

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 16 January 2025

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) Level Return 2024

1. Summary

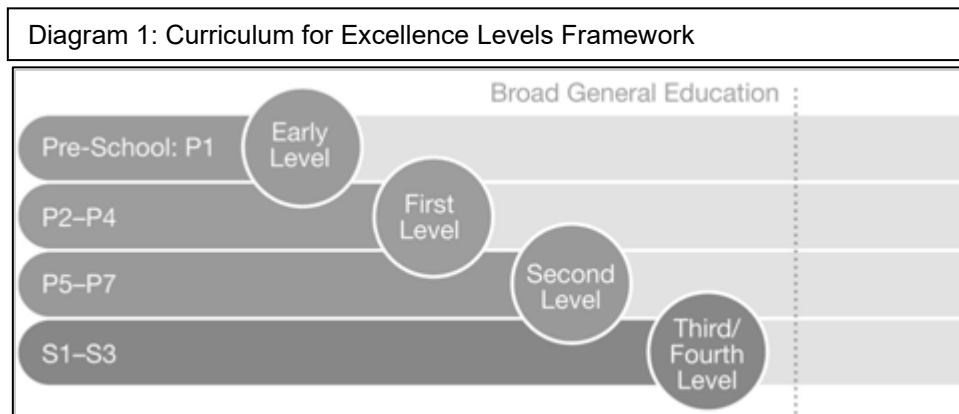
- 1.1. This report summarises attainment in the Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level Return (ACEL) 2023-24. The Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) return contains data on the highest CfE level achieved for all pupils in Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3.
 - 1.2. The 2023-24 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. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all stages and curricular areas in 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 resulting in very close alignment with national figures 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.

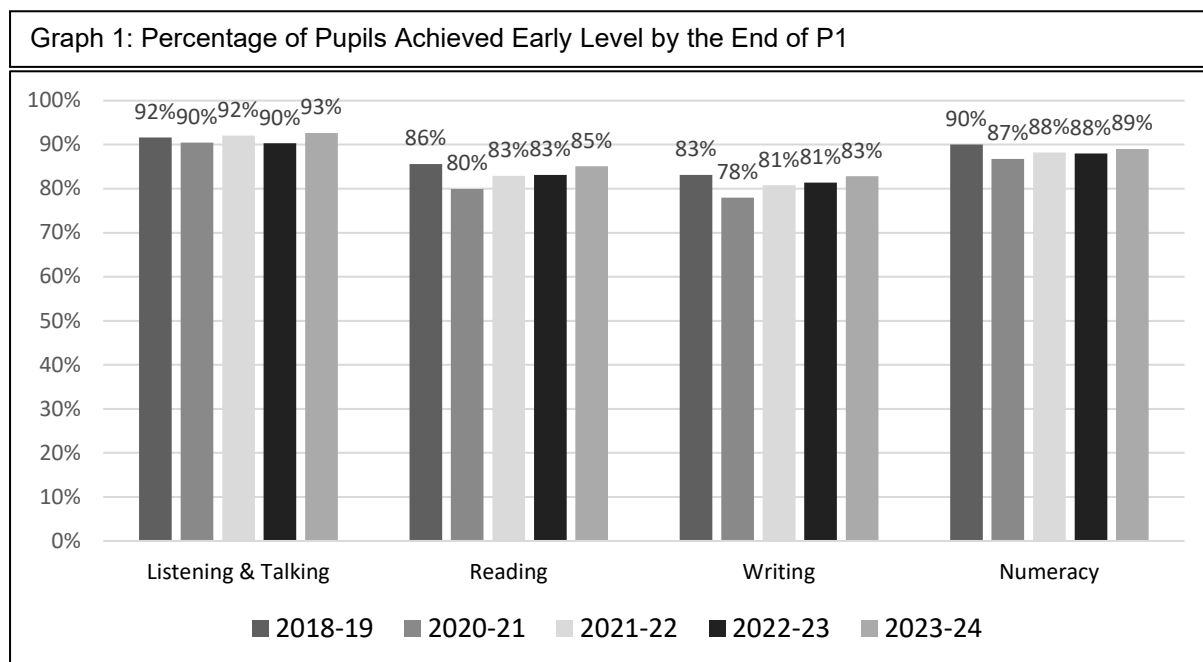
3. Background

- 3.1. The 2024 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 2023-24 school session and is published nationally in December 2024. 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 6 years.

