

The background of the slide features a large, light blue heraldic crest of the City of Edinburgh. The crest consists of a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower, the top-right a stag's head, the bottom-left a sailing ship, and the bottom-right a crowned eagle. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. A ribbon at the bottom of the shield contains the motto 'ANE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 8**

### **School Leaver Destinations and Attainment 2021/22**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** School Leaver Destinations and Attainment 2021/22  
**Meeting:** Education, Children and Young People Executive  
**Date:** 21 March 2023  
**Submitted By:** Director of Children's Services

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with details of the attainment of young people leaving Falkirk Council's secondary schools in 2021/22. This report follows on from the previous report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive in September 2022 on the attainment of Falkirk's senior phase pupils in session 2021/22. The current report therefore focuses solely on point of exit data which represents the totality of school leaver attainment.
- 1.2 The qualifications gained by our young people, the closing of the poverty related attainment gap and destinations beyond school are some of the measures of the impact schools are having in meeting the Council Plan priority "Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities"

**2 Recommendations**

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

- (1) note Falkirk Council secondary school leavers' results for 2021/22;**
- (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 continue to engage with schools on tracking and monitoring pupil's progress, and with partners in planning for positive leaver destinations.**

**3 Climate Change Implications**

- 3.1 The recommended decisions in themselves do not give rise to any material implications for the Council's climate change targets and obligations.

## **4 Background**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 as a snapshot on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022).

### **COVID-19**

- 4.3 For 2020 and 2021 the absence of external assessment information, and the Ministerial direction to award estimated grades, led to a different pattern of attainment than were seen in previous years. The results for 2020 and 2021 should not be directly compared to those in previous years or subsequent years. Attainment for 2021/22 leavers include external SQA exams for the first time in 3 years
- 4.4 Leaver's attainment data may include attainment gained across a number of academic sessions and therefore reflect differing approaches to certification dependent on the session in which the achievement was certificated.
- 4.5 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 COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5 Considerations**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.

## School Leaver Destinations

- 5.3 In 2021/22, 1703 young people left Falkirk Council secondary schools – 170 at the end of S4, 538 in S5 and 995 in S6. Chart 1 below shows the percentage of those school leavers entering a positive destination for the last 13 years and chart 2 compares Falkirk Council with the Virtual Comparator (VC), Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) and with the national average for the last 5 years.
- 5.4 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk ranks 26<sup>th</sup> in Scotland for positive leaver destinations (down from 19<sup>th</sup> last year). This places Falkirk in the third quartile in Scotland.
- 5.5 As shown in Chart 1 Falkirk schools have demonstrated an improving trend over the past 13 years.

