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**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) Level Return 2025**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report summarises attainment in the Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) return for 2024-25. The Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) return contains data on the highest CfE level achieved for all pupils in Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3.
  - 1.2. The 2024-25 return demonstrates that there has been an increase in attainment across almost all curricular areas and stages. Attainment is now in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels. It is important to note that data from 2024-25 remains provisional.
  - 1.3. National figures are not available until the official ACEL return in December 2025. Figures from 2023-24 are used to allow for a comparison between local and national attainment. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all stages and curricular areas for 2023-24. This has been a consistent trend in almost all stages and curricular areas, however the decreases in Renfrewshire's data post pandemic were greater than national figures resulting in very close alignment in 2021-22. The 2023-24 data illustrates that Renfrewshire has made greater progress over the previous 3 years and is now comfortably ahead of national figures.
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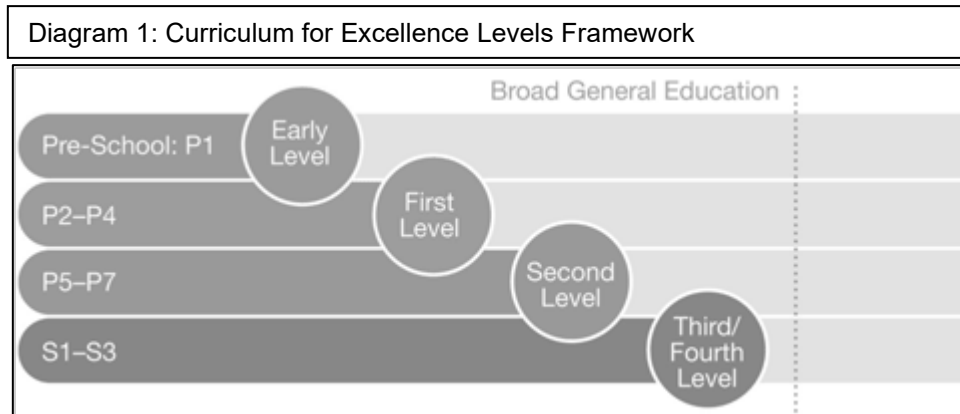
## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members of the education and children's policy board are asked to:

- note the content of this report;
- note the efforts of the children and young people and the significant commitment of teachers and support staff.

