



Agenda Item 10

**Scottish Qualifications Authority
(SQA) – Attainment of Destinations of
School Leavers in Falkirk in 2019/20**

Falkirk Council

Title: Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) – Attainment of Destinations of School Leavers in Falkirk in 2019/20
Meeting: Education, Children and Young People Executive
Date: 23 March 2021
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report follows the report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive in October 2020 on the Scottish Qualifications attainment of Falkirk's senior phase pupils in session 2019/20. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the overall attainment of young people leaving Falkirk Council's secondary schools in 2019/20.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education, Children & Young People Executive is asked to:-

- (1) note Falkirk Council secondary school leavers' results for 2019/20;**
- (2) note the positive progress made by Falkirk Council pupils across a range of attainment measures; and**
- (3) 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 school 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. This comprises of pupils leaving 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 5th October 2020).

- 3.3 The qualifications gained by our young people, the closing of the poverty related attainment gap and their destinations beyond school are some of the measures of the impact schools are having in the delivery of the Council's priorities contained within our Corporate Plan 2020-2022.

Communities:

- Ensure children and young people thrive in their education/training
- Form stronger ties with our communities and partners to improve the lives of our most vulnerable

Enterprise:

- Work with young people to develop training that helps them gain the skills needed for jobs of the future

- 3.4 The Corporate priorities are translated into the Educational Division Improvement Priorities 2020-2021 under:

- Raise attainment for **every** child and young person and enable them to make excellent progress through their learning journey from 3-18 years.
- Closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- Improve positive destinations for Falkirk's young people.

- 3.5 This report provides an overview of the progress our schools are making to deliver on these priorities by raising attainment for our young people.

3.6 **COVID-19 Statement - updated February 2021**

For 2020 the absence of external assessment information, and the Ministerial direction to award estimated grades, have led to a different pattern of attainment than we have seen in previous years. The results for 2020 should not be directly compared to those in previous years or future years. The 2020 Insight data cannot therefore be used to directly demonstrate subject, school or authority statistical improvement compared with previous years. Care should also be taken when comparing attainment to the virtual comparator, or indeed when making comparisons across schools.

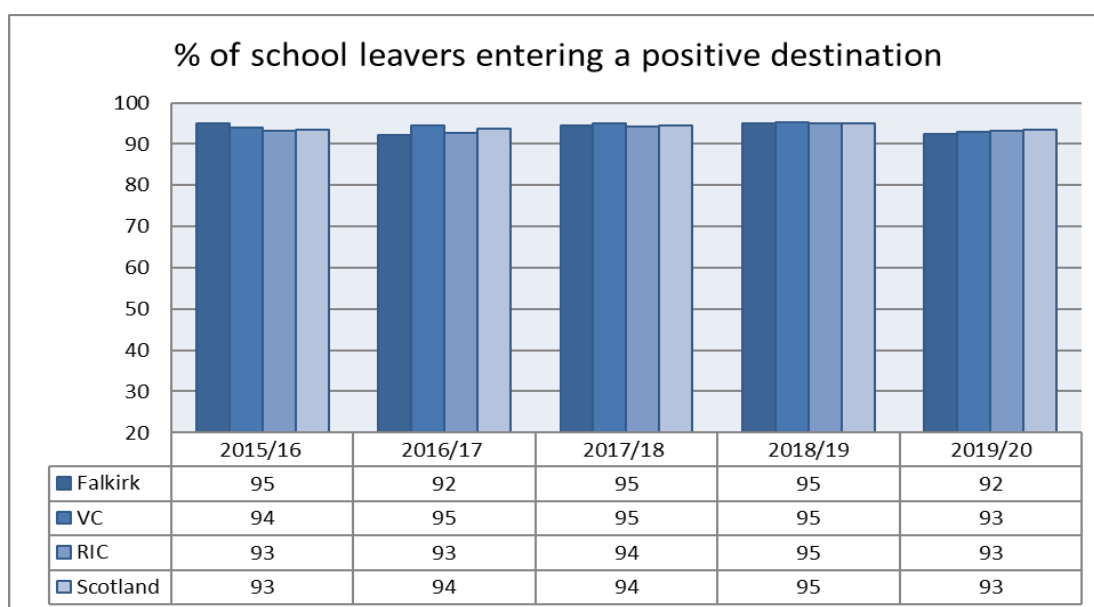
3.7 National (School Leavers) Measures

National/Leavers attainment data (*as updated in the February 2021 Update*) may include attainment gained across a number of academic sessions and therefore reflect differing approaches to certification dependant on the session in which the achievement was certificated.

- 3.8 Destination figures may reflect both choices made by pupils, as well as the opportunities available to them upon leaving school. The availability of particular opportunities (employment opportunities, for example) may have been directly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, while options available to school leavers may also have been affected by the impact of the approach to certification in 2020 on attainment levels.

