

Agenda Item	6
Report No	EDU/23/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Education

Date: 17 November 2021

Report Title: **Highland Attainment and Scrutiny Session 2020-21**

Report By: Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the performance of students in attaining Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Awards at Level 5 (National 5 or equivalent) in the S4 stages and at Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) in the S5 and S6 stages. In addition, SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher or equivalent including HNC) in the S6 stage are reported on.

The report also indicates how the Head of Service and Collaborative Leads Officers will engage with schools to scrutinise the attainment for 2020/21. Members are reminded that the attainment reported for 2020/21 was assessed using the Alternative Certification Model developed by the SQA when it became clear that Covid would prevent examinations taking place. Similar scrutiny meetings will be taken forward with Primary schools when the attainment for this sector is reported by the Scottish Government in December 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) scrutinise the Senior Phase SCQF Attainment for session 2020/21 and note the continued positive trends in attainment over four period;
- (ii) note that secondary school-based attainment meetings will take place in November and December 2021 and actions for improvement will be agreed; these will then be shared and discussed with Members at ward level and sessions completed by

end January 2022 so that a summative report inclusive of Member and Headteacher feedback is brought back to the Education Committee in February 2022; and

- (iii) Note the specific focus on attainment meetings on raising attainment in S5 at level 6 (Higher) and bring back to the February Education Committee a summary of the strategies that are being deployed across the Highlands to accelerate improvement.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** Planned improvements, target setting, and benchmarking will support better outcomes and take cognisance of the specific challenges of equity, poverty and rurality. The processes set out within this report are recognised as key leadership tasks both with central officer and school leader workplans and remits. The tasks within this report are shared on an ongoing basis via the staff partnership forums that are currently in place. Good practice both within our schools and schools nationally is used as a benchmark in all improvement activity.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no legal implications contained within the contents of this report.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Planned improvements, target setting, and benchmarking will support better outcomes and take cognisance of the specific challenges of equity, poverty and rurality. School leaders share improvement activity through parental partnership forums.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** There are no climate change issues arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Risk:** Reputational risk should schools in the Highlands' attainment not continue to improve. This can also impact upon the recruitment of staff at all levels.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** The delivery of better outcomes will build on the recent SQA success of our young people undertaking GME and GLE course work and courses.

4. Overview

4.1 Introduction

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is used to measure awards gained by young people in our schools and is a key measure within the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

The SCQF measure includes SQA National qualifications which are graded A to D and such as SQA National Progression Awards and SQA Skills for Work courses which are graded by as pass/fail.

The SCQF framework includes and recognises an extended and enhanced range of achievement in the senior phase which is in line with the principles of Developing the Young Workforce.

This report looks at the 5+, 3+ and 1+ SCQF Awards at Level 5 and 6. For Level 7, 1+ awards are reported on as this measure relates to courses studied at Advanced Higher, usually in S6.

4.2 The attainment data presented to Committee within this report is collated from SQA results across the senior phase and will cover the following:

- S4 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF level 5
- S5 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF level 6
- S6 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF levels 6 and 7

4.3 This report presents charts showing the five-year trend for SCQF attainment by year group in the Senior Phase. This shows the data for Highland, its Virtual Comparator (VC) and for the whole of Scotland (the “national” establishment).

The virtual comparator is made up of pupils from schools in other local authorities who have similar characteristics to those in Highland schools in terms of factors including stage, gender, additional support needs, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

4.4 The Scottish Government has cautioned and advised against comparing 2019/20 attainment data with attainment in other sessions due to the different attainment patterns seen in 2020. The 2020 data therefore has not been included in this report.