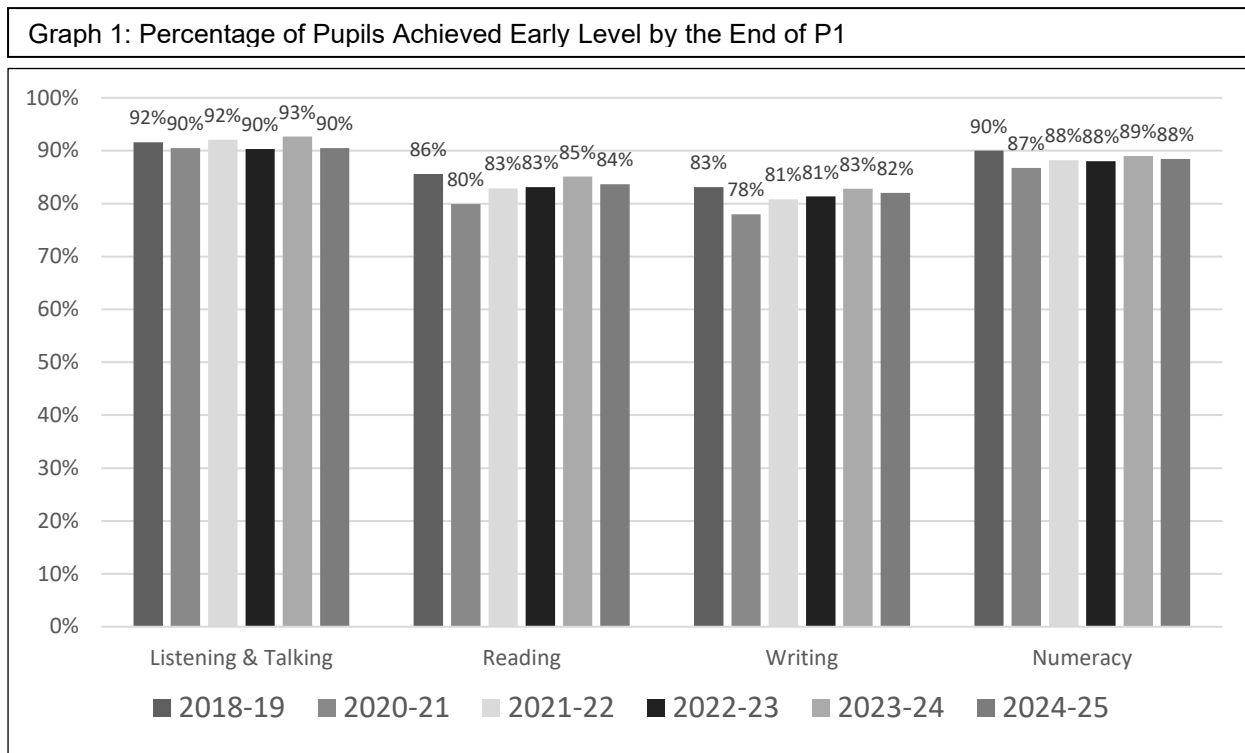
### 3. Background

- 3.1. The 2025 ACEL return includes data on all Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 pupils and Secondary 3. The data measures performance in the literacy curricular areas (listening & talking, reading, writing) and numeracy. Assessment of the level achieved is based on teacher professional judgements.



- 3.2. Diagram 1 shows the 4 curriculum levels within broad general education (P1-S3). The ACEL return measures the percentage of pupils that have achieved early level by the end of Primary 1, first level by the end of Primary 4, second level by the end of Primary 7 and third/fourth level by the end of S3. This reflects the path that most children and young people are expected to follow. However, the framework displayed in diagram 1 is designed to be flexible to permit careful planning for those with additional support needs.