4. Attainment by Stage



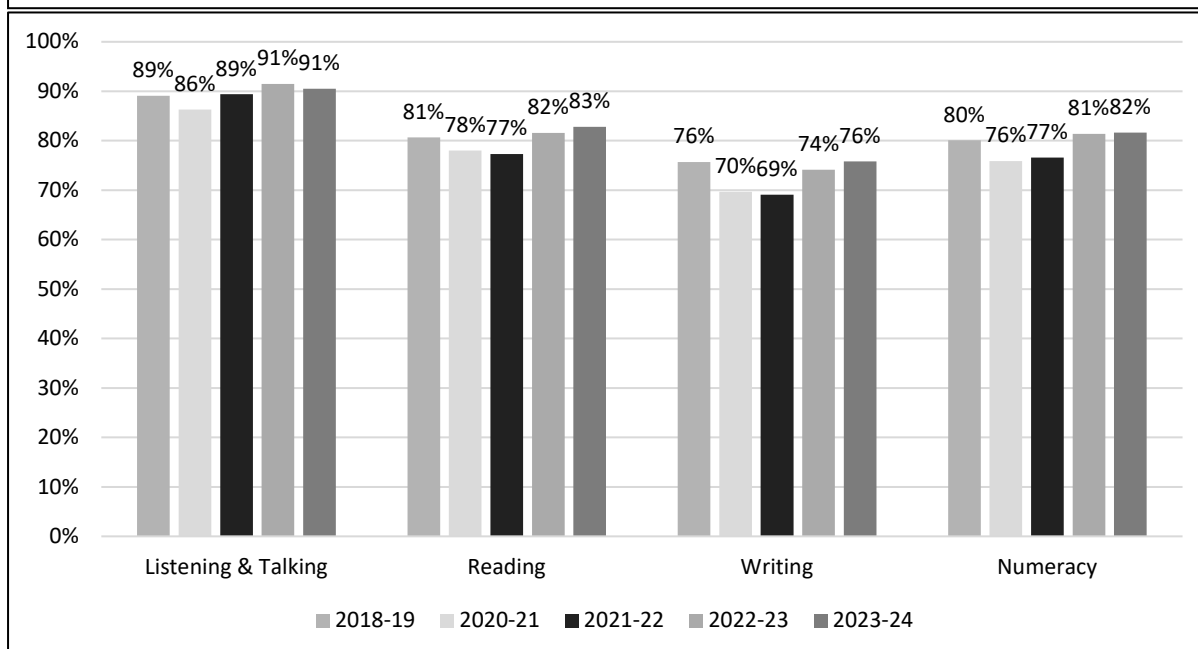
4.1. Graph 1 shows that attainment has increased across all measures in P1 since 2022-23. The largest increase has been in listening and talking which is up 2.3 percentage points which has brought this measure ahead of pre-pandemic levels. Reading, writing and numeracy attainment is now within 1 percentage 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%

Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures at this stage across all curricular areas. The largest difference is in listening and talking where Renfrewshire is ahead by 5 percentage points and the smallest difference. 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

