

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 2 November 2023

Report by: Interim Chief Education Officer

Heading: National Qualifications Results 2023

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises attainment in the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications in 2023, based on the key measures contained within the Insight benchmarking tool.
 - 1.2 The 2023 exam diet saw a return to the traditional model of assessment. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, alternative methods of assessment were put in place for the 2020 and 2021 exam diet. The 2022 diet was also seen as a transitional point back to a traditional model of assessment. As such, we should be cautious in making direct comparisons between years that had different assessment approaches.
 - 1.3 Skills Development Scotland are currently tracking school leavers' destinations. Insight is normally updated in spring and a further report providing data on our school leavers' attainment will be submitted to the Education and Children Service's Policy Board when this data becomes available. This report will provide data on the attainment of all pupils in the senior phase by stage (S4, S5 and S6).
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to:
 - note the content of this report;

- note the efforts of pupils and the school communities in achieving these results; and
 - agree that a further report will be brought to the Education and Children's Services Policy Board when leavers data becomes available.
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3. Background

3.1 Insight is a performance evaluation tool provided by the Scottish Government to schools and education authorities as a way of benchmarking performance in four key measures:

- Attainment in literacy and numeracy;
- Improving attainment for all;
- Attainment versus deprivation; and
- Leavers' destinations.

3.2 This report provides data and commentary on the performance of each of our senior phase cohorts (S4, S5 and S6) over the last three years and against our virtual comparator for three of the measures detailed above. Leavers' destinations will become available in February/March 2024 and will form part of the report to this board in spring 2024 or as soon thereafter if the data release is delayed.

3.3 In addition to these local benchmarking measures, this report will provide data in relation to the number and quality of passes at each qualifications level.

3.4 The methodology for the Insight 'virtual comparator' (VC) is unchanged in 2023. The virtual comparator allows authorities and schools to make statistically valid comparisons between how young people have performed against young people nationally, who share four similar characteristics. These characteristics are gender, year group, percentage of time spent in mainstream classes (ASN), and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) decile which measures the level of deprivation experienced in the area that a pupil resides.

4. Attainment in literacy and numeracy (S4, S5 and S6)

4.1 Raising attainment in literacy and numeracy remains a key priority of Renfrewshire Council children's services and this is reflected in one of the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework.

4.2 Attainment in literacy and numeracy includes passes at National 4 and 5 in English and Maths and passes in some other awards at Scottish Certificate and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 4 and 5 which contain certain core elements of literacy and numeracy. The tables which follow, provide data on our performance in literacy and numeracy, alongside our virtual comparator and national figures, for each of our senior phase cohorts.

S4

- 4.3 Table 1 below provides data on attainment in literacy and numeracy in S4 at SCQF Level 4 and SCQF Level 5.

	Year	% Achieved Level 4 Literacy	% Achieved Level 4 Numeracy	% Achieved Level 5 Literacy	% Achieved Level 5 Numeracy
Renfrewshire	2021	96%	83%	82%	55%
Virtual Comparator	2021	93%	88%	76%	59%
National	2021	92%	87%	73%	56%
Renfrewshire	2022	94%	91%	77%	67%
Virtual Comparator	2022	93%	88%	76%	62%
National	2022	92%	87%	74%	61%
Renfrewshire	2023	94%	90%	77%	68%
Virtual Comparator	2023	93%	89%	77%	65%
National	2023	92%	88%	76%	64%

- 4.4 The percentage of pupils achieving SCQF Level 4 and SCQF Level 5 in literacy and numeracy was above all national figures in 2023. Renfrewshire's figures were also above those of our virtual comparator for both numeracy measures and for Level 4 literacy. Renfrewshire was aligned to its virtual comparator at Level 5 literacy.

S5 (based on S4 roll)

- 4.5 Table 2 below provides data on attainment in literacy and numeracy in S5 at SCQF Level 4 and Level 5.

	Year	% Achieved Level 4 Literacy	% Achieved Level 4 Numeracy	% Achieved Level 5 Literacy	% Achieved Level 5 Numeracy
Renfrewshire	2021	96%	94%	88%	76%
Virtual Comparator	2021	95%	93%	84%	72%
National	2021	94%	91%	82%	70%
Renfrewshire	2022	96%	92%	87%	74%
Virtual Comparator	2022	95%	92%	83%	70%
National	2022	93%	90%	81%	68%
Renfrewshire	2023	94%	93%	84%	76%
Virtual Comparator	2023	94%	91%	82%	71%
National	2023	93%	90%	81%	70%

- 4.6 Renfrewshire remains aligned to or ahead of the virtual comparator and national figures across most measures at SCQF Level 4 and SCQF Level 5 in S5. Attainment remains higher in literacy than in numeracy across both levels. This mirrors the trend within the virtual comparator and nationally.

S6 (based on the S4 roll)

- 4.7 Table 3 below provides data on attainment in literacy and numeracy in S6 at SCQF Level 4 and Level 5.

Table 3 -% S6 Pupils Achieving Literacy & Numeracy					
	Year	% Achieved Level 4 Literacy	% Achieved Level 4 Numeracy	% Achieved Level 5 Literacy	% Achieved Level 5 Numeracy
Renfrewshire	2021	96%	94%	87%	78%
Virtual Comparator	2021	94%	92%	83%	72%
National	2021	93%	91%	81%	71%
Renfrewshire	2022	96%	94%	89%	78%
Virtual Comparator	2022	95%	93%	84%	74%
National	2022	94%	91%	82%	72%
Renfrewshire	2023	96%	93%	88%	75%
Virtual Comparator	2023	95%	92%	84%	72%
National	2023	93%	90%	81%	70%

- 4.8 In S6, Renfrewshire remains above its virtual comparator and the national level across all measures. This is consistent with previous years. Attainment in both literacy measures and Level 4 numeracy remains broadly in line with the previous year.

