

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Initial school attainment Report

Early Years, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Education, Participation and Skills Service has the key responsibility within the Council for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the standards of attainment and achievement, inclusive practice and safeguarding in all Plymouth schools. In Plymouth, many children achieve excellent outcomes, there are examples of great successes happening every day in our schools. However, this is not consistent across all schools or within individual schools for all pupil groups. It is incumbent on all involved within education in the city to do more to ensure that all schools offer high quality learning opportunities, for all pupils.

There are established and strong partnership arrangements in place through the city's 'place-based approach', which are utilised to enable collaboration and working together to support parents and children which is crucial to really making a difference. The collation of headline GCSE results contained within this report, through the Ted Wragg Trust, is a good example of partners working together to understand strengths and areas for development in the city education landscape in advance of lagged statistical release information.

SECTION 1: EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY PHASE

This preliminary report (interim and preceding the validated data report to be shared in January 2026) provides an initial picture of the collective performance of primary schools in the city for academic year 2024-25. The data is early/unvalidated and therefore, subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. Validated data for all cohorts and pupil level groups, together with Department of Education (DfE) national comparators will be available in November/December 2025 when a full report will be shared by EP&S, showing fine analysis on the attainment of groups and trends for groups of pupils compared to regional/national.

* We continue to wait and see if DfE re-introduce the national KS2 progress measures which are useful for schools working in challenging contexts (discontinued during and immediately following the pandemic).
NB: In keeping with national data all city averages are based on outcomes for all schools, including special schools.

Headlines:

- Typically, results show considerable variance across the city, with end of KS2 early combined averages affected by significant differences in school context and cohort size. This variance in end of KS2 attainment outcomes highlights the importance of previously published DfE progress measures, allowing us to see where schools demonstrate good rates of progress from starting points in significantly lower than average and where challenge is high.
- Overall key indicators show positive improvement on the previous year across all phases of primary assessment.
- Early Years outcomes are slightly increased with 67.4% of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of their Reception year, an improvement of 0.7% on last year’s average 66.7% and moving closer to national average 68.3%.
- Year 1 Phonics Screening Check (PSC) outcomes remain strong with 82.6% achieving the expected standard, an increase on 2024 city average 81.2%, and national average 80%.
- End of KS2, overall results are improved on previous year highlighting a continued upward trend in attainment in both the combined average (62.5% at EXS) and individual subjects, with further increase in children achieving greater depth in all subjects.

KS2 ATTAINMENT STATISTICAL RELEASE TIMETABLE

Release	Date
Key Stage 2 early/unvalidated results release	September 2025
Key stage 2 validated/full results release	December 2025 (date TBC) with full report following asap.

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the December validated data release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release.

KEY MEASURES

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is a statutory data collection. Each child's records are combined at local authority and national level to produce a National Statistics publication. The EYFSP measures the achievement of children (at emerging or expected standards) across 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) within 7 overarching areas of development: communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design. Attainment of children in the EYFSP provides us useful information showing the starting point of children in different schools and localities.

Year 1 phonics screening check is a statutory assessment designed to confirm whether pupils have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard (represented by a score of 32). It identifies pupils who need extra help to improve their decoding skills and is a useful measure in identifying early progress in both reading and writing. Outcomes are published annually showing the average achievement of each primary school.

End of Key Stage 2 national curriculum assessments are statutory measures of primary pupils' attainment in English, maths and science. Formal tests (SATs) measure attainment at working towards standard (WTS) expected standard (EXS) or greater depth within the standard (GDS) in English reading and maths, and teacher assessment judgements made against the DfE KS2 Teacher Assessment Frameworks measure achievement of pupils in English writing and science.

School results are published in national performance tables (known as league tables) allowing for comparison between schools and across localities once validated data is complete. The national Floor Standard and national progress measures used to identify schools giving cause for concern (i.e. schools with the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in combined reading/writing/maths below annual national average, and with progress in any one of three progress measures (reading/writing/maths) below a certain standard based on annual national average (*see note above regarding progress measures).

