

# Educational Services Standards and Quality Report 2024-25

## Introduction from Scott Mulholland Acting Director of Education



It is my pleasure to present the Educational Services Standards and Quality Report for 2024–25.

This report highlights the dedication, innovation and collective efforts of our education staff, school leaders, early years practitioners, support teams and our valued partners across the public and third sectors. It captures not only the progress we've made, but also our shared commitment to achieving the very best outcomes for all children and young people in our communities.

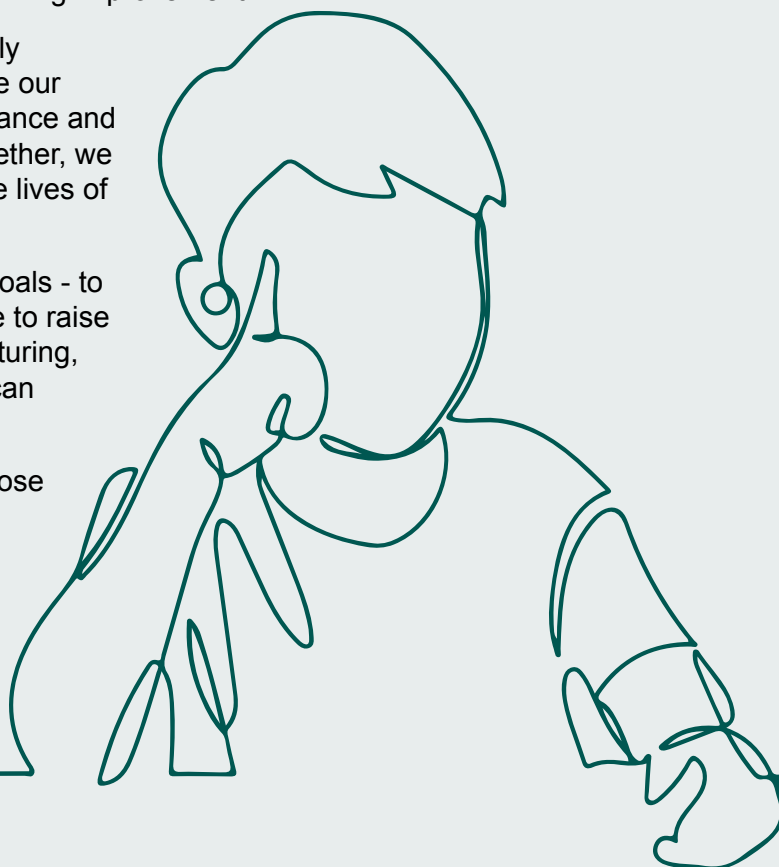
Over the past year, we have continued to navigate a dynamic and often challenging educational landscape. Despite this, our staff have demonstrated exceptional professionalism, resilience and care - always keeping the wellbeing, equity, and success of our learners at the heart of their work. Whether through classroom teaching, leadership, support services or community partnerships, every contribution has played a part in raising aspirations and driving improvement.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those who work within and alongside our educational services. Your passion, perseverance and commitment are very much appreciated. Together, we are making a real and lasting difference in the lives of our children and young people.

Looking ahead, we remain ambitious in our goals - to close the attainment gap, ensure we continue to raise standards across all settings and provide nurturing, inclusive environments where every learner can thrive.

I am grateful for the continued efforts of all those who support our learners and communities.

**Scott Mulholland**  
**Acting Director of Education**



## Foreword from Councillor William Grant Education Portfolio Holder



I am delighted to endorse South Ayrshire Council's Educational Services Standards and Quality Report for 2024–25.

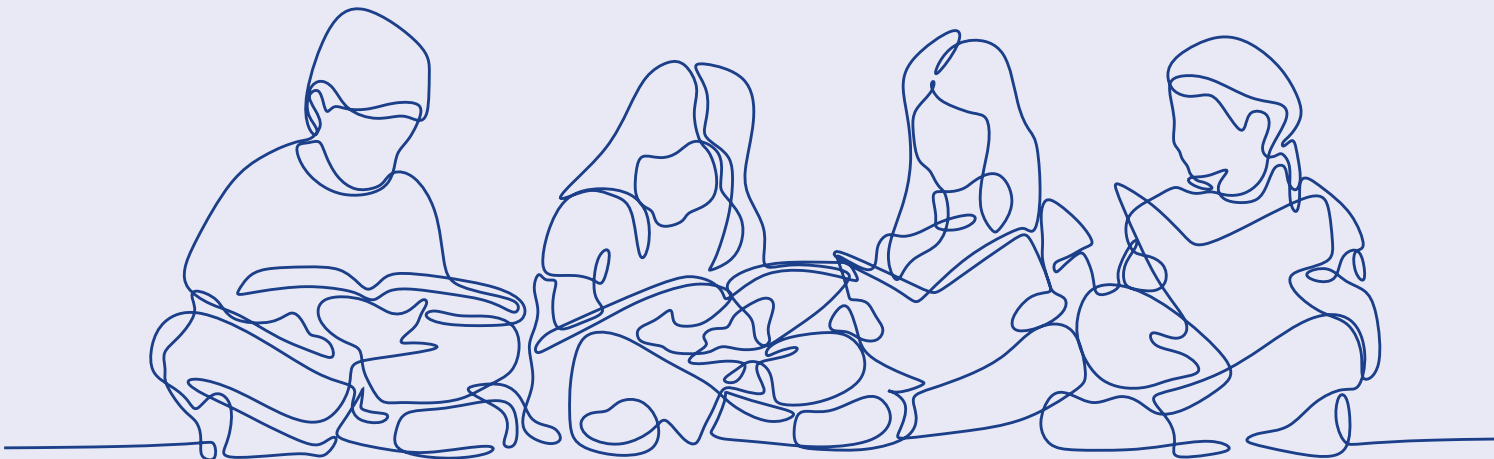
This report provides an overview of the work undertaken across our educational services and highlights the continued efforts to deliver high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people in South Ayrshire.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of staff across early years settings, schools, and support services, as well as our partners in health, social work, the third sector, and the wider community. Their ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for learners is appreciated.

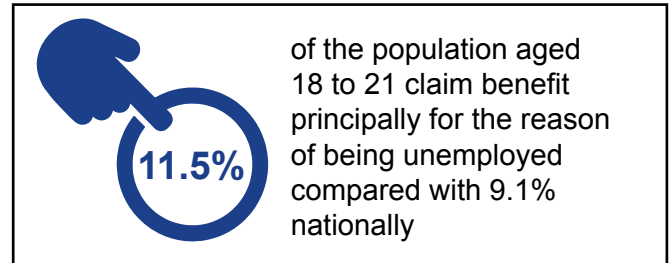
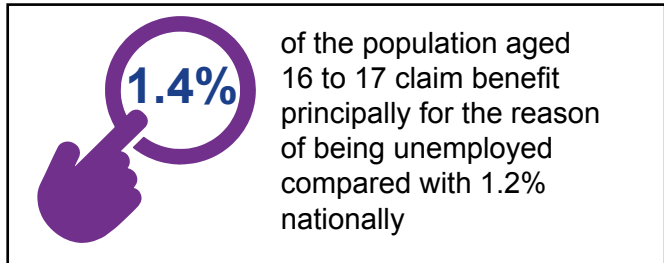
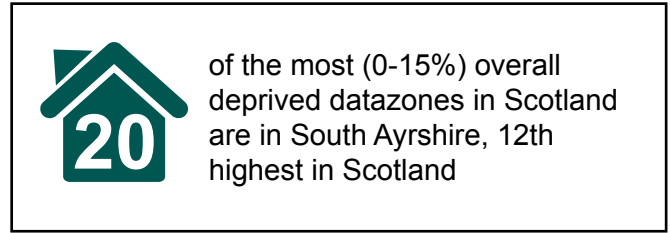
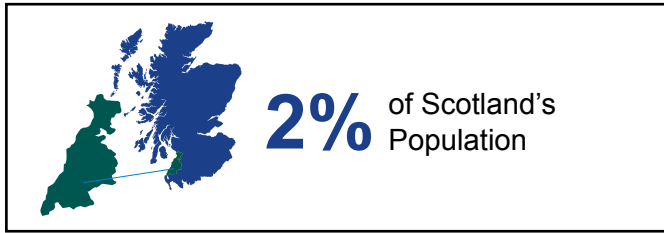
Throughout the past year, there have been examples of effective collaboration, innovation, and a focus on wellbeing and inclusion. Whether through targeted interventions, curriculum development, or support for vulnerable learners, these efforts have contributed positively to our overall objectives.

As we continue our work to reduce the attainment gap, raise standards, and support all young people to achieve their potential, I am confident that we will maintain a clear focus on improvement and respond constructively to the challenges ahead.

**Councillor William Grant**  
**Education Portfolio Holder**



## Overview of South Ayrshire



## About Educational Services

### Vision

- Excellence through raising attainment and improving outcomes: ensuring that every child and young person achieves the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary to shape a sustainable future as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- Achieving equity: ensuring every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

### Education Services Priorities

- Engaged and Included
- Outstanding Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Developing our Curriculum
- A self-improving Service



Primary Schools (7,383) children



Secondary Schools (6,313) young people



Specialist schools (130 children and young people)



Supported learning centres in mainstream schools)



Early Years centres



Funded providers



Out of school care offices



Holiday clubs



FTE Teachers employed in South Ayrshire (2022 census)



hours of support provided by support staff including classroom assistants, librarians, administration and others



Campus Police Officers

# About South Ayrshire

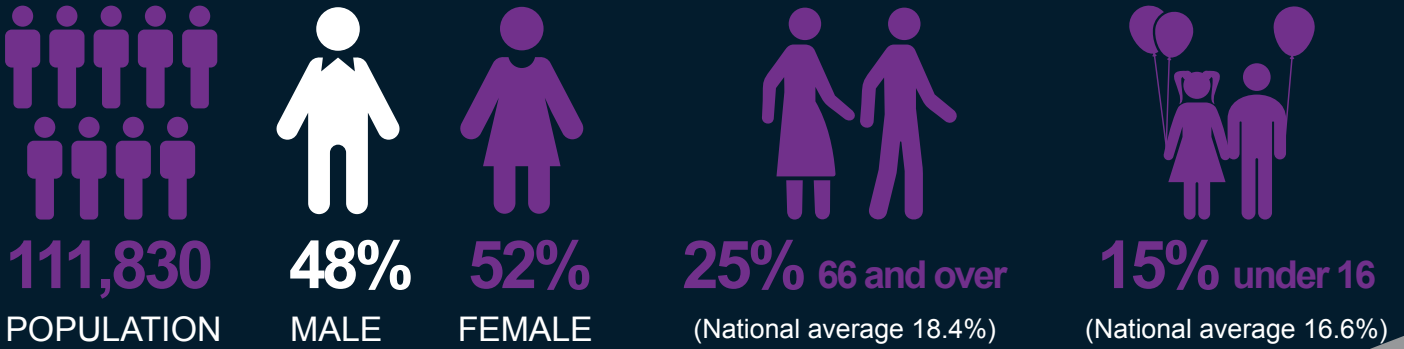
Mid-2023, South Ayrshire's population was estimated by National Records of Scotland (NRS) to be 111,830. This is projected to fall to 105,191 by 2043 – a decline of 5.9%. This contrasts with an estimated 5.1% national increase across the same period.

In South Ayrshire the forecast differs by age group. Numbers of children and the working age population are currently expected to decrease by 13% and by 14%, respectively.

