The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	EDU/22/23

Committee: **Education Committee**

Date: **23 November 2023**

Report Title: **Highland Scottish Credit & Qualification Framework Attainment and Scrutiny (Session 2022-23)**

Report By: **Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to members 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.

This report does not cover Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) attainment, as it has not yet been published. A report will be brought forward to committee on this in February. However, our indicative data is showing strong improvement from last year.

The report also indicates how the Head of Service and Collaborative Leads Officers will engage with secondary schools to scrutinise and support the attainment for 2022/23 and set realistic stretch targets with each Secondary School.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

(i) Scrutinise Highland's Senior Phase SCQF Attainment for session 2022/23 and specifically note the improvement in S4 attainment.

(ii) Note that Secondary School-based attainment meetings will take place in November and December 2023 and actions for improvement will be agreed. At these meetings stretch targets for session 2023/24 will be set with each school.

(iii) Note that the Raising Attainment Action plan agreed at the September 2022 Education Committee continues to be used as a key driver to progress the attainment agenda in secondary schools and reduce the attainment gap.

3.   Implications

3.1   Resource - There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations this report.

3.2   Legal - There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

3.3   Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - 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.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed, as the proposals within the report do not currently represent a change to policy.

3.4   Climate Change / Carbon Clever - There are no climate change issues arising from this report.

3.5   Risk - There are no risk implications requiring an addition or amendment to THC's risk register arising from the recommendations in this report.

3.6   Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no health and safety implications arising from the recommendations this report.

3.7   Gaelic - The delivery of better outcomes will build on the recent SQA success of our young people undertaking Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learners Education courses.

4.   Overview

4.1   The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on current progress in improving attainment in the senior phase and closing the poverty related attainment gap. The measures reported are based on The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). 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 qualifications such as SQA National Progression Awards and SQA Skills for Work courses which are graded 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 in the main, 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   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. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a measure of relative deprivation. SIMD classifies areas into five quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 being the least deprived. Appendix 1 of this report highlights the secondary schools in Highland who have learners in Quintiles 1 and 5. Details of cohort size for all Highland schools in S4, S5 and S6 in each of the five quintiles is detailed in Appendix 2. Members should note that compared to Quintiles 2, 3 and 4, the cohort size in Quintiles 1 and 5 are relatively small. This can cause large fluctuations in year-on-year percentages due to the size of the cohort. Therefore, it is important in the Highland context that we look at trends over time for the attainment of these cohorts.

4.4   The impacts of the different approaches to assessment and certification over the past four years means that care should be taken when making comparisons over time. The Scottish Government has cautioned and advised against comparing 2019/20 attainment data with attainment in other subsequent 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 2022-23

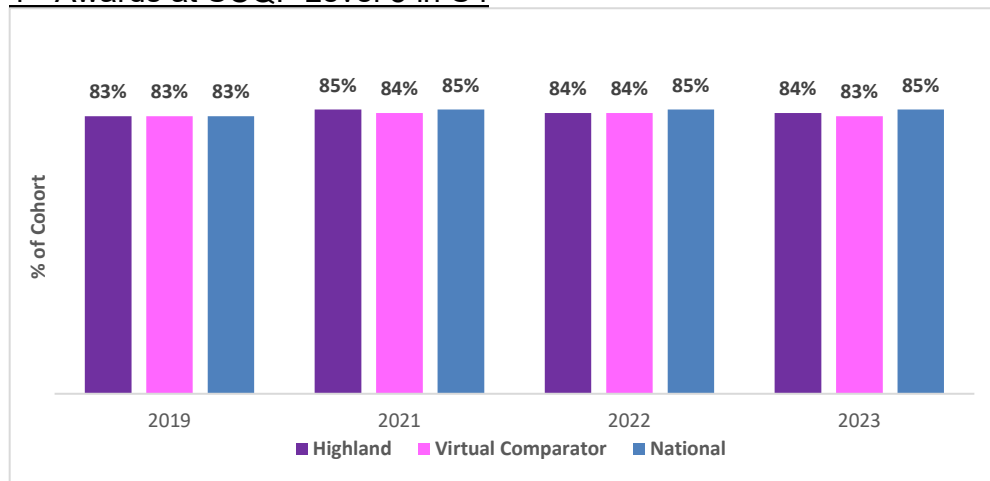5.1   <u>S4 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 5</u>

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, National Progression Awards and other SCQF awards at level 5.

From 2019 the percentage of the S4 learners attaining 5+, and 3+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4 has increased over 4 years with 2023 results maintaining this picture. Although a slight reduction from the previous year for 3+ L5, this is also reflected in the National picture. 5+ L5 attainment remains positive with the slight decline of 1% being mirrored in our virtual comparator but attainment still indicating a 5% increase from 2019 figures.1+ level 5 awards have increased by 2% since 2019, and although the gap to National remains steady, recent results indicate Highland are now above their virtual comparator for this measure. Linking directly to these measures is the positive 7% increase in national 5 resulted entries for S4 coming through 2023 SQA results. Although the S4 roll increased by 3% for this cohort the increase in entries proportionately overtakes this.

