



## **Agenda Item 7**

**Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)  
– Attainment in Falkirk in 2016/17**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) – Attainment in Falkirk in 2016/17

**Meeting:** Education Executive

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018

**Submitted By:** Director of Children's Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report follows on from the previous report in November 2017 to the Education Executive on the attainment of Falkirk's senior phase pupils in session 2016/17. The purpose of the current report is to advise on the attainment of young people leaving Falkirk Council's secondary schools in 2016/17. The report therefore focuses solely on point of exit data.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 The Education Executive is asked to:-**

- (1) note Falkirk Council secondary school leavers' results for 2016/17; and**
- (2) request that the Director of Children's Services will continue to engage with schools on tracking and monitoring pupil's progress, and with partners in planning for positive leaver destinations**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) comprises a broad general education up to the end of S3 followed by a senior phase of learning from S4 to S6.
- 3.2 During the senior phase a young person builds up a range of qualifications, following a curriculum pathway that best meets their needs and interests. The leavers cohort considered in this report will consist of young people exiting from the senior phase of their education variously at the end of S4, S5 and S6. The measures within the report tell us how well they have attained at their point of exit from school, and their destination beyond school (captured at a snapshot date on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017).

**4. Considerations**

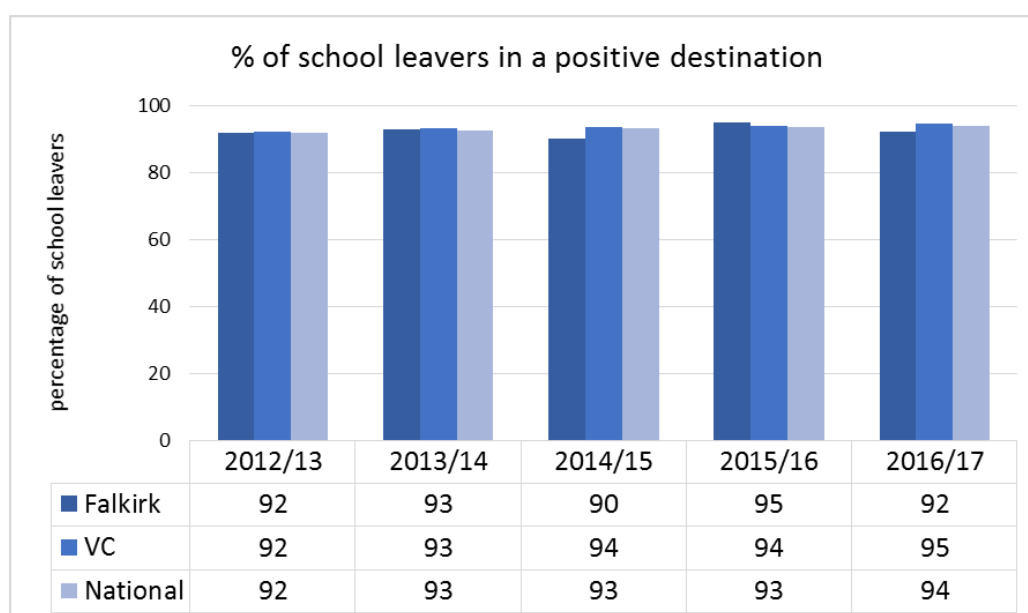
- 4.1 The performance information for Falkirk Council schools in this report is benchmarked against the national average and a 'Virtual Comparator' (VC).

The VC is made up of pupils from schools in other local authorities who have similar characteristics to the pupils in our schools, based on their gender, additional support needs (ASN), level of deprivation (SIMD) and leaving stage. The VC calculation takes no account of characteristics such as Looked After status or Level of English, nor does it take account of varying curriculum structures in schools. The VC benchmark should therefore be treated with some caution. The Falkirk measures should be compared to both the VC and national averages.

- 4.2 The Insight data shown in this report covers a five-year period, and therefore includes performance information pre-dating the first diet of CFE qualifications in 2014. The Scottish Government has retrospectively calculated prior performance by aligning old and new qualifications. However, some caution should be used when making comparisons over time, especially in literacy and numeracy measures.