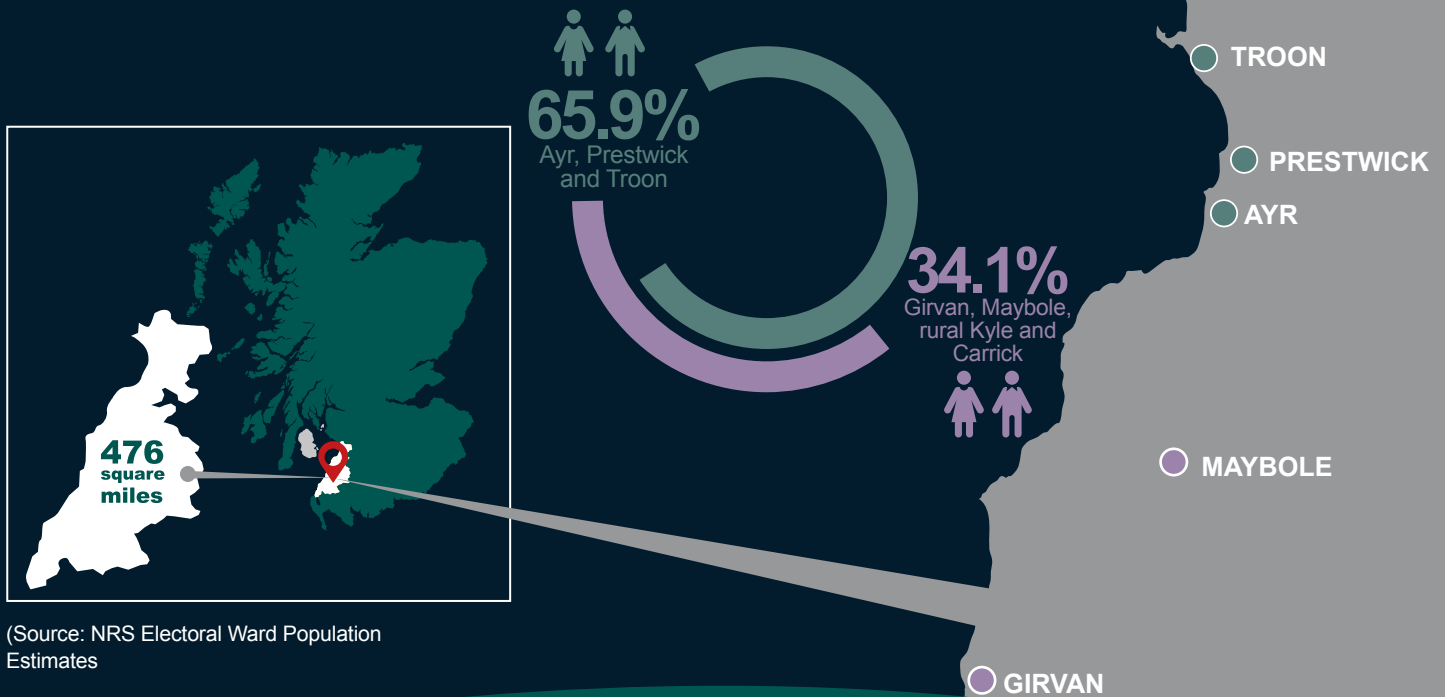
The pensionable population is, however, projected to increase by 17% by 2043 and, within this group, numbers of those aged 75 and over are currently set to increase by 46%.

These anticipated changes to the population will have considerable consequences for the Council as it strives to ensure social, educational, housing and community services continue to meet the needs of its residents.

Source: [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)



(Source: National Records of Scotland, 2021 Mid-Year Population Estimates & 2018 Based Population Projections)



(Source: NRS Electoral Ward Population Estimates)

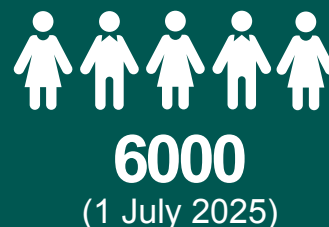
# About The Council

Elected Members

- INDEPENDENT 11
- CONSERVATIVE 6
- LABOUR 5
- SNP 5
- ALBA 1



Staff



## Care experienced children

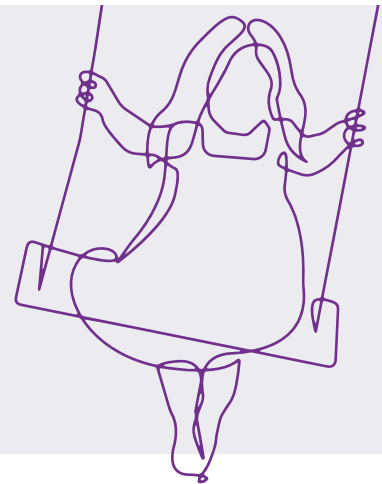
During the 2024-25 school session 488 care experienced children and young people were registered with and attended a South Ayrshire school, early years centre or early years partner centre. Of this figure, 58 were looked after at home (12%), 160 away from home (33%), and 270 recorded as previously looked after (55%).



## Child Protection

As of 31st July 2024, there were 25 children listed on the Child Protection Register in South Ayrshire Council. This translated to a rate of 1.3 per 1,000 children. The national rate was 2.1 on this date.

Source: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-social-work-statistics-child-protection-2023-24/documents/>



## Quality of Leadership

### Supporting School Improvement through Collaborative Improvement Visits and School Inspection

Supporting school improvement is a key role within education services. One aspect of improvement is through Collaborative School Improvement visits and external scrutiny and inspection by Education Scotland.

#### Collaborative School Improvement Visits

The programme for School visits is set out in the Key dates letter issued in June prior to the start of the new school session. The Collaborative School Improvement visits focused on QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment. Peer school staff are part of the team.

There were 7 collaborative improvement visits during session 2024/25. All were positive.

Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Prestwick North	Alloway Coylton Culzean Struthers Tabolton	Queen Margaret Academy

Alongside the Collaborative School Improvement Visits the following schools received inspections by Education Scotland

	1.3 Leadership of Change	2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing Equity and Inclusion	3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
Alloway Primary	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Alloway Early Years Centre	Good	Good	Very Good	Good
Dalmilling Primary		Good		Good
Doonfoot Primary	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Good
Doonfoot Early Years Centre	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Heathfield Primary		Good		Good
Ayr Academy	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Weak

### Care Inspectorate visits

Early Years Centre	Date	QI 1.1	QI 1.3	QI 3.1	QI 4.3
Struthers	September 2024	4	4	3	3
Girvan	October 2024	5	5	5	5
Heathfield	November 2024	4	4	4	4
Fisherton	April 2025	3	3	3	3
Troon	June 2025 (Not yet published)	5	5	5	5
Colmonell	June 2025 (Not yet published)	3	3	3	3

### Leadership programmes with South Ayrshire

Leadership Development Programme 1 24 participates across Primary and Secondary

Leadership Development Programme 2 18 participants across Primary and Secondary.



**Staff uptake on Education Scotland Professional Learning such as Headship etc.**

We have 6 new candidates starting cohort 11 of Into Headship

We continue to have 2 candidates in the final stages of cohort 10.

We had 5 complete and graduate from cohort 9.

1 member of staff participated in In Headship

\*Middle leader programme with Education Scotland is now online modules and we are not given data of who has completed. \*

Our Instrumental Music Service (IMS) and Youth Music Initiative (YMI) programmes are strategically aligned to maximise access to high-quality music-making opportunities in schools. Additional Scottish Government funding to widen access has created an opportunity for innovation and expansion. We remain committed to equity of access, progression pathways and sustainability.

### Instrumental Music Tuition – individual and small group lessons

In 24-25, the IMS delivered instrumental music tuition to **1,407 children and young people** from P4 – S6 across primary and secondary schools in **individual and small group lessons**:

Instrument	No of Pupils
Strings	480
Woodwind	230
Brass	395
Percussion	116
Voice	51
Guitar	75
Bagpipe / Chanter	60



Individual and small group lessons are delivered by a team of music instructors who work across schools. These educators provide instrumental lessons and facilitate access to ensemble music making activities within the school environment and at local authority level. They support the delivery of SQA qualifications, as well as a range of external examinations including Trinity, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, and Music Leaders Scotland awards.



## Instrumental Music Tuition – ‘Next Generation’ whole class projects

In 2024-25, the IMS delivered whole class instrumental music projects to primary pupils in 11 primary schools, facilitated by 3 music instructors across the Ayr, Carrick and Girvan clusters. This included singing, percussion, brass, and musicianship reaching 728 pupils. All pupils took part in performance opportunities within their schools and the local community. The funding for these additional instrumental tuition projects has been made available from Scottish Government.



This year the focus was to support transition opportunities into secondary school, to reach more young people and widen access at local authority level. The collective impact has seen an increase in instrumental participation at secondary level, confidence in performance and promotion of health and wellbeing.

## Local Authority Music Groups, Ensembles and Showcase Performances

Our young musicians have the opportunity to further develop their musical skills by taking part in our local authority groups. These include Junior String Orchestra, Intermediate String Orchestra, Senior String Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, Cello Army, Junior Concert Band, Intermediate Concert Band, Senior Concert Band, Percussion Ensembles, Pipe Band, Chamber Singers, Guitar Collective and Ukulele Orchestras. All groups rehearse after school or in the evening, led by the music instruction team and enhanced through the provision of additional staffing and resources. In 24-25, **516 young people** took part in these activities. Local authority performances in Ayr Town Hall included the annual South Ayrshire Christmas Concert featuring all senior groups and the annual String Orchestras and Bands Showcase Concerts in February. The Percussion Ensembles held their annual showcase in Ayr Academy and

the Symphony Orchestra performed in Prestwick Academy. The Guitar Collective held their annual performance in March in Belmont Academy. Across our local authority concerts **1,500** parents, families and members of the community attended as audience members. ***This programme brings pupils together from across all our school communities. It ensures continuity, supports progression, and fosters community for young musicians.***



The Ukulele Orchestra and Cello Army took part in the Ayrshire Music Festival and many of the groups held open rehearsals to share their learning with parent and carers. At the Ayrshire Music Festival, the Junior String Orchestra were winners of The Primary Shield, the Intermediate String Orchestra won their class, and the Senior String Orchestra were winners of the Walker Challenge Cup.



## South Ayrshire Young Musician of the Year

Young people from all 8 secondary schools took part in the finals of the Junior and Senior Young Musician of the Year Competition. Each secondary school head their own school competition and the winners competed in the local authority final. Scottish Young Musicians supported our school competitions and the local final by providing trophies and certificates. Across the whole event, 150 young musicians took part. The current holder of the South Ayrshire Junior Young Musician of the Year is clarinettist Agatha Ludkin-Finnie, and the current holder of the Senior Young Musician of the Year 2025 is trumpeter, Luke Parkhill. Luke went on to represent South Ayrshire at the finals of Scottish Young Musicians Solo Performer of the Year at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.



## Scottish Young Musicians – National Ensemble of the Year

**South Ayrshire Chamber Singers** were awarded 'runners up' in the Scottish Young Musicians Prestigious National Ensemble of the Year finals 2025. They were selected as one of 12 finalists from across the country and performed at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.



## West of Scotland Schools Concert Band and Orchestra (WSSCB and WSSSO)

Some senior musicians audition for extended music opportunities out with the local authority. This year, 5 were successful in gaining a place in WSSCB and 11 were successful in gaining a place in WSSSO.