Work continues to support schools to develop their senior phase curriculum to increase the number of courses being offered at this level and to effectively track and monitor against target presentations. A breakdown of this support is provided in the next steps sections below.

In addition, the Local Authority has developed and introduced a system that provides live analysis of tracking data for schools and Local Authority officers to better monitor learner's progression and ensure earlier interventions of support are introduced where required. Ongoing work continues to refine and improve this tool during the course of this session.
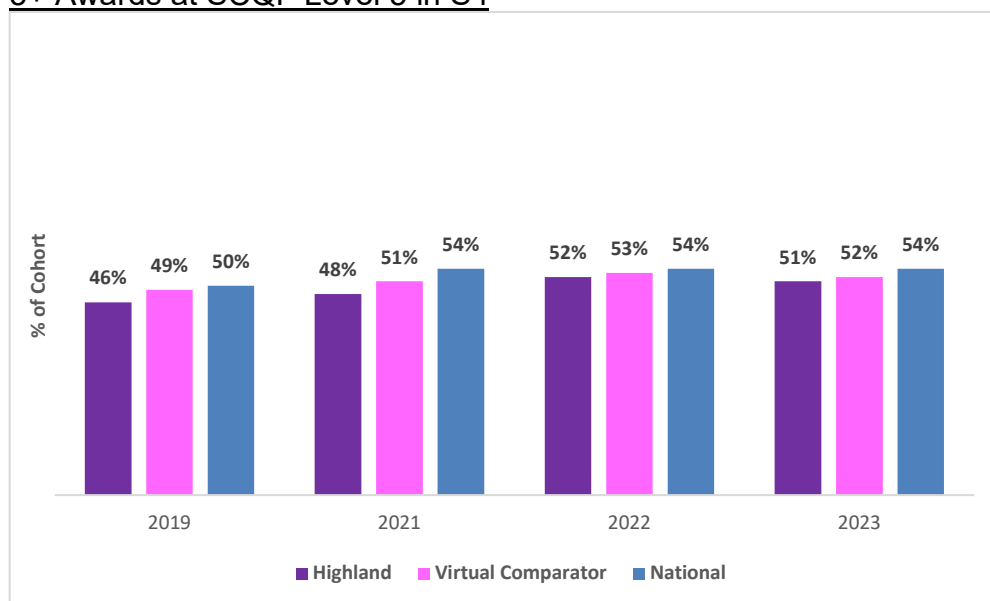
1+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4

3 + Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4
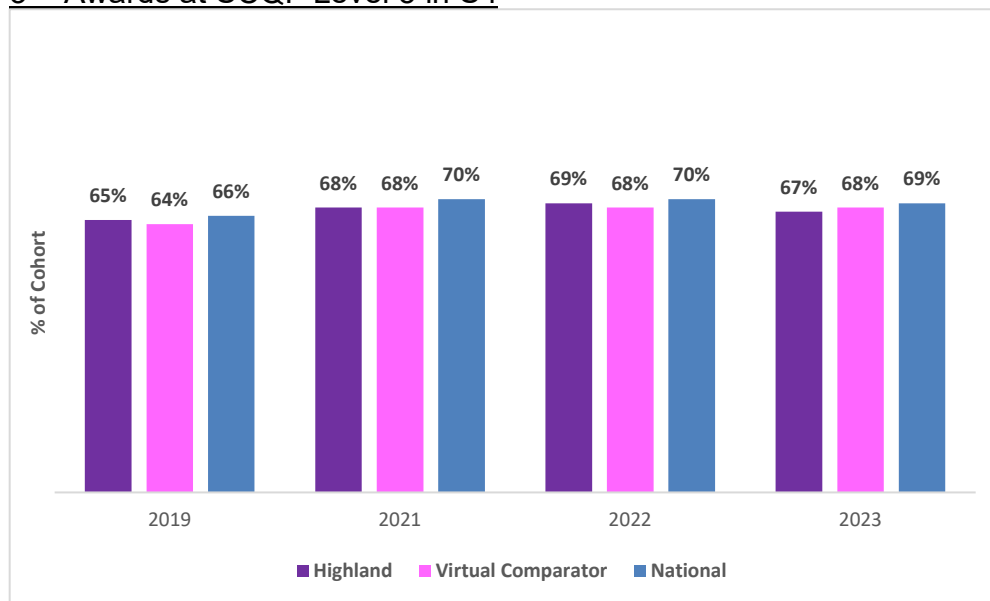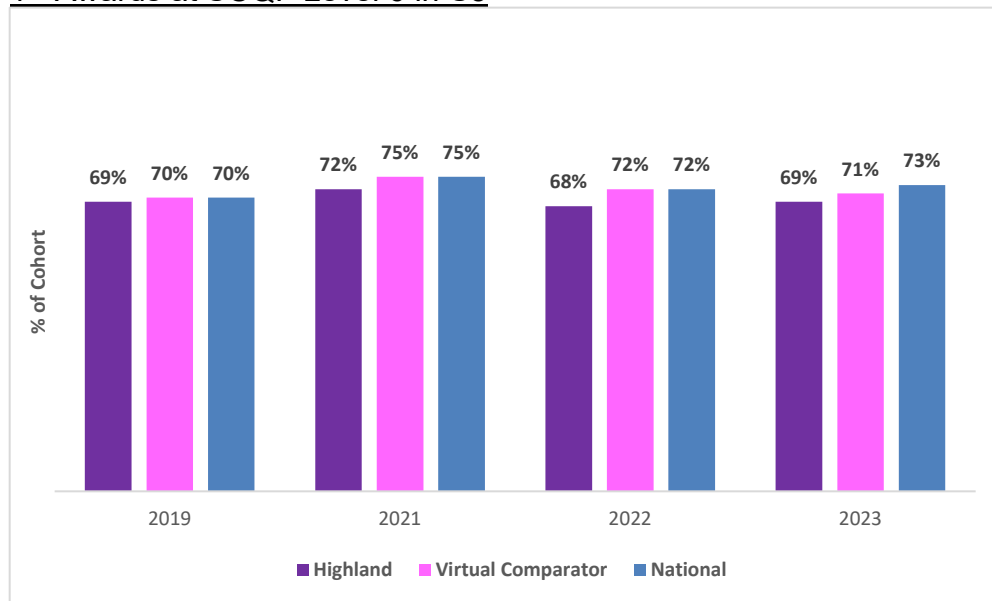