PLYMOUTH DATA HEADLINES

Early Years:

- 67.4% of children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of their Reception year, an improvement of 0.7% from last year's average 66.7% and moving closer to national average 68.3%.
- Children achieved better in both literacy and maths ELGs with 70.1% at expected standard in literacy (previous year 69.1%) and 78.9% in maths (previous year 77.6%)

NB: The EY team will produce an in-depth report on 2025 outcomes showing comparison between city and national averages, together with detail on subject area and group attainment when DfE data is published.

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check (PSC)

- 82.6% of Year 1 pupils achieved the required standard (score 32) in the PSC (an improvement on previous year city 81.2%)
- 51.8% of children achieved a higher score (between 37- 40 marks) signifying strength in phonics across the city
- Positive outcomes in this area reflect the continued legacy of the Plymouth Oracy Project rolled out across the city by PTSA and generally strong practice in the teaching of early phonics, leading to an expectation of continued progress impacting on end of KS2 English writing outcomes.

END OF KS2 ASSESSMENTS:**Overall attainment**

- 62.5% of pupils achieved combined of pupils achieved EXS in reading, writing and maths combined, with 7.7% at GDS (prev. year 61.6% EXS, 6.8% GDS).
- 74% of pupils achieved EXS in reading with 32% GDS (previous EXS 73%, GDS 28%)
- 72% of pupils achieved EXS in writing with 11% GDS (previous EXS 72%, GDS 11%)
- 74% of pupils achieved EXS in maths with 26% GDS (previous EXS 73%, GDS 23%)

Attainment of groups – as noted above, early, unvalidated data does not allow for finer level analysis of progress/achievement of pupil groups. Data is based on all Plymouth schools.

KS2 SUMMARY OF SCHOOL ATTAINMENT

Overall KS2 combined averages are positive, showing a further increase on previous year combined averages and individual subjects for children achieving EXS and GDS. Outcomes may increase further following the autumn checking exercise when headteachers can remove children eligible to be discounted (i.e. new arrivals from overseas, children working below the overall standard of the tests, etc.).

Data shows there is a broad range in attainment across the city and outcomes are not always linked to schools being in areas of highest social challenge/deprivation.

Thirty-seven mainstream primary schools present early outcomes at/above 2024 national average (KS2 combined average 61%) with thirty schools below. This indicates a citywide improvement on 2024 outcomes, but it is still important to challenge low attainment in those schools where we do not see specific causes of low attainment. Three schools present significantly low outcomes: two are engaged in ongoing improvement supported by their respective Trusts, and one, presents atypical results which require investigation (these may be due to a DfE data error or potential maladministration in English writing) and will be followed up by EP&S.

NEXT STEPS BASED ON EARLY OUTCOMES

- Headline data suggests some strong practice in terms of attainment based on high rates of progress, EP&S can work with these Trusts to facilitate opportunities for this to be shared across the city.
- Amongst the LA maintained primary schools 5 of 9 demonstrate positive attainment and significant improvement, and EP&S will continue to work with this group to further support ongoing strengthening of practice across the schools.
- EP&S autumn term School Effectiveness review will enable conversations with Trusts where overall attainment, or attainment in specific schools is lower than expected, and offer advice should Trusts seek to support improvement externally.

SECTION 2: KEY STAGE 4

This section provides an initial picture of the collective performance of secondary schools in the city for academic year 2024-25. The data is early/unvalidated and provided on a voluntary basis by schools. Therefore, data is subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. National comparators from the Department of Education (DfE) are not available at the time of writing and so it is not possible to provide fine analysis of the attainment of groups or hypothesise about trends for groups of pupils; a more detailed report will be produced early in the new year based upon DfE final validated data.

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the October statistical release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release in early 2026. Data in this section of the report is provided by schools via the Place-Based Co-ordinator on a voluntary basis.