- 3.3. The return is submitted for the 2024-25 school session and is published nationally in December 2025. Due to school closures, there was no return for the 2019-20 school session as it would not have been possible to gather accurate data. The closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021 had a negative effect on some pupils' progress and attainment with socio-economically deprived children amongst those who were most negatively affected. This was reflected in the 2020-21 figures and should be kept in mind when interpreting trends over the previous 7 years.

#### 4. Attainment by Stage



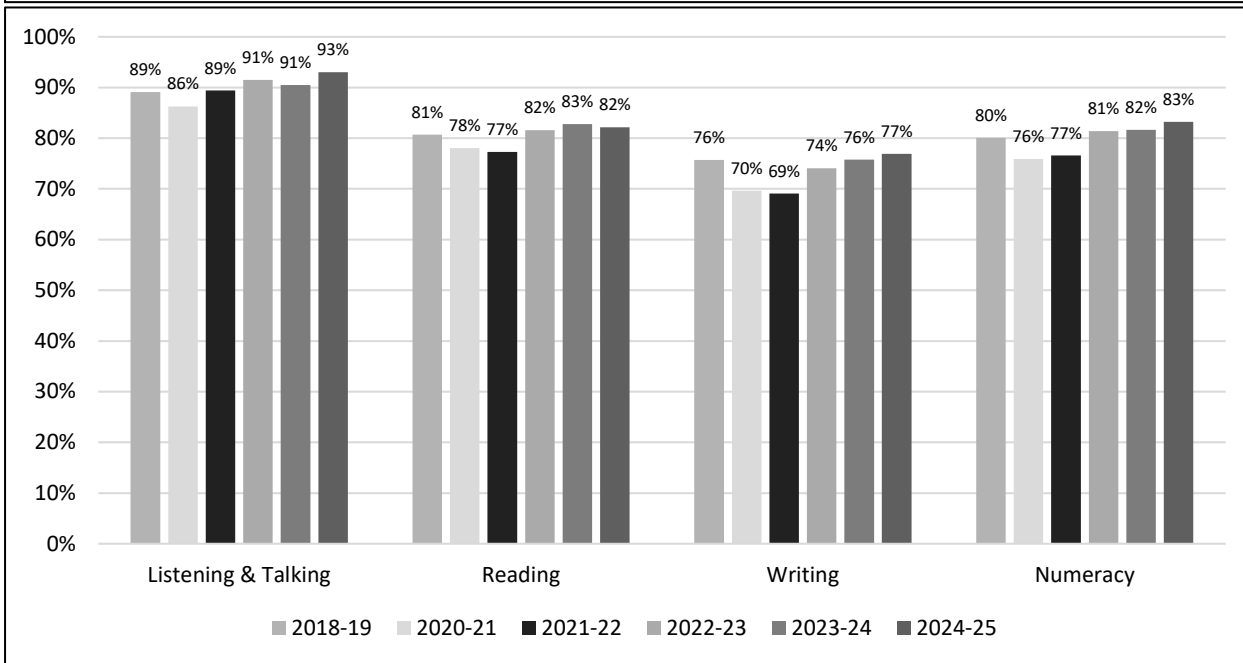
4.1. Graph 1 shows that attainment has decreased across all measures in P1 since 2023-24. The largest decrease has been in listening and talking which is down 2 percentage points. Listening and talking, reading, literacy and numeracy attainment are now within 2 percentage points of 2018-19 figures. Writing is within 1 percentage point of 2018-19 figures.