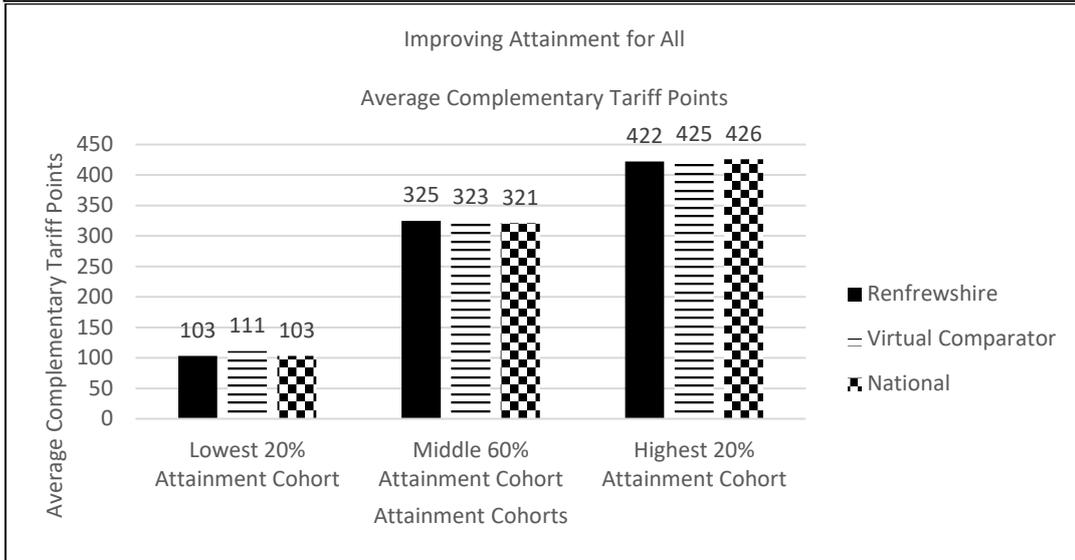
5. Improving attainment for all

- 5.1 Each qualification on the Scottish Certificate and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is attributed a number of tariff points. The higher level of qualification, the more tariff points are attributed. Each pupil gains a number of points that represents the number and level of qualifications they have gained. This report uses complementary tariff points, which measures a fixed volume of learning. Complementary tariff points allow for fair comparison across Scotland, regardless of differences in curricular models.
- 5.2 Within this measure, Insight breaks the data down into three groups: the average complementary tariff points for the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 60% and the highest attaining 20% and compares these with the virtual comparator and the national figure.

S4

- 5.3 Graph 1 below shows the average complementary tariff points of S4 pupils by attainment cohort in the 2023 exam diet.

Graph 1- Renfrewshire S4 Complementary Tariff by Attainment Cohort 2023



5.4 In S4, the average complementary tariff is below the virtual comparator and aligned to the national figure for the lowest 20%. Renfrewshire is slightly ahead of the virtual comparator and the national figure for the middle 60% attainment cohort. Renfrewshire is slightly behind both the virtual comparator and national figure for the highest 20% attainment cohort.

5.5 Table 4 shows the average complementary tariff of Renfrewshire S4 pupils over time.

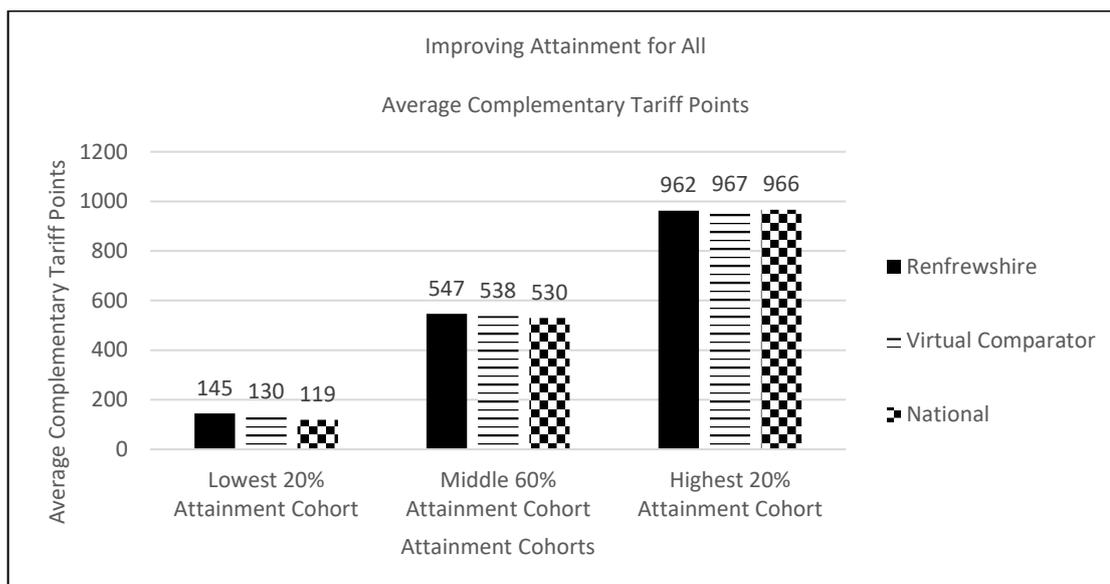
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Highest 20% Attainment Cohort	419	424	422	420	422
Middle 60% Attainment Cohort	331	341	343	332	325
Lowest 20% Attainment Cohort	145	139	146	134	103

5.6 The 2023 average complementary tariff is slightly higher than 2022 in the highest 20% cohort but lower in the middle 60% and lowest 20% attainment cohorts. Comparison to the last pre-pandemic exam diet year (2019) shows that the highest 20% attainment cohorts have improved slightly whilst the middle 60% and lowest 20% cohort has decreased.

