with others, to ensure that the needs and planning of children and young people educated outwith the authority who look after them, are considered?
- Are we supporting our ASN sector to consider and track data which is meaningful to them regarding closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

- Are we using a wide range of data including:
  - **Demographic:** descriptive information about the school community, including intersecting this data eg children affected by poverty and also identified as requiring additional support
  - **School Processes:** what is happening now to support holistic outcomes for learners
  - **Pupil Learning**: holistic outcomes of our children and young people
  - **Perceptions:** what all stakeholders think about the learning experience including children and parents where alternative communication approaches may be required

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[7] See: Appendix 1 – Closing the attainment gap: 11 key measures

Leadership

c) Self-evaluation and research

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Features of highly effective practice

- Robust self-evaluation process are well-embedded at all levels and are supported by strong and effective governance arrangements.
- Using evidence-informed research to choose and evaluate appropriate interventions and approaches matched to the local context and needs of learners.
- Increased use of recognised methodologies and approaches, such as collaborative action research and improvement science to further strengthen self-evaluation.
- Working closely with partners such as educational psychologists and universities to build capacity in evidence-informed practice, self-evaluation approaches and research.
- Making effective use of online support.   For example, Interventions for Equity and Scotland's Equity Toolkit.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• How focused are we on closing the poverty-related attainment gap in our school self-evaluation? • To what extent is our self-evaluation providing clarity about interventions and approaches are most successful at helping us to close the gap? • To what extent are we involving our partners and stakeholders, including children and young people affected by poverty and their families, in our self-evaluation processes? How effectively is this leading to best use of our collective resources and expertise? • How well are children, young people and parents/carers engaged in our self-evaluation? • How effective are we at using evidence-informed research to choose appropriate interventions, approaches and evaluation strategies? • What range of sources do we use to identify evidence-informed practice that may suit our school context? • To what extent are our approaches to self-evaluation and research inclusive for children impacted by poverty and with identified ASNs?	• To what extent are our local authority self-evaluation and quality assurance processes focused on closing the poverty-related attainment gap? • How sufficient is our emphasis on the pace of progress? • To what extent are we working in partnership with the research community to inform our decisions locally and regionally? • To what extent are we involving our partners and stakeholders in our self-evaluation processes? How effectively is this leading to best use of our collective resources and expertise? • How effectively are we supporting and empowering our schools to engage with research that will help them to improve their practice and demonstrate impact? • To what extent are our local authority school improvement planning and reporting processes helping our all our schools and provisions place sufficient focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap? • Are we sharing examples of 'what works' across locally and nationally?

Leadership

d) Pupil Equity Funding

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Features of highly effective practice

- The school has set out a clear rationale and plan for its allocation of Pupil Equity Funding taking full account of national and local guidance.
- The school's plan is well-considered and based on robust self-evaluation including the views of children and young people and their families with lived experience of poverty or financial worries, parents, partners and staff.
- The data used in the contextual analysis and plan clearly identifies the poverty-related attainment and achievement gaps within the establishment. It is useful to show the intersections between data. For example any links between poverty and children identified with additional support needs.
- The school has used a range of data and evidence to identify attainment and achievement gaps for groups and individual children and young people. As a result, appropriate interventions and approaches are in now place, with a clear focus on improvements in health and wellbeing, numeracy and literacy.
- Plans clearly describe links between the identified poverty-related attainment gaps and the interventions being implemented. There should be a range of interventions, such as classroom-based activity, additional targeted support and extended opportunities and experiences in and beyond school in place.
- Effective systems are in place to monitor and track the progress of individuals and groups. Schools and local authorities are able to evidence impact on raising attainment and achievement, improving outcomes and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• To what extent is our rationale for spending our allocation of Pupil Equity Funding based on robust self-evaluation with relevant stakeholders? • To what extent are our outcomes and measures SMART? • How well have we considered how we will evidence the impact of our interventions and approaches? • How effectively are we tracking and monitoring our progress for all our learners impacted by poverty, including those identified with ASNs and who require individualised curriculums? • How effectively have we involved children and young people, parents and partners, including those attending ASN provisions within the school, in decision-making around Pupil Equity Funding?	• To what extent do our local authority school improvement planning and reporting processes help our schools with planning and evaluating the impact of Pupil Equity Funding? How effective are these processes at minimising bureaucracy? Are these relevant and inclusive of our special schools and ASN provisions? • How confident are we that all headteachers have a clear contextual analysis and clear rationale for spending Pupil Equity Funding based on robust self-evaluation? • What local Pupil Equity Fund guidance in place? How often and to what extent is this reviewed? Does it enable schools to make effective use of the funding and support them to be accountable for their decisions? Is it