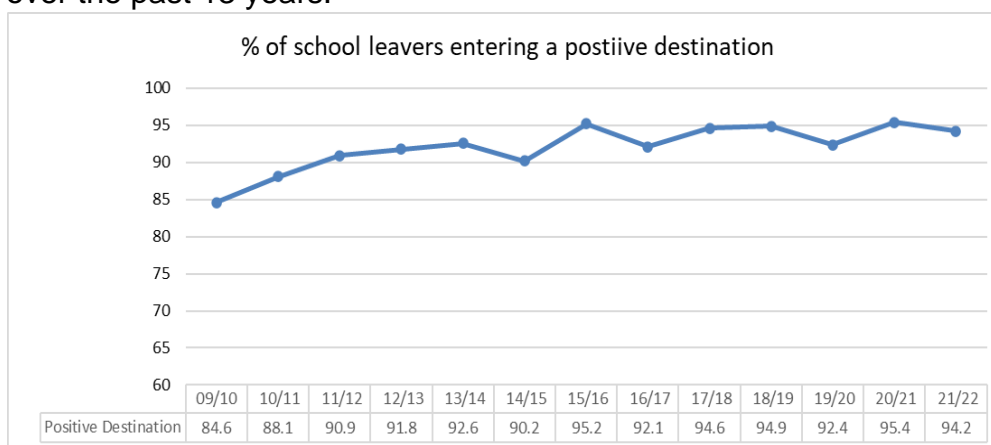


Chart 1

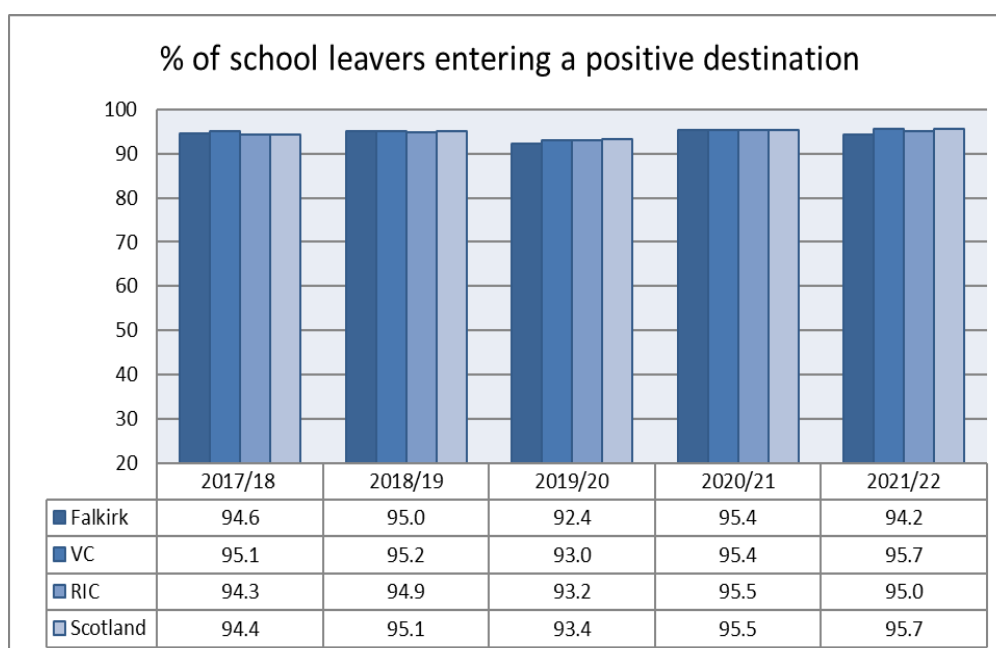


Chart 2

- 5.6 The percentage of Falkirk leavers in a positive destination at the time of the snapshot (3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022) was 94.2%. This is a 1.2% drop from the previous year's highest ever figure of 95.4%. The chart above shows how we compare with our VC, RIC and Scotland.
- 5.7 Of the 98 leavers not in a positive destination, 31 were *Unemployed Not Seeking*. This can be for a variety of reasons but is usually due to long term physical or medical problems. Of the remaining 67 young people, 56 were *Unemployed Seeking*, and 11 were of *Not Known* status.
- 5.8 Compared to the previous year, 5% fewer school leavers from the 2021/22 cohort went into Higher Education. There was a 2% increase in school leavers starting a college course and a 2% increase in those going straight into employment.

### Leavers' Attainment in Literacy

- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 Charts 3 and 4 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. Performance in 2021/22 equalled last years, which was the highest so far for Falkirk schools with 98%. The percentage of young people leaving school in Falkirk with at least level 4 Literacy is above the VC (94%), the RIC (96%) and national average (94%).

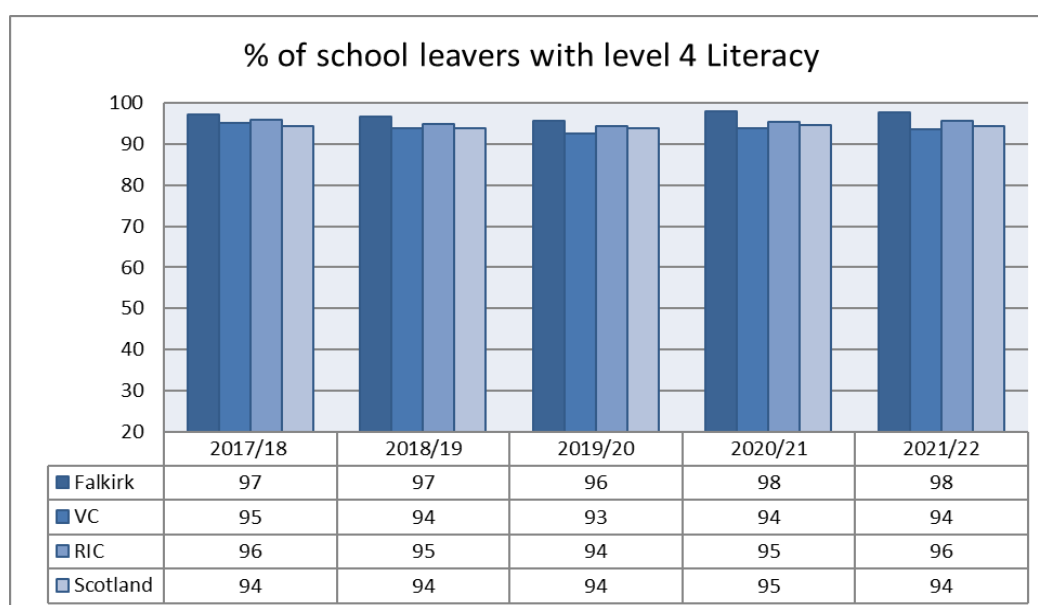


Chart 3

- 5.11 The 2021/22 figure for Level 5 Literacy has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is line with the VC, RIC and the national average.