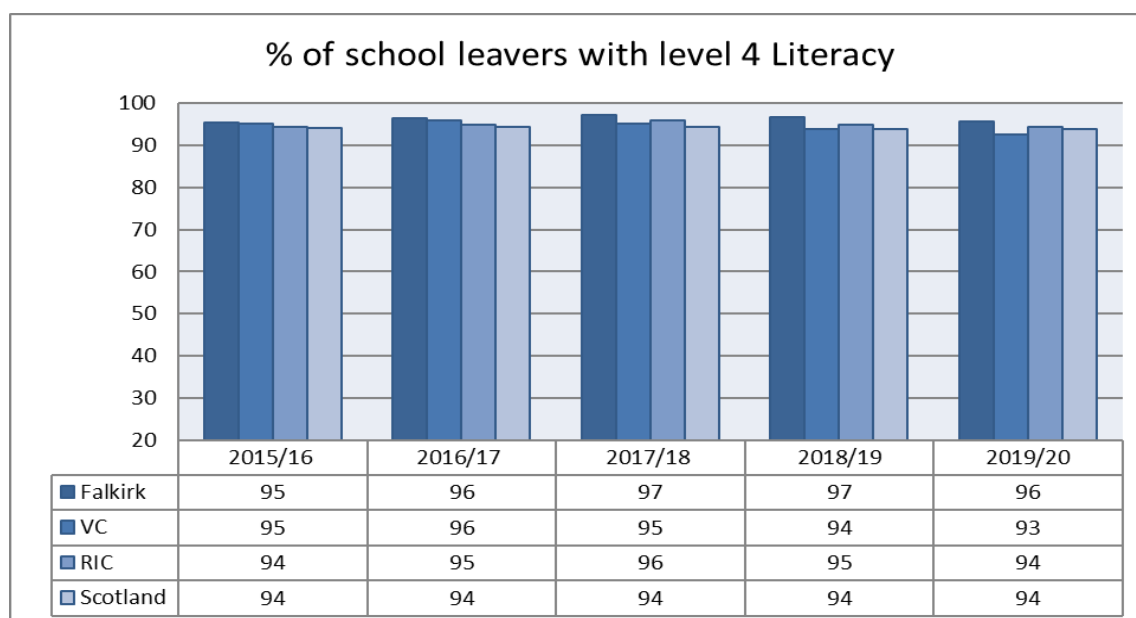
4. Considerations

- 4.1 The performance information for Falkirk Council schools in this report is benchmarked against the national average, 'Virtual Comparator' (VC) and where available, against that of the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) comprising of Falkirk, Stirling, Clackmannanshire and West Lothian Councils.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 School Leaver Destinations
In 2019/20, 1483 young people left Falkirk Council secondary schools – 181 at the end of S4, 388 in S5 and 914 in S6. The chart below shows the percentage of those school leavers entering a positive destination and compares Falkirk Council with the Virtual Comparator (VC), Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) and with the national average.
- 4.4 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk ranks 23rd in Scotland for positive leaver destinations. This places Falkirk in the third quartile in Scotland.

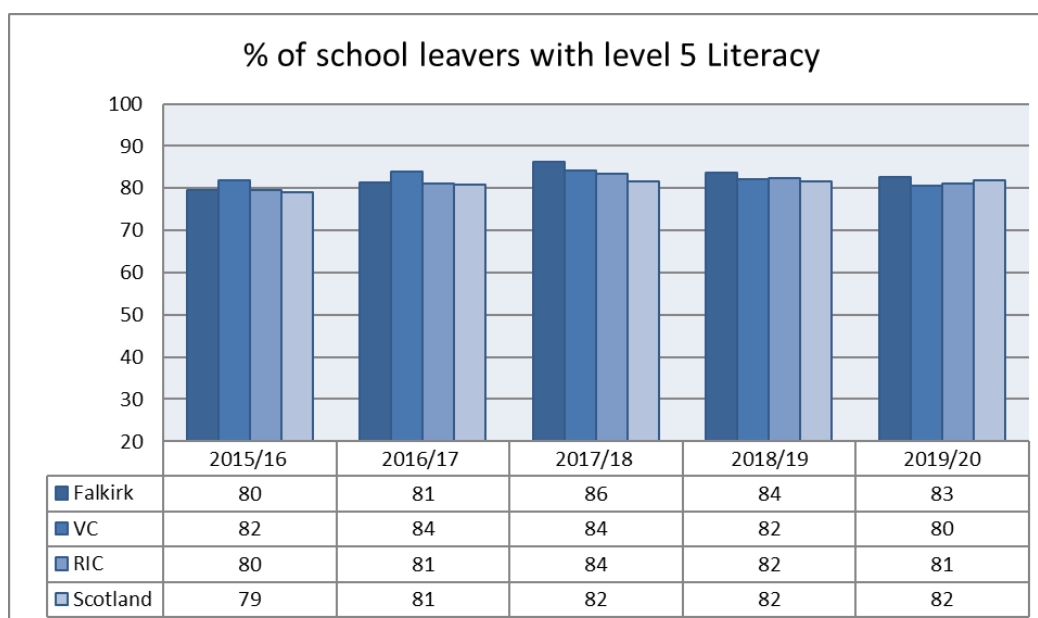


- 4.5 Falkirk schools have seen an improving trend over the past decade. In 2019/20 the percentage of school leavers entering a positive destination fell by 3%. The Scottish Average has also fallen (by 2%) from last year.