5+ Awards at SCQF Level 5 in S4

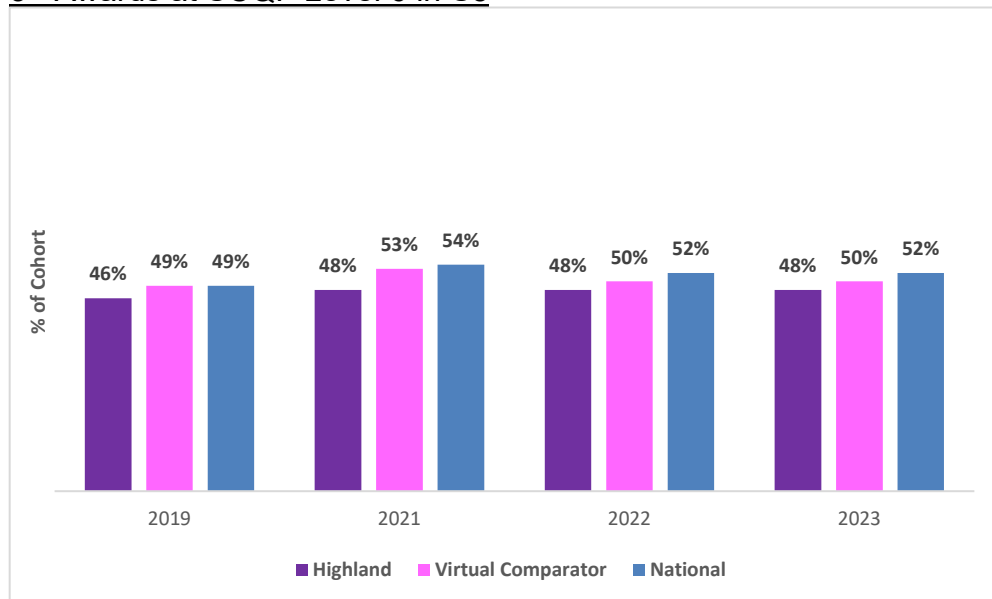## 5.2   S5 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 6

This measure demonstrates how many qualifications S5 learners achieved at SCQF level 6; this includes Highers as well as others, including Skills for Work, Foundation Apprenticeships 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, there has been a slight increase of 1% from the previous year in the percentage of young people attaining 1 or more and 5 or more L6 awards. While this has reduced the gap to our virtual comparator by 2% in 1+ L6, the gap remains to a national comparison in both measures.
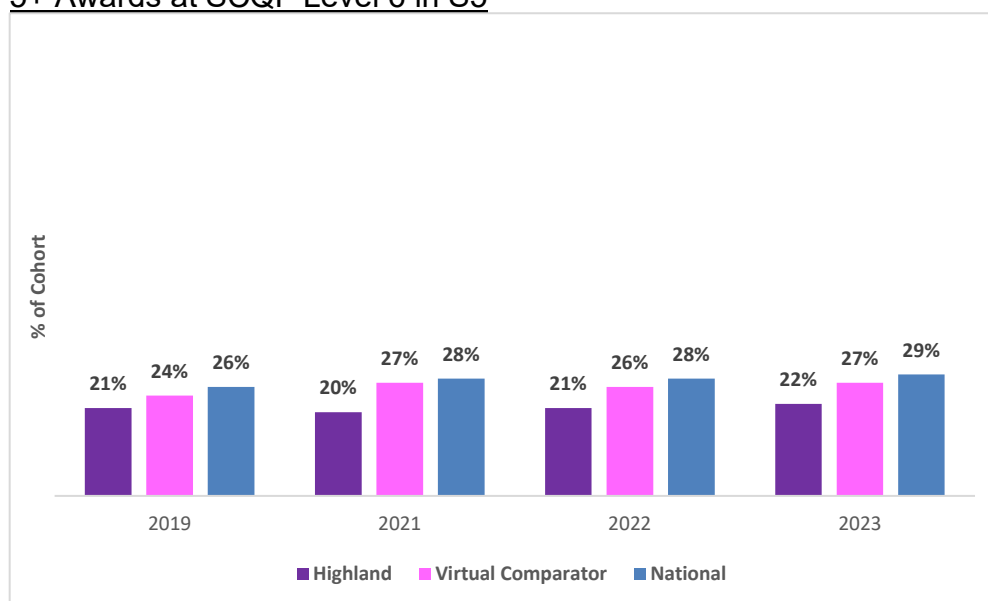
1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5