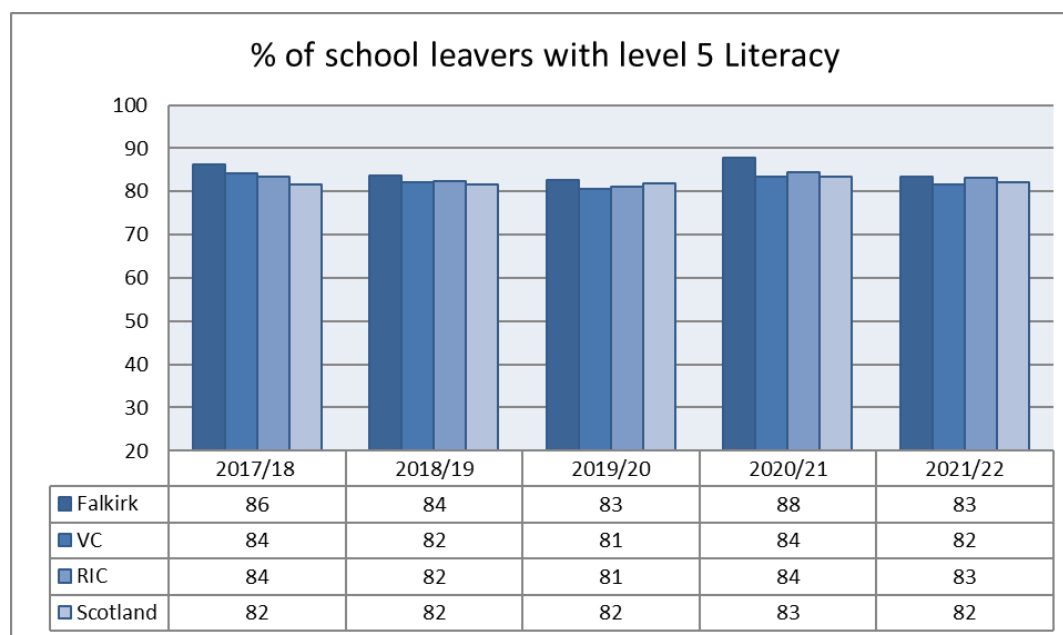


Chart 4

- 5.12 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 3<sup>rd</sup> place for attainment of Level 4 Literacy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland for this measure.
- 5.13 For level 5 Literacy, Falkirk ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in Scotland, placing us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile of all local authorities in Scotland.
- 5.14 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 Service Improvement support and challenge visits. Improved tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and cluster approaches to developing literacy has also contributed to this area of improvement. Falkirk council officers continue to drive forward Literacy by delivering training and development and signposting towards the professional learning offers the Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative, Education Scotland and other partners

#### Leavers' Attainment in Numeracy

- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 Charts 5 and 6 show school leavers' performance in Level 4 and Level 5 numeracy.

5.17 In 2021/22, 97% of all school leavers had achieved at least a level 4 award in Numeracy. This equalled last year's highest ever figure and is above the VC (91%), the RIC (94%) and national average (91%).

5.18 In 2021/22, 80% of all school leavers had achieved at least a level 5 award in Numeracy. This is above pre-Covid levels and is above the VC (70%), the RIC (75%) and national average (71%).