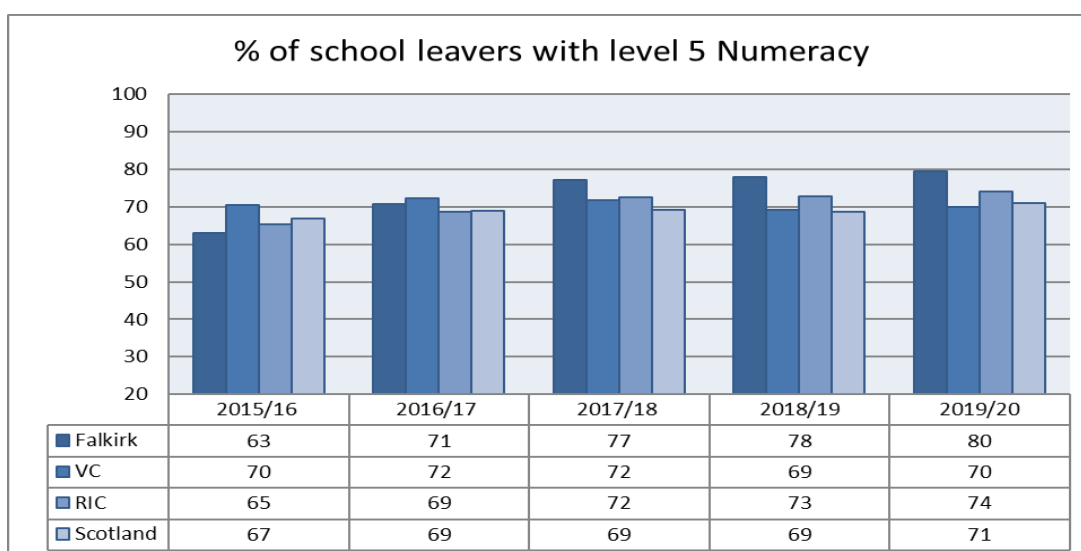
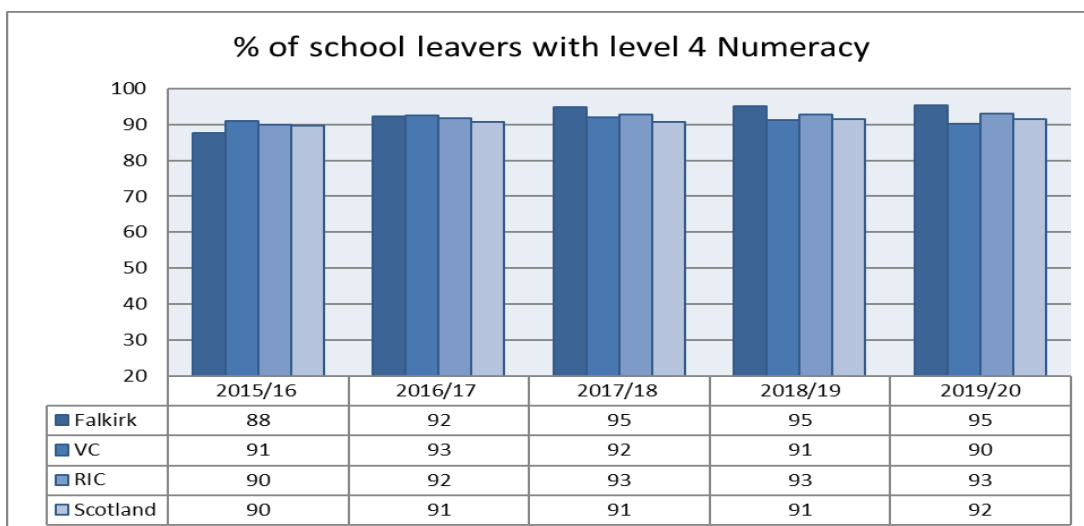
- 4.6 The percentage of Falkirk leavers in a positive destination at the time of the snapshot (5th October 2020) is in line with that of the VC, the RIC and the national average.
- 4.7 Of the 113 leavers not in a positive destination, 14 were *Unemployed Not Seeking*. This can be for a variety of reasons but is usually due to long term physical or mental health problems. Of the remaining 99 young people, 83 were *Unemployed Seeking*, and 16 were of *Not Known* status.
- 4.8 Compared to the previous year, 7% more school leavers from the 2019/20 cohort went into Further Education and Higher Education. However, there was an 11% decrease in school leavers going straight into employment.
- 4.9 Leavers' Attainment in Literacy
Raising attainment in literacy 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.
- 4.10 The charts below show the attainment trend in literacy at Level 4 and Level 5. Level 4 literacy has been improving since the Curriculum for Excellence began in 2014, and has now levelled out. Performance in 2019/20 was in line with the last 3 years. The percentage of young people leaving school in Falkirk with at least level 4 Literacy is above the VC, the RIC and national average.



- 4.11 Level 5 literacy has shown a similar improving trend up to 2017/18 where there was a large increase on the year before. Although the last 2 years have shown a slight fall compared with 2017/18, the percentage of young people leaving school in Falkirk with Level 5 Literacy remains higher than the VC, the RIC and the national average.