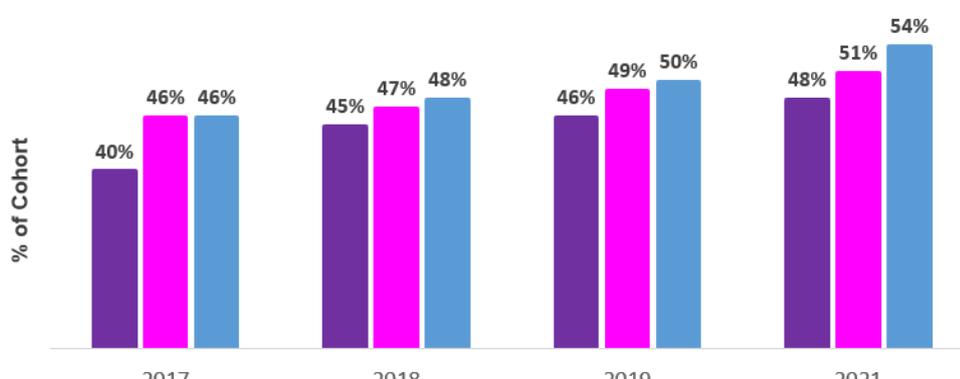
5. Breadth and Depth Attainment data for Year Stage based measures for 2020-21

5.1 S4 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 5

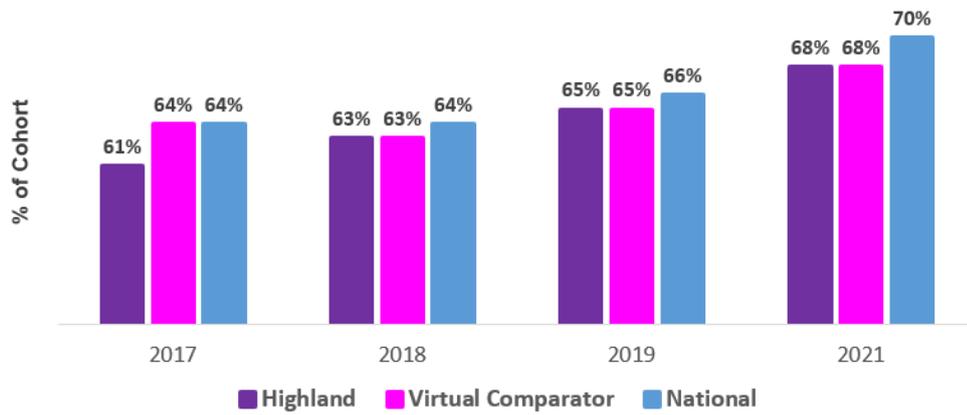
This measure demonstrates how many qualifications S4 learners achieved at SCQF level 5; this includes National 5 as well as others, including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 5.

Over the five-year period 2017 to 2021, the percentage of students attaining 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4 has improved. For 1+ and 3+ awards at level 5 our attainment is in line with our virtual comparator. While the trend in our 5+ awards at level 5 is increasing over time, it is below our virtual comparator.

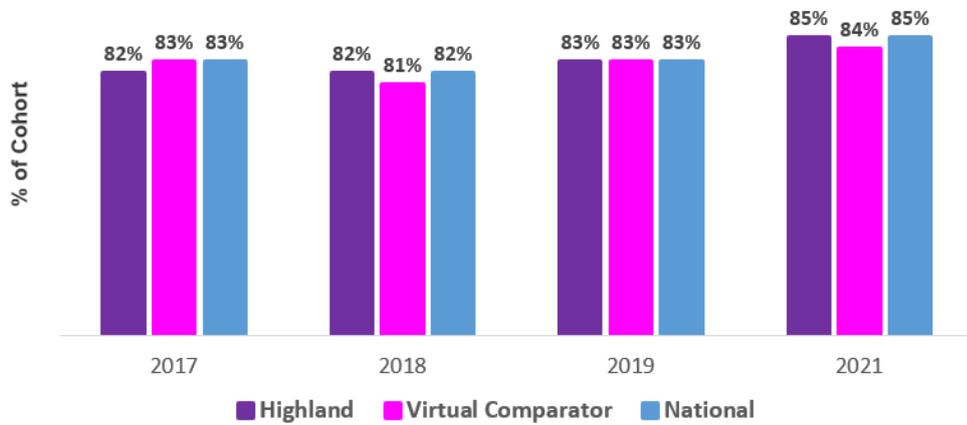
5+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4