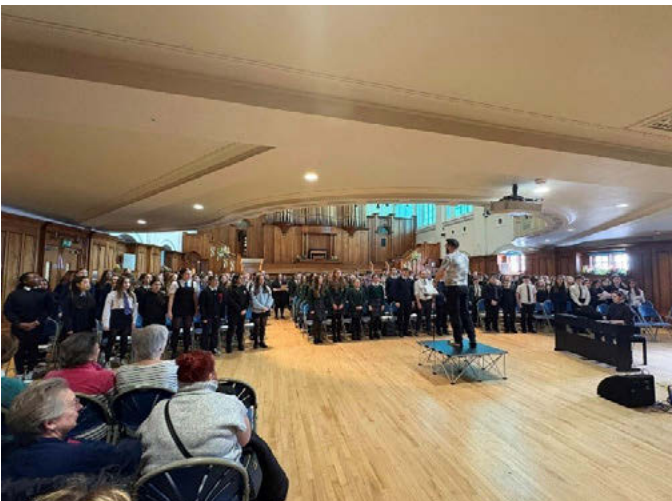
### Masterclasses

We welcomed *The Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland* with North and East Ayrshire Music Services to Ayr Town Hall where senior woodwind, brass and percussion pupils took part in a workshop.

A brass quintet from the *Orchestra of Scottish Opera* performed for pupils from Ballantrae, Colmonell, Girvan, Invergarven, Sacred Heart, St Cuthbert's and Culzean Primaries and Girvan and Carrick Academies. They demonstrated instruments and performed repertoire from a wide variety of musical styles.

We welcomed **199 secondary singers** to Ayr Town Hall for a workshop with North and East Ayrshire Music Services under the direction of choir directors and **Sir James MacMillan** from *The Cumnock Tryst*. Pupils enjoyed an inspiring and motivational day of music making.

**25 brass players** from across the authority enjoyed a trip to the *Royal Conservatoire of Scotland* for The Brass for Schools concert where RCS students put on a top-class performance of their 'Dance Remix' programme.



## Partnership Working and Community Involvement

We welcomed 200 parent/carers to our annual 'Instrumental Instruction Parent/Carer Evening' where they were able to meet with their child's instructor and discuss progress.

Parents and Carers joined open rehearsals for the Junior, Intermediate and Senior Strings, Pipe Band, and the Ukulele Orchestras.

This was the 3rd year of our partnership with Ayr Arts Guild on 'Big Music for Young Ears'. As part of the Ayr Concert Series, 138 young musicians and a parent were given free tickets to attend concerts in Ayr Town Hall with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of Scottish Opera.

Our pipers supported the annual local authority P7 Burns Supper at Ayr Town Hall welcoming guests and piping in the haggis.

Music Instructors supported pupils and school ensembles and groups who entered the **Ayrshire Music Festival**.

A group of woodwind players from Marr College and Prestwick Academy performed at an authority event in the Walker Hall Troon to celebrate **International Women's Day**.

A group of brass players performed at the Light up a Life Christmas Reflection Event for **The Ayrshire Hospice** and at County Buildings, Ayr to entertain council officials.

Young musicians showcased their skills at the Scottish Government Travelling Cabinet in Ayr Town Hall. Their performances were gratefully received, and they spoke with the **First Minister and shared their experiences of music making in school and the local authority**.



## Youth Music Initiative (YMI)

The national YMI gives every child in Scotland the opportunity to experience high-quality, whole-class music-making before the end of primary school. In South Ayrshire, our bespoke programme fosters active learning and nurtures essential music skills while building confidence, encouraging teamwork, and boosting self-esteem. By making music together, pupils not only discover their creative potential but also develop lifelong skills that resonate far beyond the classroom. YMI is funded by Scottish Government, through Creative Scotland. There are three projects which make up our planned YMI programme in South Ayrshire.

## Music Heroes

1,465 children in P2/3 across all schools took part in our Music Heroes project which takes children on a singing and musicianship journey. Our project develops core musical skills in pitch, pulse, and rhythm, through fun, inclusive activities that bring classrooms to life with music. The project is led by a music instructor with teachers actively participating in sessions providing support for pupils. ***This programme ensures an equitable baseline before pupils embark on any of our instrumental tuition programmes.*** Many teachers make time to reinforce learning throughout the week and note an increased confidence in their teaching of music because of their participation.

The impact on children is clear. Teacher's report:

- **High engagement and enjoyment**, where children consistently look forward to sessions and are excited to participate.
- **Improved musical skills**, with a notable development in understanding rhythm, beat, musical notation, and pitch.
- **A boost in confidence**, from the opportunities for children to share their learning and perform in front of others and participate in group activities.
- A nurturing environment creates space for children to **develop skills in enhanced teamwork** through opportunities for collaboration, turn-taking, and **improve listening skills**.
- Experiencing a sense of success has had a **positive emotional impact** on children who express joy, enthusiasm, and a general sense of achievement.

**“Very well-structured, with clear progression and fun for all,”**  
class teacher.



## United by Sound - ASN

United by Sound is our music project designed for our learners in **ASN schools** and settings, offering rich opportunities to explore sound through voice and instruments. With a focus on **collaboration, creativity, and fun**, pupils engage in activities that encourage turn-taking, singing, and making music together—**building confidence, communication, and joy** through shared musical experiences. **85 learners took part in this project**. Class teachers took an active part in sessions alongside our YMI musicians. They supported children and gained confidence and ideas for teaching music and were **inspired to use music more regularly**. Across sessions, teachers noted the **positive engagement of children** characterising them as **enthusiastic, calm, and motivated**. Children had very good opportunities to **develop skill**, with improved skills in rhythm, tempo, and musical vocabulary. Many reported sessions had a **therapeutic value**, bringing a **calming and regulating effect** and that *“music is enriching the learning experiences of our pupils”*, class teacher.



## Empowering Teachers:

We continue to support primary class teachers to deliver high-quality music education with greater confidence. Opportunities include CLPL sessions, access to a curated SharePoint resource hub, borrowing class sets of musical instruments, tailored advice, and digital licence subscriptions to enhance teaching and learning. Whether colleagues are new to music or looking to extend their practice, this support ensures every teacher can bring music to life in the classroom. 32 schools borrowed class sets of instruments, using our SharePoint resources to support teaching and learning.

Schools were given a choice of digital subscription licences. 62% of schools chose a Sparkyard Singing School licence. Many schools used this weekly with 50 teachers accessing over 3,500 song plays. Teachers reported an increased confidence in teaching music. Teachers appreciated the motivational and inclusive nature of songs, and that the resource was easy to navigate. They observed positive impacts on learners, including increased confidence, improved mood, greater sense of belonging, enhanced relaxation, and more opportunities for self-expression. 38% of schools chose a Charanga licence. 107 teachers used the resource, delivering 985 hours of music education. Teachers noticed increased engagement and enjoyment in music lessons, improved understanding of musical concepts and a boost in confidence through more regular music-making activities.

281 children in primary 4 and 5 from five primary schools in the Marr cluster took part in an inspiring singing pilot project led by a professional musician who worked collaboratively with class teachers to promote the development of good vocal technique, supporting musical learning in the classroom. Children had an opportunity to learn and rehearse a variety of songs before coming together for a collective singing experience. The event included an opportunity to showcase solo singers from Marr College who acted as role models for their younger peers. Also performing at the event was a professional vocalist. Singing together promotes many social and emotional benefits, and this opportunity created a rich, cross-sector celebration of music and community. Singing together promotes many social and emotional benefits, and this opportunity created a rich, cross-sector celebration of music and community.



## School Modernisation Programme 2024-25

Educational Services' modernisation agenda for schools and Early Years Centres continued to make excellent progress in the 2024-25 academic session, with the completion and commencement of a number of projects, demonstrating the Council's commitment to investing in our education estate and a determination to provide our young people with the best learning experience.

Over the next twelve years, our investment in the school estate will exceed sixty-one million pounds, further modernising our schools and education facilities. This will include the flagship project for construction of a brand-new replacement building for Girvan Primary School, with works now commencing on that in July 2025.



## Completed Projects

The largest project undertaken by Educational Services in the summer of 2024 was the creation of a new Additional Support Needs (ASN) education base at Heathfield Primary School. The works consisted of the conversion of three former mainstream classrooms into a dedicated ASN Learning Facility. Subject to a full public consultation, the project progressed due to a growing requirement for specialist education places across the authority and the need for more modern learning facilities to enhance the learning experiences and outcomes at all stages of education. The project was successfully completed in August 2024 and along with the classroom conversions, the works included formation of a new sensory room, two quiet rooms, new accessible changing space, and a dedicated, secure play area in the school grounds, as well as improved accessible parking.

ASN accommodation at the Council's Southcraig School was also expanded in the summer of 2024, increasing the capacity of the Additional Support Needs provision by converting former storage space and staff accommodation in the school to form two new classrooms.

In accommodating the impact of new housing in the catchment area, Doonfoot Primary School had works completed last summer to upgrade parking facilities and improve security measures at the school. The work comprised of a full re-development of the school car park, footpaths, and external security fences. This has added a dedicated area for ASN school transport, increased the number of accessible parking spaces and facilitated easier flow of traffic with a new one-way system. The completed project has created a much safer environment for pupils and staff in the school grounds.

Dailly Primary School was also subject to similar last summer with a project to convert unused land at the rear of the school into a car park with sixteen spaces. The work, completed in early 2025, has helped to alleviate parking and congestion in the village's main street, which was a real focus of the Community Council who worked closely with Educational Services on this project. Along with the new car park the school's Early Years Centre also benefitted from a project to install a canopy over the outdoor play space and improve play and external storage facilities. The work on this was collected in August 2024.



Another project with a focus on improving outdoor space for our young people, and their play-based learning, took place at Annbank Primary School in the summer of 2024. A new covered play area with canopy was created for the lower school building and the project also involved creation of some much-needed additional office and meeting space for staff.

Smaller projects included the creation of two, new pupil changing rooms at St Patrick's Primary School, a project that was led and championed by the school's pupil Rights Respecting Group. Kirkmichael Primary School had work completed to increase staff accommodation with the conversion of existing space to create an additional office in August 2024, and work at Dalmilling Primary School was completed last summer to convert a former open space into two, flexible general-purpose rooms for staff and pupils.

Education's outdoor estate was also improved during the last session with a number of projects to improve play and sports facilities in our schools, the largest of which was the replacement of the all-weather sports pitches at Marr College which are an extremely well-used resource, both for the school, and for local sports clubs and community Lets.

Although completed in the 2023/24 session, our new Maybole Community Campus is worthy of mention once again as the building was shortlisted for the 'Architectural Excellence' award at the 2025 Scottish property Awards in February. The awards recognise the best new public buildings in Scotland, judged by a panel of experts drawn from across the sector who bring together their industry experience and market knowledge to recognise the greatest achievements in the built environment across Scotland. Although missing out on the top award on the night, Maybole Community Campus was praised as a stunning example of modern, functional design which will sustainably support many future generations in Maybole through education and community use.

### Projects Due to Commence

Works will continue to progress on several school construction projects over the next session, including commencement of a new-build primary school and two major extensions to existing primary schools.

Without doubt Education's flagship project at the moment is for the construction of a brand-new replacement building for Girvan Primary School. Over the course of the last 12 months a design has been finalised, a Contractor has been appointed and Planning Permission has been granted for a new, two-stream primary school building with dedicated ASN facility, standalone Early Years Centre and improved landscaping, outdoor play areas and an artificial sports pitch. Enabling works will commence in July 2025, with construction of the new school starting in October. It is anticipated that the new school will be ready at the beginning of 2027, with all remaining landscaping works and demolition of the old school building completed in the same year.