S5

5.7 The graph below shows the average complementary tariff points of S5 pupils by attainment cohort in the 2023 exam diet.

Graph 2- Renfrewshire S5 Complementary Tariff by Attainment Cohort 2023



5.8 Graph 2 demonstrates that Renfrewshire is above the virtual comparator and national figures in the lowest 20% and the middle 60%. Renfrewshire is slightly behind the virtual comparator and national figure for the highest 20% attainment cohort.

5.9 Table 5 shows the average complementary tariff of Renfrewshire S5 pupils since 2019.

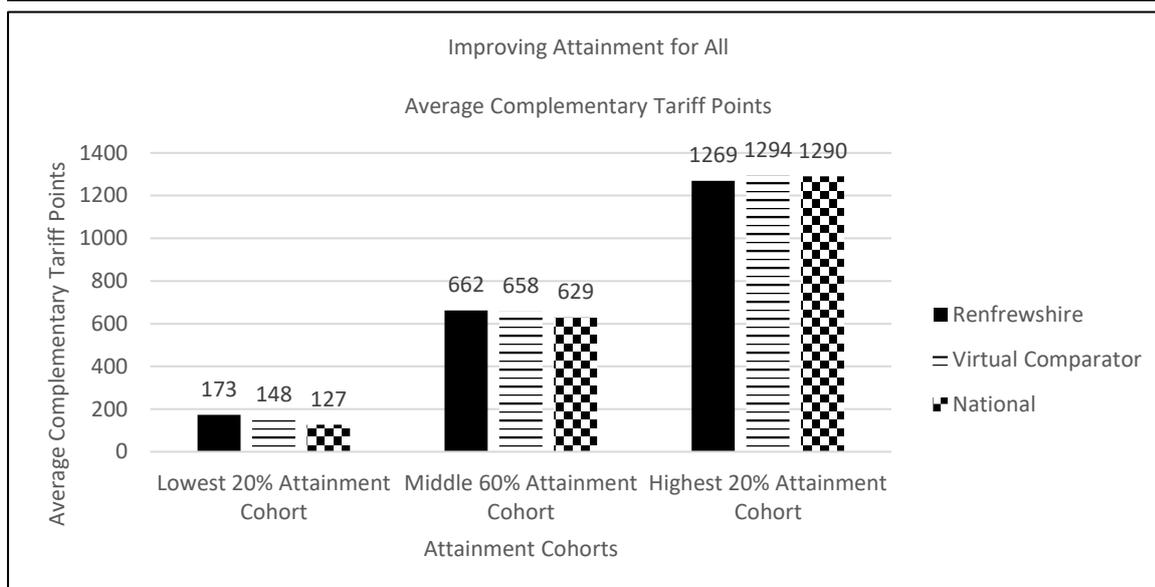
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Highest 20% Attainment Cohort	954	981	991	975	962
Middle 60% Attainment Cohort	546	597	606	580	547
Lowest 20% Attainment Cohort	146	167	164	171	145

5.10 Attainment is lower than in 2022 for all cohorts. Attainment in 2023 is similar to the last pre-pandemic year of 2019, with the lowest 20% and middle 60% cohorts aligned to 2019 figures.

S6

5.11 Graph 3 shows the average complementary tariff points of S6 pupils by attainment cohort in the 2023 exam diet.

Graph 3- Renfrewshire S6 Complementary Tariff by Attainment Cohort 2023



5.12 In graph 3, we can see that the average complementary tariff for the lowest 20% attainment cohort is above both the virtual comparator and national figures. Pupils in the middle 60% attainment cohort are also ahead of both comparators. The highest 20% attainment cohort is below both the virtual comparator and national figures.

5.13 Table 6 shows the average complementary tariff of Renfrewshire S6 pupils over 5 years.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Highest 20% Attainment Cohort	1258	1261	1321	1275	1269
Middle 60% Attainment Cohort	653	660	718	700	662
Lowest 20% Attainment Cohort	175	152	173	167	173

5.14 The average complementary tariff is lower than in 2022 across the highest 20% and middle 60% attainment cohorts. However, the lowest 20% cohort has improved on the 2022 figure. The 2023 figures are in line with or above the last pre-pandemic diet in 2019.