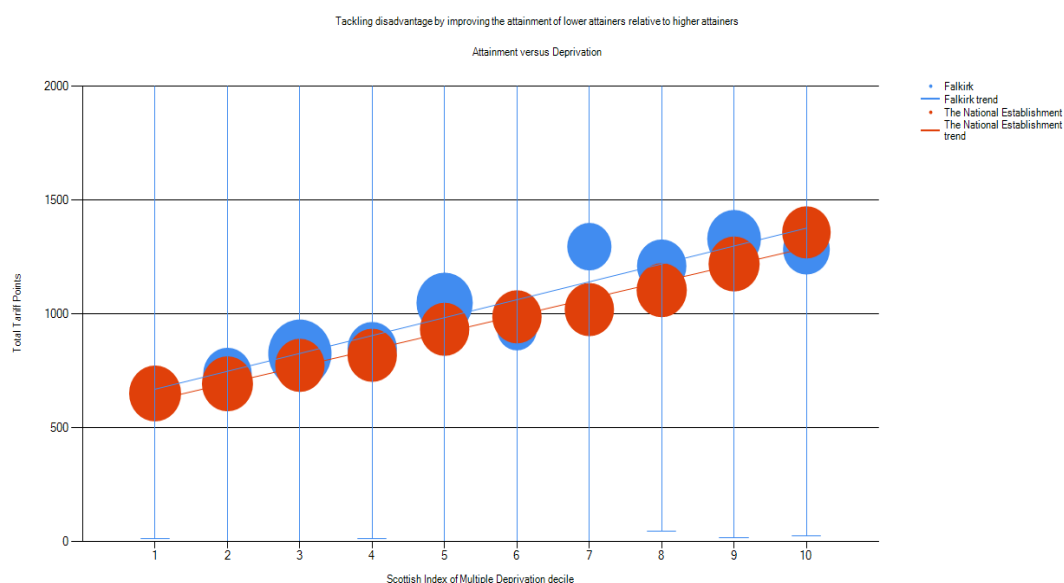


- 4.12 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 7th place for attainment of L4 literacy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland for these measures.
- 4.13 For level 5 literacy, Falkirk ranks 13th in Scotland, placing us in the second quartile of local authorities in Scotland.
- 4.14 Schools have achieved this improvement in literacy through a focus on developing literacy across the curriculum led by school appointed literacy leads. There is a continued focus on literacy through the Service support and challenge visits. Improvements in tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and cluster approaches to developing literacy has also contributed to this area of improvement. We continue to support the improvement in literacy through linking professional learning with our FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative literacy team.
- 4.15 Leavers' Attainment in Numeracy
As with literacy, numeracy remains a key skill for young people in learning, life and work and in combination with literacy, is linked to positive outcomes for young people.
- 4.16 The charts below show school leavers' performance in Level 4 and Level 5 numeracy. Again, there has been an improving trend across both measures.
- 4.17 At Level 4, Falkirk has equalled last year's figure of 95% which was the highest reached so far by Falkirk schools. Falkirk's figure is higher than the VC, the RIC and the national average.
- 4.18 At Level 5, the 2019/20 figure is the highest reached so far by Falkirk schools and is clearly ahead of the VC, the RIC and the national average.



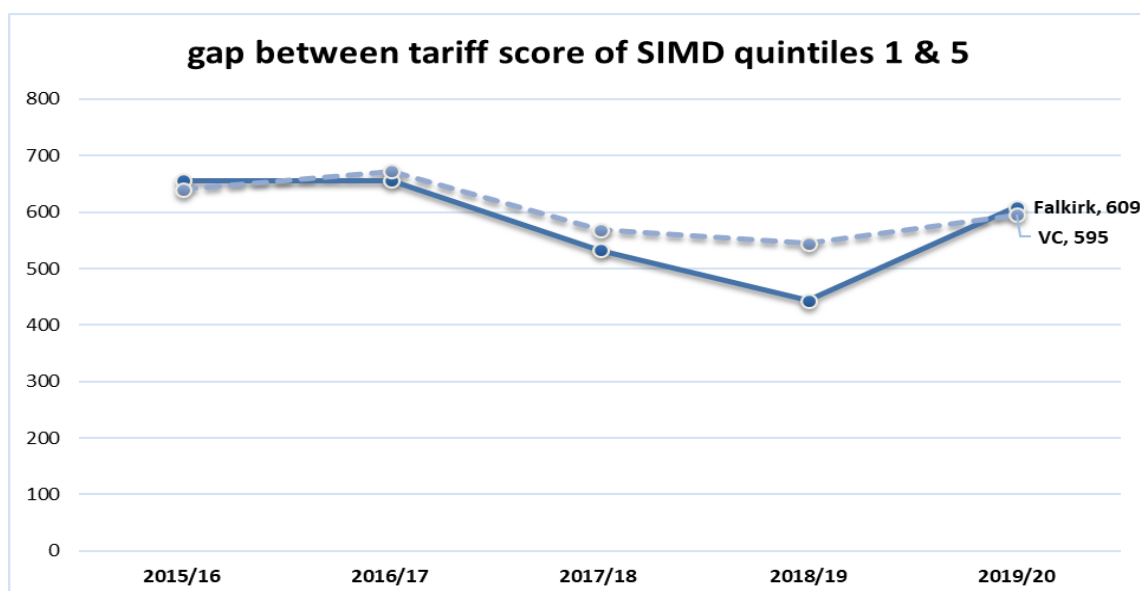
- 4.19 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 5th place for attainment of level 4 numeracy and in 3rd place for level 5 numeracy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland for both of these measures.
- 4.20 The Service continues to work with schools to increase staff understanding of progression in mathematics and numeracy across the early years, primary and secondary sectors. There is a continued focus on numeracy through the Service support and challenge visits. This will continue to support pupil progress in numeracy, from the early years through to the point of exit from school. Schools are encouraged and signposted towards the professional learning offer of the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative
- 4.21 Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap
Tackling disadvantage and 'closing the gap' are key priorities both nationally and for Falkirk Council schools. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) allows local authorities to analyse attainment in relation to deprivation. By doing so, schools can more clearly identify where intervention is required.