Release	Date
Key Stage 4 results release	October 2025 (date TBC)
Revised Key stage 4 revised results release	January – February 2026 (date TBC)

2025 examination series

Individual subject results are not yet validated. Schools will be moving through the appeals process, this in turn will impact on the Basics measure and the attainment. Complete unvalidated data will be published in October 2025, with complete validated data published in January 2026.

This summer’s GCSE results should be seen in the context of a highly unusual educational journey for this year group.

These pupils were in Year 6 at the time of the first national lockdown in March 2020, which meant their final months of primary education and the transition into secondary school were both severely disrupted.

- No Key Stage 2 SATs were taken in 2020, so this cohort entered secondary school without the usual baseline data.
- Their Year 7 experience was also heavily affected by continued lockdowns and restrictions, with significant periods of remote learning and limited access to in-person teaching and wider school life.
- As a result, this is the first GCSE cohort without progress measures such as Progress 8. The Department for Education will not publish these figures because there is no Key Stage 2 baseline against which to measure progress from age 11 to 16.

This means that the 2025 results will be reported on attainment only (for example, the percentage achieving grade 4 and 5 or above in both English and Maths). Attainment provides an important snapshot, but on its own it does not capture the progress pupils have made, nor the challenges many of them faced in their disrupted early secondary years.

It is particularly important to recognise that Plymouth is a city of contrasts. Outcomes are strongly shaped by the community context in which schools operate. Schools serving communities with high levels of deprivation, poverty and additional barriers to learning may show lower raw attainment compared with those in more affluent areas. Normally, progress measures help to balance this picture, demonstrating the gains schools achieve for pupils irrespective of their starting points. With no progress data available this year, the risk is that comparisons will unfairly favour schools in more advantaged areas.

In short, these results provide a useful picture of attainment, but they must be interpreted with caution. They should not be seen as a straightforward reflection of school performance. What is not visible in the national statistics is the hard work of pupils and staff, the resilience shown by this cohort, and the progress many young people have made despite the disruption and challenges of their educational journey.

Key measures

Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list. Each individual grade a pupil achieves is assigned a point score, which is then used to calculate a pupil's Attainment 8 score

The Basis measure (EM 4+ & 5+) provides the percentage of children achieving either grades 4 – 9 or grades 5 – 9 in both English and maths. A pass at grade 4 is considered a standard pass, a pass at grade 5 is considered a strong pass.

Note: There is no **Progress 8** measure this year as there were no Key Stage 2 SATs were taken in 2020 to provide a baseline.

National headlines

The overall percentage of children achieving pass grades in English and maths has fallen compared with last year. Results for the Year 11 (16-year-olds) has fallen slightly. In maths, the results for 16-year-old entries show that 71.9% of pupils achieved grade 4 (C grade equivalent) in maths this year, very slightly

down from 72.0 per cent last year. In English the results for 16-year-old entries show that 70.6% of pupils achieved grade 4 in English this year, slightly down from 71.2% last year.

The national data for the 'Basics' measures (English and maths) for both 4+ and 5+ and also Attainment 8 will not be available until the DfE publishes its provisional statistics in October (this is the same for breakdowns of groups such as disadvantaged pupils). It can be anticipated that with very slight reductions in both the separate English and maths results there will be a slight reduction in the national 'basics' (combined English and maths figures).

Overall, this year, 67.4 per cent of entries were awarded a grade 4 or above. This is slightly less than last year, when 67.6 per cent of entries received a grade 4 or above. The grade 5+ pass rate has risen slightly for the second year in a row from 54.6 % last year to 55% this year.

For the higher grades, the overall proportion of entries achieving a grade 7(A grade equivalent) or higher was 23.0 %. This is very slightly up compared to 2024, when it was 22.6%. A very slightly higher proportion of entries managed to achieve grade 9 with 5.2% compared to 5.1% last year. This is 10.6% higher than in 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels.