3+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S5

5+ 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 as well as others, including 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 at both 3+ and 5+ level 6 qualifications has improved over recent years with a 2% increase on the previous year of the percentage of young people attaining 5 or more L6 awards resulting in an overall increase of 5% based on 2019 figures. 3 or more L6 awards remain steady and indicate a closing of the gap to our virtual comparator but both measures remain below National. There has also been a significant 4% increase on the previous year in the percentage of young people attaining 1 or more L7 (Advanced Higher) awards resulting in this figure being the highest in the last 4 years.

A focus for schools is on widening the curriculum sufficiently to allow more opportunities for young people staying on to S6 to attain at least one level 6 award prior to leaving. This may be additional awards /courses that fit their wider achievement/ interests or link to more vocational awards.

1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6
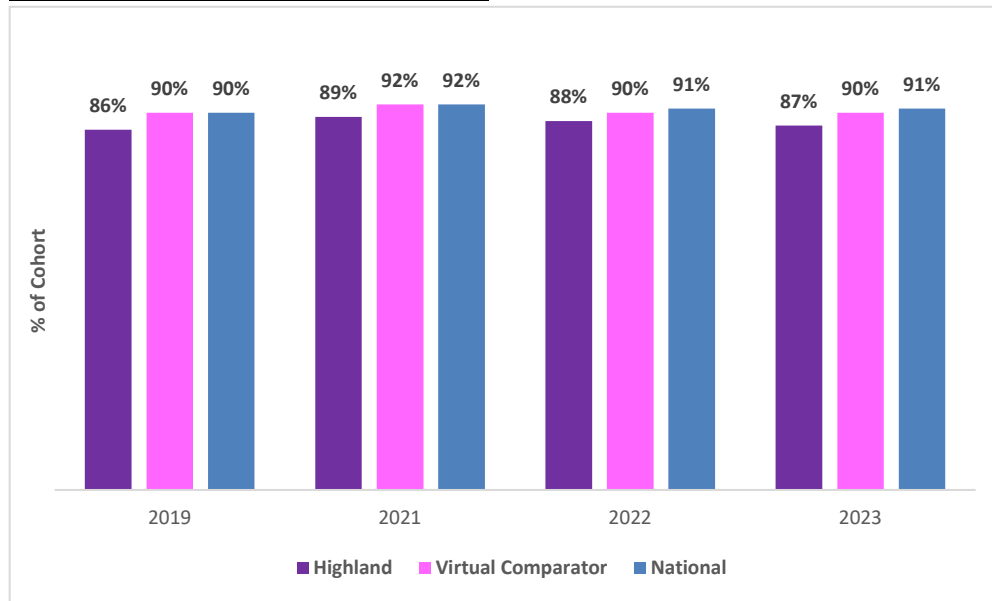
3+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6
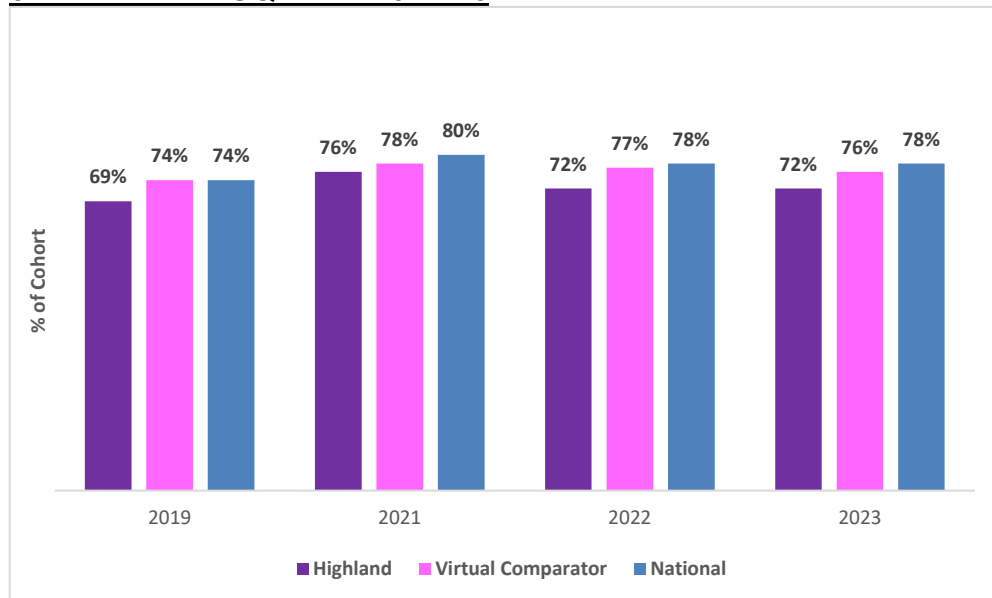
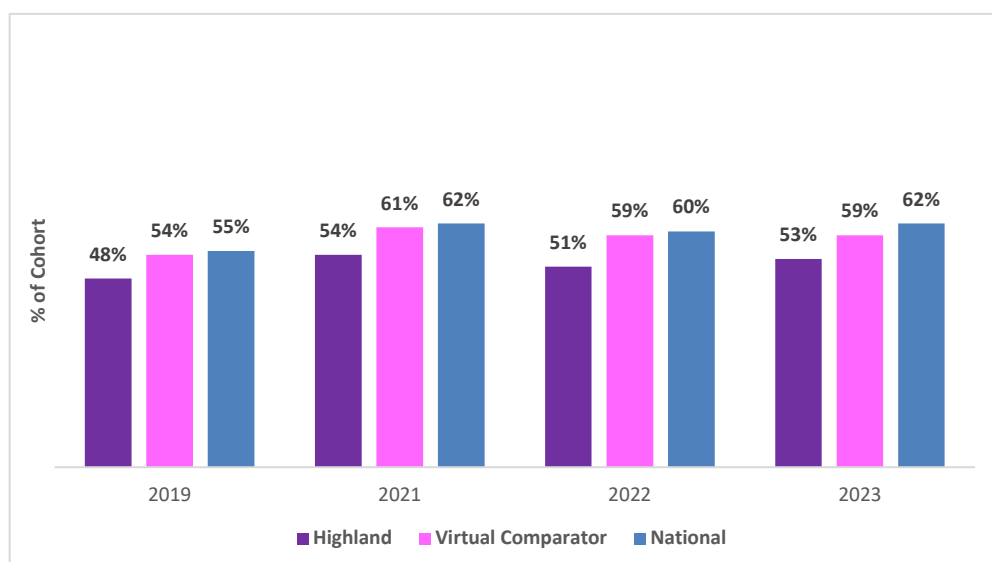## 5+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 in S6