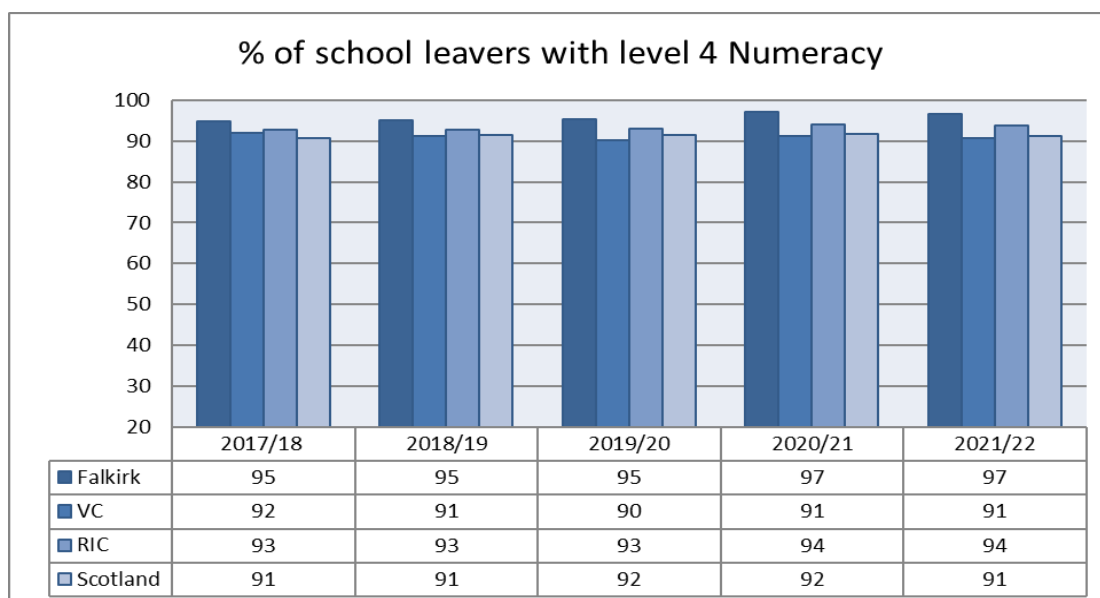


Chart 5

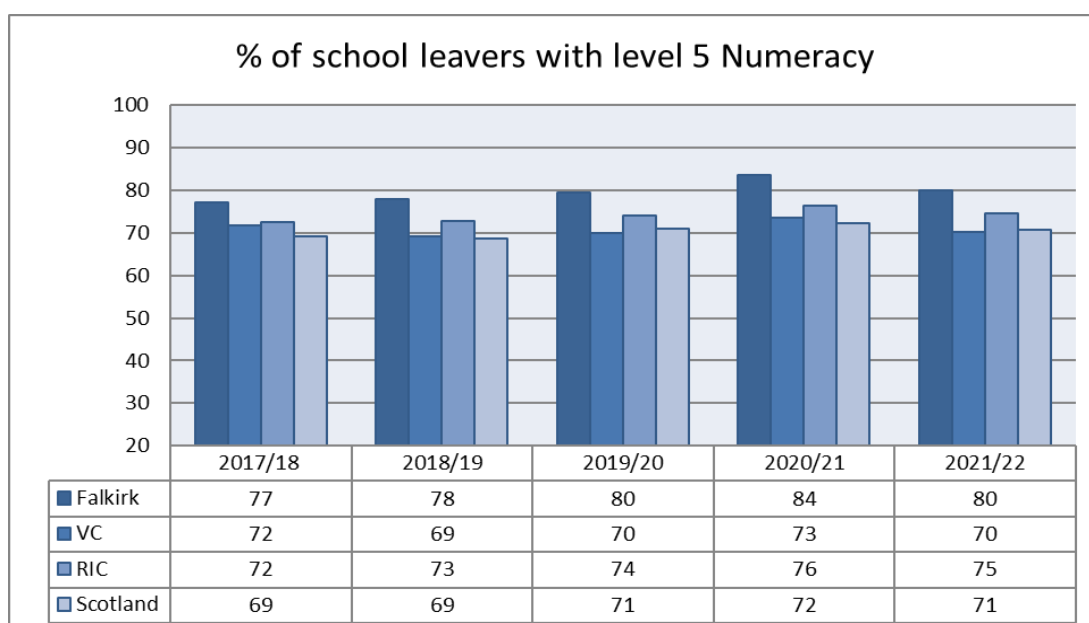


Chart 6

5.19 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 3<sup>rd</sup> place for attainment of Level 4 Numeracy and in 3<sup>rd</sup> place for Level 5 Numeracy. This places Falkirk in the top quartile of all local authorities in Scotland in both of these measures.

- 5.20 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 Service Improvement 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 to participate in training and development delivered centrally and signposted towards the professional learning offers from the Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative, Education Scotland and other partners.

### Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap

- 5.21 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.
- 5.22 Charts 7 and 8 show the total tariff points of Falkirk Council's school leavers in 2021/22 compared with the national average and compared to our VC. 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. The National Establishment referred to in the chart below means Scotland.
- 5.23 Chart 7 below illustrates on average that Falkirk pupils accrue the same or more tariff points than the national average in each decile. Chart 8 shows Falkirk pupils are gaining more tariff points on average in all deciles than our VC.