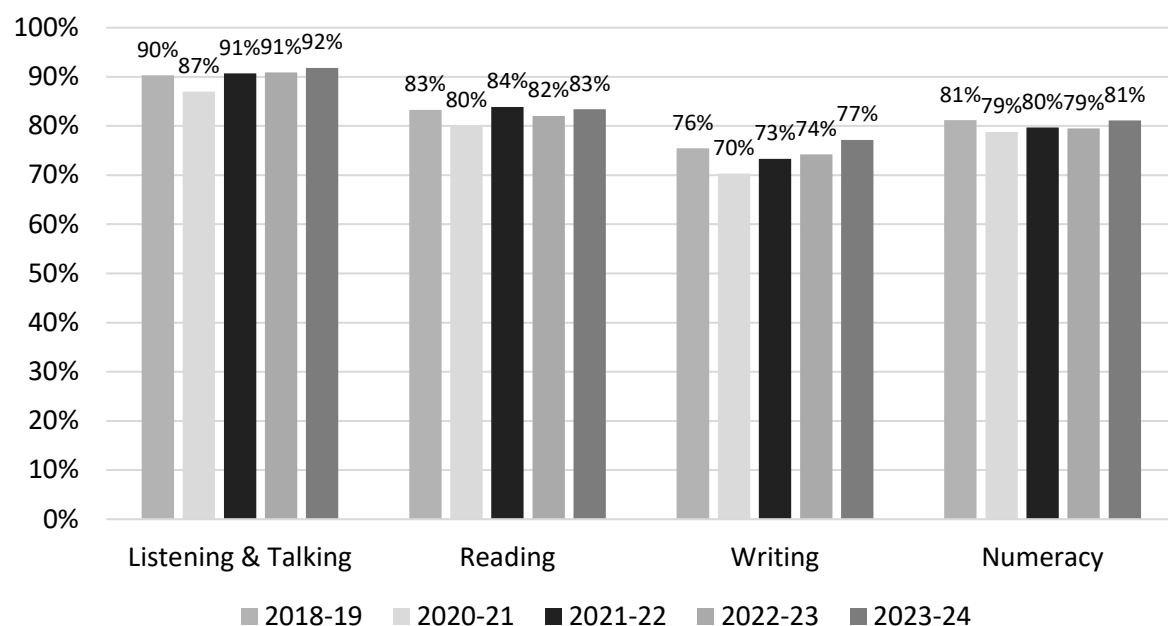


- 4.2. Graph 2 demonstrates attainment has increased in reading, writing and numeracy since 2022-23. There has been a marginal decrease in listening and talking however this is less than 1 percentage point. All curricular areas are in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

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

- 4.3. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in P4. The percentages differences are within 2 to 4 percentage points across the curricular areas, with reading the largest difference 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 national 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.

Graph 3: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Second Level by the End of P7

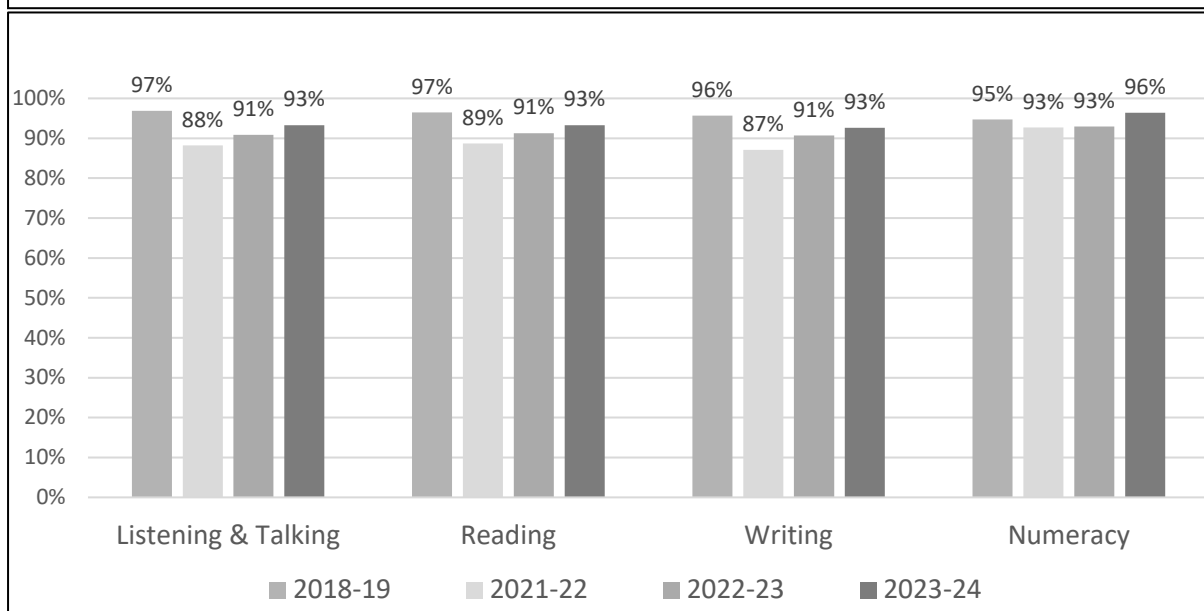


4.4. In Primary 7, attainment has increased in all curricular areas since 2022-23. The largest increase has been in writing which has increased by 3 percentage points and has had sustained improvement over the since 2020-21. All measures are in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

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

4.5. Renfrewshire is ahead of national in all curricular areas within the 2023-24 data, 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.