A major project to extend Struthers Primary School will commence this coming summer, a requirement of completion of the major housing development in North-East Troon, the

works include construction of a four-classroom extension, a new school library, a multi-purpose open area, general purpose space and new toilets. The upper school playground will also be extended and will include a new outdoor classroom and garden that can be directly accessed from the extension. Planning Permission for the design has been approved and a Contractor has been appointed to commence the work from July 2025. It is anticipated that the work will take just over twelve months to complete.

Dalmilling Primary School will also be extended through a major project to expand the gym and dining hall at the school. The project includes creation of an additional gym/dining hall, connected to the existing hall via partition, which will allow for the flexibility of either an extended double hall for P.E, or the ability to separate gym and dining if required. The project also includes formation of a new school office and reception, as well as new meeting rooms and support accommodation for visiting specialists. A life-skills classroom will also be created as well as improvements made to the school's car park and main entrance. This work will commence in July 2025 and should be completed in the latter half of 2026.



The Council's focus on ASN education provision continues with three major projects linked to inclusive learning this summer. The biggest of these is a project at Troon Primary School to create an ASN base in the school, similar to the project completed at Heathfield Primary School last summer. Also subject to a full public consultation, the works include conversion of a former classroom and staffroom to create two dedicated ASN classrooms which will include separate quiet rooms and a sensory room, new accessible changing place and a dedicated outdoor play area, as well as improvements to the car park for ASN school transport. The school will also benefit from alterations and security improvements for the main entrance and office/reception, conversion of a former classroom to create a new staff room, formation of a new family meeting room and refurbishment of management office space.

The second ASN project taking place this summer takes us back to Heathfield Primary School where, following the success of the 2024 ASN project, we will be improving outdoor facilities at the school by building an accessible multi-use games area. With the generous support of the Cruyff Foundation, the school's 'Cruyff Court' will be the first of its kind in Scotland. Work on the court is expected to be completed by September 2025 and when finished will offer accessible football, basketball and trampoline facilities.

A rolling programme of work at Doonfoot Primary School, which has seen many projects completed in the last ten years, continues this summer with a full refurbishment of the school's upper ASN base. The work comprises alterations to the existing two ASN classrooms to incorporate new quiet rooms, a new sensory room, and an additional accessible changing place. Work will commence in June 2025 and will be completed for the new session starting in August.

A unique and exciting project at Girvan Academy will take place in the summer of 2025 through a joint community sponsored project to refurbish the school theatre. The theatre will be completely transformed with new seating, flooring, re-decoration throughout and a replacement of the stage rigging and curtains. Technological improvements include installation of a new audio-visual system including state-of-the-art projection facilities, display screens and a new sound and lighting control booth. Perhaps most importantly the theatre will also benefit from creation of a new accessible viewing platform which can be accessed on the level, where previously a wheelchair lift has been required. It is hoped all of these improvements will make this a much more suitable space for school and community use.

The expansion of the Council's early learning facilities also continues at pace and a project, facilitated by the relocation of the former Troon Library, to create a new Early Years Centre for Troon Primary School, commences in July 2025. The works include conversion of the former Library to create a modern early learning centre with four playrooms, supporting accommodation and a brand-new outdoor play area incorporating covered, all-weather sections. When the works are complete at the beginning of 2026, the project will increase the capacity of Troon Primary EYC for statutory early years provision for 2–5-year-olds, from 65 currently to 100 children.

## Future Years Projects in Design

With construction works getting underway for the forthcoming new school session, plans are already in place for the continued modernisation of the school estate into 2026/27 and beyond.

Whilst the major projects to improve facilities for Girvan, Struthers and Dalmling primary schools will continue on until 2027, design work for new projects has already commenced and these will be progressed from August 2025 to enable construction taking place in the summer of 2026.

The most developed of these plans is for a full alteration of the Music Department at Girvan Academy. Having opened in 1983, the school is now the Council's second oldest secondary school and along with the work in 2025 to refurbish the school's theatre, further investment at the Academy outlines the Council's commitment to keeping our school estate in excellent condition and fit for the modern requirements of learning and teaching.

The project comprises a refurbishment and alteration of two existing music classrooms to include dedicated storage space for instruments, a new layout to better reflect advances in music technology and which offers the flexibility of facilitating desk based learning and musical performance. The works will also include formation of a new staff base and three new music practice rooms. It is anticipated that this project will commence from July 2026.



## Priority 1

**Engaged and Included in South Ayrshire, we want all of our children and young people to be engaged and participate in an inclusive education system that values the unique contributions of all our learners.**



## Improve School Attendance

In this session, our ongoing efforts to improve school attendance concentrated on refining our methods for tracking and monitoring attendance in both our Primary and Secondary schools. By effectively analysing and utilising our data, we can identify early warning signs and implement well-planned support, positively influencing attendance rates. This year, our attendance in primary schools reached 93.5%, an increase of 0.8% from the 2023-24 session. The attendance rate at our secondary schools increased by 1.7%, rising from 86.7% in 2023-24 to 88.3%. These improvements have brought our overall attendance rate to 90.9%, a notable milestone on our path to improvement. We introduced tracking persistent absence (PA) as a new measure this session. PA is the percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of sessions. Our overall PA rate stands at 29.1%, while the national average is 29.3%. This remains an area we will continue to focus on moving forward.

### Attendance (%)

Primary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	95.5	94.8	94.5	93.9	92.2	92.7	93.5
Quintile 1- most deprived	93.3	92.8	92.3	91.7	89.7	90.2	91.4
All care experienced	93.8	93.2	92.4	91.9	90.1	90.8	90.8

Secondary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	90.6	89.7	90.0	91.4	85.5	86.8	88.3
Quintile 1- most deprived	85.6	85.4	86.0	87.3	79.2	82.0	84.4
All care experienced	83.3	81.9	84.0	85.9	77.4	78.4	82.4

Attendance – 2020-21 and 2021-22 are removed from analysis as Covid attendance code recording and cannot reasonably be compared with other years. 2019-20 recording only reflects up to point where schools initially closed.

Our 'Every Learner, Every Day' (ELED) campaign has continued throughout the session with a multimedia approach to spreading the message about the importance of school, while promoting the benefits of good attendance.



We have used radio adverts in August and April, which reached 100,000 listeners in South Ayrshire across the two adverts. A new YouTube video in January with over 43,000 views, as well as utilising bus stop adverts throughout the session, and a billboard in the centre of town in April to coincide with our radio advert on Clyde 1 Ayrshire. The bus stop advertisements and billboard campaign garnered a total of 1.6 million impressions. Our general social media advertisements on Facebook and Google Ads, which included our video and photographic content, were viewed just over two million times by South Ayrshire residents. In total, our campaign material has been viewed a total of 3.7 million times this session, helping us deliver a strong and consistent message about the importance of school attendance. Two Council vans have been commissioned with our Every Learner, Every Day message on their livery to further promote the message over the next two years.



**Going to school has lots of benefits!**

**EVERY LEARNER EVERY DAY**

**I feel connected**

**EVERY LEARNER EVERY DAY**

**South AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
Comhairle Siorrachd Air a Deas  
Making a Difference Every Day

[south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ELED](http://south-ayrshire.gov.uk/ELED)

To support our schools and promote staff development around attendance, we have collaborated with Education Scotland on a program focused on quality improvement. Two cohorts of staff from seven schools, including both Primary and Secondary sectors, attended a two-day training session along with colleagues from other local authorities. Staff took a deep dive into their school's data to highlight a group to target with a test of change and learnt how to use various improvement methodology tools to support this.

In March, we presented our ELED journey alongside a colleague from our Child Protection team at the National Neglect Seminar, hosted by the Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), to an audience of over 400 professionals from Children's Services and the third sector. The response and feedback we received from fellow professionals were hugely complimentary, and we've had follow-up discussions with six local authorities regarding aspects of our improvement journey.

To end this session, we've created a smaller campaign targeting our Early Years children and families. A poster campaign and a leaflet have been developed, featuring some of our current learners enjoying activities provided by our Early Years team.

## Exclusions

Primary – Exclusions have decreased by 0.9 per 1000 pupils since 2023-24.

50% of exclusions involve children from decile 1.

A small number of care experience children were excluded.

### Exclusion incidence per 1,000 pupils

Primary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	4.9	3.9	3.4	1.4	1.9	1.8	*	3.3	2.4
Quintile 1- most deprived	11.9	11.2	7.9	*	*	*	*	*	7.5
All care experienced	46.3	*	*	0.0	*	*	0.0	0.0	*
All looked after	79.5	*	*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	*
Previously looked after	0.0	*	*	0.0	*	*	0.0	0.0	*

\* disclosure rules have been applied for confidentiality reasons with values less than 5 being suppressed, or where values would allow calculation of small numbers.

### Distinct pupils excluded

Primary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	21	19	19	9	10	9	*	15	14
Quintile 1- most deprived	10	8	8	*	*	*	*	*	7
All care experienced	6	*	*	0	*	*	0	0	*
All looked after	6	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	*
Previously looked after	0	*	*	0	*	*	0	0	*

\* disclosure rules have been applied for confidentiality reasons with values less than 5 being suppressed, or where values would allow calculation of small numbers.

Secondary- exclusions have decreased by 8.7 per 1000 pupils since 2023-24

23% of exclusions involved young people from decile 1.

9 care experienced young people were excluded.

### Exclusion incidence per 1,000 pupils

Secondary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	34.3	37.8	34.7	19.3	30.2	28.2	32.7	26.0	17.3
Quintile 1- most deprived	91.6	81.8	92.1	45.0	54.3	44.5	59.0	43.2	20.7
All care experienced	209.7	226.0	144.4	67.6	114.4	79.5	91.2	70.6	50.0
All looked after	163.5	303.0	164.6	*	115.0	*	*	*	*
Previously looked after	277.8	126.0	116.7	104.9	113.9	118.8	133.8	92.1	63.3

### Distinct pupils excluded

Secondary	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
All pupils	147	154	141	92	129	136	147	128	93
Quintile 1- most deprived	60	53	54	36	39	42	45	38	21
All care experienced	31	42	32	13	20	13	16	14	9
All looked after	15	29	21	*	9	*	*	*	*
Previously looked after	16	13	11	10	11	11	12	10	6

## Improve support for young people and families experiencing difficulty across our school communities.

During session 24/25 we have been committed to our work within our Family First model. The Family First model allows the needs of South Ayrshire's children to be met through a joined-up, collaborative approach to children's services. Integrative practice within and across agencies is key to locality working, and with this in mind the Family First approach uses a tiered approach to intervention in order to plan for individual children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. Putting Families First and working alongside local families, our GIRFEC approach helps us to identify the support each child or young person needs to help to improve their wellbeing.

The Family First model has been implemented across 8 clusters, organised by the 8 secondary schools and their associated Primary schools – Ayr, Belmont, Carrick, Girvan, Kyle, Marr, Prestwick and Queen Margaret.