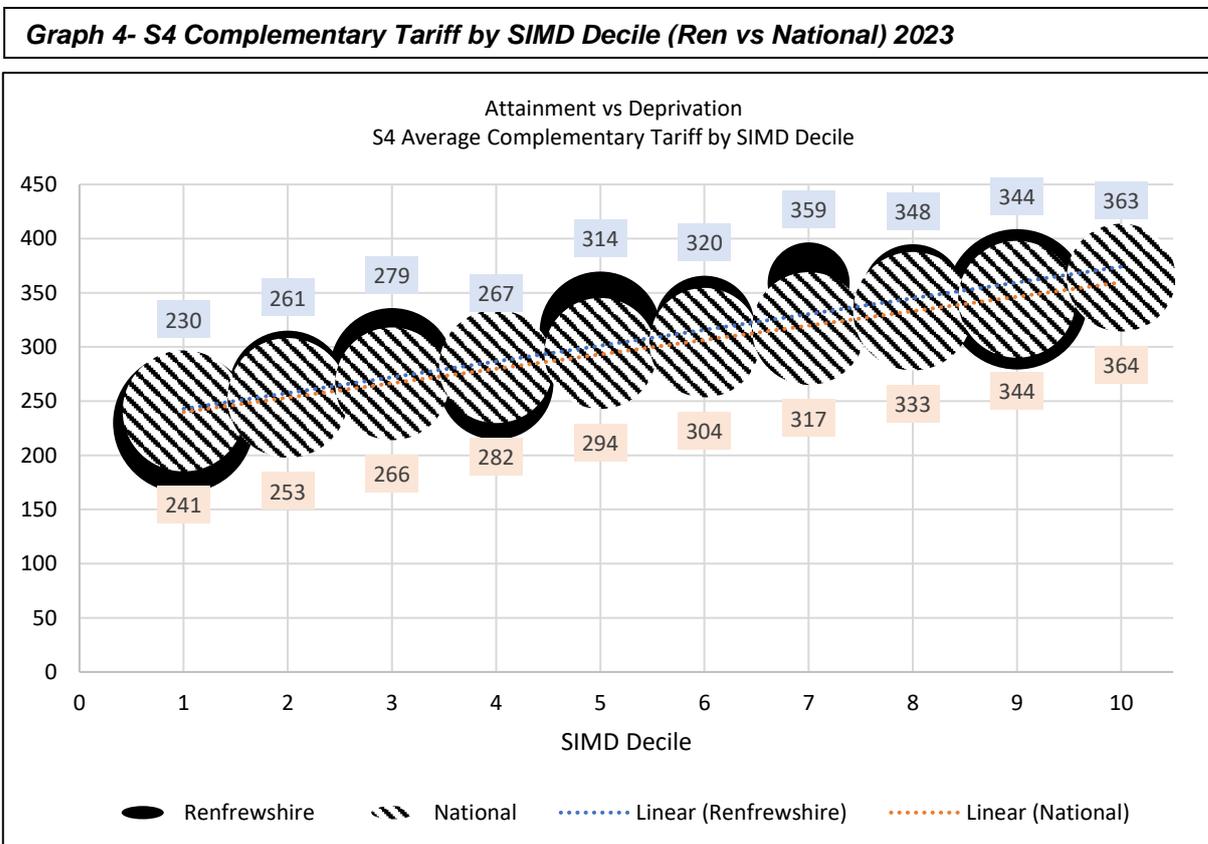
6. Attainment versus deprivation

6.1 The attainment versus deprivation measure provides the average complementary tariff of pupils by SIMD decile. This allows us to identify the attainment gap in Renfrewshire and compare it to both our virtual comparator and national data.

6.2 The following charts show SIMD deciles 1 -10 (most deprived to least deprived) plotted along the horizontal axis with the average complementary tariff points plotted on the vertical axis. The size of the circles represents the

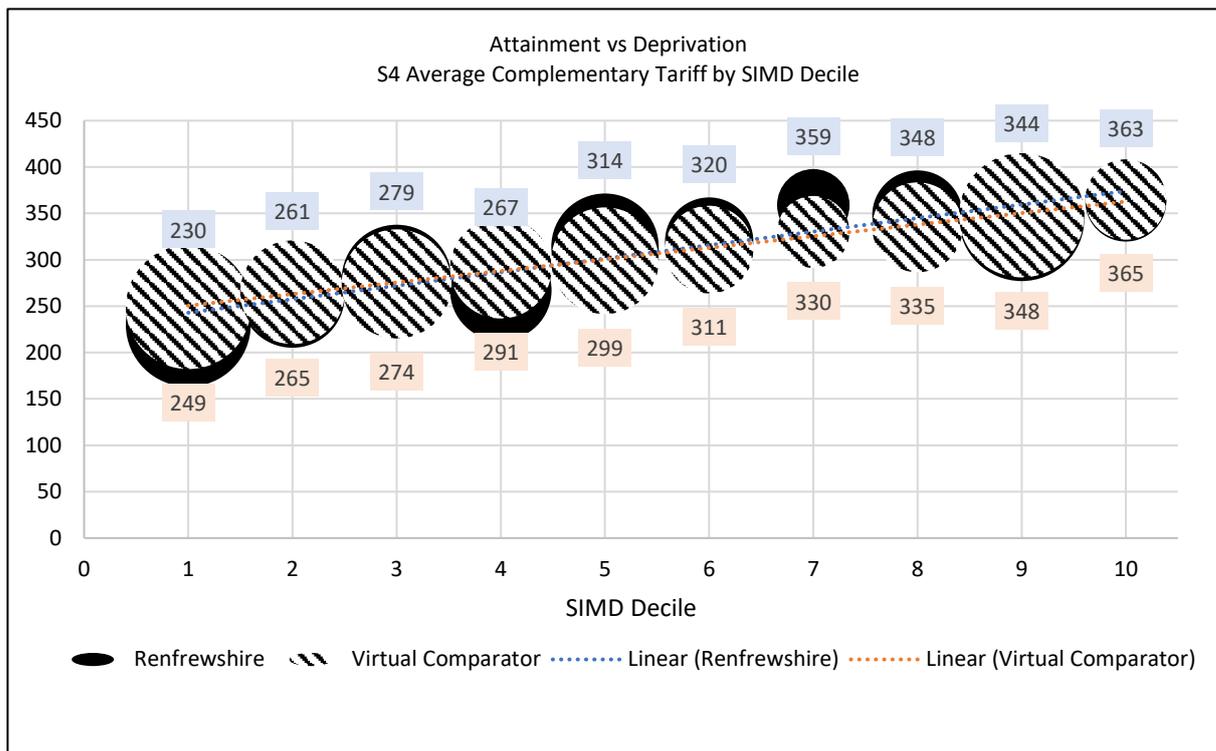
percentage of pupils who live in each decile. The trend line which runs through the circles represents the difference in attainment between pupils living in the most deprived and the least deprived areas. The steeper the angle, the more pronounced the disparity between the most and least deprived deciles.