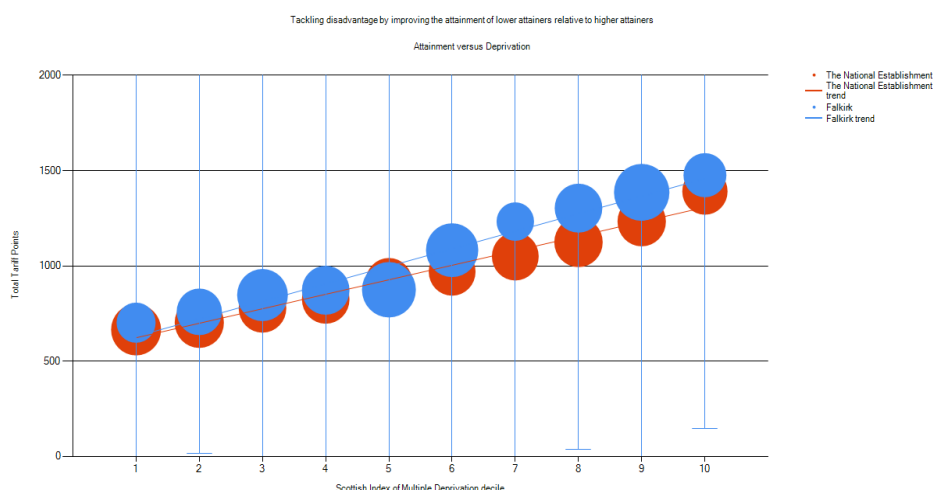


Chart 7



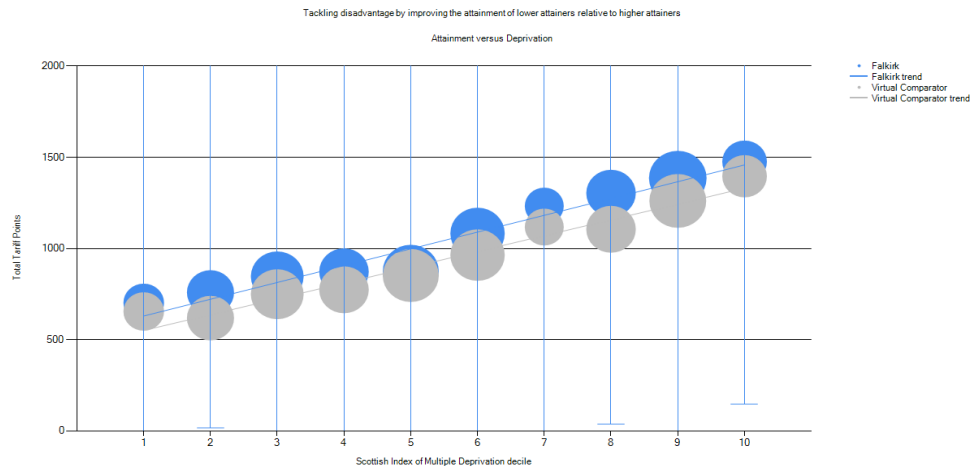


Chart 8

Table 1 gives the numbers for the 2 charts above.

2021/22	SIMD 1	SIMD 2	SIMD 3	SIMD 4	SIMD 5	SIMD 6	SIMD 7	SIMD 8	SIMD 9	SIMD 10
Number of leavers - Falkirk	101	151	198	171	234	213	89	170	245	131
average total tariff point of school leavers										
Falkirk	703	760	848	873	876	1083	1233	1304	1386	1477
VC	655	619	750	774	853	964	1118	1106	1262	1397
RIC	667	693	822	880	958	1036	1160	1229	1312	1419
National	666	703	779	826	916	970	1051	1125	1234	1391

Table 1

5.24 Chart 9 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 2018/19 but has increased since, almost certainly due to impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.25 In 2021/22 the poverty related attainment gap has increased at a lesser rate than our virtual comparator.

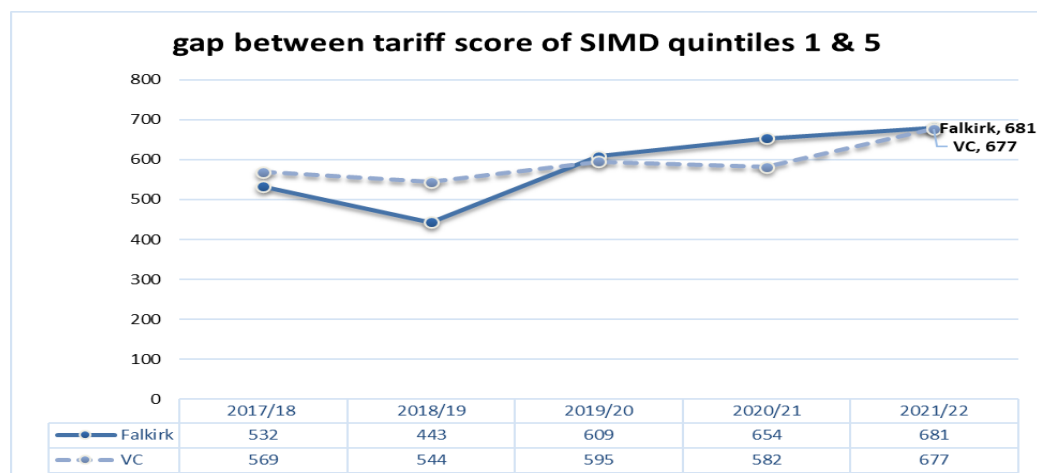


Chart 9

- 5.26 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 now seeing the impact of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) introduced in 2017. This fund is targeted to broad general education (BGE) in P1 to S3. The positive impact of the work, curriculum development and interventions supported by PEF is reflected in our school leaver attainment data. COVID-19 has interrupted some of these interventions and has significantly disrupted all aspects of learning and teaching. However, throughout the period of the pandemic Falkirk's schools have demonstrated their ability to adapt and innovate, therefore we are confident we will see this gap narrow again in the coming years.