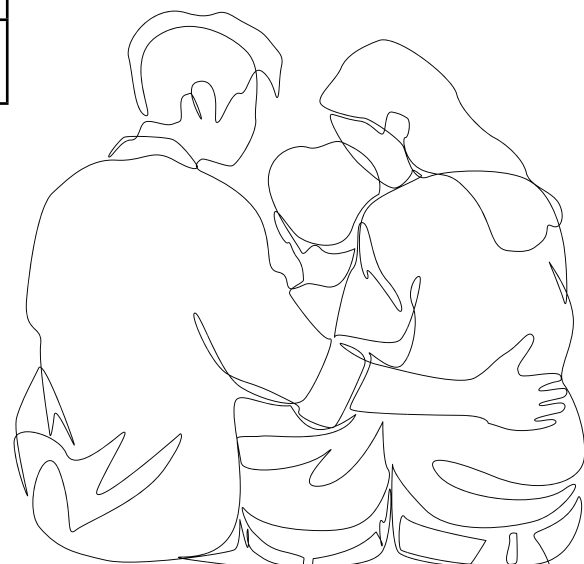
This approach identifies needs within local schools and communities and empowers schools to effect change often with the allocational of additional resource. Between September 24 and May 25 73 young people and families have been referred to the Family First Forum. Analysis of referrals to the Forum offers insights into evolving needs, shifting thresholds and the impact of interventions. This multi-agency approach has strengthened links between sectors and has had a positive impact for young people and families across the school session.

The table below outlines the range of multi-agency supports accessed during session 24/25.

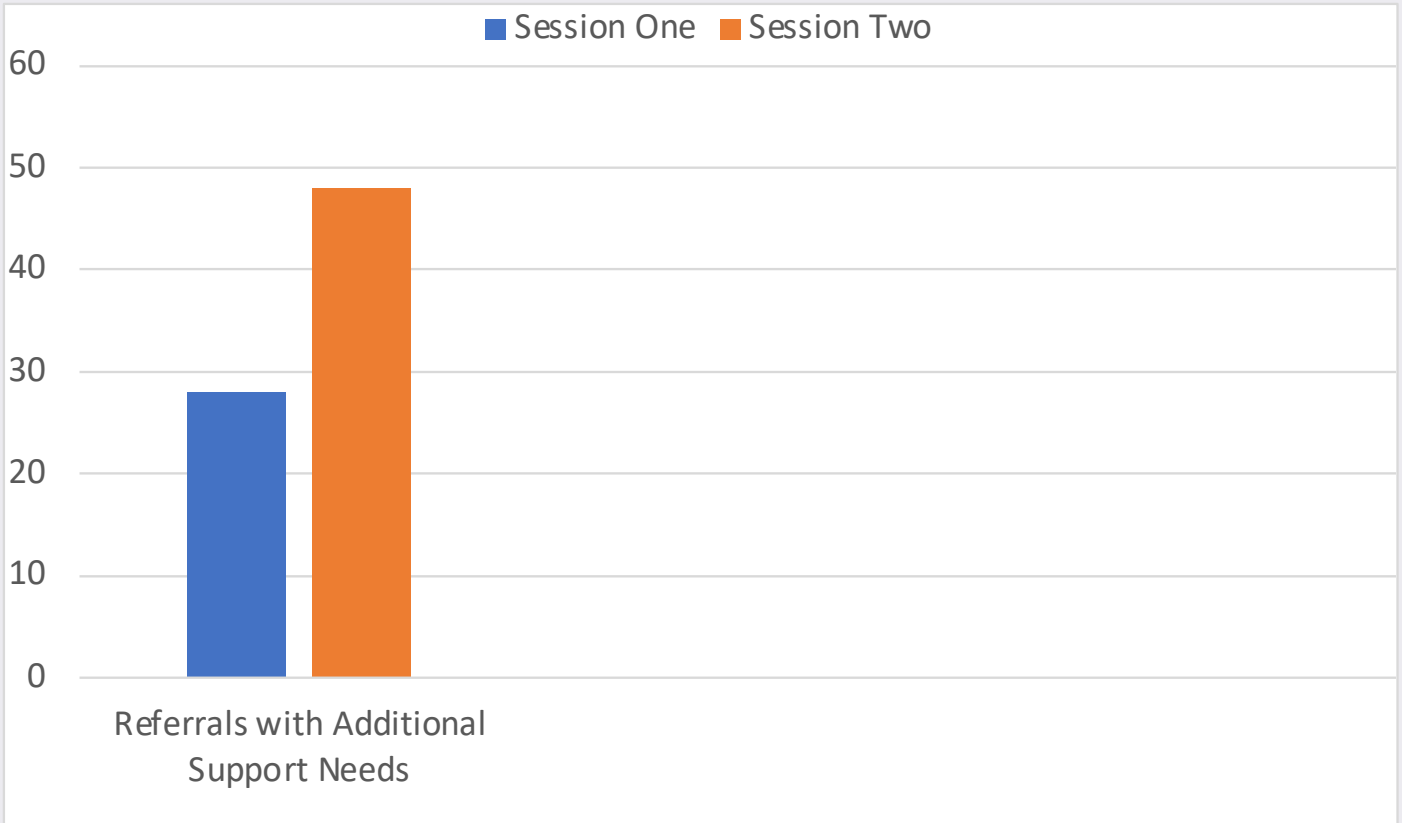
	<b>Number of Referrals Sep 24 – May 25</b>
<b>Family First Teacher</b>	32
<b>Support &amp; Development Worker</b>	48
<b>Thriving Communities</b>	21
<b>School Nurse</b>	5
<b>Small Steps to Wellbeing</b>	9
<b>Educational Psychologist</b>	7

Our statistics from the last two sessions show us that young people are being referred to Family First at an earlier stage, before a referral to social work or other services. This early intervention model helps support young people and families before they reach the point of crisis.

We are able to evidence that Family First is continuing to support an increasing number of children and young people with additional support needs.



## Referrals with Additional Support Needs



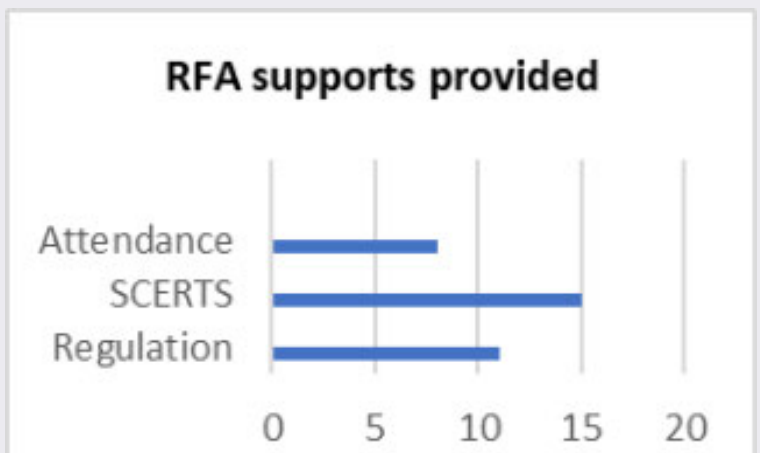
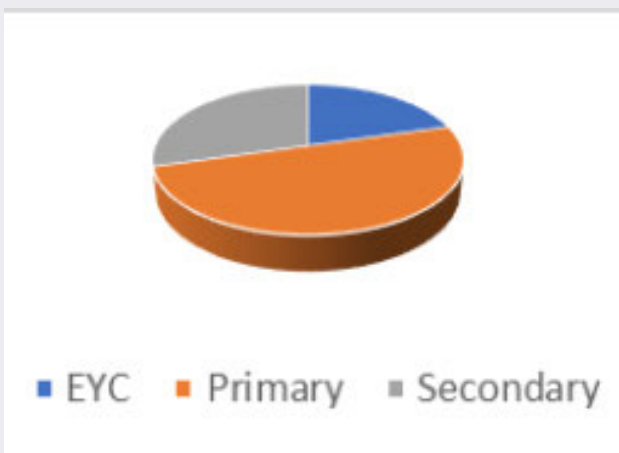
Our Central Inclusion Teams continue to support schools, young people, and families.

### Autism Outreach Team

The Principal Teacher of Language and Communication leads a team of 4 FTE Autism Outreach teachers and 1.0 FTE school assistants can offer support to autistic learners aged 3-18 years in mainstream settings across the authority.

Autism Outreach Team have received **66 requests** for assistance (RFA's). This has resulted in **34 accepted RFA's**. Building capacity supports were offered to those where RFA support weren't agreed.

Autism Outreach Team has delivered 68 training sessions to over 1300 staff.



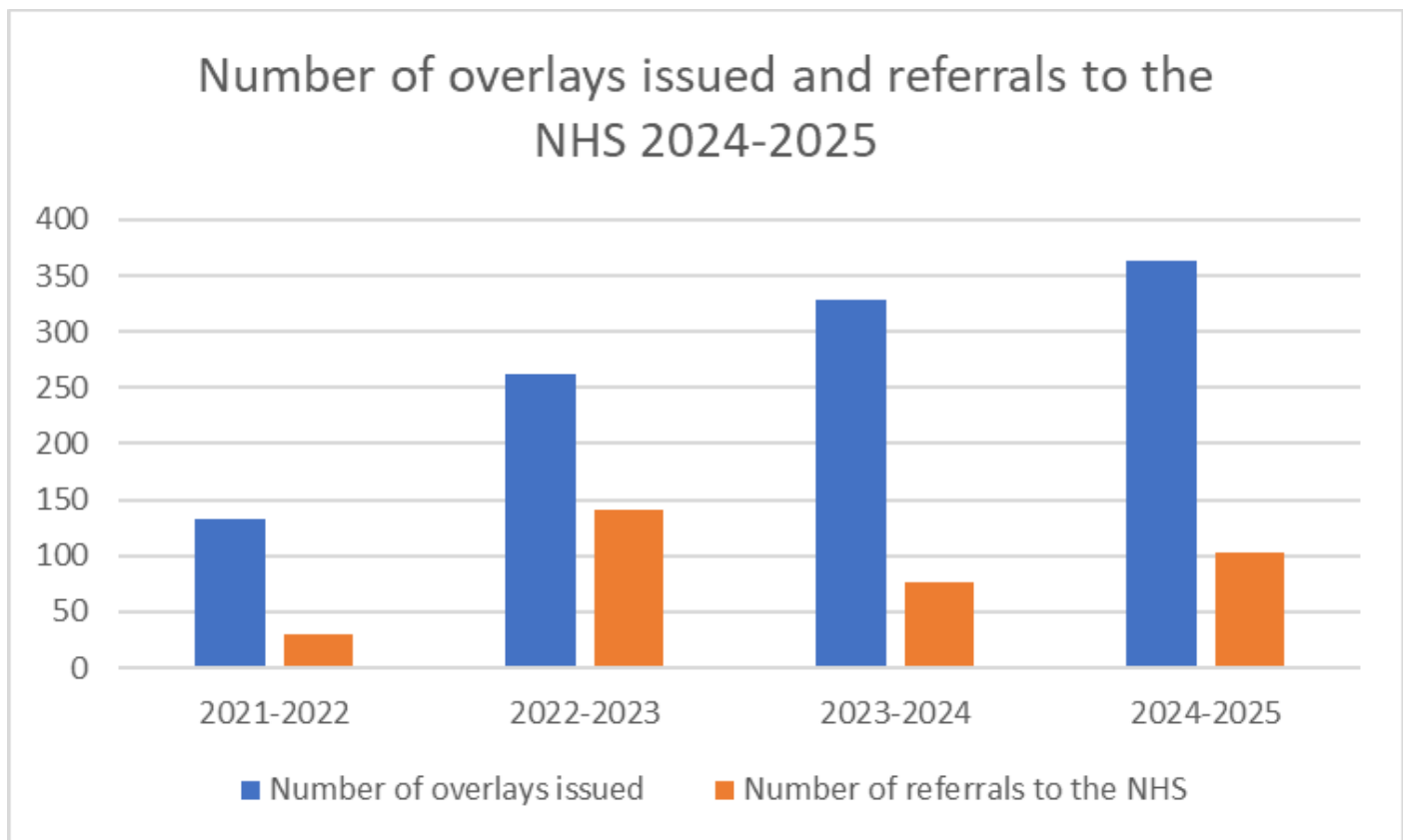
## Additional Support for Learning (ASfL)

The Principal Teacher for Additional Support for Learning (ASfL) leads a team of 43 Additional Support for Learning teachers supporting all mainstream schools across the authority. School Assistant Training and Family support is also provided.