S4



6.3 Renfrewshire’s S4 average complementary tariff is above or in line with national figures in most deciles. The trendlines indicate that the size of the gap between most and least deprived pupils is very slightly larger in Renfrewshire than nationally due to lower attainment of Renfrewshire pupils living in decile 1.

Graph 5- S4 Complementary Tariff by SIMD Decile (Ren vs Virtual Comparator) 2023



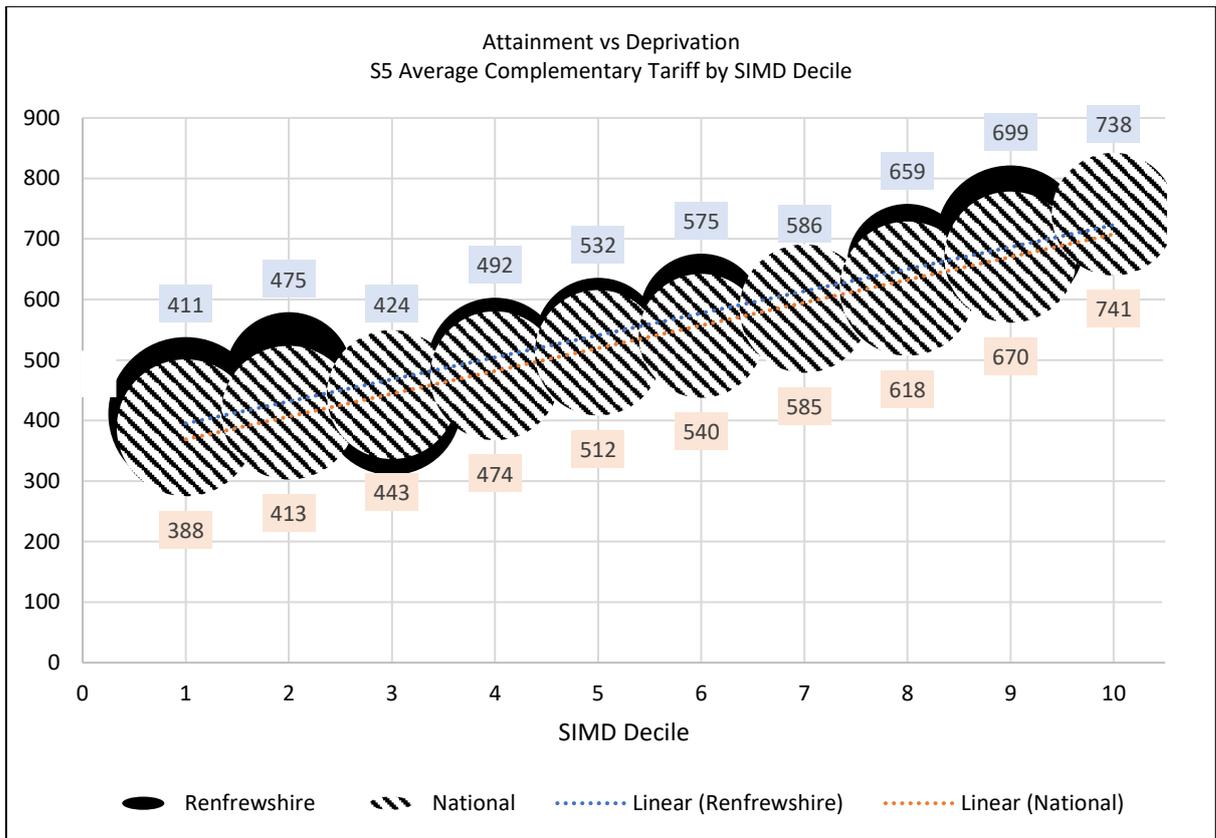
6.4 Renfrewshire’s S4 average complementary tariff is behind the virtual comparator figure for SIMD deciles 1,2,4,9 and 10. Renfrewshire is ahead of the virtual comparator in SIMD deciles 3,5,6,7, and 8. The trendlines in graph 5 indicate that Renfrewshire has a slightly higher attainment gap due to lower performance in decile 1.