Graph 4: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Third Level by the End of S3

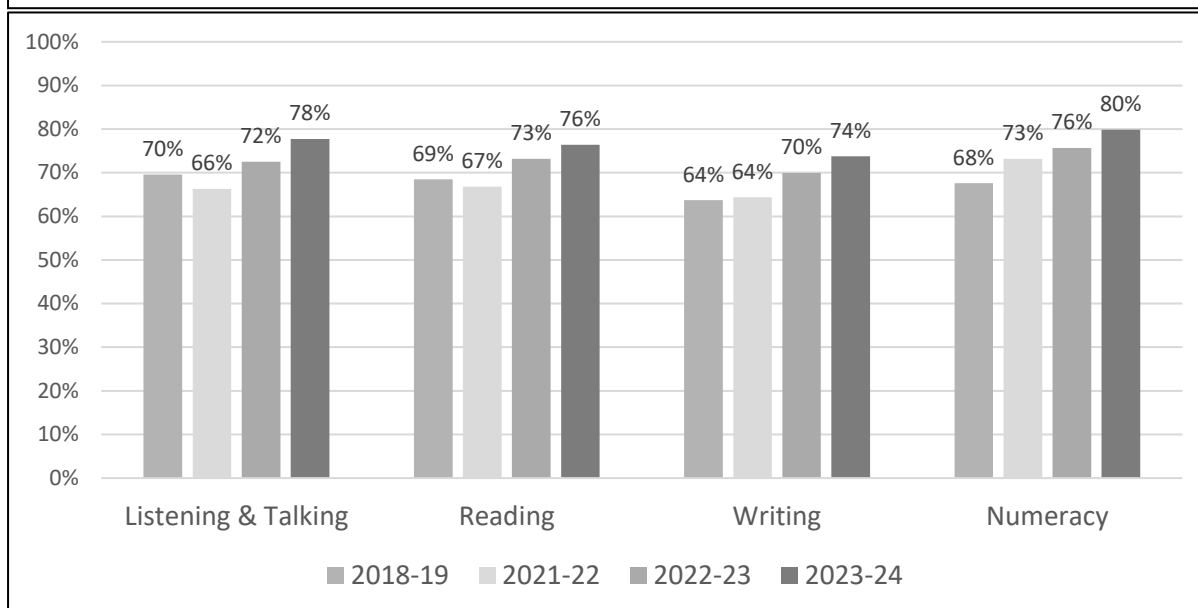


4.6. The ACEL return measures the percentage of pupils who achieve third and fourth level in S3. The percentage of pupils that achieved third level or above are displayed in graph 4. Attainment has increased across all measures since 2022-23. The greatest improvement has been in numeracy which increased by 3.5 percentage points. As a result, numeracy attainment is now ahead of pre-pandemic levels. Literacy attainment remains lower than pre-pandemic levels.

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

4.7. As shown in table 4, Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in S3. The largest difference is in numeracy which is 6 percentage points ahead of the national figure. The literacy organisers are all 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.



4.8. Graph 5 shows the percentage of pupils achieving fourth level across all curricular areas. These has been significant and consistent improvement in this measure across all curricular areas. All areas are considerably above pre-pandemic levels.