- 4.22 The chart below shows the total tariff points of Falkirk Council's school leavers in 2019/20 compared with the national average. Every qualification gained by a young person attracts tariff points and these have been totalled and averaged for each decile. The size of the 'bubbles' in the chart relates to the number of leavers who reside in that decile.

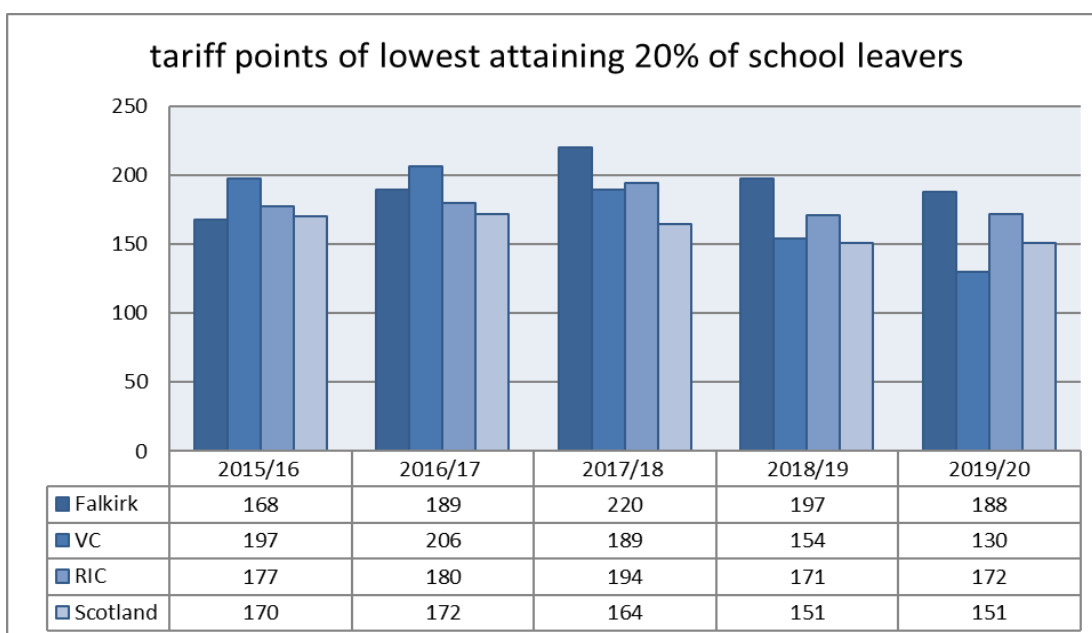


| 2019/20 | SIMD 1 | SIMD 2 | SIMD 3 | SIMD 4 | SIMD 5 | SIMD 6 | SIMD 7 | SIMD 8 | SIMD 9 | SIMD 10 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Number of leavers - Falkirk | 100 | 135 | 269 | 142 | 204 | 80 | 104 | 146 | 176 | 127 |
| average total tariff point of school leavers | | | | | | | | | | |
| Falkirk | 655 | 738 | 827 | 849 | 1049 | 935 | 1296 | 1211 | 1331 | 1285 |
| VC | 646 | 664 | 732 | 761 | 981 | 879 | 1128 | 1084 | 1218 | 1296 |
| RIC | 604 | 681 | 803 | 842 | 1022 | 1015 | 1096 | 1183 | 1293 | 1408 |
| National | 652 | 694 | 775 | 819 | 933 | 988 | 1020 | 1105 | 1220 | 1359 |

- 4.23 The chart below shows the poverty related attainment gap between pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (quintile 1) and pupils living in the 20% least deprived areas of Scotland (quintile 5). The data shows that the gap between the most and least deprived leavers narrowed in 2017/18 the 2018/19 and has increased in 2019/20.
- 4.24 In 2017/18 and 2018/19 the poverty related attainment gap in Falkirk narrower at a greater rate than for the VC. The increase in 2019/20 has brought Falkirk back into line with VC.