6.5 Table 7 shows the S4 average complementary tariff of pupils living in SIMD 1-3 (30% most deprived areas) and of pupils living in SIMD 4-10 (70% least deprived areas) over 5 years. It also shows the Tariff Point gap between these two figures.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Pupils Living in 30% Most Deprived Areas	266	280	277	269	254
Pupils Living in 70% Least Deprived Areas	338	339	341	332	327
Tariff Point Gap	72	59	64	73	73

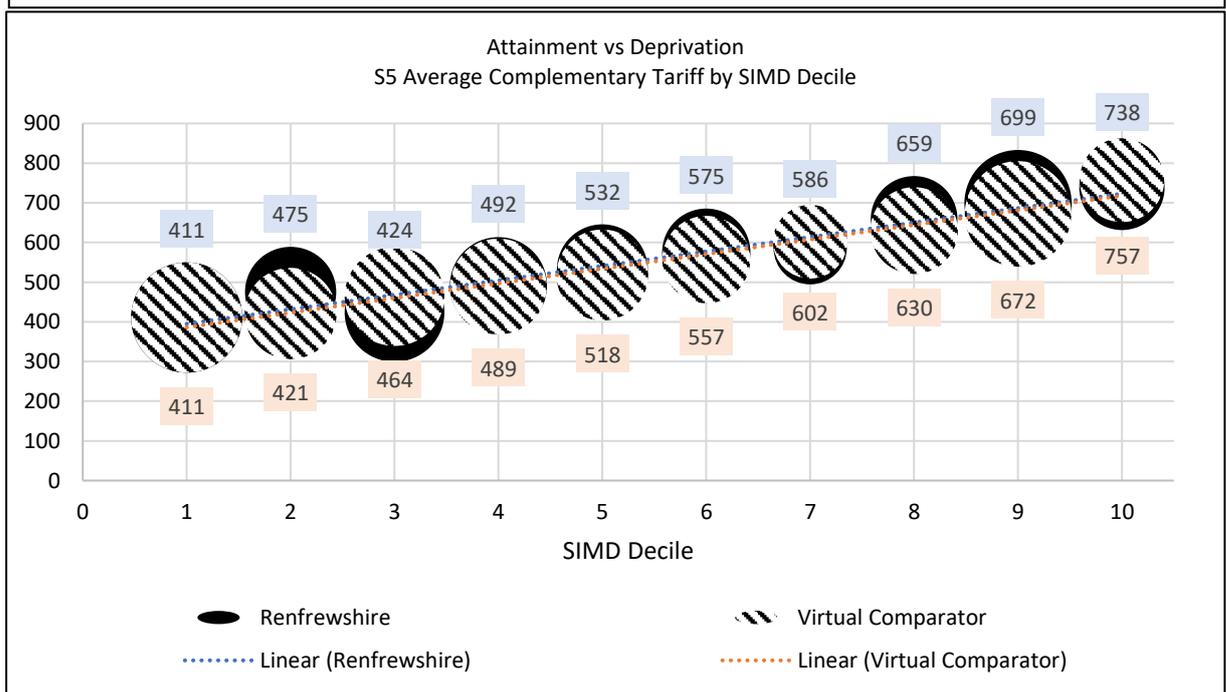
6.6 The average complementary tariff of pupils living in 30% most and 70% least deprived areas has fallen against 2022 figures. Despite a decrease for both cohorts of pupils, the size of the gap remains unchanged and is in line with levels experienced in 2019.

Graph 6- S5 Complementary Tariff by SIMD Decile (Ren vs National) 2023



6.7 The S5 average complementary tariff for Renfrewshire is above national in all but two SIMD deciles (3 and 10). As Renfrewshire has higher performance at deciles 1 and 2, compared to the national picture, its attainment gap is smaller than the national gap.

Graph 7- S5 Complementary Tariff by SIMD Decile (Ren vs Virtual Comparator) 2023



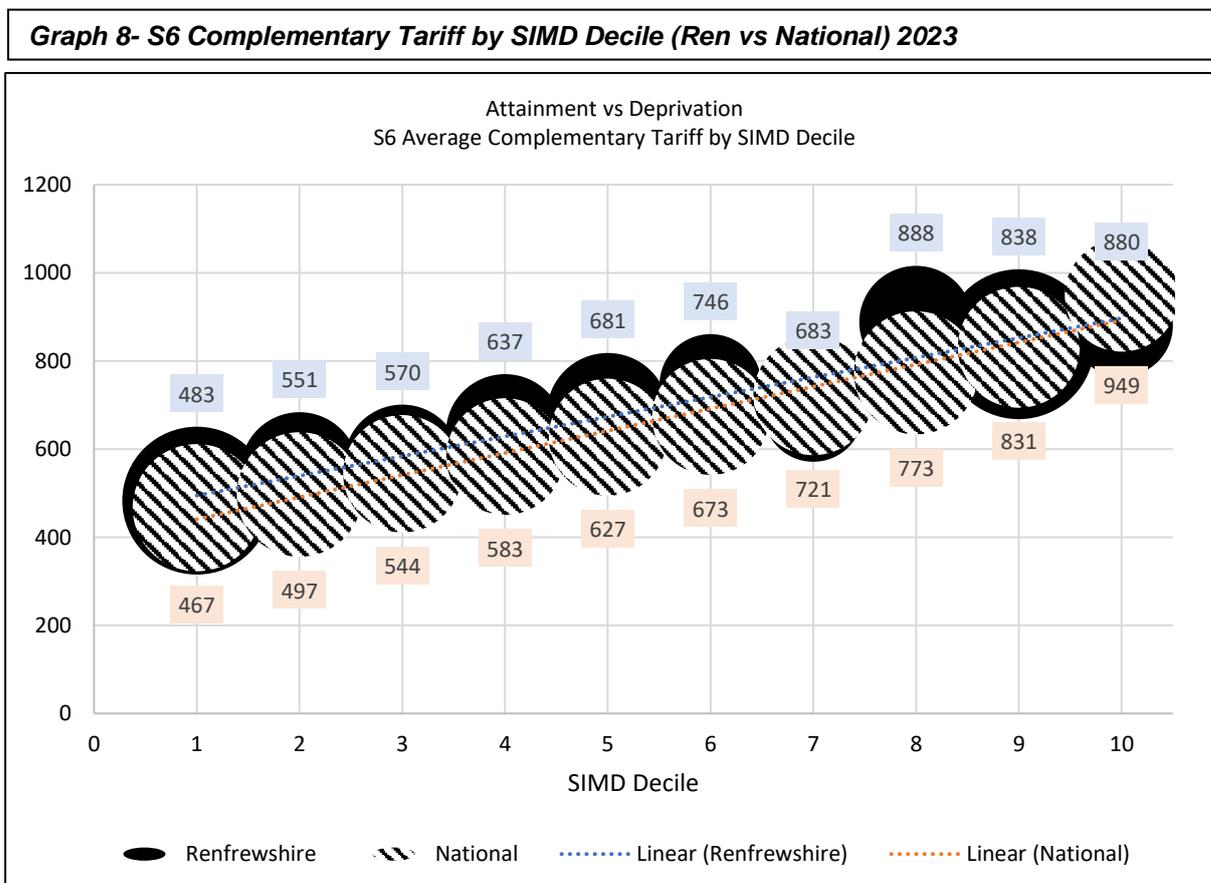
6.8 Graph 7 shows that Renfrewshire outperforms its Virtual Comparator at most deciles. The Virtual Comparator figure outperforms Renfrewshire figures at SIMD deciles 3,7, and 10. The trendlines suggest that attainment gaps are very similar between Renfrewshire and its Virtual Comparator.

