

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sue Webber MSP
Convener
Education, Children and Young People
Committee The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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Dear Convener

I am writing to share with the Committee the publication, today, of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Local Authority Stretch Aims for Raising Attainment and closing the poverty-related Attainment Gap.

Through the Scottish Attainment Challenge [Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress](#), all local authorities are now required to set ambitious stretch aims for progress closing the gap. These should be published on local platforms as part of local authority education service improvement plans. A national aggregation of these aims has been published today and is available to access [here](#).

Collectively, the core stretch aims set by local authorities show ambition for both recovery and accelerating progress. Aggregated, they represent local ambitions for improvement both on 2020/21 – the last year of published data when this requirement was introduced – and 2018/19 – the last year of pre-pandemic data. I know that ultimately what matters is the implementation of the plans – supported through Strategic Equity Funding – that underpin the stretch aims and the actual progress made locally throughout the academic year.

Through the refreshed mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the introduction of local stretch aims, we have shifted our focus towards outcomes for our children and young people impacted by poverty. Key to improving those outcomes is the work done in local systems with schools, third sector organisations and other local services.

By introducing a requirement for local stretch aims, we seek to:

- ensure clear local ownership of progress towards the overall mission of the Scottish Attainment Challenge;

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- drive a greater transparency around data for improvement, creating opportunities for learning and partnership working; and
- help address unwarranted variation in attainment and progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap between local authorities.

I very much welcome the Committee's focus on the work of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and trust that the publication of the Local Authority Stretch Aims will be of interest to the Committee. I look forward to further updating the Committee in due course.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

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