Table 1: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Early Level by the end of P1. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	93%	85%	83%	89%
National	87%	81%	79%	85%

4.2. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures at this stage across all curricular areas for 2023-24. The largest difference is in listening and talking where Renfrewshire is ahead by 5 percentage points. Renfrewshire has been consistently ahead of national data at this stage since the data collection started in 2015-16.

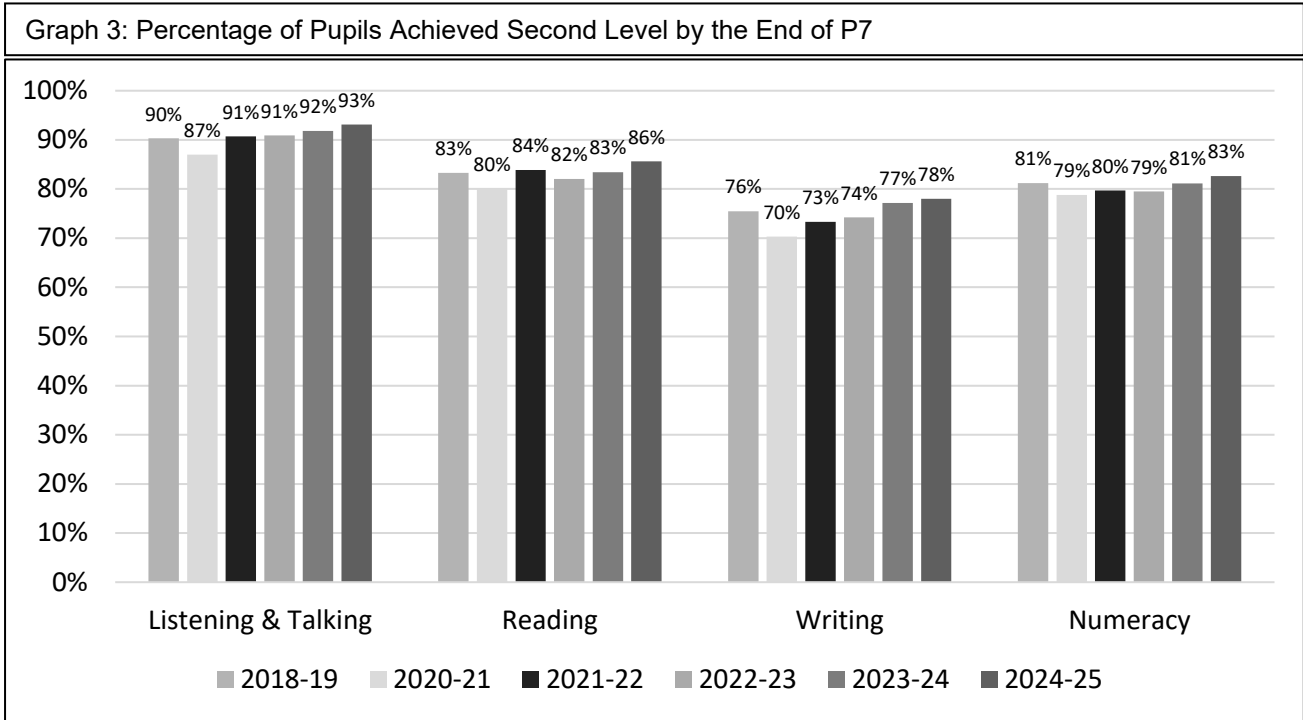
Graph 2: Percentage of Pupils Achieved First Level by the End of P4