6.9 Table 8 shows the S5 average complementary tariff of pupils living in SIMD 1-3 (30% most deprived areas) and of pupils living in SIMD 4-10 (70% least deprived areas) over 5 years. It also shows the Tariff Point gap between these two figures.

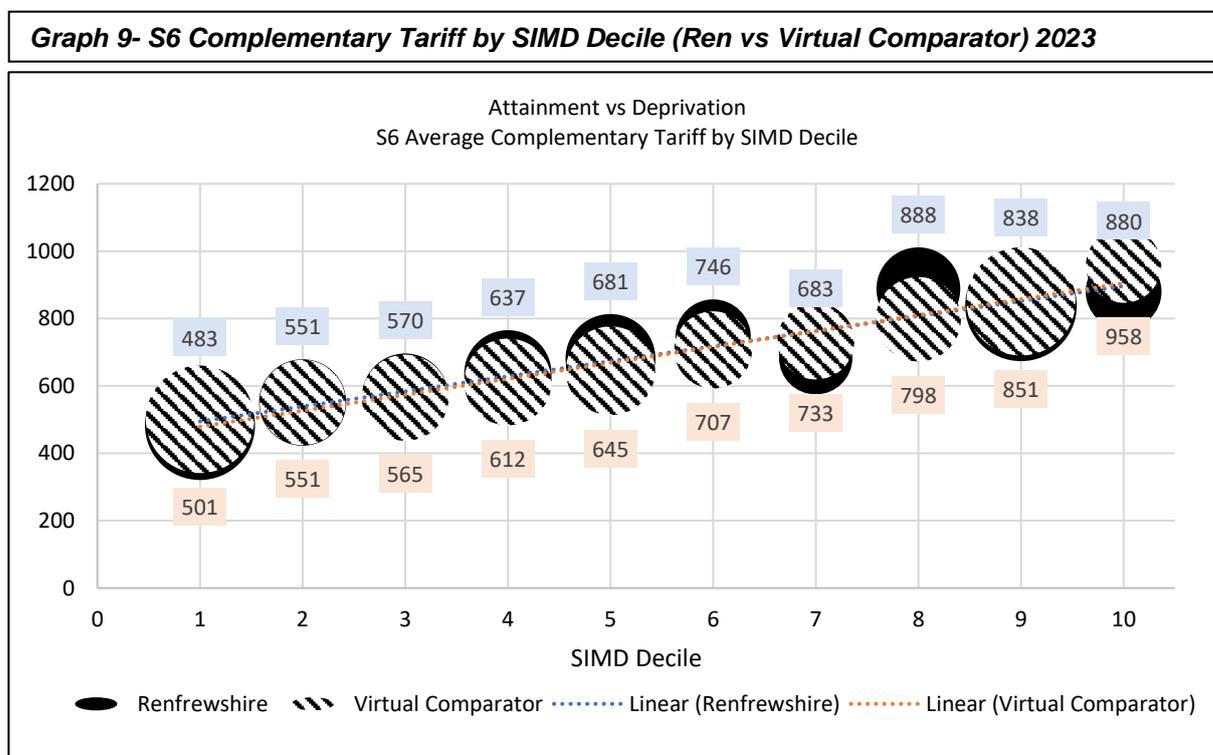
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Pupils Living in 30% Most Deprived Areas	417	445	467	457	433
Pupils Living in 70% Least Deprived Areas	626	668	665	642	613
Tariff Point Gap	209	223	198	185	180

6.10 The average complementary tariff has decreased for both the 30% most deprived and the 70% least deprived groups in 2023. This has occurred within the National and Virtual Comparator figures also. The decrease of the 30% most deprived group is less than that of the 70% least deprived. As a result, the size of the attainment gap has decreased.