1+ Awards at SCQF Level 7
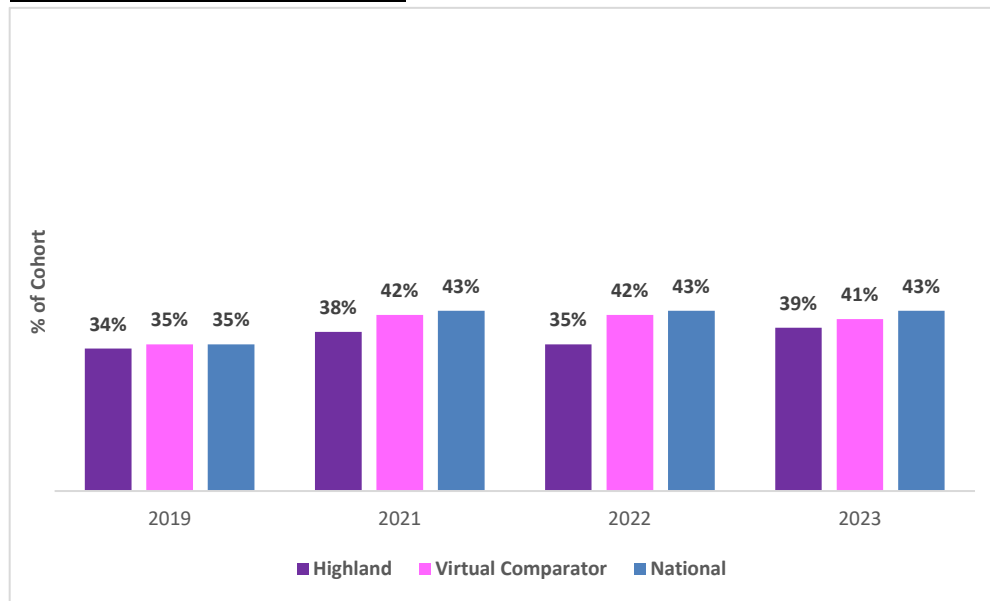
5.4   The Attainment Gap in S4, S5 and S6

The attainment of learners in quintiles 1 and 5, compared to the Highland average is shown in the following graphs. The difference between quintile 1 and quintile 5 is the attainment gap. For Highland in S4 to S6, the awards gained by young people in Quintile 1 has improved and remained steady on 2022 figures for S4 achieving 1+ Level 5 awards. There has been a significant 4% improvement on the previous year for S5 learners from our most deprived areas achieving 1 or more Level 6 awards resulting in a 10% improvement over the last 4 years and reducing the attainment gap for this cohort by 9% over the same time period. A concern however is S6 data for the same measure and cohort indicates a significant decline on previous year's data and work is being done to consider the reasons behind this to support progress moving forward. Meetings specifically focusing on S6 attainment will take place with each secondary school to get a full understanding of the next steps required to support schools in improving the attainment of the quintile 1 cohort in S6.