### School Leaver Destinations

- 4.3 The chart below shows the percentage of school leavers entering a positive destination over the past 5 years. It compares Falkirk Council with the Virtual Comparator and with the national average.

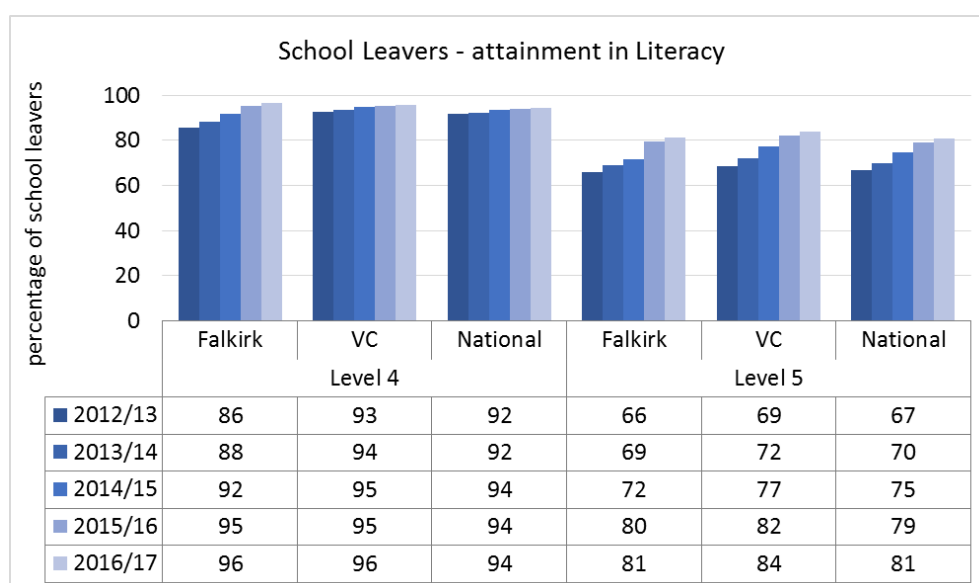


- 4.4 Falkirk schools have seen an improving trend over the past decade. The drop in performance in 2014/15 was apparent rather than real and this was rectified in the Follow-Up data on the same group of leavers that was gathered in 2016.
- 4.5 2015/16 saw a resumption of the positive trend in the percentage of young people entering a positive destination on leaving school with the highest it has ever been for Falkirk Council schools - higher than both the national average and the VC figure.
- 4.6 The percentage of Falkirk leavers (92%) in a positive destination at the point of snapshot (3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017) is below that of the virtual comparator (95%) and the national average (94%). This less positive outcome requires some further analysis, given below:

- 4.7 Of the 8% (125) of leavers not in a positive destination 16 (1%) were *Unemployed Not Seeking* (for a variety of reasons), 99 (6%) were *Unemployed Seeking*, and 10 (1%) were of *Unknown* status
- 4.8 Tracking these young people who were in a negative destination in October 2017, their status in March 2018 was as follows: of the 16 leavers who were *unemployed not seeking*, 2 have been employed. Of the 99 young people who were *unemployed seeking* in October 2017, 42% (43) are in a positive destination
- 4.9 Compared to 2016 leavers, a lower percentage of the 2017 leaver cohort went into education and training, with a higher percentage moving into employment and unemployment (at the October 2017 snapshot)