4.3. Graph 2 demonstrates attainment has increased in listening and talking, writing, literacy and numeracy since 2023-24. There has been a marginal decrease in reading, however this is less than 1 percentage point. All curricular areas are in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	90%	83%	76%	81%
National	87%	79%	74%	78%

4.4. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in P4 for 2023-24. The percentage differences are within 2 to 4 percentage points across the curricular areas, with the largest difference found in reading at 4 percentage points. This has been a consistent trend in almost all curricular areas since 2015-16 however Renfrewshire was -0.6 percentage points behind the national figure in 2021-22. Since that point Renfrewshire attainment has increased by 6 percentage points, compared with 4 percentage points nationally, resulting in the positive difference within the 2023-24 figures.

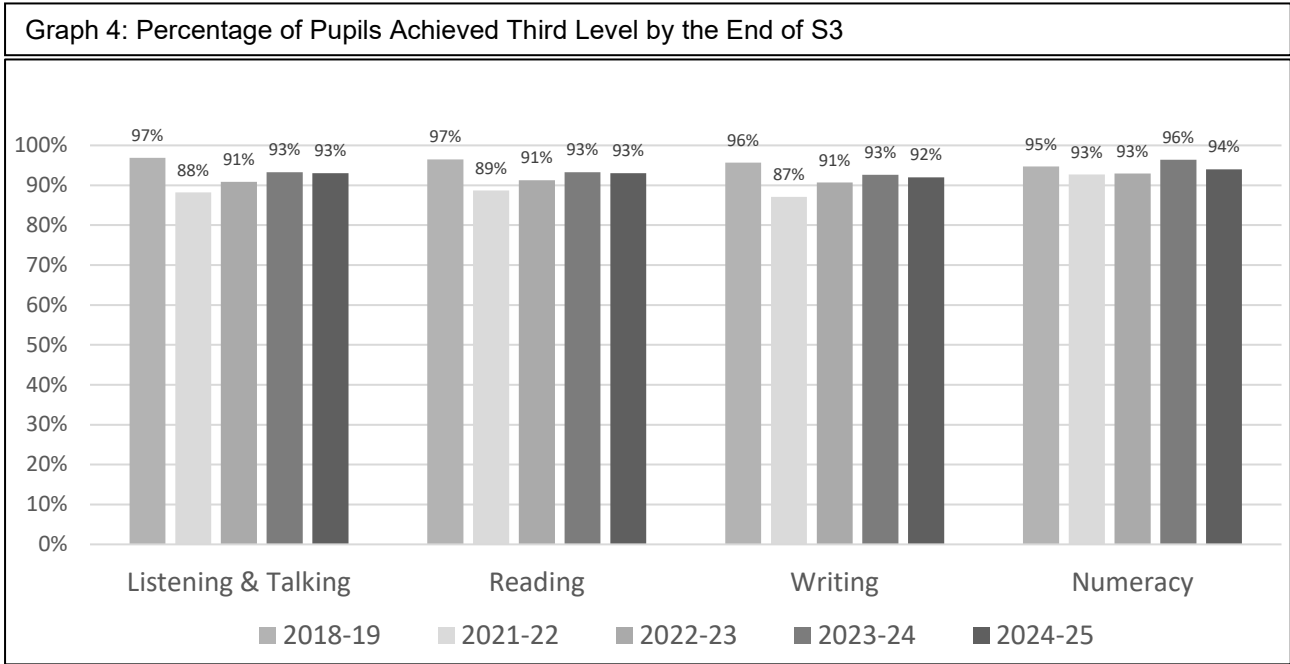


4.5. In Primary 7, attainment has increased in all curricular areas since 2023-24. The largest increase has been in reading which has increased by 3 percentage points and has now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. All other measures remain in line or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

Table 3: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Second Level by the end of P7. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	92%	83%	77%	81%
National	88%	81%	76%	78%

4.6. Renfrewshire is ahead of the national figures in all curricular areas for 2023-24, within a range of 1 to 4 percentage points. This has been a consistent trend in listening and talking, reading and numeracy. Writing attainment was behind national figures by 1 percentage point in 2022-23 but the increase within Renfrewshire’s data over this period has resulted in the local authority moving 1 percentage point ahead of national.



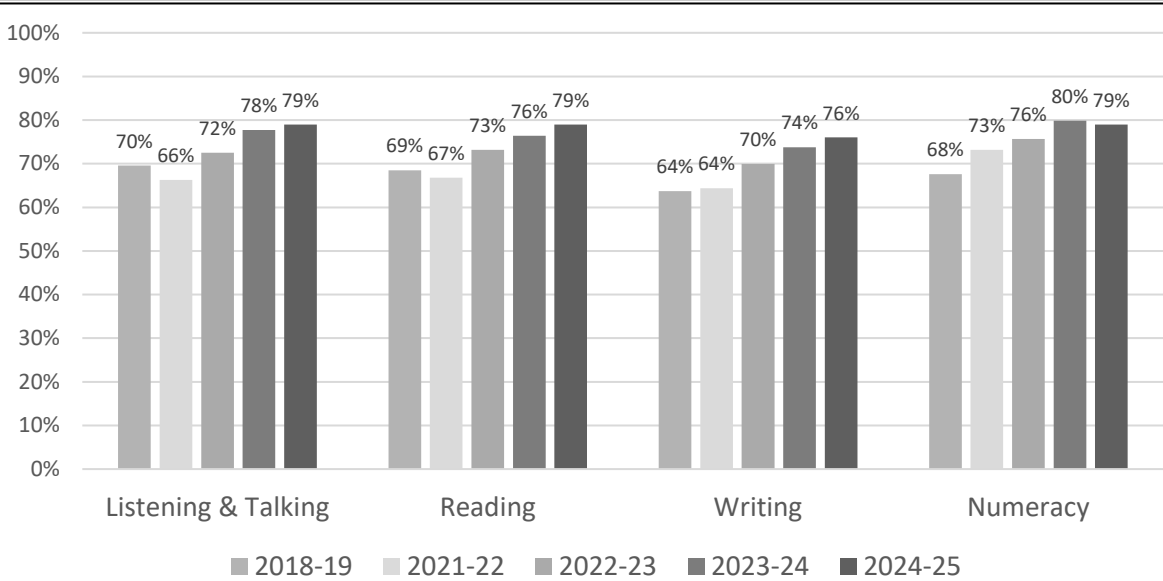
4.7. The ACEL return measures the percentage of pupils who achieve third and fourth level in S3. The percentage of pupils that achieved third level or above are displayed in graph 4. Attainment has remained level across listening and talking and reading since 2023-24. Attainment has decreased in writing by 1 percentage point, and numeracy by 2 percentage points since 2023-24.