3 + Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4



1+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4

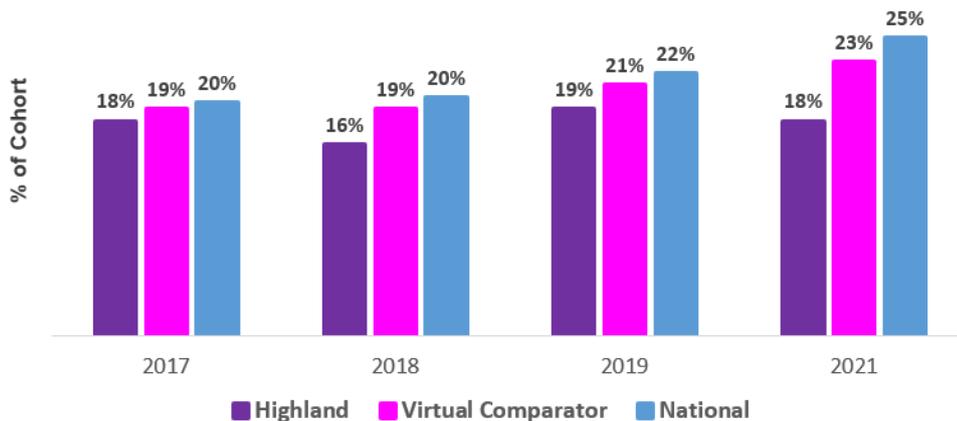


5.2 S5 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 6

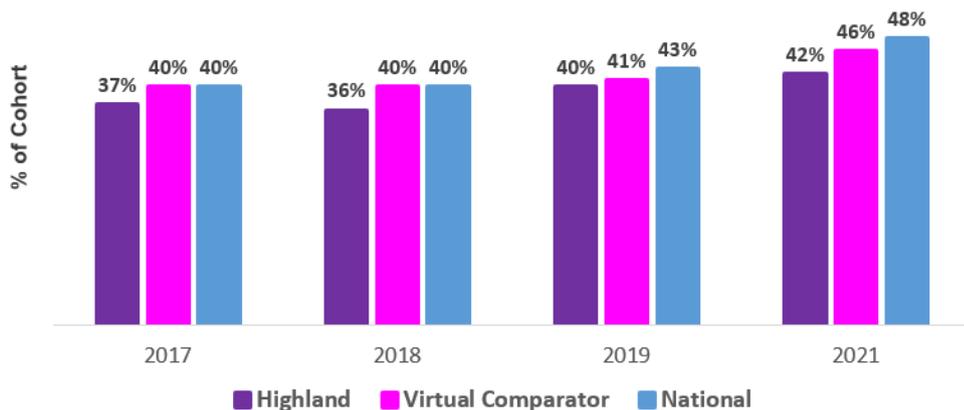
This measure demonstrates how many qualifications S5 learners achieved at SCQF level 6; this included Highers as well as others, including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 6. The measure of one or more SCQF Level 6 qualification can allow young people to access higher education courses at college.

For Highland, the percentage of young people attaining 1+ and 3+ awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5 has improved over time. There is still work to be done with regard to the 5+ awards at level 6. There has not been a significant improvement in this measure over the 5-year period. This measure will be a particular focus for discussions with our Headteachers during the scrutiny meetings to identify strategies which will help lead to improvement in this measure.