Over 40% of entries were graded 9-7 in the triple sciences, with increases in attainment of 2 percentage points in biology and chemistry and 1 percentage point in physics. Given the fall in entries in these subjects, we might assume that the entry cohort was slightly more able than the previous cohort. There has been a national increase in the take up of combined (double award science)

Plymouth mainstream overall outcomes 2025 (Draft and unvalidated)

	2024	2025(provisional)	Difference +/-	National 2024
Attainment 8	47.0	46.3	-0.7	45.9
English and Maths 5+	46%	46%	0%	46%
English and Maths 4+	66%	66%	0%	65%

These figures are provisional 2025 and may increase following appeals, which may be submitted by schools.

Disadvantaged pupils

	2024	2025(provisional)	Difference +/-	National 2024
English and Maths 5+ (Dis)	32%	36%	+4%	26%
English and Maths 4+ (Dis)	51%	58%	+7%	43%

Commentary

All 19 mainstream secondary schools returned preliminary headline results. It is important to reiterate that attainment data is subject to cohort variation where a weaker cohort may have lower attainment than historic cohorts but had progress data been available may have performed in line.

The outcomes are very similar in comparison to those from 2024 for the city and in line or slightly better than the 2024 national data with initial indications that nationally outcomes were slightly lower nationally suggesting that, as a city, outcomes may be slightly higher than national figures when the initial national data is published (October 2025)

The outcomes are generally positive with 7 of the 19 schools having improved outcomes in all headline areas in comparison to last year. Only 3 schools, slipped very slightly in both basic measures but 2 schools had an improved Attainment 8 score. There were 4 schools which performed well below their results last year (“ of these had particularly strong outcomes last year and a drop in attainment was anticipated). 1 school which has historically performed well over time, and which had slipped back significantly last year has returned to stronger outcomes.

The performance of 2 of the schools in the West of the city is encouraging improving in both Basics 5+ and 4+ and both of these 2 schools had improved Attainment 8.

Basics 5+ and 4+ (national benchmark)

10 schools (53%) have delivered increases in the Basics 9 – 5 and 7 (37%) increases in the 9 – 4 measure.

6 (32%) schools are sitting at or above last year’s (2024) national basics 5+ benchmark of 46%, with 8 (42%) above the national Basics 4+ benchmark of 65%. This is repeated when compared to the 2024 Plymouth averages for Basics 5+ and 4+.

Attainment 8 (national benchmark)

The average for Plymouth’s mainstream schools is 46.3 against a national figure in 2024 of 45.9 and a city figure in 2024 of 47.0. 11 schools (58%) have improved or are in line with their 2024 score. 6 (32%) are above last year’s national average of 45.9 points with the same 6 schools above or in line with the 2024 Plymouth average of 47.0 points.

Disadvantaged Pupils*

The performance of disadvantaged pupils is well above 2024 national average figures for both Basics 4+ and 5+ (4% and 7% better respectively).

*the data is not yet available for 3 schools (2 of these schools had significantly stronger overall performance than they did in 2024 so it can be expected that their disadvantaged cohort will also have improved in comparison to 2024.)

Summary

The city average for the headline measures (Attainment 8 and Basics 4+ & 5+) is the same as last year’s figure for the city in 2 of the 3 areas and while it is slightly below in one area (Attainment8) this is in a context of a slight national drop. All 3 of the headline figures are in line or above the 2024 national figure, indicating that when the national data is published the average performance of Plymouth’s schools will be positive.

Initial indications (some data is still outstanding) are that disadvantaged cohort outcomes, will be even stronger than last year when the outcomes for Plymouth's disadvantaged pupils were already well above the national figures (Basics 4+ and 5+). As previously noted, national data will not be available until October, however the indications to date are very encouraging as this has been a priority for the city.