### Improving Attainment for All

- 5.27 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.
- 5.28 Chart 10 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 2021/22 figure is slightly lower than last year, 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, S5 and S6 leavers and remains above the VC, RIC and National average. The difference between 2020/21 and 2021/22, of 39 tariff points represents approximately one national 4 course award.
- 5.29 Falkirk is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> nationally for performance in this measure, which places the council in the top quartile in Scotland.

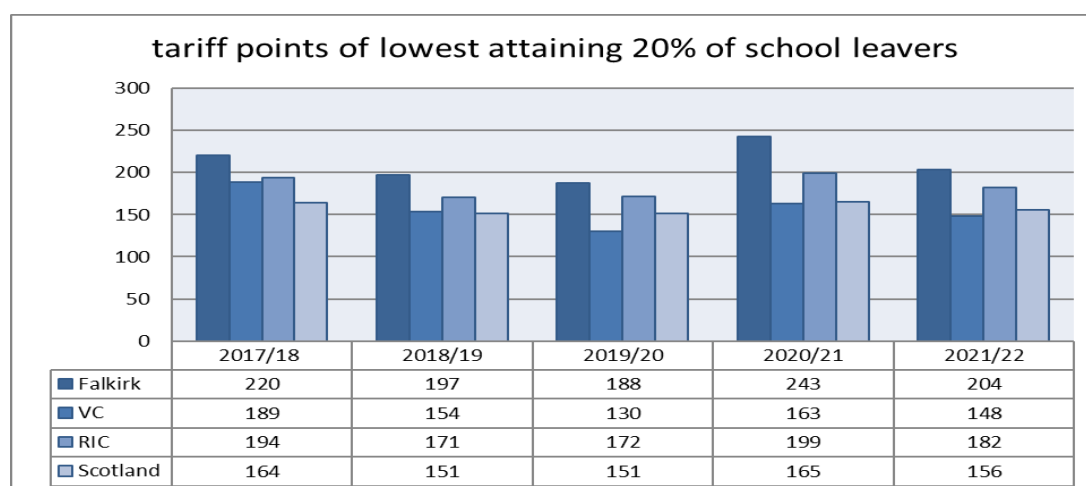


Chart 10

5.30 Chart 11 shows the average tariff points for the middle attaining 60% of school leavers. The 2021/22 figure is slightly lower than last year but remains above the VC, the RIC and national average. The difference between 2020/21 and 2021/22, of 100 tariff points approximately one award at National 5 level.

5.31 When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk is in 4<sup>th</sup> place overall for this measure and in the top quartile.

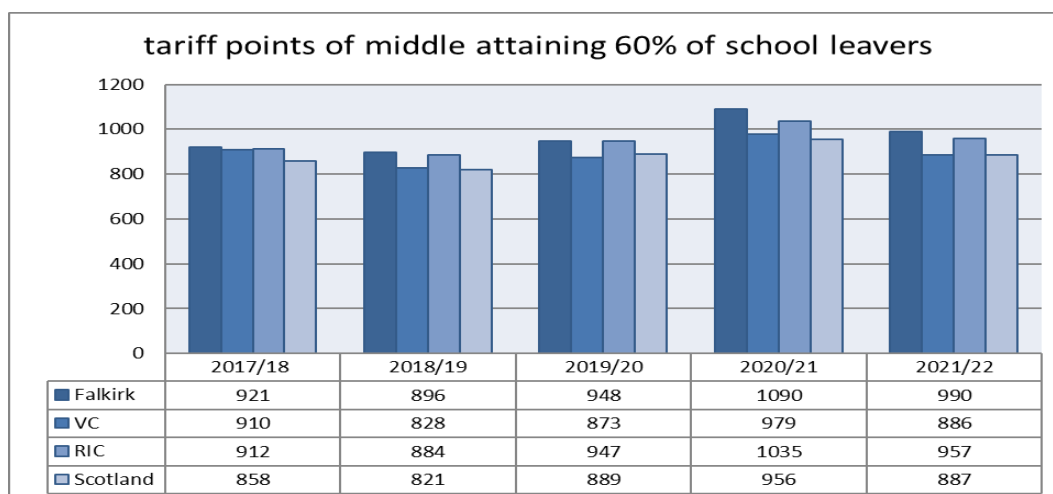


Chart 11

5.32 Chart 12 shows the average tariff points for the highest attaining 20% of school leavers. The 2021/22 figure slightly lower than last year but remains above the VC, the RIC and national average.