Table 4: Percentage Pupils Achieved Third Level or Above by the end of S3. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	93%	93%	93%	96%
National	91%	90%	90%	90%

4.8. As shown in table 4, Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in S3 for 2023-24. The largest difference is in numeracy which is 6 percentage points ahead of the national figure. The literacy organisers are all 2 to 3 percentage points ahead. These figures had moved in line with or in some cases marginally behind national figures in the post-pandemic figures therefore the 2023-24 data demonstrates that Renfrewshire has increased at a higher rate than national figures in the previous 2 years.

Graph 5: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Fourth Level by the End of S3.



4.9. Graph 5 shows the percentage of pupils achieving fourth level across all curricular areas. Attainment has increased across listening and talking, reading, and writing since 2023-24. Attainment has decreased in numeracy since 2023-24, but this is by less than one percentage point. All areas remain considerably above pre-pandemic levels.

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	78%	76%	74%	80%
National	64%	63%	61%	65%

4.10. Renfrewshire is ahead of national data across all curricular areas in this measure for 2023-24. The differences range from 12 to 15 percentage points, with the largest difference in numeracy. This is greater than in other stages however is in line with previous years at this level.

## 5. Poverty- Related Attainment Gaps

5.1. The attainment gap is measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) which is an area-based measure based on pupil postcode. In line with the Scottish Government approach, the data in the section below is split into SIMD quintiles which represent the 20% most deprived areas (quintile 1) to 20% least deprived areas (quintile 5).

Graph 6: Attainment in Literacy by SIMD Quintile (P1, P4, P7 Combined)