The ASfL team continue to deliver the 5 roles of a support for learning teacher across the authority. Feedback from schools such as “We value our ASfL teacher’s knowledge and skills” highlight the important contribution of the ASfL team.

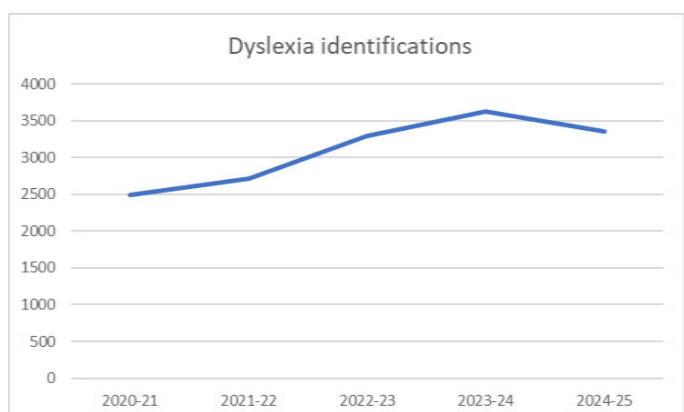
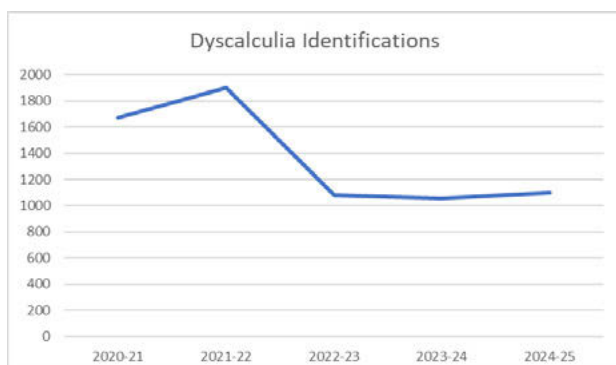
## Visual Stress Assessments and Referral to NHS

The numbers of overlays issued has increased steadily over the past 4 years. Recent training to new ASfL teachers was successful with feedback suggesting a rise in confidence in recognising the signs of visual stress and in the process of assessing learners for overlays Next Steps: continue to embed this process across all schools.



## Identification of Dyslexia and Dyscalculia

The number of dyslexia identifications has been steadily increasing peaking in 2023-2024. The number of dyscalculia identifications peaked in 2021-2022 with the number of identifications gradually increasing again this year.



## Learning and inclusion Team

The Principal Teacher of Learning and Inclusion leads a team of 4 teachers, 2 support and development workers and 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) school assistants comprising outreach support and the South Ayrshire Skills Academy (SASKA) to support the inclusion of pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs (SEBN) across the authority.

## Visual Impairment Team

2.4 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers of the Visually Impaired and 1 transcription assistant support children and young people with a visual impairment across the authority from diagnosis throughout their educational journey.

## English as an Additional Language

1 FTE Principal Teacher of Ukrainian Support, 2 full time equivalent (FTE) Ukrainian Support EAL teachers, 2 FTE Ukrainian Support Welfare Officers, 4 full time equivalent (FTE) EAL teachers and 1 full time equivalent (FTE) EAL Early Years Practitioner support bilingual learners from 3-18 years across the authority. Members of the EAL team led workshops and delivered training to Early Years and Secondary staff at the ASN forums. The aims of the workshops were to develop inclusive strategies for bilingual learners. The Early Years workshops were particularly well attended, and feedback was positive. Members of the team also led workshops at the ASN Primary forum in February.

Feedback suggested increased confidence in knowledge and understanding amongst participants. All staff reported increased confidence in understanding what a bilingual learner is and what strategies to use to support them.

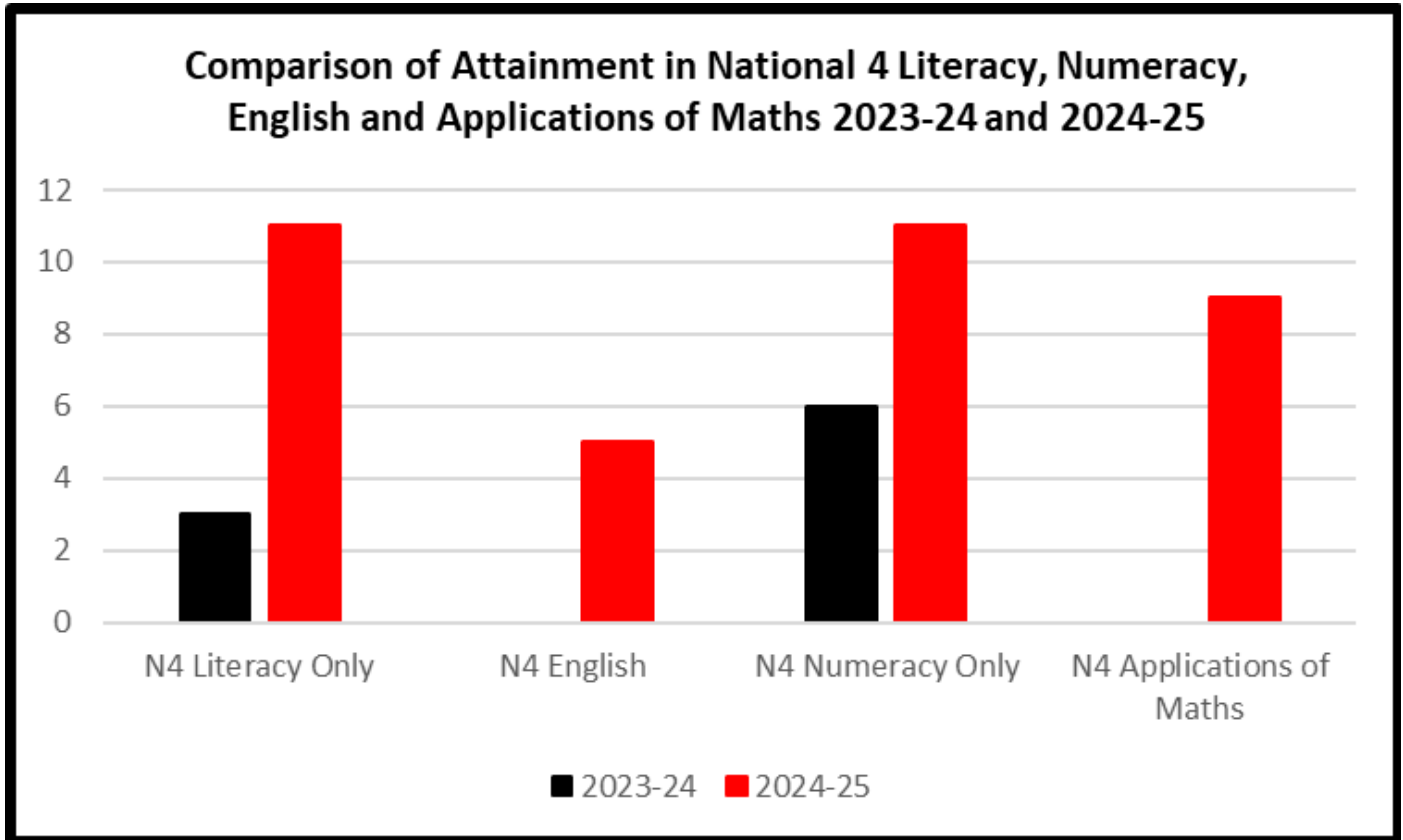
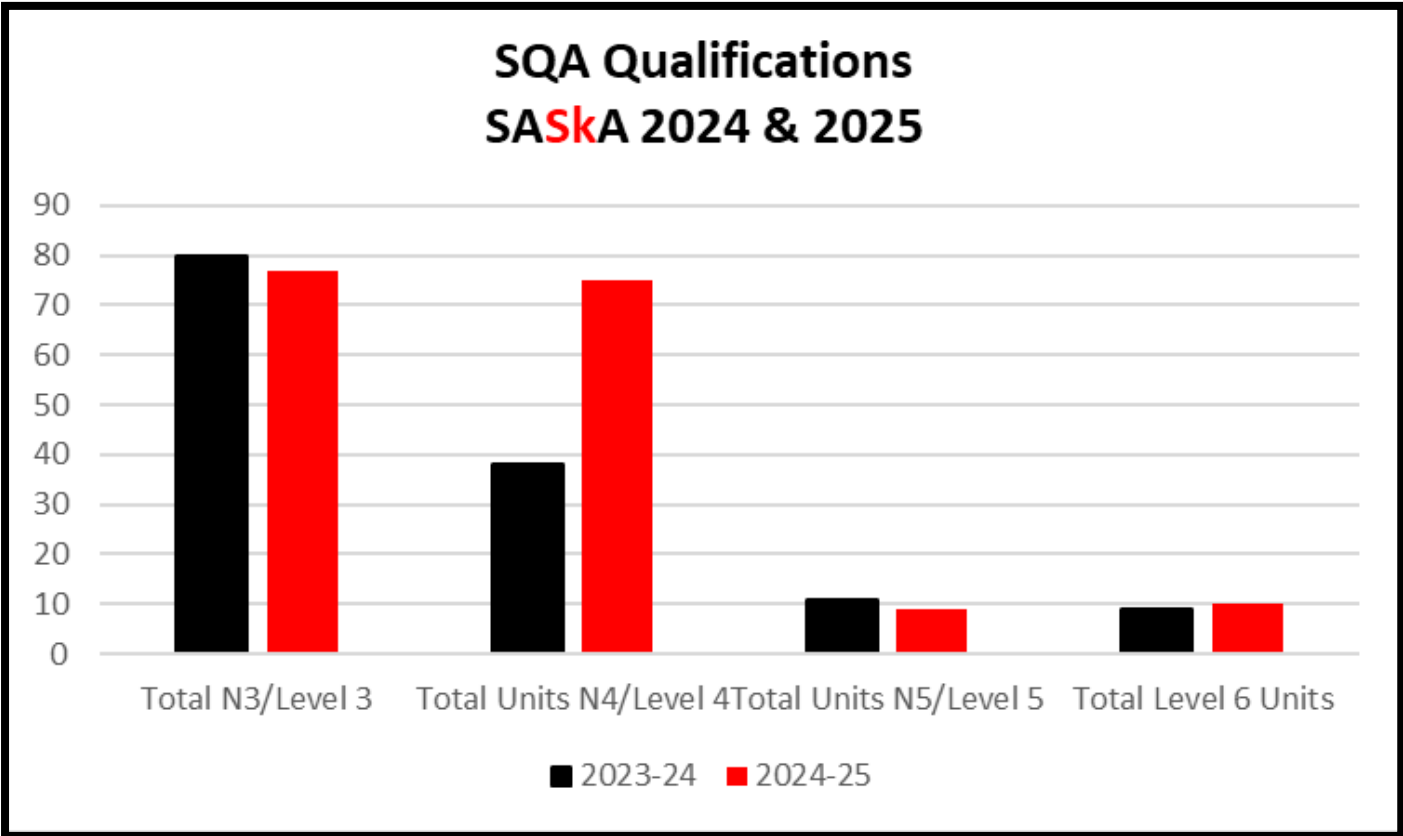
Ayrshire college staff delivered training in english for speakers of other languages (ESOL) an initial assessments and trauma informed practice in english for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes to EAL and Thriving Community staff. There are currently three english for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes running: an unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) ESOL class delivered by Thriving Communities and a Nat 2 and Nat 3 level class at Ayr College.

