

The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. We want to work with Government, local authorities, health bodies as well as our third sector partners to ensure they can effectively support deaf children and their families.

1. Background

We met with Committee members in private on 12 December 2018 where there was discussion on the attainment gap that deaf learners continue to experience in education. Specifically, whether the attainment profile of this group was improving. To better outline the current picture we have provided further information on the attainment of deaf pupils according to the most recent Scottish Government data.

The attainment agenda is rightly a key priority for the Scottish Government. The initiatives that are being taken forward to drive this offer opportunities to achieved the shared aspiration of inclusive education for every learners, including those with additional support needs. The attainment gap experienced by deaf children and young people persists in Scotland. Deafness is not a learning disability but deaf learners consistently do worse than their hearing peers in Scotland.

2. Context

- There are at least 3174 deaf children and young people in Scotland today¹;
- 90% of deaf children have hearing parents or carers, this makes support, intervention and information in the early years crucial for families, to ensure children have the best start in life;
- Around 87% of deaf children are educated in mainstream schools, making additional specialist support crucial to ensuring these learners reach their full potential;
- The specialist teacher workforce continues to face challenges with data suggesting overall reductions in numbers of Teachers of the Deaf in education authorities between 2015 and 2017.²
- With the right support, deaf young people can achieve as much as their hearing peers. However we continue to be concerned about the persisting education attainment gap facing deaf young people.

3. Summary

Scottish Government data shows that there is a significant attainment gap for deaf school leavers and the attainment of this group is among the lowest of all pupils in Scotland. The data published in 2018 for the 2016/17 cohort of school leavers illustrated a significant attainment gap that still exists for deaf learners:

¹ Consortium for Research Into Deaf Education, 2017, CRIDE report on educational provision for deaf children in Scotland

² Consortium for Research Into Deaf Education, 2017, CRIDE report on educational provision for deaf children in Scotland

- 9.4% of deaf learners left school with no qualifications (compared with 2.5% of all pupils) and 42.4% obtained Highers or Advanced Highers (compared with 60.3% of all pupils). The gap continues post-school with 25.2% of deaf learners going on to university compared with 47.3% of those with no additional support needs.

We are concerned that the number of deaf young people obtaining no qualifications continues. Additionally, the numbers obtaining Highers and Advanced Highers is down by 1.8% from last year's figures. Similarly, those entering university is down by 10.9% from last year's cohort. Entry into Further Education has improved slightly (1.4%) and continues to be the most popular destination.

Over the last three years the overall attainment of deaf learners has improved, as is the case with all pupils, which is positive. However it is important to note that on a number of indicators, such as numbers leaving school with no qualifications and those qualifying to enter Higher Education, this group has a worsening attainment profile in 2016/17.

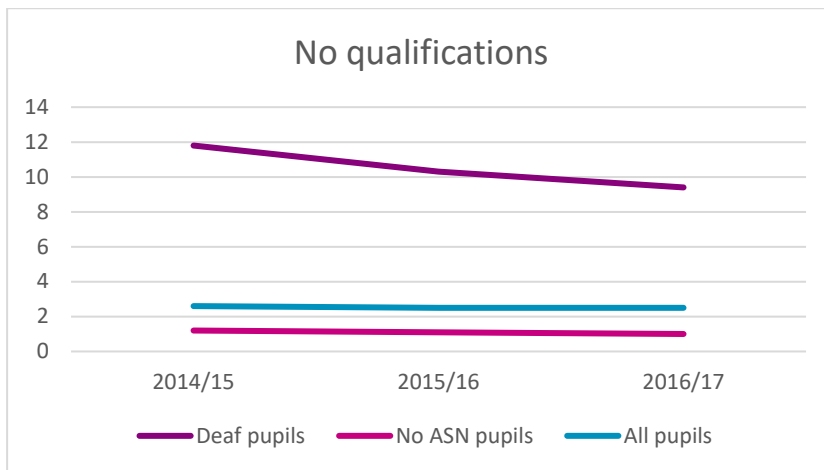
4. Statistics in context

- Comparison of pre 2015 data is challenging as this marked the first year of the new set of results from the new qualifications framework, with National 4 and 5 qualifications replacing Standard Grades. A key difference with the new qualifications is how they are assessed.
- There are 7 methods of assessment being used by practitioners, only one of which is written tests or examination. The others are: projects, assignments, practical activity, portfolio, case study and performance.
- The shift towards continual assessment and away from written examination has the potential to benefit deaf learners where they are being effectively supported and appropriate reasonable adjustments made.
- Deafness can impact negatively on a child's working memory skills, being able to hold information in mind while working on related activities – crucial for successful traditional written examinations.
- Deafness is a low incidence ASN and every year the number of school leavers in Scotland is small and can naturally vary. In 2018 the number of school leavers increased to 278 from 253 the previous year. With varying cohort sizes, it is more difficult to identify trends year on year and account for fluctuations in statistics.