#### Leavers' Attainment in Literacy

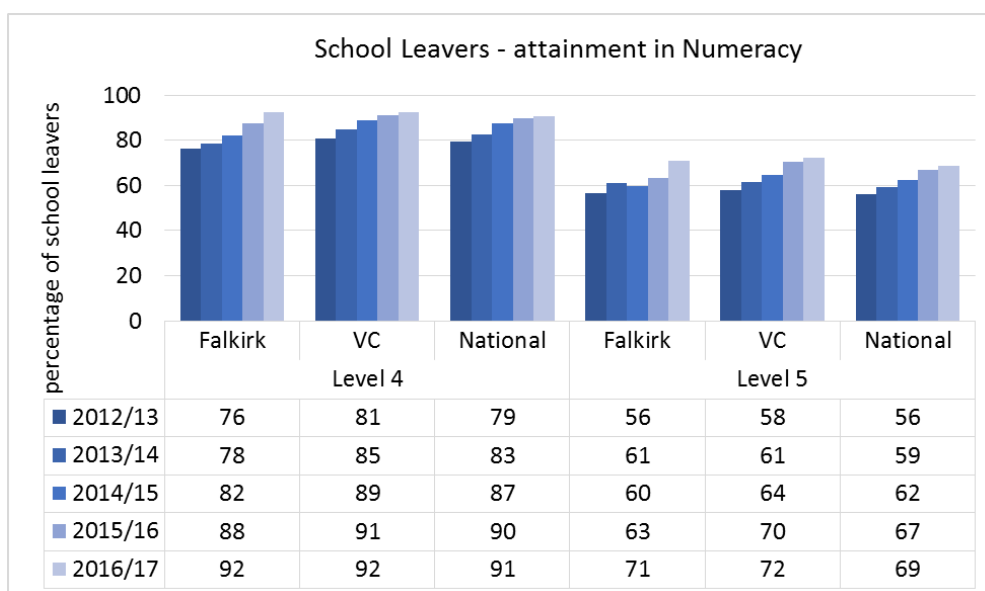
- 4.10 Raising the literacy attainment of our young people is a priority for Falkirk Council schools. Improved literacy, in turn, allows young people to access the full curriculum and move on to positive destinations. More than one unit of course contributes to the literacy measure in insight.
- 4.11 The chart below shows that the attainment of school leavers in literacy has been improving steadily in Falkirk Council schools over recent years. Falkirk's school leavers' attainment in literacy continues to be higher than the national average at SCQF level 4 and equals the national average for SCQF Level 5. However, in relation to the VC, there is further work to be done in raising literacy attainment at level 5.



- 4.12 Schools have achieved this progress in literacy levels over time through a focus on developing literacy across the curriculum led by school-appointed literacy co-ordinators.

### Leavers' Attainment in Numeracy

- 4.13 As with literacy, more than one course or Unit contributes to the numeracy measure in Insight. Numeracy remains a key skill for young people in learning, life and work.
- 4.14 The chart below shows that, Falkirk Council school leavers' performance in numeracy at level 4 has been improving over recent years, and is broadly in line with the comparator and national averages
- 4.15 At level 5, Falkirk Council school leavers' numeracy performance has shown a significant improvement over time, and is currently in line with the comparator and national averages