- To what extent is our self-evaluation informed by effective analysis of data focused on poverty-related attainment and achievement gaps? Have we intersected our data with other factors such as free school meals, ASN, gender, etc? Does this include data from our ASN provision, where relevant?
- To what extent are we clear and specific about our interventions, approaches and targets?
- How effective are our service level or partnership agreements to plan and support delivery of PEF funded provision with partners?
- How well are we monitoring our PEF spend to ensure we are using all the funding available to us to improve outcomes for all of our learners impacted by poverty?
- How confident are we about making timely informed changes to our plans if our interventions and approaches are not achieving their intended impact?
- How well are we using our Pupil Equity Funding to ensure flexible and sustainable improvements in culture, ethos and pedagogy to improve outcomes for learners?
- To what extent is our use of Pupil Equity Funding improving outcomes of children and young people and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?

- relevant and inclusive of our special schools and ASN provisions?
- What robust procedures are in place to monitor how Pupil Equity Funding is being spent timeously? How do we use the information gathered to report effectively on impact?
- To what extent is our schools' use of Pupil Equity Funding leading to improved outcomes for children and young people? How effectively is this helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap for all our learners and inclusive of children identified with additional support needs?
- How effectively does our strategic approach to improving outcomes using the Strategic Equity Funding and Care-Experienced Children and Young People Fund complement how our schools are using Pupil Equity Funding?

Learning and teaching

e) Learning, teaching and assessment

Features of highly effective practice
• Teachers use effective strategies to improve learning and teaching, as a result of their increased awareness and understanding of the socio-economic challenges and barriers faced by all children and young people.
• Staff and partners work effectively together to remove barriers and to implement a range of interventions and approaches to improve health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy.
• A focus on increasing the participation and engagement of children and young people in their learning, personal achievement and activities beyond the school.
• Strong and valued contributions from educational psychological services and other partners such as allied health professionals, 3rd sector, CLD providing evidenced based practice leading to improvement. For example in relation to nurture, growth mindset, resilience and restorative practice, providing accessible learning environment.
• Significant focus, commitment and action resulting in an inclusive ethos.
• Safe and welcoming learning environments and inclusive approaches tailored to all children's needs.
• Strong contribution by speech and language therapists to closing the vocabulary gap leading to improvements for learners and building the capacity of staff to improve literacy.
• Targeted and effective use of well-trained support staff working in partnership with class teachers to promote equity and help to close the attainment gap.

Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• How effective are we at differentiating learning and teaching, and using strategies to address the socioeconomic challenges and barriers faced by children and young people?	• How confident are we that staff at all levels in our schools and communities understand and consider the socio-economic challenges and barriers faced by children and young people when planning learning?
• To what extent do we focus on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people living in the most deprived communities and circumstances? Does this include a focus on equity for care-experienced children and young people and those with other identified additional support needs?	• How robust are our local and regional approaches to moderation and assessment? To what extent do these approaches focus on equity? Are they inclusive of all schools and provisions?
• How effective is our moderation, monitoring, tracking and assessment in ensuring that our interventions and approaches are raising attainment and achievement and helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap?	• To what extent are we monitoring and tracking the interventions and approaches in all of our schools and provisions to know if they are raising attainment and achievement and helping to close the poverty related attainment gap?
• To what extent are we providing additional experiences and opportunities for children and young people who we have identified as missing out? Are we	• How effective are we at sharing learning, teaching and assessment approaches that have a focus on equity locally, regionally and nationally?

making sure they are accessible to all our children affected by poverty including those with identified additional support needs?

- To what extent is an inclusive ethos evident across all aspects of the life and work of the school community?
- To what extent are we considering equity across the four contexts of learning?
- To what extent are our collaborative partnerships with specialists and partners improving outcomes of children and young people? How does this work build the capacity of our staff to improve outcomes and achieve equity?
- Do we have an effective plan for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and where appropriate, their families?
- Do we track pupil participation and progress effectively and make use of this information to plan next steps in learning?
- Is the work of our partners embedded in any offer we have planned?