5.33 When ranked against other local authorities Falkirk is in 3<sup>rd</sup> place and in the top quartile in Scotland.

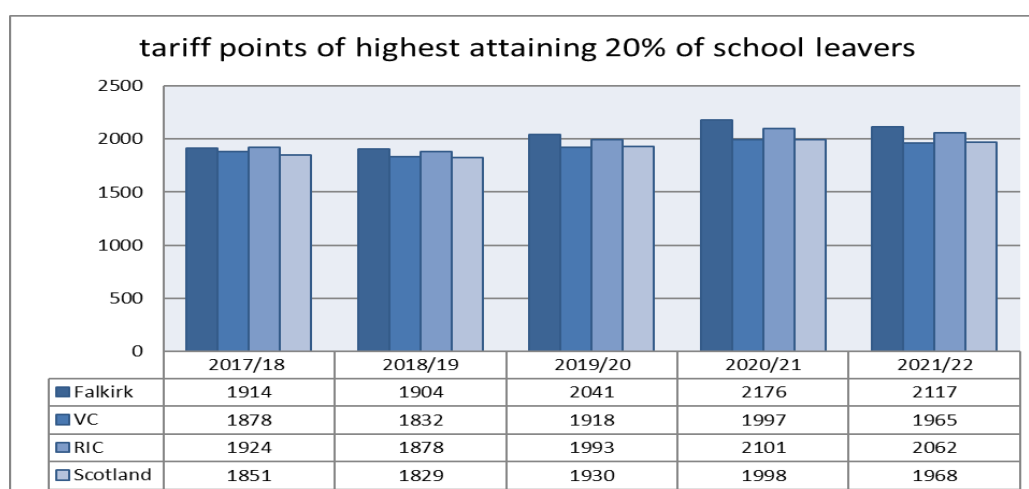


Chart 12

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

- 5.34 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.
- 5.35 Chart 13 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 2021/22 figure has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is line with the VC and the national average.
- 5.36 Falkirk ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in Scotland for school leavers with 1 or more Level 6 course awards. This puts Falkirk in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile nationally.

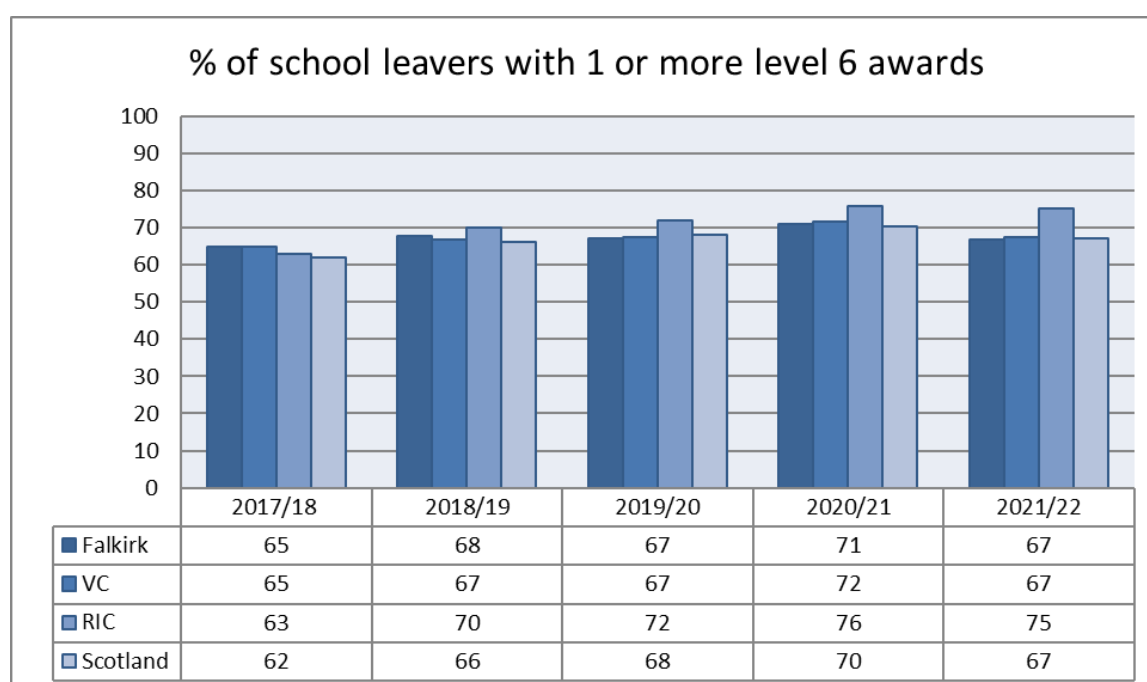


Chart 13

- 5.37 Chart 14 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. The 2021/22 figure has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is line with the VC and the national average.
- 5.38 Falkirk ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in Scotland for school leavers with 3 or more Level 6 course awards. This puts Falkirk in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile nationally.