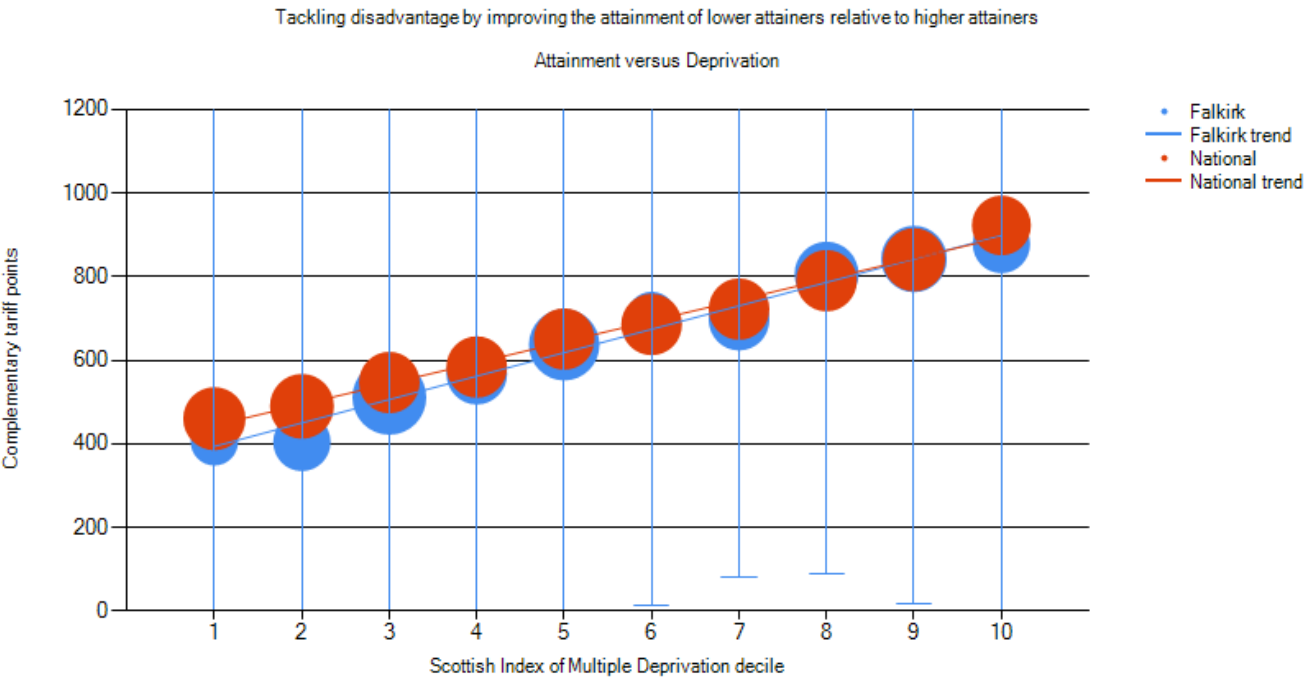


- 4.16 The Service currently has a dedicated numeracy officer who is working with schools to increase staff understanding of progression in mathematics and numeracy across the early years, primary and secondary sectors. This will help to support pupil progress in numeracy, from the early years through to the point of exit from school.

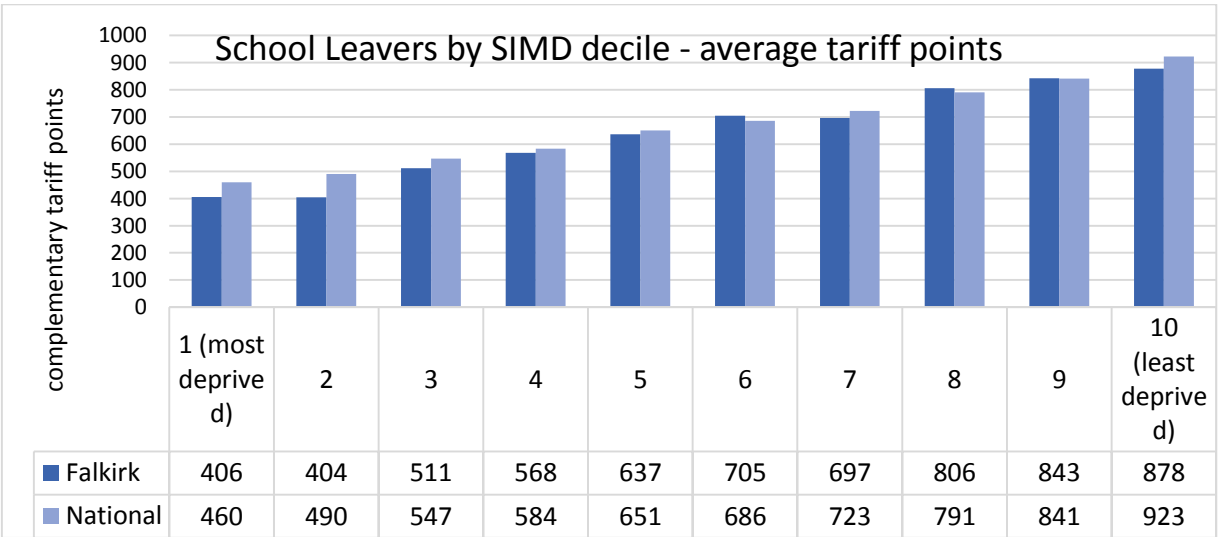
### Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap

- 4.17 Tackling disadvantage and 'closing the gap' are key priorities both nationally and for Falkirk Council schools. This is reflected in the focus on the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), which has been allocated to schools on the basis of their deprivation profiles.
- 4.18 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) allows local authorities to access pupil level deprivation information to help in analysing attainment. Showing attainment by SIMD decile allows schools to identify where targeted intervention is required.

- 4.19 The chart below shows the average tariff points of Falkirk Council’s school leavers in 2017, compared with the national average, broken down by the SIMD decile in which they live.
- 4.20 The size of the ‘bubbles’ in the chart is proportional to the percentage of the cohort who are in that SIMD decile. It clearly shows an ‘attainment gap’, with pupils living in more deprived areas having significantly lower attainment than pupils living in less deprived areas. This is a local and a national pattern.