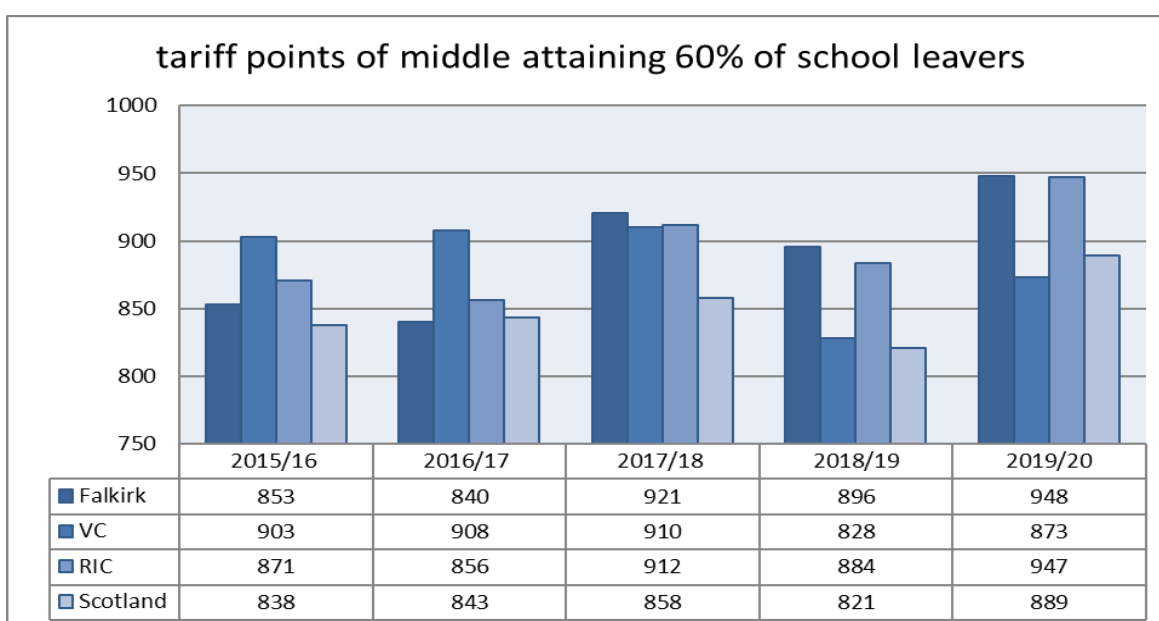


- 4.25 The data around closing the attainment gap can be attributed to a number of factors including developments in tracking and monitoring of pupil progress; changes in curriculum structures allowing pupils to progress on different pathways; targeted interventions and greater partnership working to deliver a more pupil centred curriculum. We are beginning to see the impact of Pupil Equity Fund, which is targeted to BGE interventions, reflect in the school leaver attainment data.
- 4.26 Improving Attainment for All
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.
- 4.27 The chart below shows the average tariff points for Falkirk's lowest attaining 20% of school leavers, compared with the VC, RIC and the national average. Although the 2019/20 figure is slightly lower than 2018/19, it remains above the VC, RIC and national average. It should be noted that difference in variation between cohorts can be expected as this measure is influenced by the number and balance of S4, 5 and 6 leavers. The difference between 2018/19 and 2019/20, of 9 tariff points represents less than 1 unit of work at National 3 level. For comparison : A full National 4 course award attracts 33 points.
- 4.28 Falkirk is ranked 7th nationally for performance in this measure, which places the council in the top quartile in Scotland.



4.29 The chart below shows the average tariff points for the middle attaining 60% of school leavers. The 2019/20 figure is the highest so far for Falkirk schools. It remains above the VC and national average and is in line with the RIC average. The difference between 2018/19 and 2019/20, of 52 tariff points represents slightly less than one award at National 5 level. For comparison : A National 5 course award (grade D) attracts 59 points. The 5 year trend shows a significant gap reversal between Falkirk schools our virtual comparator.

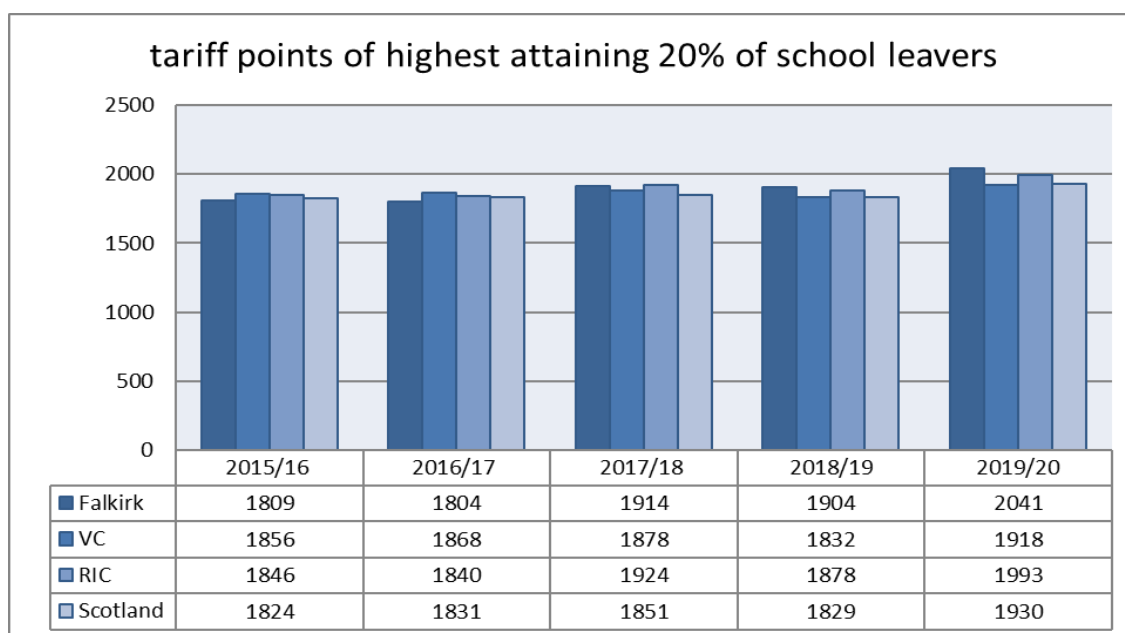
4.30 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 7th place overall for this measure and in the top quartile.