SECTION 2.1: CHILDREN IN CARE – KS4

Cohort context

The Year 11 cohort of children in care for the academic year 2024/5 faced multiple challenges to achieving well in formal exams, with 39% either attending a specialist setting or Alternative Provision, and 33% having an EHCP. Additionally, 1 in 6 students entered care during Y11, half of whom were Separated Asylum Seeking Children, and 38% had homes and schools outside of the Plymouth Local Authority Area.

Outcomes - Exam Results 24/25:

	% of those who sat the exam	% of whole Cohort	2024 (whole cohort)
Maths basic pass (GCSE 4)	19%	11%	13%
Maths strong pass (GCSE 5)	17%	9%	7%
GCSE 1-3 or Other Maths qualification (EL, FS)	69%	48%	39%
Maths achieving their individual target	42%	34%	
English basic pass (GCSE 4)	23%	13%	7%
English strong pass (GCSE 5)	17%	9%	9%
English achieving their individual target	44%	30%	
GCSE 1-3 or Other English qualification (EL, FS)	65%	44%	39%
Maths and English basic pass (GCSE 4 in both)	14%	8%	9%
Maths and English strong pass (GCSE 5 in both)	14%	8%	4%

Commentary

95% of this year's cohort were engaged in a registered school education at the time of their Y11 exams. The remaining pupils who did not have a registered school were however in receipt of education through a bespoke tutoring offer.

Initial exam results indicate that 20% achieved a basic or strong pass in maths and 22% achieved a basic of strong pass in English. Notably, 33% of students had an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), which skews comparative analysis with the wider cohort.

This year, due to increased early intervention with tutoring offer and early outreach for Y11 students, 81% have a secure post 16 offer for the new academic year. This is a 12% increase on last year and the remaining 19% have all been referred for Post 16 outreach and engagement support.

SECTION 3: KEY STAGE 5

This section provides an initial picture of the collective performance of secondary schools in the city for academic year 2024-25. The data is early/unvalidated and provided on a voluntary basis by schools. Therefore, data is subject to change during the autumn checking exercise in schools. National comparators from the Department of Education (DfE) are not available at the time of writing and so it is not possible to provide fine analysis of the attainment of groups or hypothesise about trends for groups of pupils; a more detailed report will be produced early in the new year based upon DfE final validated data.

Cohort level analysis in relation to gender, special educational needs and disadvantage will be available from the October statistical release. National benchmark data will be available following the statistical release in early 2026. Data in this section of the report is provided by schools via the Place-Based Co-ordinator on a voluntary basis.

Release	Date
Key Stage 5 results release	October 2025 (date TBC)
Revised Key Stage 5 revised results release	January – February 2026 (date TBC)

Key measures/terms

Average point score (APS)

The average point score (APS) that students achieved per entry, Where an A level grade A* is 56 points, A is 48 points, B is 40 points, C is 32 points, D is 24 points and an E is 16 points.

A Level academic

A-Level qualifications such English language, mathematics, geography, French, physics etc.

Applied general

Level 3 qualifications with a vocational focus, including, Applied science, business, and health and social care, to accountancy and horticulture.

Tech Level

Tech levels are rigorous advanced (level 3) technical qualifications on a par with A Levels

The national picture

- Nationally more than 800,000 A level results were issued to student in England, with grades determined by their performance in their exams and assessments. Over 250,000 vocational and technical results were issued to students alongside A levels.
- The number of A levels taken by 18-year-olds in England:

Number of A levels taken	Number of students	% of students
1	30,320	10.8%
2	49,795	17.7%
3	186,945	66.3%
4	14,545	5.2%
5 or more	195	N/A

- Overall, the A level results across England were similar to 2024 (very slightly up). But it's worth noting that grades in 2023 were already slightly higher than the typical pre-pandemic level. With the increases since then, the percentage of entries achieving a grade A or A* is now three percentage points higher than in 2019.
- Further, more detailed information will not be available until the first full publication of provisional national data in October.