- 4.21 The chart shows that, in 2016/17, Falkirk Council school leavers’ attainment in decile 1 and 2 (the most deprived areas) was lower than the national average. Alternatively, this can be illustrated in the chart below.

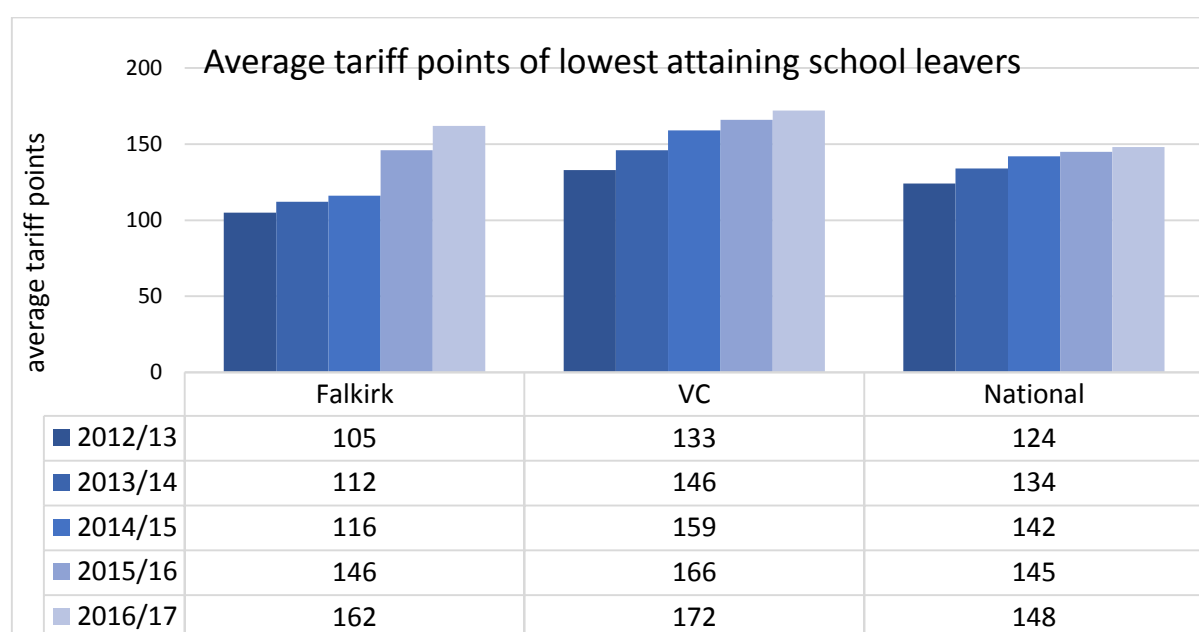


- 4.22 Schools are currently using the PEF to improve outcomes for children and young people who experience relative disadvantage. The use of additional funding is at an early stage, and schools are being supported by a central officer in the management of their resources.