- How confident are we that all establishments are intensifying support for the most vulnerable children and young people impacted by poverty?
- Are we confident that all children and young people in our authority have access to appropriate equipment and resources (including digital) which allow them to access their learning environment effectively?
- At authority level, do we rigorously track pupil participation and progress for children and young people affected by poverty?
- Are our strategic interventions and mitigations, including those funded through SEF and Care Experienced Funding, effective for children and young people affected by poverty? Are we considering the needs of children and young people affected by poverty and also identified with any additional support need?

Learning and teaching

f) Professional learning and sharing practice

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Features of highly effective practice

- A well-planned strategic and structured approach to career long professional learning which is building capacity and leading to improvements in practice and outcomes.
- High levels of staff engagement at all levels within a culture of collaboration, and with partners.
- A deepened understanding of the poverty-related attainment gap and how pedagogical approaches can improve outcomes for children and young people living in the most deprived communities and circumstances.
- Well-developed case studies and practice exemplars of what is working effectively towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap are shared online, at conferences and through professional discussions.
- Pathways for career development:
  - use and develop evidence-informed practice
  - have equity, equality, inclusion and wellbeing at the core
  - all staff know where to find specialist support and information on the impact of poverty on learning and the interconnections with other factors such as additional support needs.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• How deep an understanding do staff at all levels have of pedagogical approaches and ASN which can be used to improve outcomes of children and young people who are affected by poverty? How do we know? • To what extent are we ensuring high quality data is effectively identifying to support the needs of all children and young people? How are we using this data to strategically plan our professional learning? • To what extent are we monitoring the impact of our professional learning on staff and learners? • To what extent is professional learning leading to improvements in outcomes of children and young people? How do we know whether this is this leading to equity for children and young people living in the most deprived circumstances, including	• How confident are we at effectively using data, including information on poverty, ASN and from partners, to inform, plan and provide professional learning aimed at improving outcomes of children and young people who are affected by poverty? How do we know? • How confident are we providing professional learning opportunities that are leading to improvements in outcomes of children and young people living in the most deprived circumstances? • How effectively do we use our collective capacity across the local authority and region to deliver professional learning and share effective practice? • To what extent are we ensuring that the most effective practice to achieve equity is embedded in our educational establishments and applied consistently? • To what extent are local authority and regional approaches to building capacity

- those who are care-experienced and identified with ASNs?
- In ensuring sustainability, how well embedded are our school's approaches to building capacity and improving practice?
- To what extent are we ensuring that our approaches are applied consistently across each of our classrooms? Are we confident that the most effective practice to achieve equity is being embedded?
- To what extent are we sharing our effective practice to achieve equity collegiately within our own school and with other schools?
- To what extent are we looking outwards and learning from effective practice elsewhere to achieve equity?
- Have we created opportunities for staff to learn from one another and from colleagues in other settings?
- Are we confident that all learners affected by poverty, including those with additional support needs, and those with English as an additional language, have access to the most effective learning and & teaching approaches, whether working in school or whilst being supported by partners?
- How well do we consider and plan the implementation of any new approach following professional learning?

- and improving practice embedded to ensure sustainability?
- To what extent are we supporting educational establishments and settings across our region to develop case studies and practice exemplars around achieving equity? How well are we including a focus on children and young people who require additional support, including care-experienced children and young people within our range of practice exemplars?
- How effective are we at supporting establishments and local authorities to learn from effective practice elsewhere to achieve equity?
- To what extent are we looking outwards and learning from effective practice elsewhere to achieve equity?
- Do our central teams work effectively to deliver appropriate professional learning to support closing the poverty-related attainment gap? Have we effectively tracked the impact of professional learning to help achieve this?
- To what extent are our specialist supports strategically focused on supporting educational establishments and communities most affected by poverty?
- How well do we consider and plan the implementation of any new approach following professional learning?

Families and communities

g) Parental[8] engagement

Features of highly effective practice

- Staff have developed very positive relationships with families based on trust and respect. They are aware of and sensitive to family socio-economic circumstances, challenges and barriers. As a result, all parents and carers are confident to engage with schools in supporting their child's learning.
- Structured family learning programmes, co-constructed with partners, are leading to meaningful accredited and non-accredited outcomes for parents and carers living in the most disadvantaged communities.
- Staff support and deliver family learning programmes. They work directly with families to improve home school links and provide practical support. These programmes are accessible to all parents, including those with disabilities and their own needs.

Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• To what extent are we managing to engage with the parents of children and young people living in our most deprived communities and circumstances? • In what ways does our learning environment feel welcoming and helpful to all our parents and carers? How do we know? • To what extent does our curriculum include opportunities for families to learn together? To what extent is this helping us to achieve equity? Are these opportunities accessible to all parents and children, including those with additional support needs? • How well do we help parents with supporting their children's learning? • To what extent do we engage and support parents of children and young people living in our most deprived communities and circumstances during key transitions and pathway choices?	• How effectively do we promote the engagement of parents to achieve equity? To what extent do we support our schools to do this? • Does our local authority parental engagement strategy have an appropriate focus on equity? • To what extent do we support and challenge schools to engage with their local communities to design, develop and evaluate their curriculum? To what extent does this focus on equity? Are these opportunities accessible to all parents? • How effectively do we plan and coordinate family learning opportunities between schools, local authority services and partners? To what extent is this helping us to achieve equity? • How effectively do we consider our role as corporate parents as part of our approach to achieving equity?

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[8] Throughout this document, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

- How well is our engagement with families leading to improved and equitable outcomes for all our learners?
- To what extent is our Parent Council inclusive and representative of our school's socio-economic context?
- To what extent are we engaging parents in the evaluation of interventions and approaches to achieving equity? How effective are we at taking account of their views in decision-making around change and improvement?
- How well do we understand the needs of our parents and families in supporting our curriculum aims – e.g. literacy and numeracy?
- How effectively do we seek out relevant partnerships with local authority services and third sector organisations to meet the needs of our parents support their child's learning?
- How effectively do we articulate the needs of parents and families with our partners?
- Are we taking account of disabilities and/or language difficulties of parents that might act as barriers to them supporting their child?
- How effectively are we tracking, monitoring and evaluating our approaches to engaging parents in our children's learning?
- To what extent are we considering the 6 categories of families most at risk of poverty* in our engagement and planning?

- To what extent do we ensure that - care experienced children and young people benefit from our schools' approaches to parental engagement?
- How effectively do we signpost parents and families to information and advice on local learning and employability opportunities?
- How effectively do we create space for practice sharing, and joint professional learning on parental engagement approaches within the local authority, and between/across local authorities? Is this inclusive of all provisions?
- How effectively are we tracking, monitoring and evaluating our authority approaches to engaging parents in our children's learning?
- To what extent are we supporting our special schools and ASN provisions to engage with parents impacted by poverty?
- To what extent are we considering the 6 categories of families most at risk of poverty* in our engagement and planning?

*Scottish Government (2023) have identified 6 categories of families most at risk of poverty. They are:
- Lone parent families
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with a younger mother (under 25)
- Families with a child under one
- Larger families (three or more children)

Families and communities

h) Collaborating with partners

Features of highly effective practice
- Schools and local authorities are working with a wide range of partners to improve the life chances of children and young people living in the most disadvantaged communities and circumstances. For example, community learning and development, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and third sector organisations.   - A focus on removing barriers to learning caused by socio-economic challenges and other associated factors such as additional support needs. This includes providing children and families with a network of support through an effective multi-agency approach.   - Schools and local authorities are working with partners to provide children and young people with additional experiences and opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities including sport, outdoor learning and personal achievement. These should be accessible to all children, young people and parents including those with identified additional support needs.

Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
- How well do we understand the range of potential partners within our local community who can support our approaches to achieving equity? - To what extent does our school make effective use of a wide range of local and national partners to improve outcomes for learners? How do we know this is making a difference and leading towards equity? - To what extent are we engaging with partners in planning, delivery and evaluation of our work to achieve equity? - To what extent are our children, young people, parents and families informed about the range of opportunities for personal achievement in their school and in the community? Is this leading to increased participation and helping to achieve equity for learners in our school? - To what extent are we able to mitigate against the challenges of partnership	- How well are we supporting all schools, including ASN sector, to access a wide range of local and national partners to improve outcomes for learners affected by poverty? - To what extent are we engaging with partners in planning, delivering and evaluation of our work to achieve equity? - To what extent are we promoting and supporting partnerships that will help to achieve equity? - To what extent are our children, young people, parents and families informed about the range of opportunities for personal achievement in their community? Is this leading to increased participation and helping to achieve equity for learners in the local authority and across the region? - How effective is the collaboration between education and social work to ensure that the Care -Experienced Children and Young People's Funding is improving life chances?

working in rural geographical areas or authority-wide provisions such as special schools? • To what extent are our partners considering the 6 categories of families most at risk of poverty* in their work?	• To what extent is SEF being used across services and agencies to strategically improve outcomes for learners and families affected by poverty? • How effectively are we working in partnership across various authority funding streams to close the poverty-related attainment and achievement gaps? • To what extent are our partners considering the 6 categories of families most at risk of poverty* in their work?