S4 Cohort 1 @ Level 5 SCQF	Attainment			
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Highland	83	85	84	84
SIMD Quintile 5	91	93	91	90
SIMD Quintile 1	70	65	69	68
Attainment Gap	21	28	22	22

S5 Cohort 1 @ Level 6 SCQF	Attainment			
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Highland	68	72	68	69
SIMD Quintile 5	83	89	76	82
SIMD Quintile 1	45	50	41	55
Attainment Gap	38	39	35	27

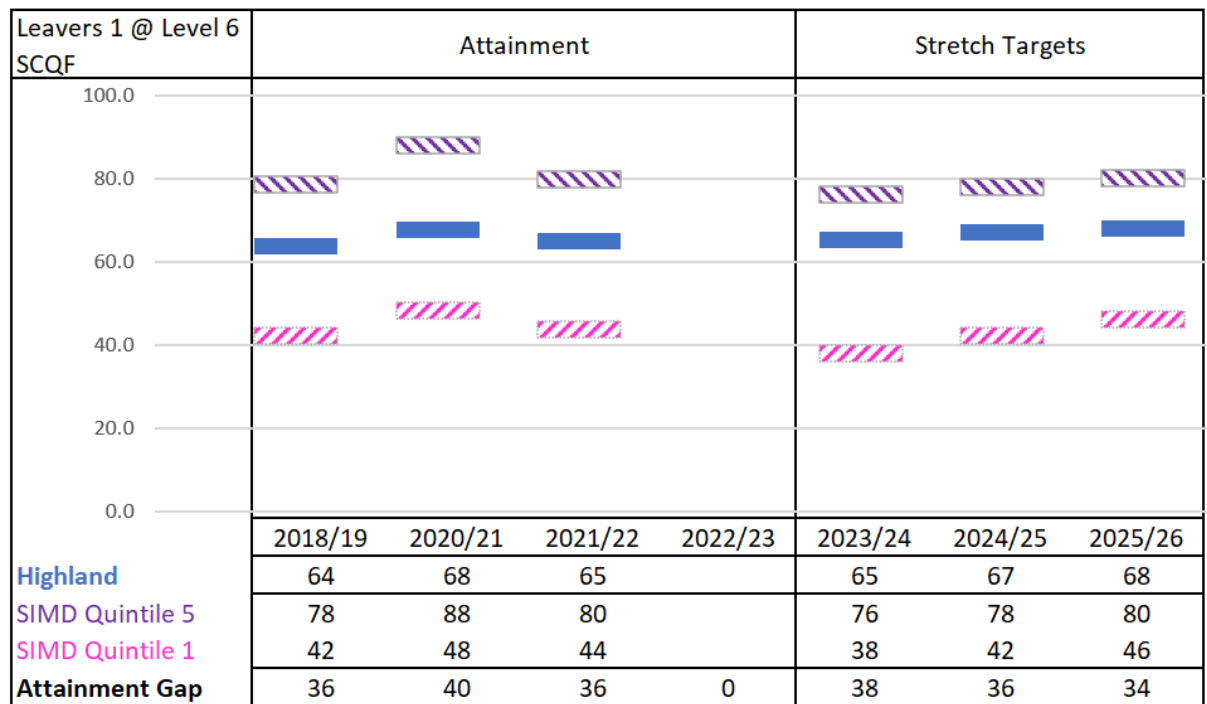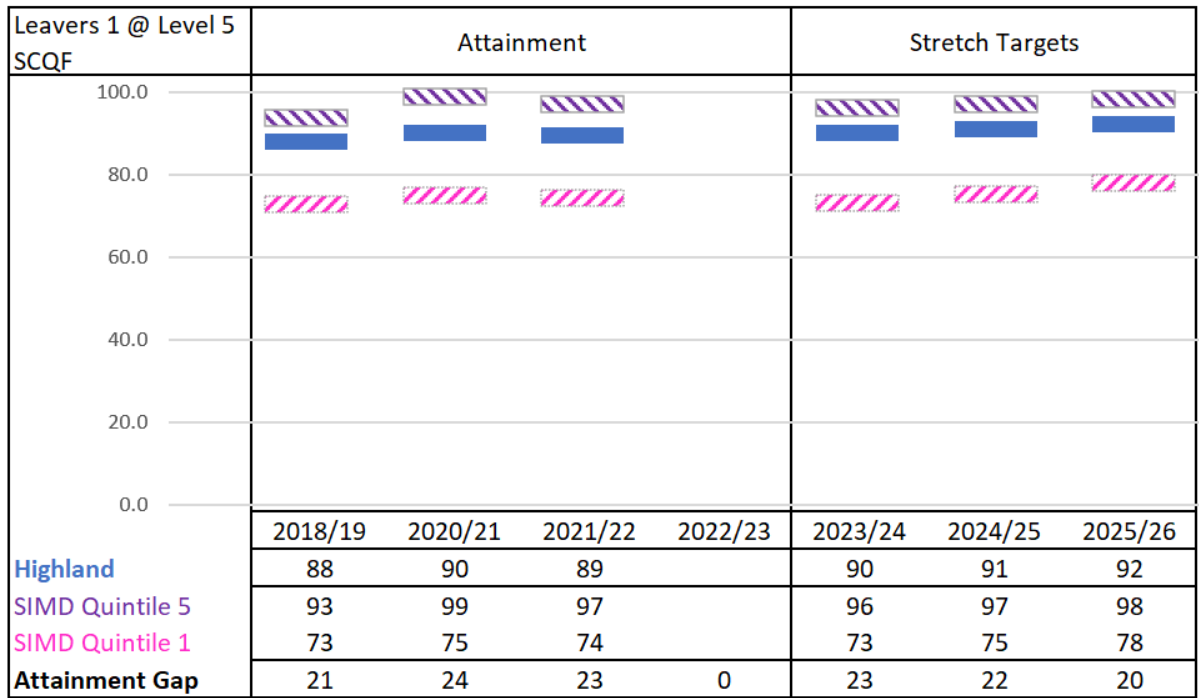| S6 Cohort 5 @ Level 6 SCQF	Attainment			
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Highland	48	54	51	53
SIMD Quintile 5	55	71	63	57
SIMD Quintile 1	24	34	33	25
Attainment Gap	31	37	30	22