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

4.9. Renfrewshire is ahead of national data across all curricular areas in this measure. 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 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)

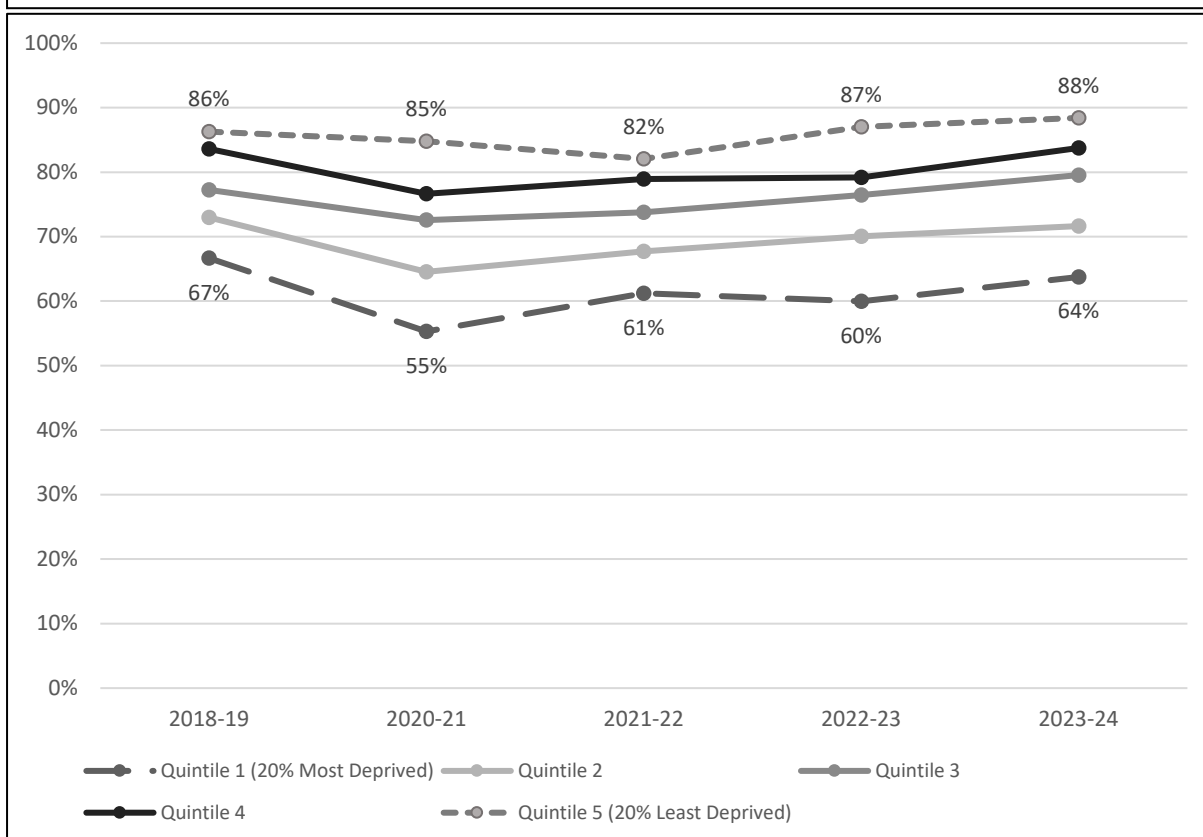


Table 6: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Literacy (P1,P4,P7)

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

5.2. Graph 6 shows that attainment of pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) have increased attainment since the previous year but remains below pre-pandemic levels. Pupils living in SIMD quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas) have also increased attainment however are now above pre-pandemic levels. Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas were most significantly impacted by the pandemic, with an 11-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 2 percentage points since 2022-23 to 25 percentage points. This is lower than in 2020-21 however there has been some year on year variation since this point.