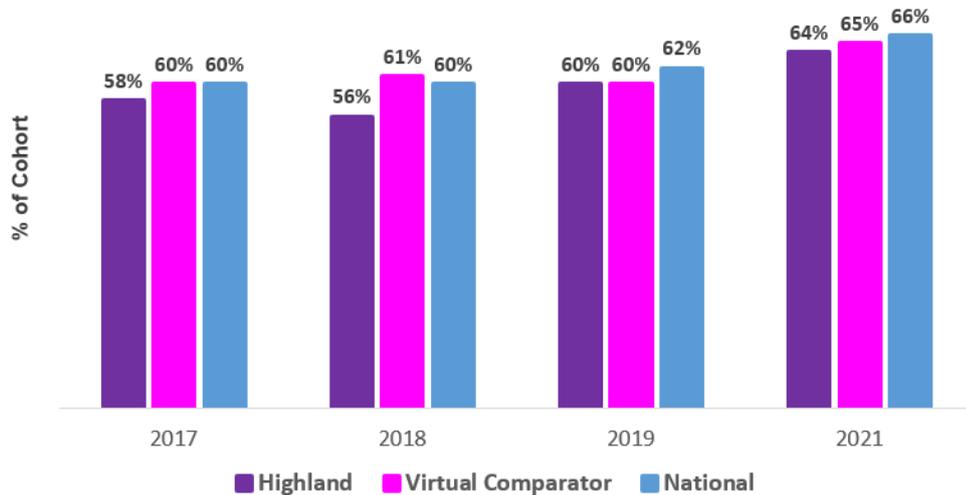
5+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5



3+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5



1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5



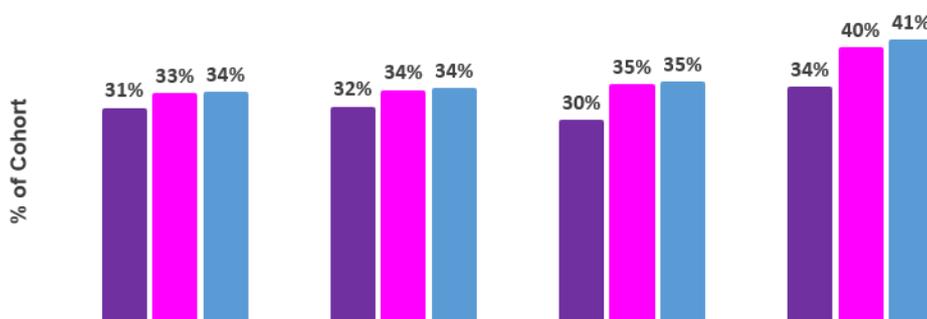
5.3 **S6 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Levels 6 and 7**

This measures how many qualifications S6 learners achieved SCQF level 6 and 7 qualifications. This includes Highers and Advanced Highers, Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 6 and 7.

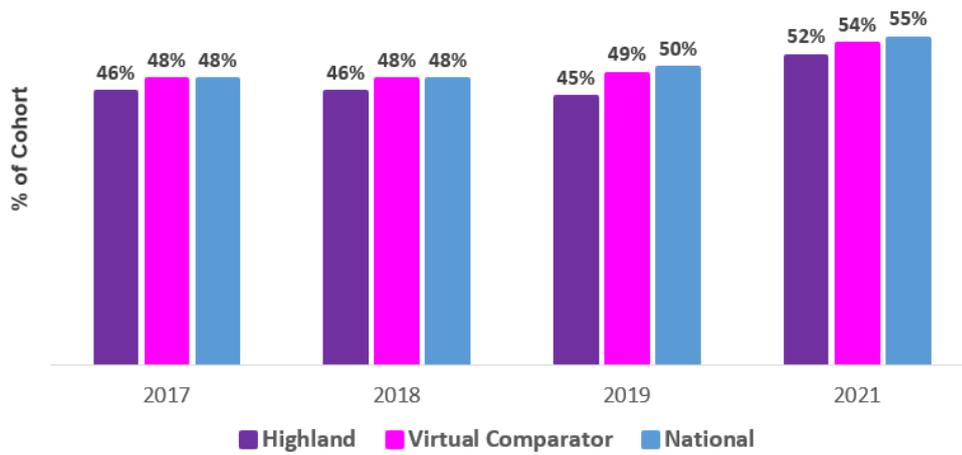
This is an accumulation of level 6 and 7 attainment which may have been achieved prior to S6 within the Senior Phase.

Our S6 attainment is variable across achievement of both 1+ and 5+ qualifications at SCQF level 6. Numbers of young people achieving at least 1+ Advanced Higher is displaying an improving trend, although it remains below the Virtual Comparator. Similarly to S5 performance, we will focus on this measure in scrutiny meetings with Headteachers, with the view of identifying strategies for improvement.