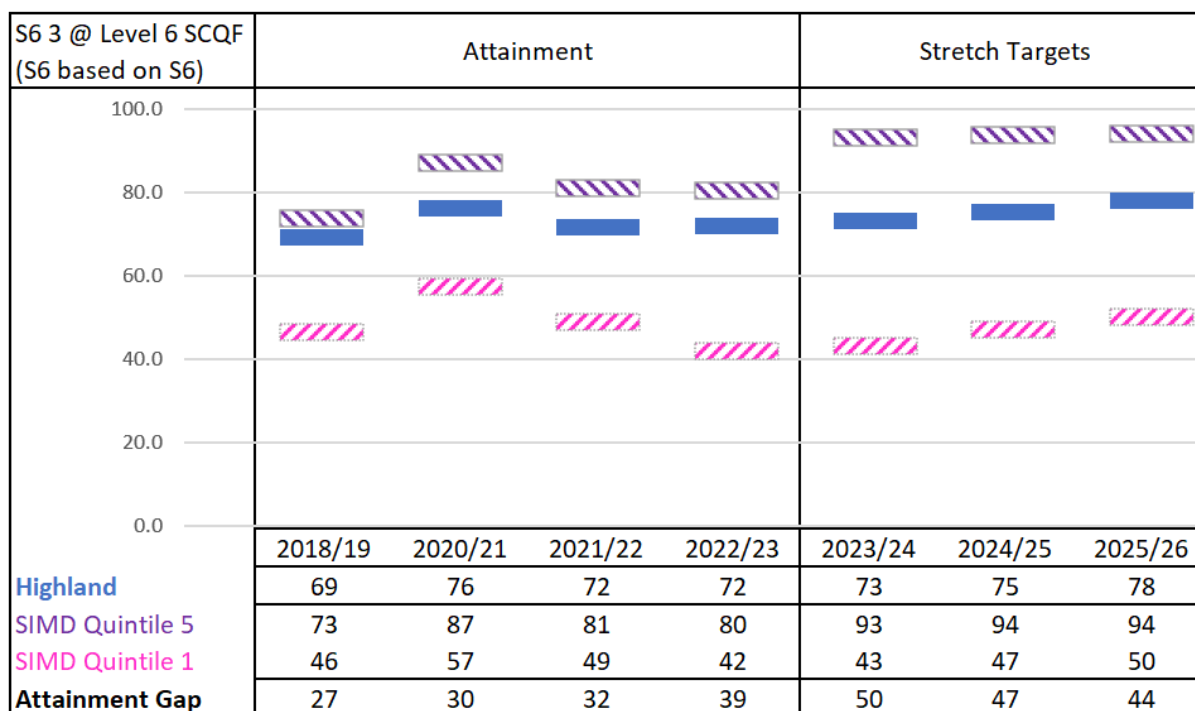### 5.5   Next Steps /actions which will support improvement.

Three-year stretch targets have been set for the Local Authority. These are focused on leavers attainment using the measure 1 @ Level 5 and 1 @ Level 6.