4.31 The chart below shows the average tariff points for the highest attaining 20% of school leavers. Performance in 2019/20 is higher than last year's figure and is

higher than the VC, RIC and the national average. The difference between 2018/19 and 2019/20, of 137 tariff points represents two awards at National 5. For comparison : A National 5 award (grade B) attracts 74 points.

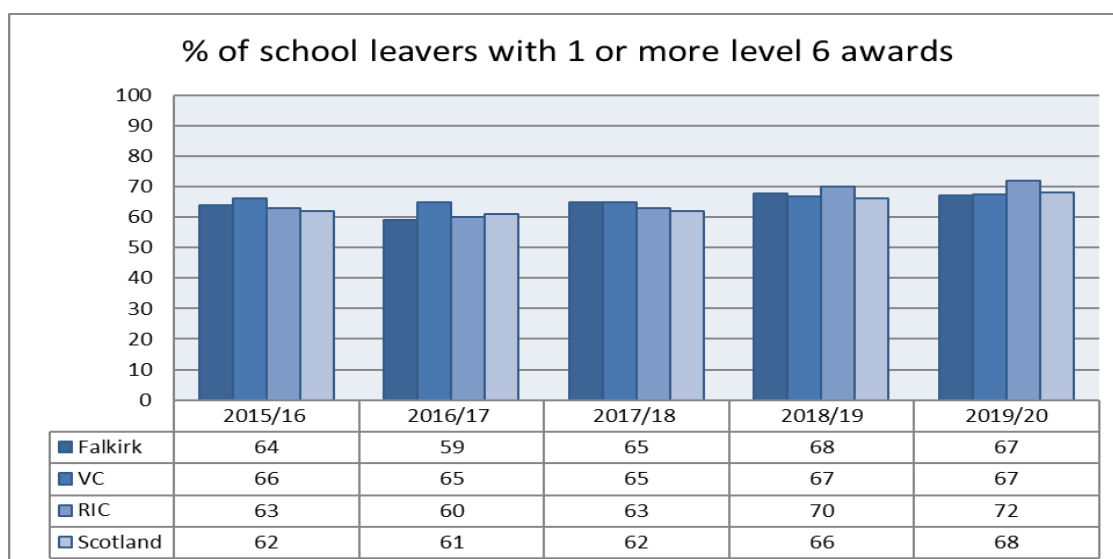
- 4.32 When ranked against other local authorities Falkirk is in 3rd place and in the top quartile in Scotland.



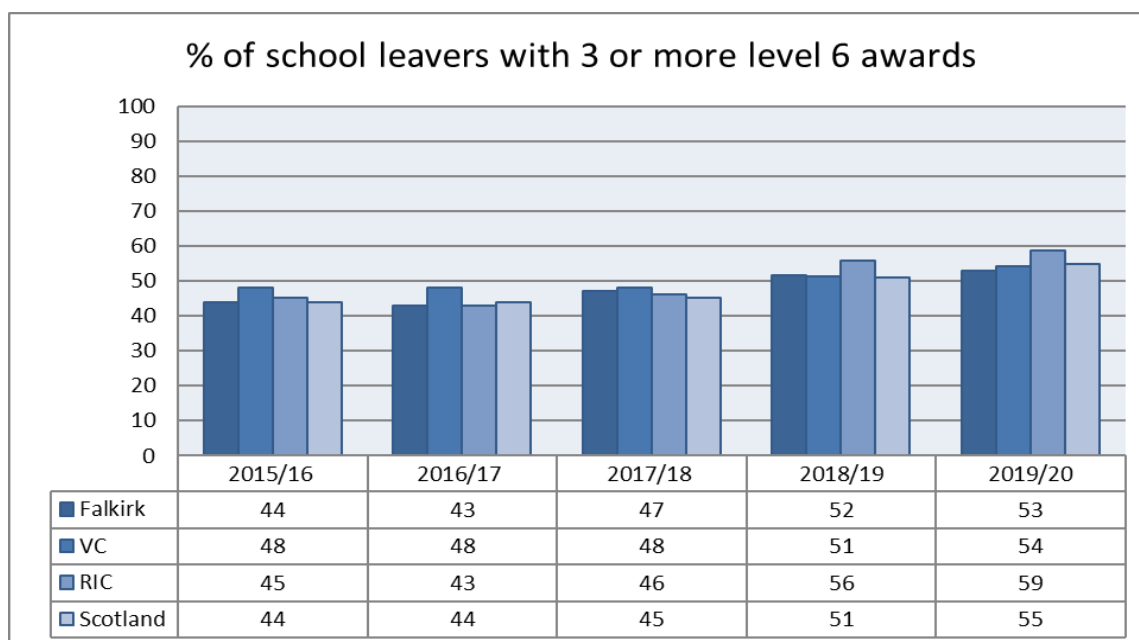
- 4.33 Attainment at SCQF Level 6 (Higher and equivalent qualifications e.g. Foundation Apprenticeships, National Progression Awards)

As attainment at SCQF level 6 level remains crucial to accessing further and higher education, it is important that we continue to monitor performance in these measures.