5. Attainment data

5.1. School leavers with no qualifications at SCQF Level 2 or better (%)

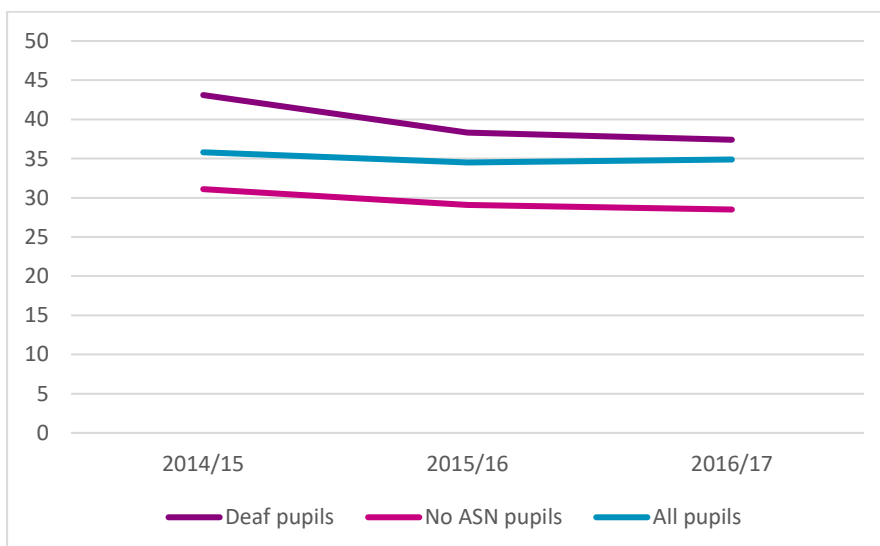
No qualifications			
	Deaf pupils	No ASN pupils	All pupils
2014/15	11.8	1.2	2.6
2015/16	10.3	1.1	2.5
2016/17	9.4	1	2.5



We continue to see a disparity between the number of deaf children leaving school with no qualifications compared with that of all school leavers, with 9.4% being a significant percentage of a small cohort.

5.2. Numbers obtaining National 4 and National 5 qualifications only (possibly qualifying for FE but not HE)

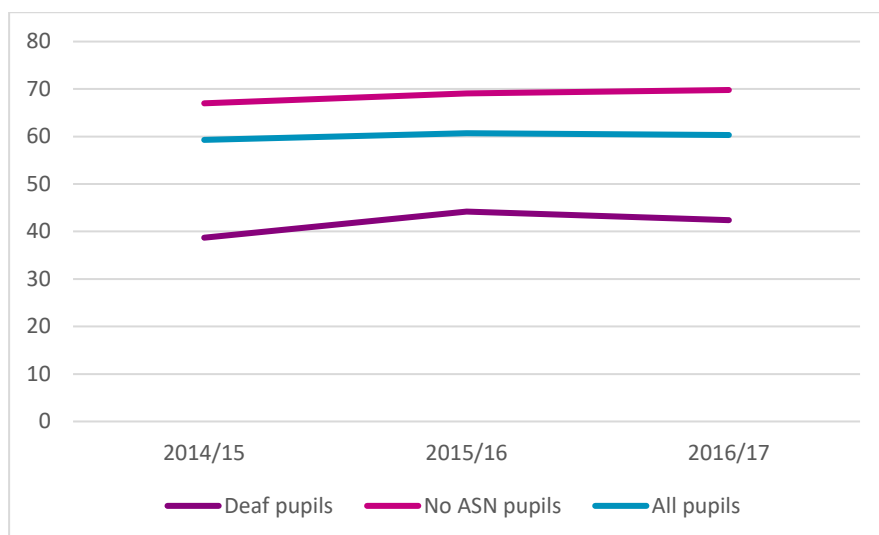
	Deaf pupils	No ASN pupils	All pupils
2014/15	43.1	31.1	35.8
2015/16	38.3	29.1	34.5
2016/17	37.4	28.5	34.9



The number of deaf school leavers obtaining N4 and N5 as their highest qualification has reduced by 5.7% for the last two years cohorts. The reasoning behind the continuing drop in numbers on this particular indicator in recent years is of concern and requires further examination. Currently data is not collected on the experiences of deaf learners in FE settings and how they transition out of college into sustainable employment.

5.3. Numbers obtaining Highers and Advanced Highers, SCQF6 & 7 (qualifying for HE)

	Deaf pupils	No ASN pupils	All pupils
2014/15	38.7	67	59.3
2015/16	44.2	69.1	60.7
2016/17	42.4	69.8	60.3



We are particularly concerned that numbers of deaf pupils obtaining Highers/Advances Highers has dropped from last year's cohort whilst those with no ASN has increased slightly. There continues to be a significant, widening, gap (27.4%) in deaf learners obtaining these qualifications compared with their hearing peers.

6. School leavers destinations

6.1. Numbers entering FE (initial destination)

	Deaf pupils	No ASN pupils	All pupils
2014/15	46.1	24.6	27.9
2015/16	37.4	23.1	Data not available
2016/17	38.8	22.5	Data not available

Deaf pupil's access to college has increased slightly from last year's cohort. College continues to be the preferred post-school destination for the majority of deaf school leavers.

6.2. Numbers entering HE (initial destination)

	Deaf pupils	No ASN pupils	All pupils
2014/15	22.1	43.6	38.2
2015/16	36.1	45.9	Data not available
2016/17	25.2	47.3	Data not available

There has been a significant drop (10.9%) in numbers of deaf learners entering HE in this year's cohort. This is especially worrying since the number of pupils entering HE with no ASN has seen an increase (1.4%).

As with previous years data, there continues to be a significant gap (22.1%) in access for deaf school leavers to HE when compared with pupils with no ASN. This gap has increased by 9.8% compared with last year's cohort.

Recommendations

- We recommend a ToD workforce planning exercise is undertaken urgently to include the training and upskilling of professionals working with deaf pupils in the classroom.
- Supporting and investing in the Teachers of the Deaf workforce to achieving higher levels of British Sign Language.
- We recommend that peripatetic Hearing Impairment education services should be subject to inspection by Education Scotland.
- We recommend refreshing the [Count Us In: achieving success for deaf pupils guide \(which we produced in partnership with HMIE in 2007\)](#) and that a quality framework is established for teachers working with deaf learners, overseen by an external independent body.
- We recommend making Buildings Bulletin 93 statutory in Scotland so that future schools in Scotland will have sound acoustic environments for all children to learn. This should include pre-completion testing.