The Plymouth picture

	2024	2025	Difference +/-	National 2024
A Level Academic APS	33.3	31.7	-1.6	35.5
A Level Applied APS	28.3	29.4	+1.1	29.1
A-Level Progress	-0.22	+0.10	+0.32	-
Applied Progress	0.06	+0.21	+0.15	-

Summary

It should be noted that the cohort size for +16 results is typically about 1/3 the size of the GCSE cohort and as such attainment outcomes are subject to greater volatility and variation from one year to the next. The overall performance in A-level academic Average Point score is below that in 2024, however the reverse is true for A -Level Applied outcomes.

Of the 15 schools for which data was available, 9 (64%) improved their A-Level Average Point Score from 2024. 7 out of 12 schools (58% - 2 schools included do not have data for applied general qualifications as they may not facilitate these courses) improved their Applied Average Point Score compared to 2024 and 6 (50%) improved in both metrics.

Of the 12 schools where progress data is available 8 have positive progress for A-level qualifications. The overall average for the city is projected to be positive at +0.10 in comparison to a negative progress figure in 2024. This improvement is replicated for Applied Progress which was positive in 2024 at +0.06 but is now improved to +0.21. 7 schools had positive progress in both metrics.

Further analysis will be possible when national data is published in October.

SECTION 3.1: CHILDREN IN CARE – KS5

Cohort context

This year 30% of the Year 13 Children in Care cohort had an EHCP, and 66% were engaged in Education, Employment or Training. 20% had homes and Education, Employment and Training opportunities outside of the Plymouth Local Authority Area. 16% were Separated Asylum Seeking Children and also 16% had entered care during Key Stage 5. The 33% who were Not in Education Employment or Training had support provided from the Virtual School outreach officer.

Outcomes - Exam Results 24/25:

This year 62% of our Year 13 students achieved a wide range of qualifications, from ESOL, Entry Level English and Maths, all the way to A-Levels and BTEC National Diplomas.

- Of the students who undertook T-Level studies, 66% continued on to their second year next year and 30% gained an Award in Health and Safety in Construction and their CSCS card.
- 26% of our students are continuing their FE studies at a range of providers post 18 such as On Course South West, GHQ training, Post 16 Specialist providers and City College Plymouth.
- 8% of the cohort have secured apprenticeships and a further 10% have confirmed employment as care leavers.
- 55% of those with an EHCP have either a confirmed employment or training provider in place for September.
- 38% of our young people in Y13 were Not in Education Employment or Training at the end of the year, and gained no post 16 qualifications during this period. However, all were referred to Skills Launchpad and the Virtual School Outreach team for support during Y13, with around half engaging successfully with the team. Most of these young adults from the cohort have now been referred for further support from the new Virtual School Care Leavers EET Advocate in September 2025.

ACTIONS

What	When	Who
Utilise feedback from the 2024/25 assessment outcomes to facilitate opportunities for those schools/Trusts identified as presenting best practice examples for accelerating the progress of children who are disadvantaged or have SEND.	31 January 2026 (depending on the data release date)	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer, PCC Graham Roser, Education Improvement Partner, PCC April Davies, Service manager Early Years and Childcare PCC
Identify those school leaders who are implementing impactful strategies to support children who experience disadvantage or who have a special education needs so that they can be included in relevant strands of the 'place-based' plan.	31 January 2026 (depending on the data release date)	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer, PCC Graham Roser, Education Improvement Partner PCC Rob Williams, Place-Based Co-ordinator
Carry out in-depth analysis of the disadvantaged cohort & children with SEND based on validated data at all key stages.	31 January 2026 (depending on the data release date)	Lucinda Ross, Education Improvement Officer; Graham Roser, Education Improvement Partner and Tina Brinkworth, Head of Post-16 and Skills
The virtual school has a clear action plan for the children within it's remit in response to the outcomes and information from this summer's results	31 October	Lee Earnshaw – Head Virtual School PCC