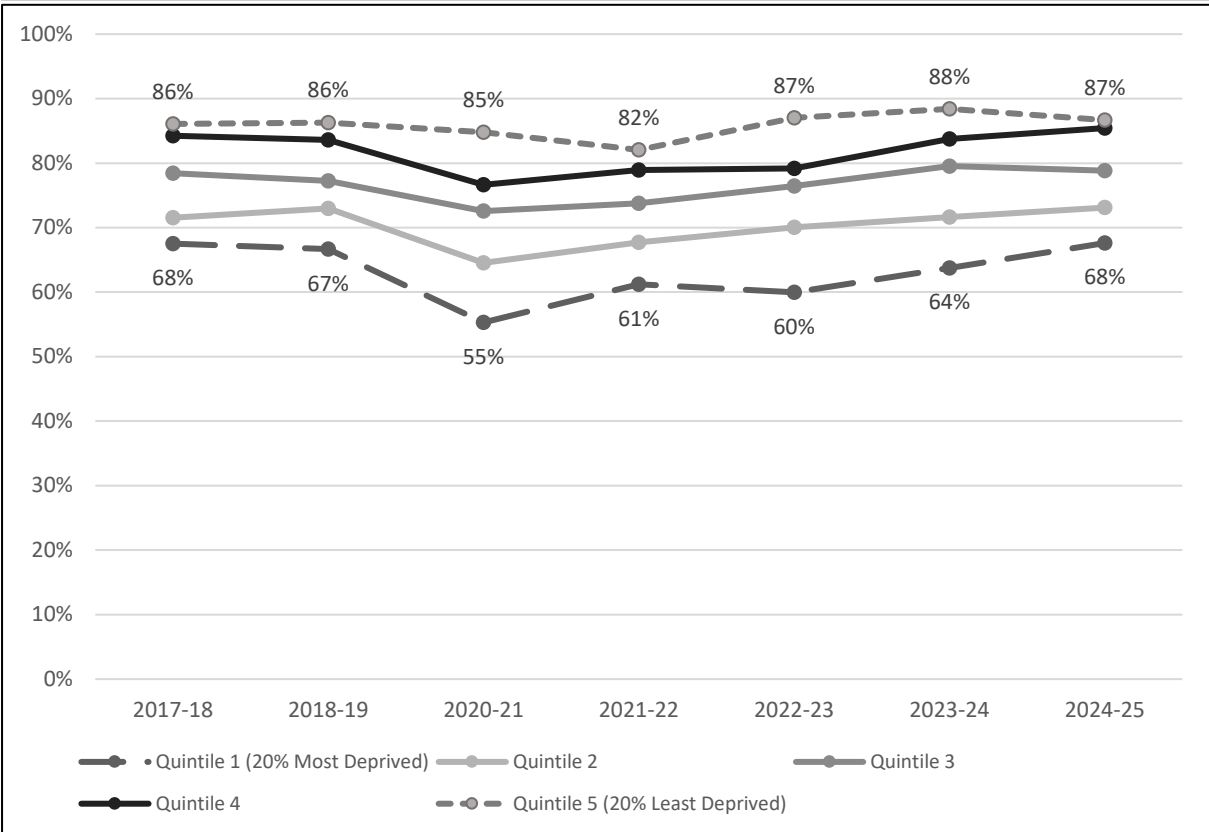


Table 6: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Literacy (P1,P4,P7)

	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Literacy	-20%	-30%	-21%	-27%	-25%	-19%

5.2. Graph 6 shows that pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) have increased attainment by 4 percentage points since the previous year. This is now in line with pre-pandemic levels. Pupils living in SIMD quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas) have decreased attainment but remain above pre-pandemic levels. Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas were most significantly impacted by the pandemic, with a 12-percentage point drop in this group between 2018-19 and 2020-21. This compares to a 1 percentage point drop for pupils living in 20% least deprived areas over the same period. As a result, the size of the gap (shown in table 6) has decreased by 8 percentage points since 2022-23 to 19 percentage points. This is lower than in 2021-22 however there has been some year-on-year variation since this point.

Graph 7: Attainment in Numeracy by SIMD Quintile (P1, P4, P7 Combined)