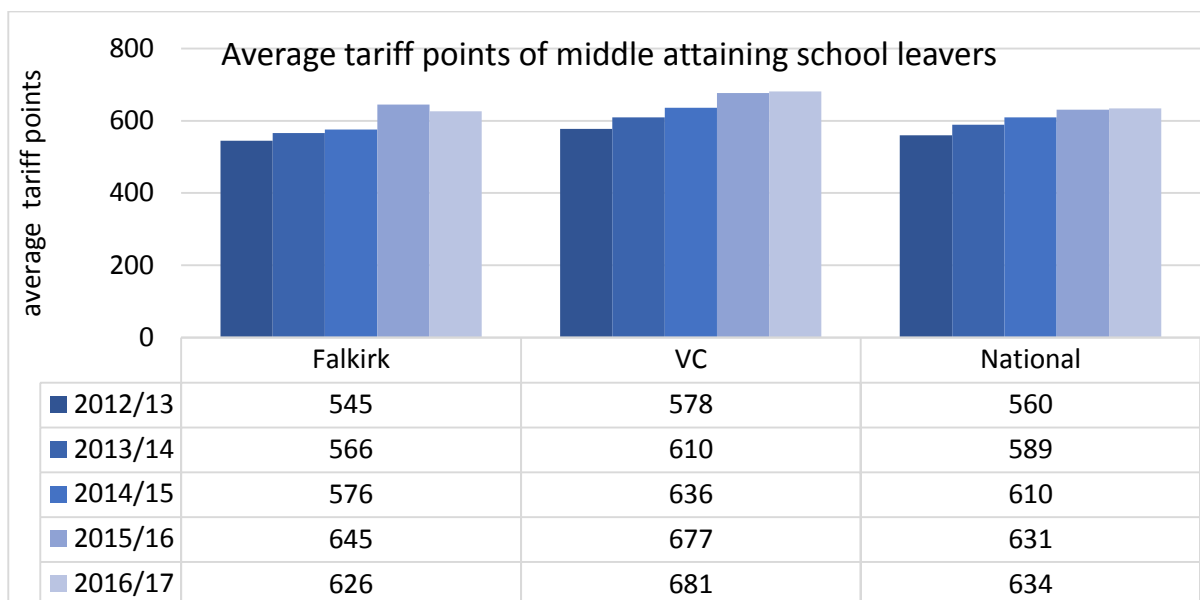
Evaluation of impact will take place through school and authority reporting at the end of the current session, although many of the interventions being put in place will have a longer-term impact

### Improving Attainment for All

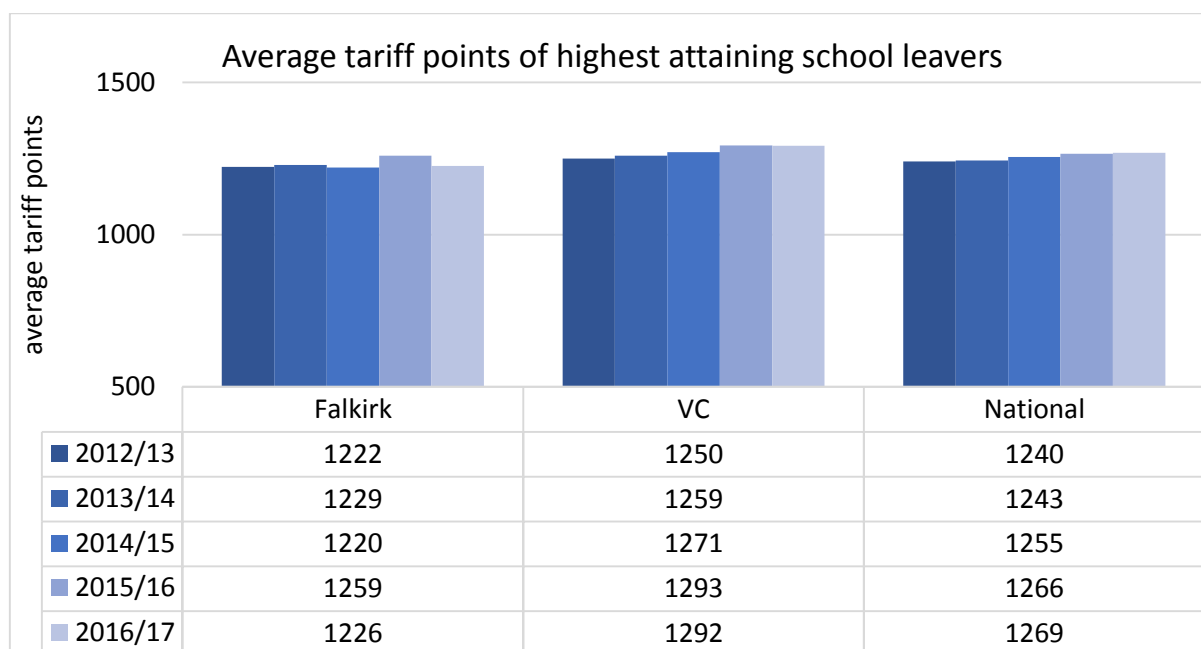
- 4.23 This is a national benchmarking measure which examines the 'spread' of attainment across the leaver cohort. It compares the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils with the middle 60% and highest 20% of attaining pupils - with a view to improving the attainment for all pupils.
- 4.24 The chart below shows the average tariff points for Falkirk's lowest attaining 20% of school leavers, compared with the VC and the national average. 2016/17 saw a significant improvement in Falkirk Council schools' performance which is now significantly higher than the national average.