Families and communities

j) Cost of the school day

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Features of highly effective practice

- Schools and local authorities are sensitive to families facing socio-economic challenges. The dignity of families is respected while ensuring that children and young people do not miss out on opportunities and experiences because of financial barriers. All these opportunities and experiences are readily accessible to children with additional support needs.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that children and young people can access additional experiences such as excursions and residential experiences. Focused interventions, such as breakfast clubs and holiday programmes ensure that children and young people are not missing out as a result of hunger.
- Schools and local authorities review and adapt their approaches to costs associated with the school day. For example, removing additional charges for curriculum subjects, sensitivity around fundraising and minimising events such as non-uniform days, access to mi-fi devices, charging stations in schools for chromebooks, etc.

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Challenge questions

For educational establishments and settings	For local authorities and regional improvement collaboratives
• How well have we reviewed our school policies and procedures to ensure that we are mitigating against additional barriers that may prevent children and young people from participating in all aspects of their education? • How well do all staff and partners respond to the needs of children and families facing barriers due to socio-economic circumstances? • To what extent do all staff have a sound understanding of the need to ensure the cost of the school day does not exclude some children and young people from the opportunities that we promote? • How effectively do we engage with children, parents and partners in reviewing the cost of the school day? To what extent do we involve them in making financial decisions • To what extent have we considered how we will evidence the impact of our interventions and approaches? • How well are we tracking and monitoring our progress and ensuring equity? How can we ensure this continues if children are	• How well are we supporting and empowering schools with mitigating the cost of the school day? • To what extent do our local authority policies and procedures help to mitigate against additional barriers that may prevent children and young people from participating in all aspects of their education? • What policy and procedures do we have in place to ensure any pupil, who may be learning at home, can access their learning digitally and there is no financial barrier to this? • How well are we providing any additional resources or support to schools to help them address issues associated with the cost of the school day? How effective is this support at achieving equity? • To what extent is SEF and Care Experienced Fund being used to support educational establishments, settings and communities to ensure

learning at home, including during periods of illness? • Do staff ensure resources for planned, progressive learning activities are accessible to all, including those affected by poverty and children identified with additional support needs?	learning is equitable and accessible to all?

Appendix 1 - Disability and Additional Support Needs

There can be overlap between the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (as amended 2009) and the Equality Act 2010 for children and young people.

These are not exhaustive lists. The purpose is simply intended to highlight the areas where there is overlap and also where discrimination and disadvantage can occur if the need is not recognised and supported.

Scottish education is designed to be an inclusive one for all children and young people in Scottish schools, with or without additional support needs. A formal identification/label is not required in order for a child or young person to receive additional support.

Equality Act 2010	Additional Support for Learning Act 2004(as amended)
All children and young people whose needs meet the definition of disability will be entitled to support under the ASL Act.	Some children and young people who require additional support may also meet the definition of disability.
Pupils' needs which may meet definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. Physical or Mental impairment which has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. This can include: Diabetes Disfigurement Eating disorder (diagnosed) Gross obesity Deaf/Hearing loss/Tinnitus Blind and Sight loss Heart conditions Incontinence Neuro-divergence: - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) also referred to as Dyspraxia - Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) - Epilepsy - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) - Intellectual Disability including serve and complex - Tourettes and Tic disorders - Specific Learning Disorder/ Differences e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia Rheumatoid arthritis Sickle cell anaemia Some conditions may progress to have a substantial adverse effect. Pupils' needs which automatically meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act: - Cancer - HIV - Multiple Sclerosis - Blind and partially sighted people - Certified/Registered - Severe long-term disfigurement	Pupils who may require additional support under the ASL Act have a barrier to learning as a result of one of the four factors giving rise to additional support needs: - Learning environment - Family circumstances - Disability or health need Social Emotional factors These may include children or young people who are or who have: A disability (see Equality Act 201) Being bullied English as an additional language Experience emotional or social difficulties Experienced a bereavement Interrupted learners Living with parents who are abusing substances Living with parents who have mental or physical health difficulties Looked after by the local authority /care experienced Motor or sensory impairments Neuro-developmental differences which **may or may not** meet the definition of disability: - ADHD - Dyscalculia - Dyslexia - Dyspraxia (DCD) - Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) - Epilepsy - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) - Intellectual Disability including serve and complex - Tourettes and Tic disorders On the Child Protection Register Particularly able or talented Too ill to attend school Young carer Or for any other reason.