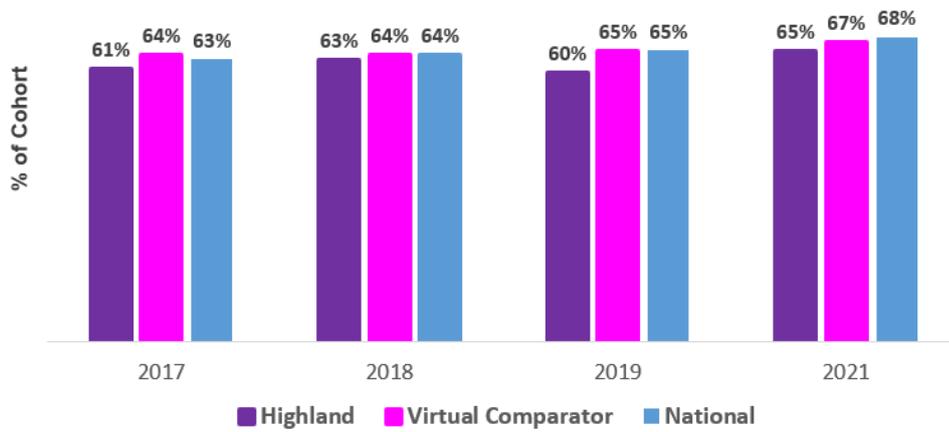
5+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6



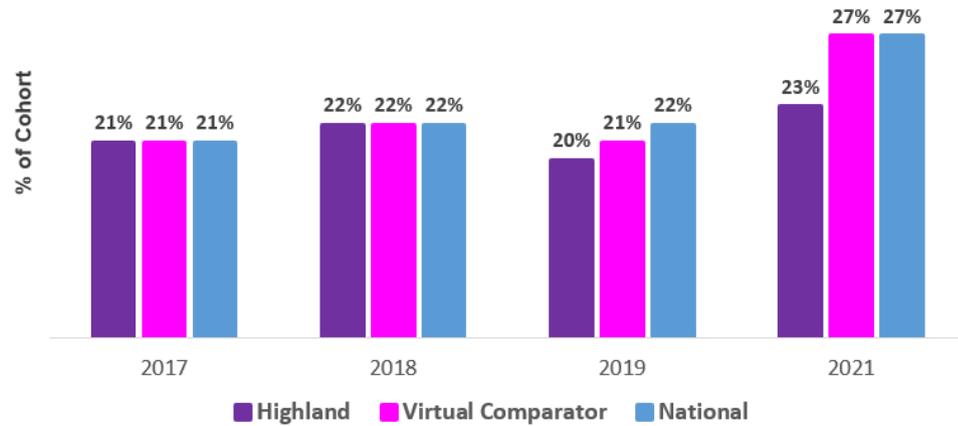
3+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6