- 4.25 The chart below shows the average tariff points for the middle attaining 60% of school leavers over a 5 year period. The attainment of this group of leavers has shown an improving trend in recent years, but with a dip in 2017, placing it below the VC.



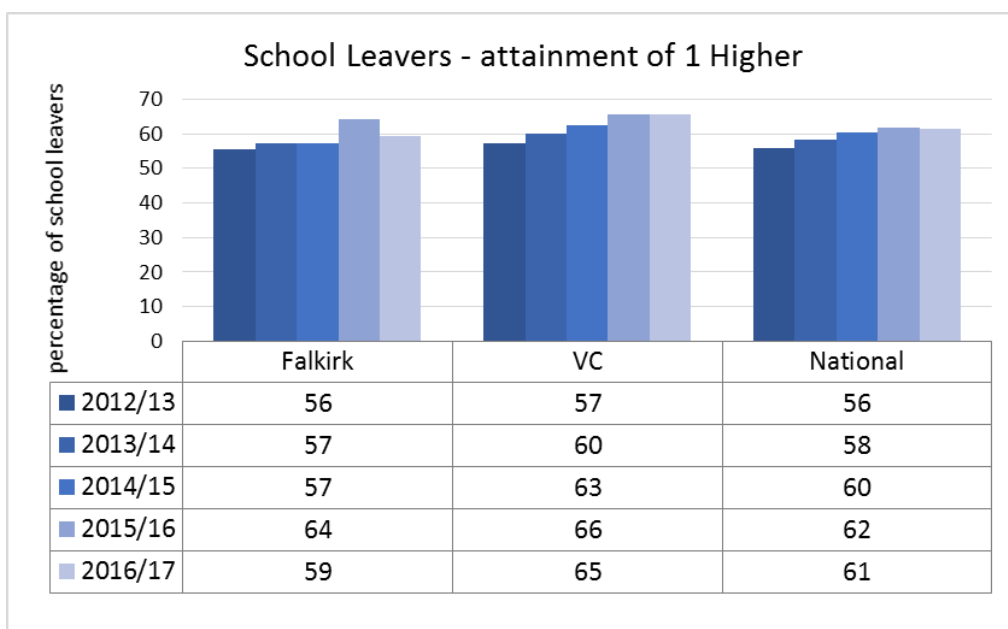
- 4.26 The chart below shows the average tariff points for the highest attaining 20% of school leavers over a 5- year period, comparing Falkirk Council school leavers with the VC and the national average 2017 saw a slight fall in Falkirk Council schools' performance, and it remains lower than the national average and VC.



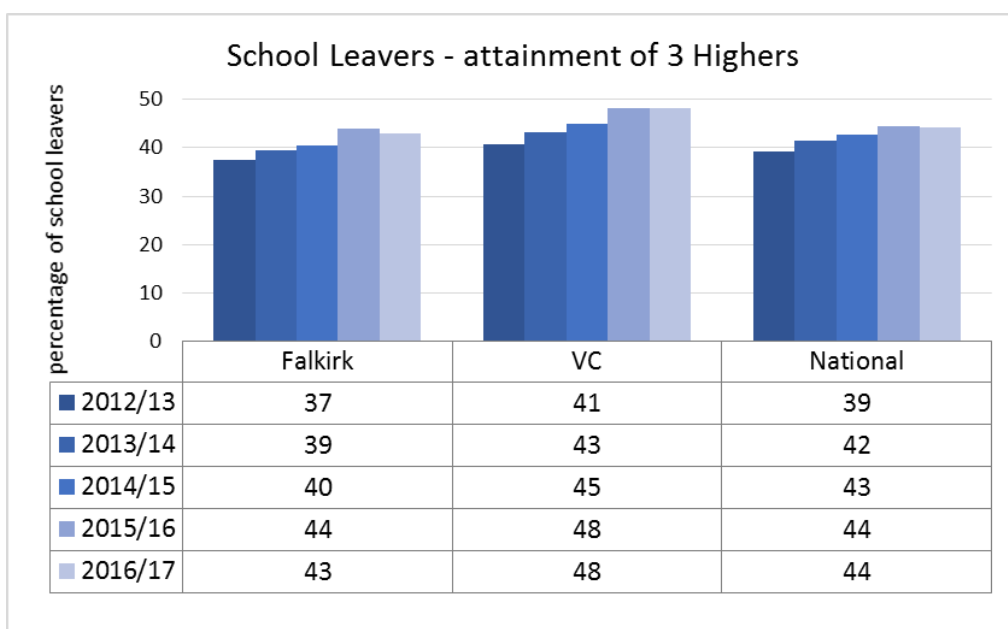
#### Attainment at SCQF Level 6 (Higher)