Appendix 2 – Links to local authority inspections

- How well are the Scottish Attainment Challenge authorities improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap? **Summary report**. https://education. gov. scot/Documents/SACSummaryReport. pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **Clackmannanshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/yfcjqc02/insclacks191218.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **Dundee City Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/rd2prm5d/dundeecitycouncilins250618.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **East Ayrshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the povertyrelated attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/qozhdve0/eastayrshirelains070319.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **Glasgow City Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the povertyrelated attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/wwhh2pd4/glasgowlains110319.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **Inverclyde Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/pacdluev/inverclydecouncilins301018.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **North Ayrshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the povertyrelated attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/xidnj1k3/northayrshirecouncil020718.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **North Lanarkshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the povertyrelated attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/lx1ipmif/northlanarkshirecouncilinspection.pdf

- Inspection of Local Authorities: How well is **Renfrewshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap?
https://education.gov.scot/media/l0sj5w1h/renfrewshireila190219.pdf

- Inspection of local authorities: How well is **West Dunbartonshire Council** improving learning, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap? https://education.gov.scot/media/q0xjmpr1/westdunbartonshirecouncilins010518.pdf

Appendix 3 – Other useful links

Evaluations:
- Attainment Scotland Fund: Reporting on National Improvement Framework Attainment and Health and Wellbeing Measures, 2023. Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation: Reporting on National Improvement Framework Attainment and Health and Wellbeing Measures, 2023 (www.gov.scot)
- Scottish Attainment Challenge – Scottish Government https://www. gov. scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/
- Attainment Scotland Fund interim report (years 1 and 2): evaluation https://beta. gov. scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-interim-report-years-1-2/
- Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: interim report (year 3) https://www. gov. scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-interim-report-year-3/
- Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: headteacher survey 2018 https://www. gov. scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-headteacher-survey-2018/
- Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation: school case studies https://www. gov. scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-school-case-studies/
- Evaluation of the Attainment Scotland Fund - Analysis of Local Authority Mini Survey – Summer 2018 https://beta. gov. scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-analysis-local-authority-mini-survey-summer/

Relevant reviews, plans and guidance:
- Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress: Supporting documents - Scottish Attainment Challenge: framework for recovery and accelerating progress - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- Scottish Attainment Challenge Logic Model: Supporting documents - Scottish Attainment Challenge: framework for recovery and accelerating progress - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation Strategy: Attainment Scotland Fund - 2022 to 2026: evaluation strategy - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- National Improvement Framework: National Improvement Framework (NIF) - Schools - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- Review of additional support for learning implementation: report - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

- Additional Support for Learning review: action plan - November 2022 update - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- Every Child Every Chance: The tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022 https://www. gov. scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/
- National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report https://public. tableau. com/profile/sg. eas. learninganalysis#!/vizhome/NIFInteractiveEvidenceReport/FrontPage
- Adult learning strategy 2022 to 2027 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) https://www.gov.scot/publications/adult-learning-strategy-scotland-2022-27/https://www.gov.scot/publications/adult-learning-strategy-scotland-2022-27/

Evidence and resources:
- Scotland's Equity Toolkit: Scotland's Equity Toolkit | Resources | Education Scotland
- Pupil Equity Funding: looking inwards, outwards and forwards – sharing effective practice to maximise support for learners and practitioners. Pupil Equity Funding: Looking inwards, outwards, forwards – sharing effective practice to maximise support for learners and practitioners | Resources | National Improvement Hub (education.gov.scot)
- Interventions for Equity https://education. gov. scot/improvement/self-evaluation/Interventions%20for%20Equity
- Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners - Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub (education.gov.scot)
- CLD, Poverty and Social Justice - Wakelet https://wakelet. com/wake/6c48f6c4-8e25-45d2-8f21-31a5c2243ab7
- Cost of the School Day - breaking down the financial barriers to education https://cpag. org. uk/scotland/cost-school-day

References:

Glasgow Centre for Population Health, University of Glasgow Policy Unit and Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland. March 2022. COVID-19 Micro Briefing 4: Consolidating evidence of the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people. Last accessed July 2022 at COVID-19 Microbriefing 4: Consolidating evidence of the impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people (gcph.co.uk)

Scottish Government (2023). Tackling child poverty priority families overview. Last accessed September 2023 at Tackling child poverty priority families overview - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)