Highland's attainment for 1 or more award at SCQF is the highest that it has been in the past 5 years. It is likely our leavers measure for 2022-23 will be 89%. We have therefore set the target for 2023-24 at 90% which is a 1% increase on the year and a 5% increase over the five-year trend. Over the next two years we are aiming to continue this incremental increase of 1% to give a Stretch Aim of 92%, which is 7% above the Highland data in 2019. For quintile 1, Highland data in 2022 shows 72.3% for the measure which is the lowest in 5 years. We are looking to incrementally increase this by 6% by 2025- 26 which is 10% higher than our figures pre covid. For quintile 5 our aim is to improve by 2 percentage points. With the targets set the gap should decrease from 23 percentage points to 20 percentage points.

The stretch aim for 1 @Level 6, overall attainment in this measure for the past five years has fluctuated from 58% to 64% with no trend emerging. The aim would be to improve attainment in 2023-24 by 1% on our highest figure which was in 2021. We have then set an aim of increasing incrementally to a stretch aim in 2025-26 of 68% which is an 8% increase form 2022. Between 2023 and 2026, we are aiming to increase quintile 1 attainment by 8%, while improving quintile 5 attainment by 4%. This should close the gap by 4%.

Individual stretch targets will be set with each school at attainment meetings held in November and December, with specific targets for the four Scottish Attainment Challenge Schools who have a large proportion of leaners in quintile 1 on their roll. Progress towards meeting these targets will be reviewed in March 2023. Highland's stretch targets will be reviewed annually.

Leavers 1 @ Level 5 SCQF

	Attainment				Stretch Targets		
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Highland	88	90	89		90	91	92
SIMD Quintile 5	93	99	97		96	97	98
SIMD Quintile 1	73	75	74		73	75	78
Attainment Gap	21	24	23	0	23	22	20

Leavers 1 @ Level 6 SCQF

	Attainment				Stretch Targets		
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Highland	64	68	65		65	67	68
SIMD Quintile 5	78	88	80		76	78	80
SIMD Quintile 1	42	48	44		38	42	46
Attainment Gap	36	40	36	0	38	36	34

S6 3 @ Level 6 SCQF (S6 based on S6)	Attainment				Stretch Targets		
	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Highland	69	76	72	72	73	75	78
SIMD Quintile 5	73	87	81	80	93	94	94
SIMD Quintile 1	46	57	49	42	43	47	50
Attainment Gap	27	30	32	39	50	47	44

Further actions for improvement include the following:

- Bespoke school-based attainment analysis sessions with middle and senior leadership teams to focus on the subject and departmental contribution to the whole school attainment. These sessions look in detail at each school's presentation culture, curriculum improvement planning, aspirational coursing, and effective target setting.
- Focused work on teaching approaches to support the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching
- Improved tracking of attainment through the session with positive action taken to support learners who are not achieving as predicted.
- Sharing of good practice between school settings linked to widening of options including timetable and partnership approaches to support enhanced curriculum offer.
- Improved datasets issued to schools to indicate pupil specific data showing individual student attainment profiles.
- Development of an interrupted learners programme delivered through the Highland Virtual Academy and widening senior phase curriculum offer.
- Secondary subject working groups to include sharing of practice around raising attainment, national and local HMI inspections and approaches to broadening curriculum offer linked to ungraded courses within the SCQF framework.
- Closer links to colleges, UHI and local businesses to improve curriculum opportunity and progression.
- Termly area focus on school attendance.
- Area Committee for member scrutiny

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Education & Learning

Date: 25 October 2023

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Appendix 1: Secondary schools with learners in quintiles 1 and 5

(Schools with 10 or more learners in their S4 cohort in relevant quintile)

Quintile 1	Quintile 5
Alness Academy	Culloden Academy
Charleston Academy	Inverness Royal Academy
Invergordon Academy	Millburn Academy
Inverness High School	Nairn Academy
Inverness Royal Academy	
Lochaber High School	
Wick High School	

Appendix 2: Highland Senior Phase Cohort Sizes

S4 Cohort – pupil numbers

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All learners	2344	2363	2502	2446	2515
Quintile 5	257	238	286	161	200
Quintile 4	781	777	821	823	813
Quintile 3	660	701	757	861	860
Quintile 2	447	458	443	353	393
Quintile 1	199	189	195	248	249

S5 Cohort – pupil numbers

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All learners	2099	2068	2059	2250	2141
Quintile 5	227	237	219	206	154
Quintile 4	742	702	672	352	744
Quintile 3	641	586	620	764	735
Quintile 2	350	380	393	352	319
Quintile 1	139	163	155	206	189

S6 Cohort – pupil numbers

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All learners	1579	1420	1435	1461	1576
Quintile 5	197	196	184	115	137
Quintile 4	565	518	517	482	557
Quintile 3	465	424	393	519	526
Quintile 2	253	202	255	221	223
Quintile 1	99	80	86	124	133