1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6



1+ Awards at SCQF Level 7

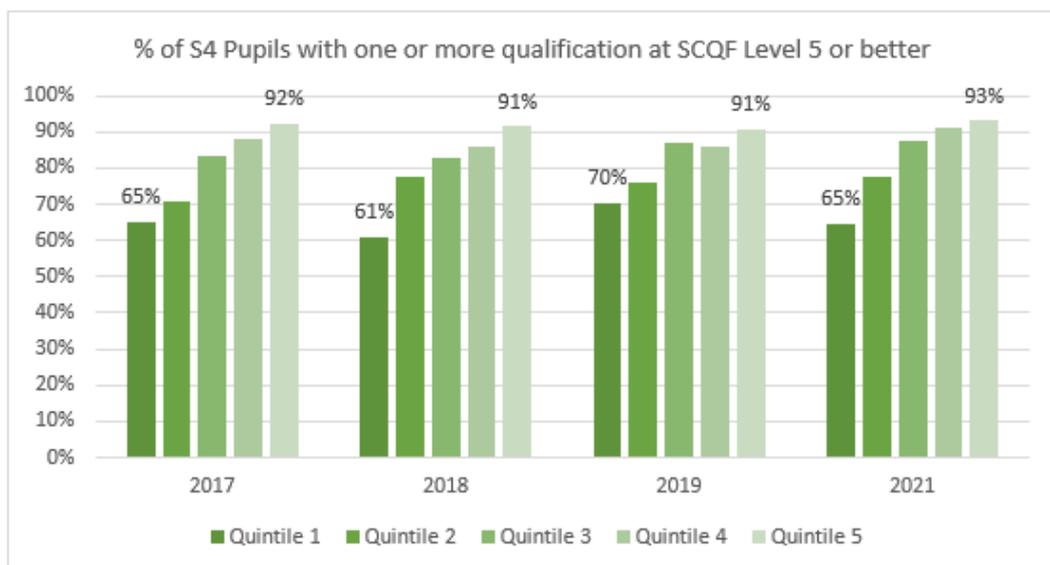


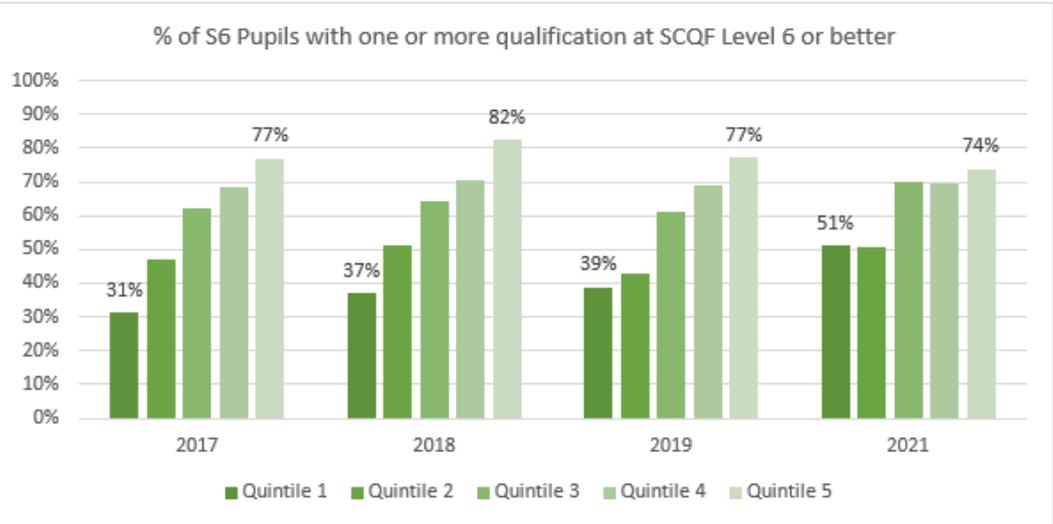
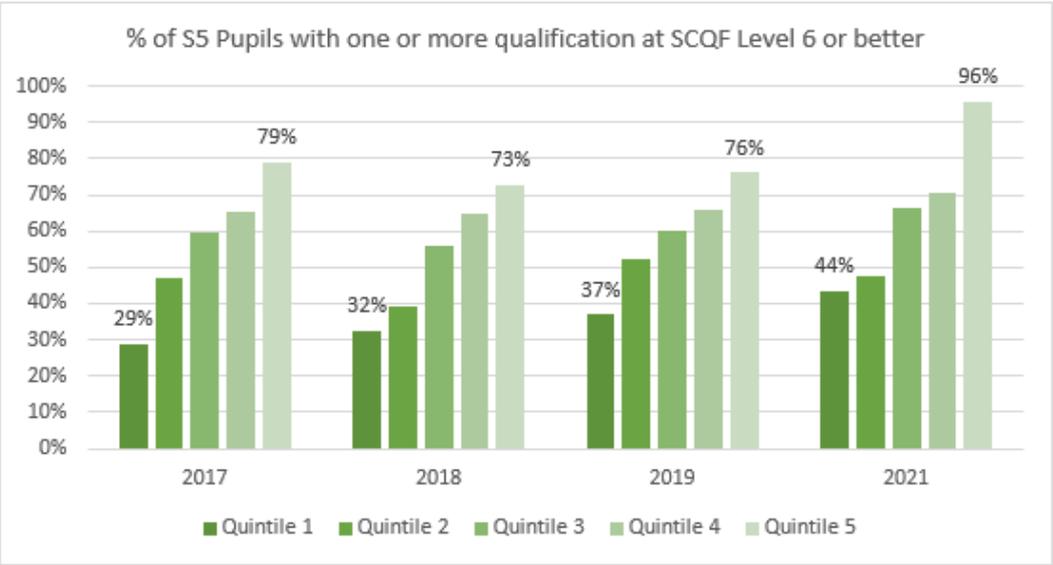
5.4 Closing the Attainment Gap in S4, S5 and S6