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

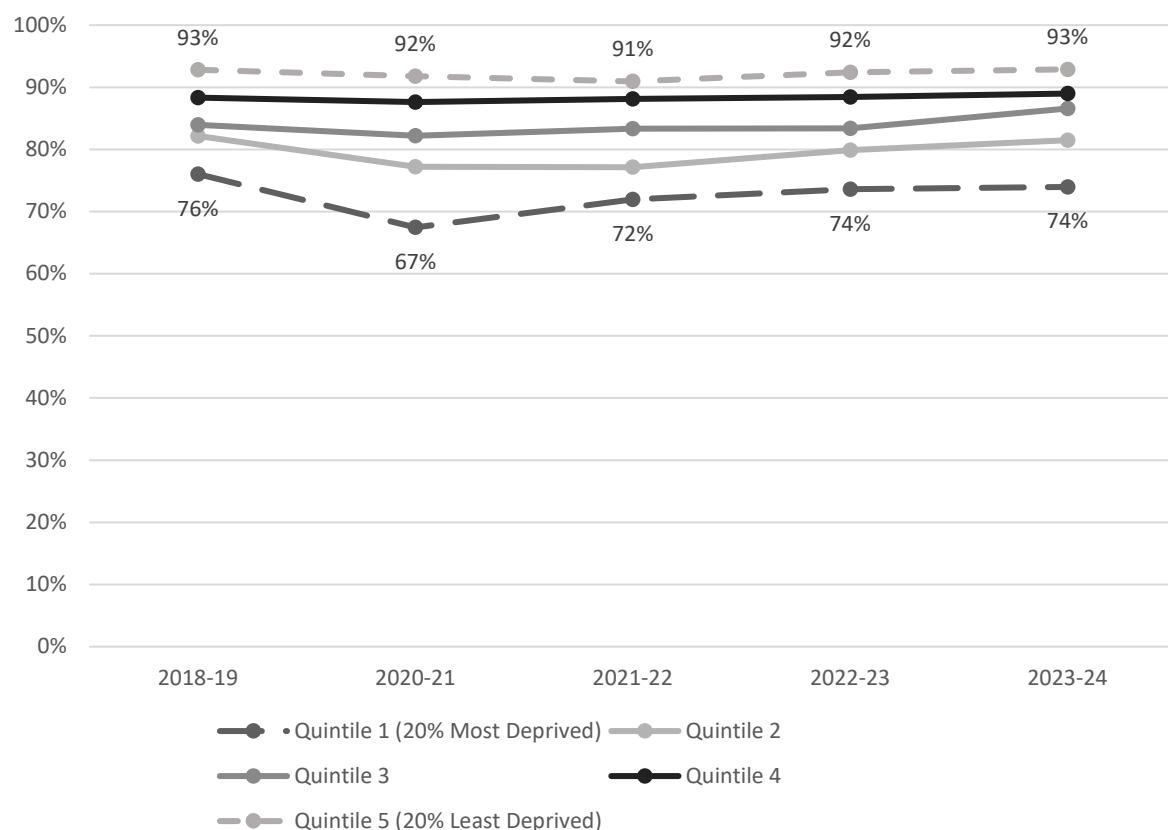


Table 7: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Numeracy (P1,P4,P7)

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

5.3. Graph 8 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. Percentage point gaps, shown in table 7, have remained unchanged over the previous 3 years. The current figure of 19 percentage points is lower than in 2020-21 but remains higher than the pre-pandemic figure of 17 percentage points.

Table 8: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Literacy & Numeracy in Primary (P1,P4 & P7) 2023-24

	Literacy		Numeracy	
	Renfrewshire	National	Renfrewshire	National
Quintile 1 (Most Deprived)	65%	64%	74%	72%
Quintile 2	71%	70%	81%	77%
Quintile 3	80%	74%	86%	81%
Quintile 4	83%	79%	89%	85%
Quintile 5 (Least Deprived)	88%	85%	92%	89%
Percentage Point Gap between Quintiles 1 and 5	-23%	-20%	-18%	-17%

5.4. Renfrewshire is in line with or ahead of national figures across all SIMD quintiles in literacy and numeracy. 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 3 percentage points, however in numeracy the difference is only 0.5 percentage points.

6. Conclusion and next steps

6.1. The Achievement of a CfE Level Return in 2023-24 has demonstrated that attainment continues to improve with the majority of measures increased since 2022-23. These increases have resulted in most measures returning to pre-pandemic levels. The exception to this is attainment at third level or above in S3 however there has been significant improvement in attainment at fourth level at this stage.

6.2. Attainment gaps remain larger 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 are reduced since 2020-21. However, attainment of pupils living in 20% most deprived areas remains below pre-pandemic levels and as a result attainment gaps are wider than in 2018-19.

6.3. Renfrewshire is 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 2023-24 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, a targeted schools programme is in place for 2024-25 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

- 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.

List of Background Papers

- (a) none

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