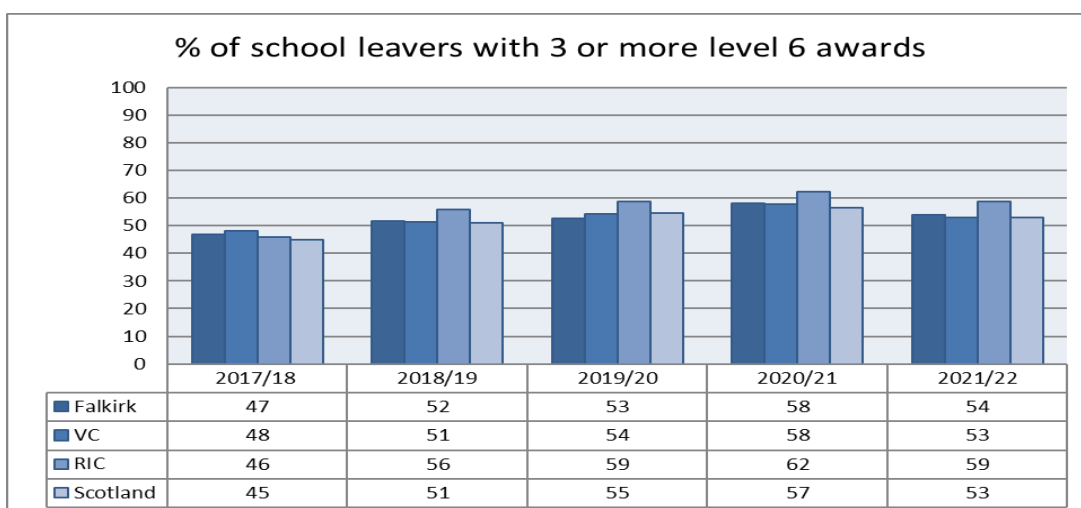


Chart 14

5.39 Chart 15 shows the percentage of young people leaving Falkirk Council schools with 5 or more Level 6 course awards. The 2021/22 figure is higher than pre-pandemic levels and is higher than the VC and the national average.

5.40 Falkirk ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in Scotland for school leavers with 5 or more Level 6 course awards. This puts Falkirk in the top quartile nationally.

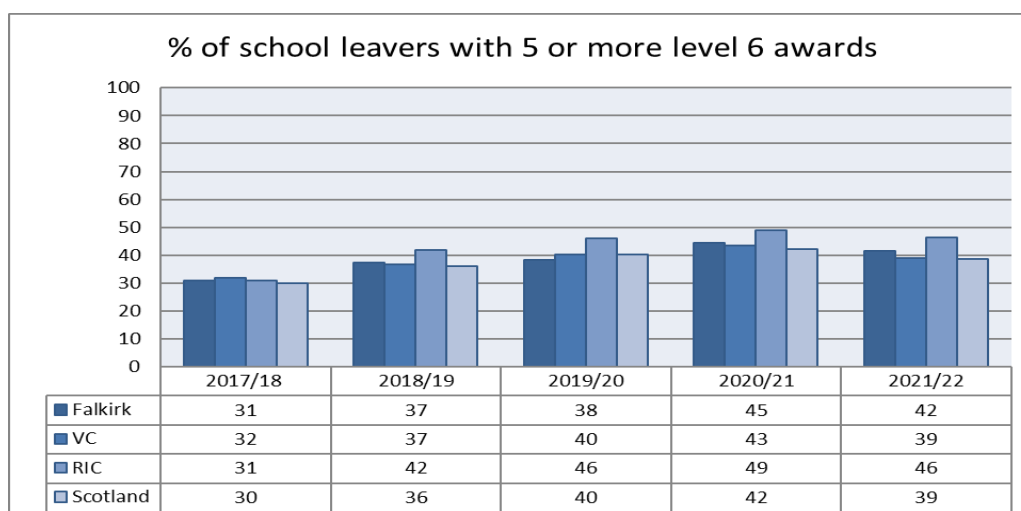


Chart 15

5.41 Improvements in 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 Higher National Certificate (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.

## Vocational Qualifications

- 5.42 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.
- 5.43 38% of Falkirk school leavers gained at least one Level 5 vocational qualification (down from 39% last year). This was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in Scotland when compared with other local authorities and places Falkirk in the top quartile.
- 5.44 15% of Falkirk school leavers gained at least one Level 6 vocational qualification which is equivalent to a Higher award (up from 14% last year). This was the 5<sup>th</sup> highest in Scotland when compared with other local authorities and places Falkirk in the top quartile.
- 5.45 22 Falkirk school leavers gained at least one Level 7 vocational qualification (up from 17 last year), which is equivalent to Advanced Higher level. This was the highest number of all local authorities in Scotland and places Falkirk in the top quartile.
- 5.46 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.

## **6 Consultation**

- 6.1 None.

## **7 Implications**

### **Financial/ Resources**

- 7.1 None

### **Legal**

- 7.2 None

### **Risk**

- 7.3 None

## **Equalities**

- 7.4 Self evaluation, tracking and monitoring of young people's progress, achievement and attainment is core to the work of the Service. Rigorous processes are in place to monitor and support improving outcomes for all learners. This includes groups of interest for example those young people who are care experienced, who have additional learning needs and who are affected by impact of poverty.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 7.5 None

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 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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## **Appendices**

None

## **List of Background Papers**

None