- 4.27 As attainment at Higher level remains important to accessing further and higher education, it is important that we continue to monitor performance in these measures.
- 4.28 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 1 or more Highers (A-C pass), compared with the VC and the national average. Falkirk Council school leavers' performance has remained fairly static in recent years, despite a spike in performance last year. It remains slightly below the national average and VC.

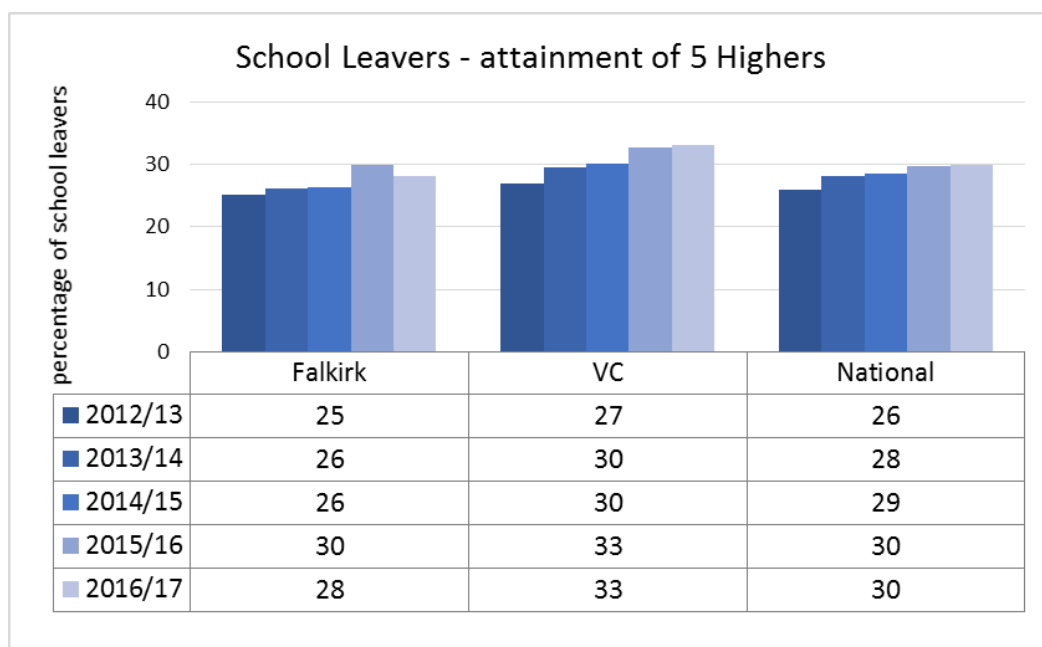




- 4.29 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 3 or more Highers (A-C passes), compared with the VC and the national average. Falkirk Council schools' performance has been improving in recent years, however it remains lower than the National average and VC.



- 4.30 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 5 or more Highers at grades A to C, compared with the VC and the national average. Falkirk Council school leavers' performance has shown an improving trend in recent years, however it remains lower than the national average and VC.



## 5. Consultation

5.1 None.

## 6. Implications

### Financial

6.1 None.

### Resources

6.2 None.

### Legal

6.3 None.

### Risk

6.4 None.

### Equalities

6.5 None.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

6.6 None.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1 This report provides an update on a range of measures within the Insight tool relating to the latest cohort of school leavers. Analysis of these measures reinforces the Service's identification of strengths and development needs.

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**Director of Children's Services**

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018

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## **Appendices**

None

## **List of Background Papers**

None