The department has been looking for a resource to identify strengths and challenges for learners for whom standard assessments for ASN would not be suitable. We purchased Cognitive Assessment for Multilingual Learners (CAML) which looks at different cognitive abilities and is presented in a way that is accessible for our bilingual learners. We also discussed next steps with the PT ASFL and plan to work more with ASFL staff in school going forward.

## South Ayrshire Skills Academy

12 young people in S4 perceived at risk of non achievement and disengagement from education have been supported by South Ayrshire Skills Academy (SASKA) this academic year. All 12 young people are recognised to have a range of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties which present barriers to learning.

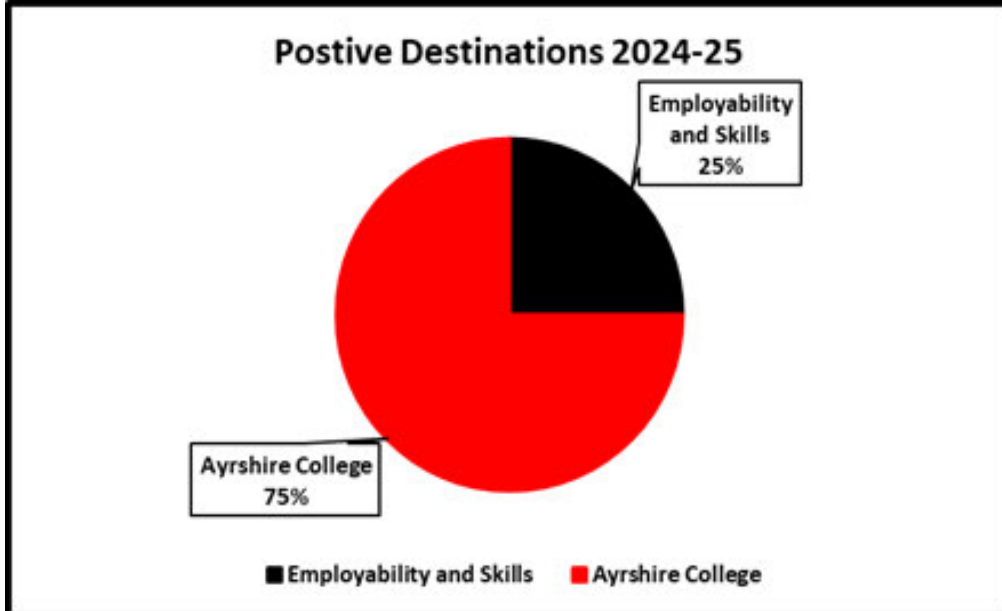
SQA Qualifications 2024-25



SQA attainment has increased with all young people (YP) who attended SASkA this year achieved a minimum of 5 National 3 qualifications. This year 5 young people have secured National 4 English with Literacy and N4 Applications of Maths. There has also been an increase this year in attainment of N4 Literacy (2024– 3 YP, 2025– 11 YP) and N4 Numeracy (2024–6YP, 2025– 11YP)

## Post School Destinations 2025

All 12 young people who attended SASkA this year have secured a positive destination post school. 3 young people have signed up with the Thriving Communities Employability and Skills Team to prepare for employment and further education. 9 young people have secured a place at Ayrshire College starting in August 2025. All young people will have access to the summer programme provided collaboratively by Ayrshire College and Thriving Communities.



## Language Provision

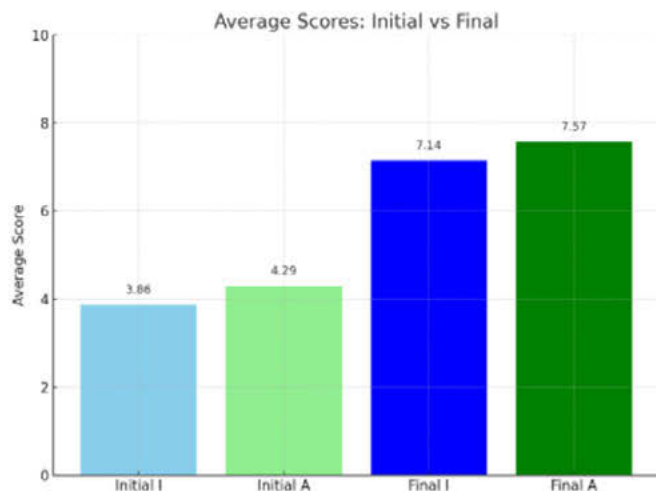
One teacher, a 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) Early Years Practitioner and 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) Speech and Language Therapists support learners from pre-school to Primary 2 where language is the most significant barrier to learning and inclusion at the point of referral, and they are at risk of having Developmental Language Disorder.

Between August 2024 and February 2025, Language Provision supported a total of 19 children through the Language Nest. During this period, seven children participated directly in the Language Nest model. Prior to February 2025, five children were supported exclusively through outreach services. Following February 2025,

the new model continued to support 12 children, each receiving up to three sessions per week.

All pupils making progress from the start of the intervention to the end of the year.

This Demonstrates that strategies employed during the intervention period has had a measurable impact on both inclusions and attainment.



I- Inclusion

A- Attainment

## Early Years Home Visiting

Two Early Years Practitioners support children up to 3 years of age who have significant additional support needs in their own home. This session we welcomed two new members of staff to our Early Years Home Visiting Team both of whom had supported young children with significant additional support needs in early years settings and a specialist setting. The team have supported 27 children and families with a range of additional support needs such as language and communication and complex needs. Almost all referrals have come from health visitors this year with only one request from an Early Years Centre.

### Individual Assessment of Early Learning and Development (IAELD)



for the identification of additional need in children whose skills fall within the 0-4 age range, to aid target setting and to promote inclusive practice in early years settings and schools.

This Session the IAELD tracker was further embedded with new staff supported to use it effectively as a tool to track and monitor development across four key areas.

## Visual Impairment Team

### Support this session

The VI team of 2.4 FTE teachers and 1 transcription assistant have provided support to 39 learners from under 1 year olds to senior phase secondary this session.

The VI Transcription assistant adapted in excess of 700 items for learners requiring large print, enlarged, braille and tactile resources this session.

VI Support Provided



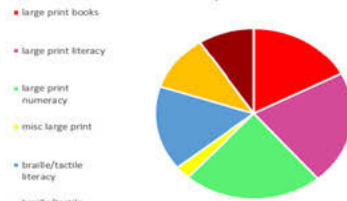
■ regular ■ monitored ■ Initial FVA

Learners Supported



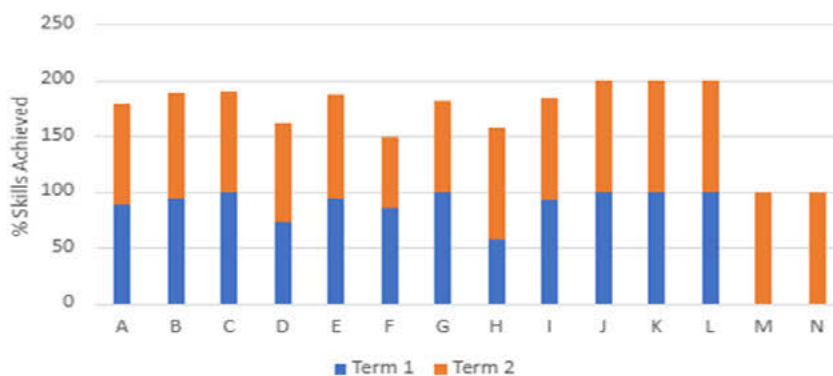
■ > 3yrs ■ EYC  
■ Primary ■ Secondary

Resource adaptations



■ large print books  
■ large print literacy  
■ large print numeracy  
■ misc large print  
■ braille/tactile literacy  
■ braille/tactile literacy numeracy  
■ misc braille/tactile

VI Skills Gained

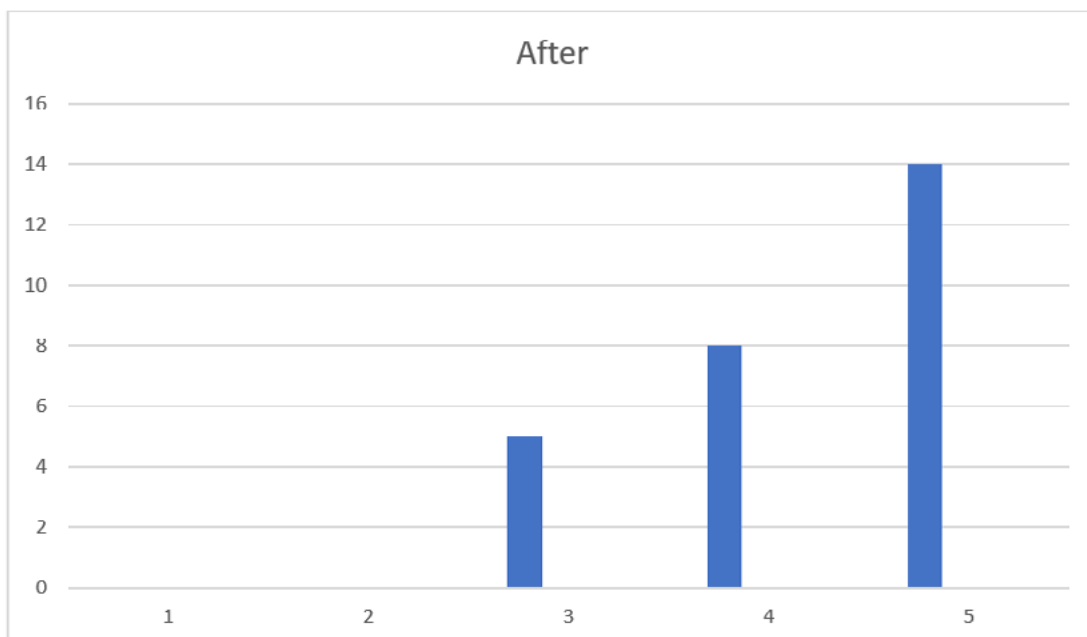
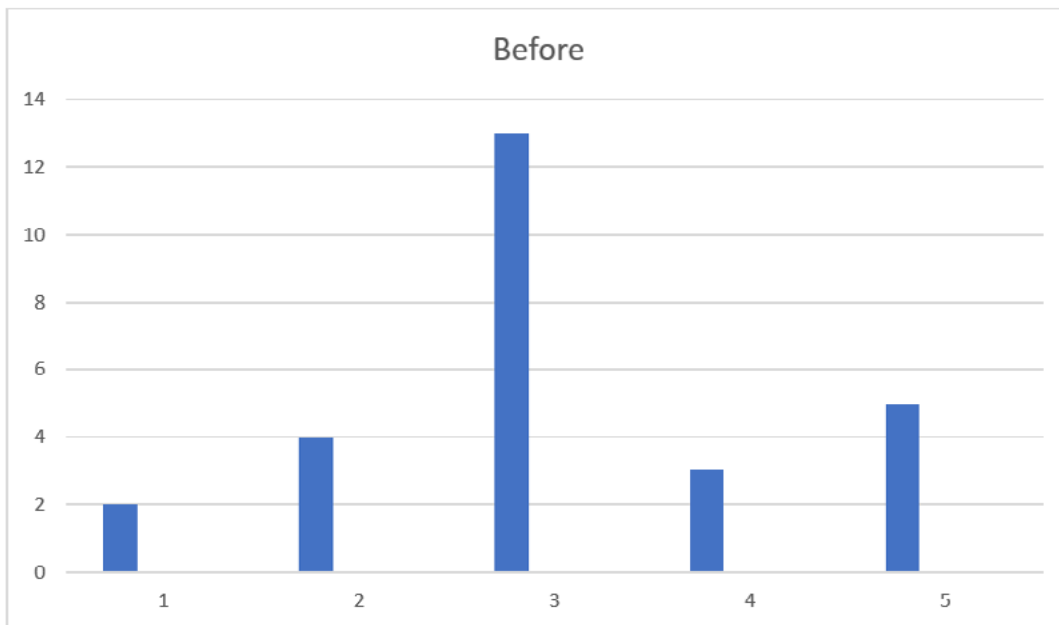


During in class support and one to one sessions a range of VI specific skills were taught such as developing tactile awareness in preparation for learning braille, building ICT skills using both mainstream and specialist devices, for example laptops, iPads and Connect 12. Most learners achieved 80% and above while almost all achieved 70% and above.