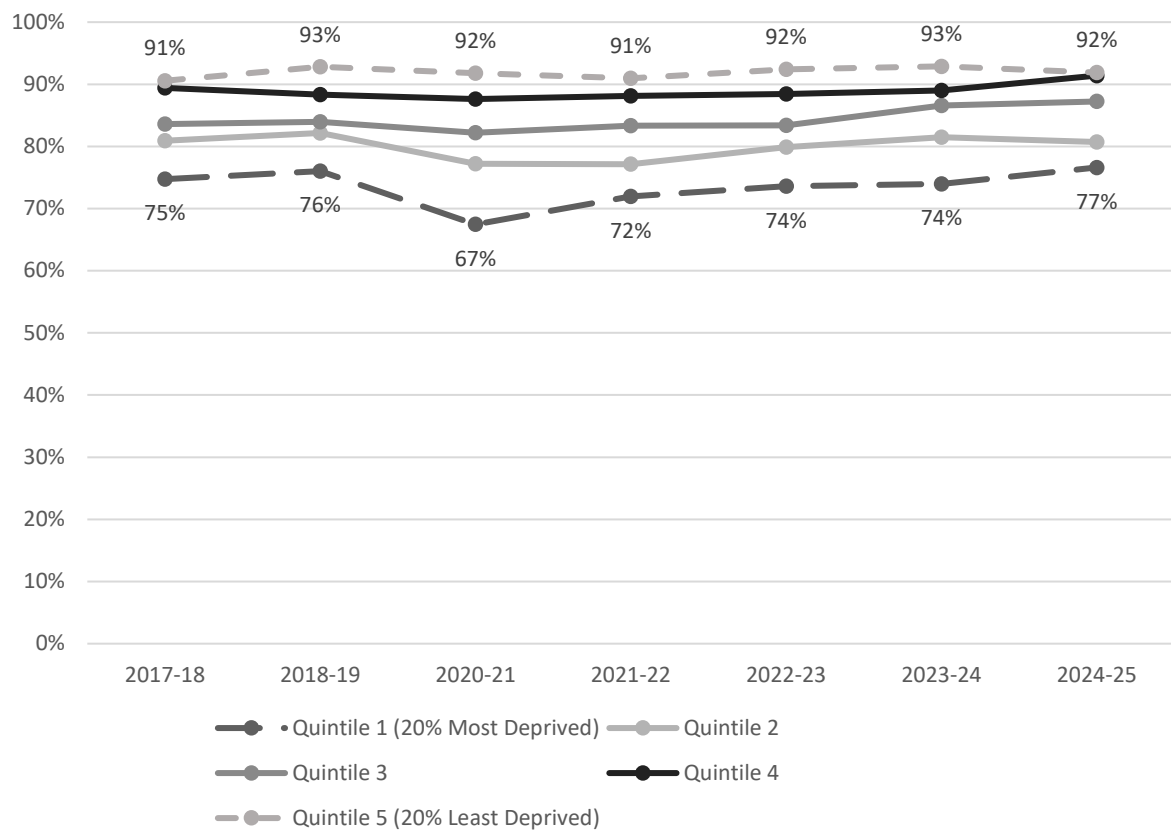


Table 7: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Numeracy (P1,P4,P7)

	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Numeracy	-17%	-24%	-19%	-19%	-19%	-15%

5.3. Graph 7 demonstrates attainment in numeracy by SIMD quintile. Similar to literacy, attainment of pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) had the largest decrease in 2020-21. There has been improvement in this measure since 2020-21, however 2023-24 figures for pupils living in quintile 1 were unchanged on the previous year. In 2024-25, the percentage of pupils living in quintile 1 attaining in numeracy increased by 3 percentage points. Percentage point gaps, shown in table 7, remained unchanged between 2021-22 and 2023-24. The current figure of 15 percentage points is lower than in 2020-21 and the pre-pandemic figure of 17 percentage points.

	Literacy		Numeracy	
	Renfrewshire	National	Renfrewshire	National
Quintile 1 (Most Deprived)	64%	64%	74%	72%
Quintile 2	72%	70%	82%	77%
Quintile 3	80%	74%	87%	81%
Quintile 4	84%	79%	89%	85%
Quintile 5 (Least Deprived)	88%	85%	93%	89%
<b>Percentage Point Gap between Quintiles 1 and 5</b>	<b>-25%</b>	<b>-20%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>-17%</b>

5.4. Renfrewshire is in line with or ahead of national figures across all SIMD quintiles in literacy and numeracy for 2023-24. The difference is most marginal in quintiles 1 and 2 literacy, however is broadly consistent within numeracy. While attainment is higher in Renfrewshire, the size of the gaps also remain larger than nationally. In literacy, this is a difference of 5 percentage points, however in numeracy the difference is only 2 percentage points.

## 6. Conclusion and next steps

- 6.1. The Achievement of a CfE Level (ACEL) provisional data for 2024-25 has demonstrated that attainment continues to improve with increases across many measures since 2023-24. These increases have resulted in most measures returning to pre-pandemic levels. The exception to this is attainment at early level in P1 and third level in S3 however there has been improvement in attainment at fourth level at this stage.
- 6.2. Attainment gaps are in line with or less than pre-pandemic levels. Pupils living in SIMD 20% most deprived areas were most significantly impacted by the pandemic and the 2020-21 figures demonstrated large decreases in attainment. Attainment has improved across both groups and gaps have reduced since 2020-21. For pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas, attainment is now in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels, and as a result attainment gaps have reduced.
- 6.3. Renfrewshire were consistently ahead of national figures in 2023-24 due to greater increases within Renfrewshire data in the previous year. This is an improvement on recent years where figures for some stages and curricular areas were within 1 percentage point of national figures.
- 6.4. While the 2024-25 figures are positive, we recognise there is scope for further improvement, particularly around attainment of our pupils living in most deprived areas. We will continue, through our quality improvement framework, to support and challenge our schools and ensure continual professional learning is available across a wide range of areas. Additionally, Renfrewshire's targeted schools programme remains in place for 2025-26 which is providing focused support for primary schools with high levels of deprivation and below average attainment levels. This programme alongside our universal offer aims to increase attainment for all and reduce the poverty related attainment gap.

## 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
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- 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.

**14. Children's Rights**

This links to, Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

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**List of Background Papers**

(a) none

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18/11/2025*

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