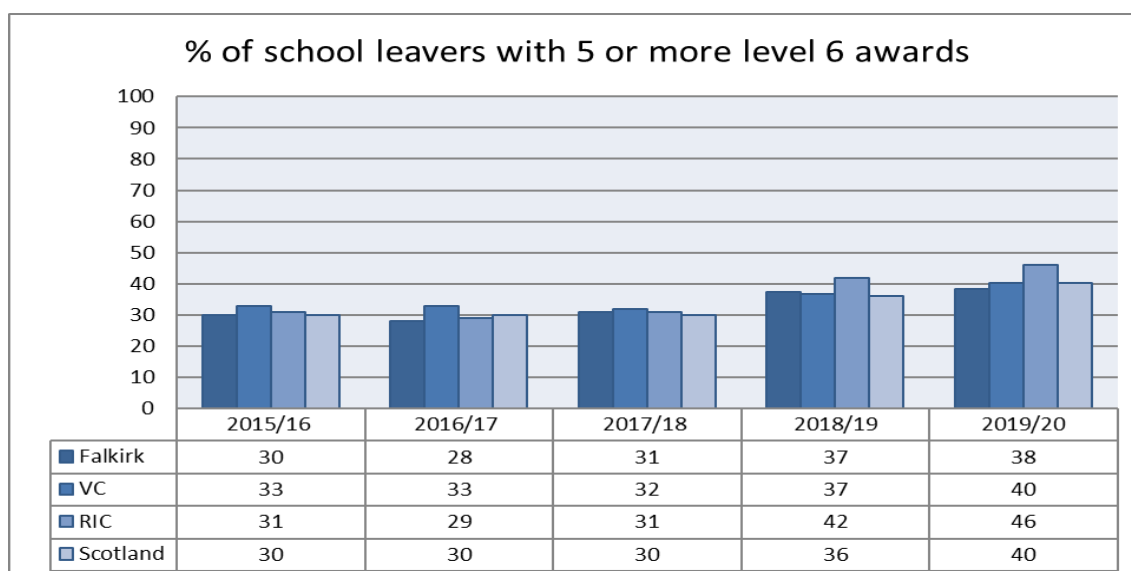
- 4.34 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 1 or more level 6 passes, compared with the VC, RIC and the national average. The 2019/20 figure is the second highest so far for Falkirk schools. This is broadly in line with the VC and the national average although slightly lower than the RIC.
- 4.35 Falkirk ranks 15th in Scotland for school leavers with 1 or more level 6 course awards. This puts Falkirk in the 2nd quartile nationally.



- 4.36 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 3 or more level 6 course awards compared with the VC, RIC and the national average. This measure has shown improvement over the last 5 years and the 2019/20 figure is the highest yet for Falkirk schools. This is broadly in line with the VC and slightly lower than the RIC and the national average.



- 4.37 The chart below shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 5 or more level 6 course awards. This measure has shown an improving trend over the last 5 years and the 2019/20 figure is the highest yet for Falkirk schools. Falkirk remains lower than the RIC and slightly lower than the VC and the national average.



4.38 Performance can be attributed to a number of factors including developments in tracking and monitoring of pupil progress; changes in curriculum structures allowing pupils to progress on different pathways; targeted interventions and greater partnership working. Falkirk Council secondary schools offer a range of HNCs and other level 7 certificated courses which are not included in this indicator. This approach to deeper learning better suits the needs of our young people which is evident in the School Leaver Destination figures.

4.39 The impact of COVID on the Level 6 Foundation Apprenticeships has shown impact in this measure, with a number of young people not achieving the course award as there was no opportunity to complete the vocational workplace unit of the course. Letters of recognition were awarded to those young people, however, statistically the incomplete award would not be included in the Insight data.

4.40 Vocational Qualifications

Vocational Qualifications include National Certificates, Higher National Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, National Progression Awards, and Skills for Work. The figures therefore include young people who have taken Foundation Apprenticeships, which provide, work-based learning opportunities with industry recognised qualifications in the senior phase of secondary education. Foundation Apprenticeships comprise several of the qualifications listed.

4.41 37% of Falkirk school leavers gained at least one level 5 vocational qualification. This was the 2nd highest in Scotland when compared with other local authorities and places Falkirk in the top quartile.

4.42 12% of Falkirk school leavers gained at least one level 6 vocational qualification (equivalent to a Higher). This was the 3rd highest in Scotland when compared with other local authorities and places Falkirk in the top quartile

- 4.43 The increased range and depth of qualifications our young people are attaining is attributed to the greater recognition of the relevance of industry specific skills which will prepare our young people for the future world of work.

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.

.....
Director of Children's Services

Date **26 February 2021**

Contact Officer: David Mackay, Head of Education ext 6681
david.mackay@falkirk.gov.uk

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers

None