S6



6.11 The S6 average complementary tariff is higher than national in all but two SIMD deciles (7 and 10). As Renfrewshire has a higher relative performance at decile 1 and a lower relative performance at decile 10, its trendline suggests a smaller attainment gap relative to the National picture.



6.12 Renfrewshire is above the virtual comparator in deciles 3,4,5,6 and 8. The Virtual Comparator is ahead in deciles 1,7,9 and 10. Renfrewshire has a lower attainment gap compared to its Virtual Comparator at S6.

Table 9 – Renfrewshire S6 Average Complementary Tariff by SIMD Groupings

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Pupils Living in 30% Most Deprived Areas	512	507	537	548	526
Pupils Living in 70% Least Deprived Areas	774	780	830	798	769
Tariff Point Gap	262	273	293	247	243

6.13 The average complementary tariff for pupils living in the 30% most deprived and 70% least deprived group has decreased against 2022. Pupils from the 30% most deprived areas remain above the pre-pandemic figure of 2019. The tariff point gap has reduced because the 70% least deprived group decreased by a bigger amount than the 30% most deprived group. This is a pattern repeated with the national and virtual comparator figures.

7. Breadth and depth

7.1 In addition to the key measures available in Insight, the service also looks at the percentage of the cohort who achieved any number of awards at various SCQF levels. These are known as ‘breadth and depth’ measures. We look at

this data in conjunction with the Insight measures to allow us to gain a broader understanding of attainment across Renfrewshire and between schools.

- 7.2 The tables on the following pages show performance over time of some of the key breadth and depth measures and how we compare to the virtual comparator. SCQF 4 is National 4 or its equivalent, SCQF Level 5 is National 5 or its equivalent, SCQF Level 6 is Higher or its equivalent; and SCQF Level 7 is Advanced Higher or its equivalent.

S4

- 7.3 Table 10 includes data on the number of awards achieved for S4 pupils at SCQF Level 4 and Level 5 for Renfrewshire and the virtual comparator.

Table 10- S4 Breadth & Depth								
S4 A-C	3 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better		3 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better	
	Ren	VC	Ren	VC	Ren	VC	Ren	VC
2021	93%	92%	86%	83%	76%	73%	60%	56%
2022	93%	91%	86%	83%	74%	70%	59%	55%
2023	89%	91%	81%	82%	71%	70%	58%	55%

- 7.4 In S4, Renfrewshire is now behind the virtual comparator at SCQF Level 4. The proportion of pupils achieving 3 or more and 5 or more at Level 4 has fallen on previous years. At SCQF Level 5, Renfrewshire is ahead of the virtual comparator at 3 or more and 5 or more awards, but has also fallen against 2022 figures.

S5

- 7.5 Table 11 includes data on the number of awards achieved for S5 pupils at SCQF levels 5 and 6 for Renfrewshire and the virtual comparator.

Table 11- S5 Breadth & Depth (% of S4 Roll)												
S5 A-C	1 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		3 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better		3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	
	Ren	VC										
2021	91%	90%	82%	80%	71%	68%	71%	68%	51%	49%	28%	25%
2022	92%	90%	82%	80%	69%	68%	70%	66%	49%	48%	27%	25%
2023	90%	88%	80%	77%	68%	65%	68%	65%	47%	46%	28%	25%

- 7.6 At both SCQF Level 5 and Level 6, Renfrewshire is above the virtual comparator across all measures. Aside from 5+ awards at Level 6, all other measures decreased from 2022. This also occurred with the virtual comparator.

S6

7.7 Table 12 includes data on the number of awards achieved for S6 pupils at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7 for Renfrewshire and the virtual comparator.

S6 A-C	3 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better		1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better		3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better		5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better		1 or more awards at SCQF level 7 or better	
	Ren	VC										
2021	82%	79%	72%	69%	73%	69%	59%	56%	45%	42%	27%	28%
2022	82%	81%	74%	71%	75%	70%	60%	56%	45%	41%	27%	28%
2023	83%	81%	73%	70%	72%	69%	56%	54%	41%	40%	26%	27%

7.8 In S6, Renfrewshire has performed above the virtual comparator in all measures at SCQF Level 5 and Level 6. This is consistent with previous year's trends. Attainment at SCQF Level 7 is slightly behind the virtual comparator, which mimics previous years at this level. Most measures saw a decrease in comparison to the 2022 figures.

8. Conclusion and next steps

- 8.1 The 2023 results need to be considered in the context of returning to a traditional exam diet after challenging circumstances and the never-before-used alternative certification model. Considered in this context, it would not be helpful to directly compare attainment to 2020-2022. Better comparisons are to be made with 2019 performance which used an assessment programme that more closely resembles what was implemented in the 22/23 session. What is clear is that young people across Renfrewshire have performed exceptionally well, and they should be congratulated for all that they have achieved.
- 8.2 A further report on finalised leavers' data and the attainment of our looked after children will be presented to this board in spring 2024 or as soon thereafter as the data becomes available.

Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

None.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

Children and Young People

- High levels of attainment and achievement provide our children and young people with the best start in life

- 4. Legal Implications**
None.
- 5. Property/Assets Implications**
None.
- 6. Information Technology Implications**
None.
- 7. Equality and Human Rights Implications**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
- 8. Health and Safety Implications**
None.
- 9. Procurement Implications**
None.
- 10. Risk Implications**
None.
- 11. Privacy Impact**
None.
- 12. COSLA Policy Position**
None.
- 13. Climate Risk**
None.

List of Background Papers

- (a) none
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