The graphs below show cumulative achievement by year group over time.

For Highland in S4 to S6, the awards gained by young people in SIMD Quintile 1 has improved over five years. It is clear that we have been successful in closing the gap at Level 5 and Level 6. The gap in S4 had decreased in 2019. However, in 2021 the gap has again widened. Schools report that Covid has impacted particularly on young people living in deprivation. Our focus on closing the gap will continue through the targeted use of SAC & PEF funding.

Additional support to our Headteachers is also available for our Education Scotland Attainment Advisor on embedding interventions that have been shown to have the most impact on the attainment of young people living in deprivation.





6. Actions for Improvement for Breadth and Depth Attainment:

In response to this data, a number of strategies are already underway which aim to raise levels of attainment across Highland. Progress with these will be monitored and followed up by central officers throughout the session.

Actions for improvement include the following:

- Strategic planning at the authority (through the National Improvement Framework Plan) and local levels (School Improvement Planning) reflecting the ethos and vision of the raising attainment for all and closing the poverty related attainment gap agendas.
- Develop a Quality Improvement framework aimed at supporting Headteachers and schools to improve outcomes. This will include developing peer support for Secondary Headteachers through the establishment of Improvement Support Groupings ([Appendix 1](#)).
- Look outwards to schools in other Local Authorities with good practice and further develop the work of the RIC through collaborative peer challenge and good practice visits.
- Update Highland's Raising Attainment Strategy through a working group led by Headteachers, classroom practitioners and central officers which will include an Authority-wide focus on high quality learning and teaching across all schools.
- As part of our engagement with schools on the OECD review, we will consider the implications of the developments on curriculum developments in our schools. Headteachers and Depute Headteachers are leading the working groups which will be taking this work forward to inform our contributions to the national debate and Professor Ken Muir's report and how our schools respond to decisions made at national level about the future of the Scottish education system.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning

Date: 28 October 2021

Author: Fiona Grant – Head of Service Secondary Education

Appendix 1: Improvement Support Groups

Improvement Support: Group 1	
School	Area
Alness Academy	Mid
Invergordon Academy	Mid
Tain Royal Academy	Mid
Improvement Support: Group 2	
School	Area
Charleston Academy	South
Inverness High School	South
Lochaber High School	South
Wick High School	North
Improvement Support: Group 3	
School	Area
Culloden Academy	South
Inverness Royal Academy	South
Millburn Academy	South
Improvement Support: Group 4	
School	Area
Dingwall Academy	Mid
Nairn Academy	South
Thurso High School	North
Improvement Support: Group 5	
School	Area
Dornoch Academy	North
Kinlochleven High School	West
Mallaig High School	West

Improvement Support: Group 6	
School	Area
Fortrose Academy	Mid
Grantown Grammar School	South
Kingussie High School	South
Portree High School	West
Improvement Support: Group 7	
School	Area
Glen Urquhart High School	South
Golspie High School	North
Ullapool High School	West
Improvement Support: Group 8	
School	Area
Gairloch High School	West
Kilchuiamen Academy	West
Kinlochberrie High School	North
Improvement Support: Group 9	
School	Area
Ardnamurchan High School	West
Farr High School	North
Plockton High School	West