## Nurture

The Principal Teacher of Nurture leads a team of 6 nurture teachers and 3.5 FTE school assistants supporting children and young people through 2 enhanced nurture provisions and an outreach team working in partnership with mainstream schools to embed nurture principles. This year the team have supported 8 children across Chestnut Cottage and Crosshill Enhanced Nurture provisions. 85% of pupils live in SIMD 1/2, 17% of pupils live SIMD 3 33% . 37.5% of pupils are care experienced. All pupils showed an increase in their wellbeing throughout their journey of Enhanced Nurture. The team have trained 65 staff this year, including foster carers and residential staff, in full nurture training which comprises of Attachment Theory, Early Neuroscience, Nurture Principles, Boxall Profiles, Developmental Trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Schools across the authority that were supported by the Outreach Nurture Team were asked “How confident do you feel your staff are in supporting children with nurture needs before/after input from the Nurture Team”?



## Virtual School Support

The Virtual School has operated with one Head Teacher and four full time Welfare Officers this year. The WFOs supported 44 children and young people and their families this year; across 19 of South Ayrshire Schools, 4 from residential living and 1 living in another authority. The children and young people are amongst the most disconnected with education across authority. There were 14 new children and young people allocated to the service this year and 6 young people have successfully transitioned on to other services such as Employability and Skills, Small Steps to Wellbeing or Belmont Family First. The team are supporting children and young people with a varied range of social work intervention.

The Virtual School also supported the implementation of a pilot provision, RISE, in partnership with Health and Social Care Partnership—aiming to return young people from out with authority education provisions to their own community:

- 1 DHT, 1 Class teacher, 1 WFO, 1 SW Support Assistant
- 3 young people included; 3 in process of enrolling
- 7 qualifications have been gained amongst the three pupils since Jan 2025
- Two work placements have been secured since Jan 2025

Virtual School has co-managed a one year pilot Supportive School Structure Programme alongside the Health and Social Care Partnership.

- 2 Care Experienced Curriculum Officers, 1 Lived Experienced Participation Officer
- 10 young people and families (previously looked after) supported 1:1

### Impact Across the Year:

- The Virtual School offered an After School Art Club to young people with care experience. The club has steady attendance of 15 young people weekly, with one previously supported young lady volunteering to support the club.
- Eight young people attend a weekly Wellbeing Group, supported by Active Schools
- 12 young people and their families participated in an Easter Residential Outdoor activity at Dolphin House, facilitated by Thriving Communities and organised and supported by Welfare Officers
- The Virtual School HT has worked in partnership with CLD and Health and Social Care Partnership to implement an Education Hub for Unaccompanied Young People.
- Eight fourth year pupils achieved their minimum qualifications with a bespoke and creative package supported by the WFO and teacher input
- Virtual School Pupil Council continued to operate this year; with six young people representing care experience from across four schools
- Two young people included in Youth Council
- SQP Pick Up intervention supported 13 young people to gain qualifications for leaving school
- Three non school attending pupils are now attending school, with attendance rates sitting approximately at 85%
- Six young people received new bikes as a result of completing a Cycle Scotland Scheme supported by WFOs
- Virtual School secured funding to purchase Barista equipment and deliver training; allowing young people to achieve Level 6 qualifications

## The year in review

Significant work continues across English as an Additional Language (EAL) with focus teams on Ukrainian Support, Afghan Support, Unaccompanied Young People support and general core EAL across all school. The Autism Outreach Team worked under Educational Psychological service this year to focus on a change of approach to the service. Nurture Outreach teams have had a focus on building capacity across all sectors as well as implementing the Fidelity Nurture within five schools. Family Engagement through the ASN Family Forum and EAL Forums has significantly increased with an increase in attendance over the year.

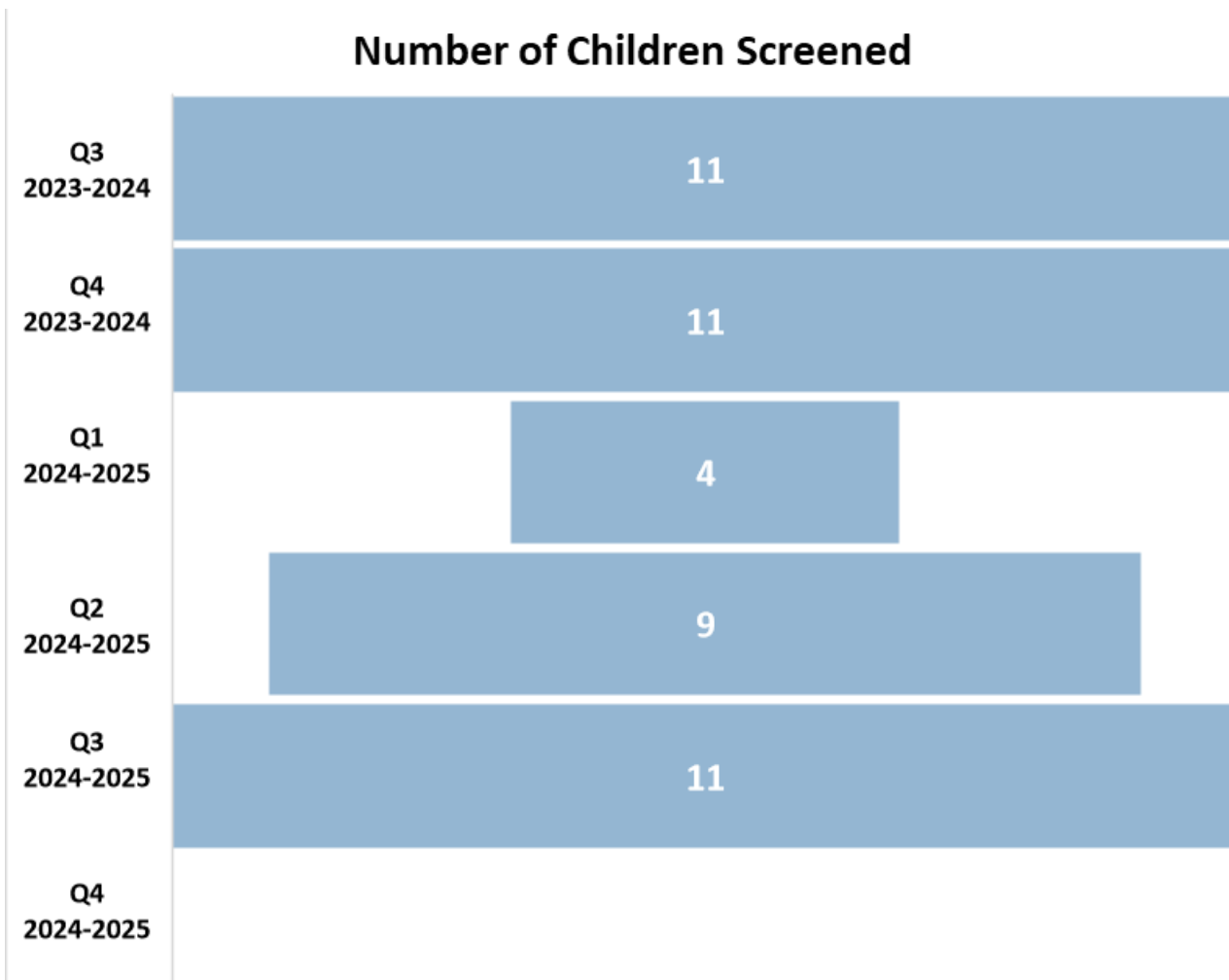
## Improve support for our neurodiverse children, young people and families

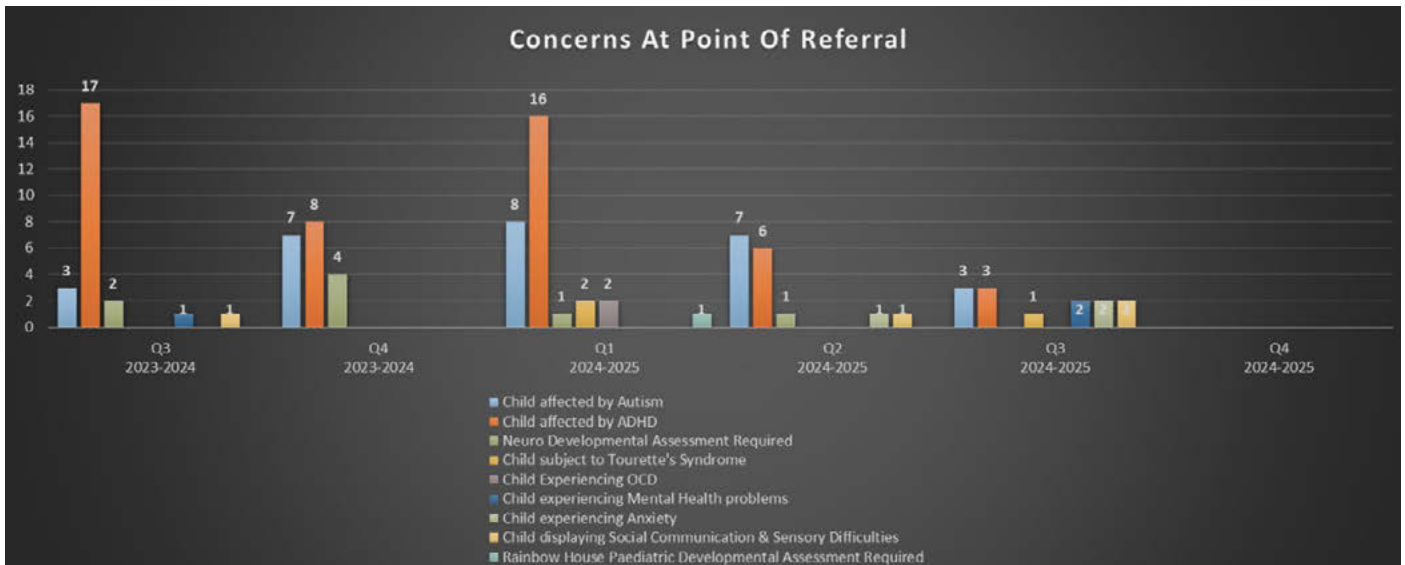
In August 2023 CAMHS Ayrshire and Arran adopted the National Neurodevelopmental Specification. As a result, South Ayrshire has instigated several groups to ensure families and young people are supported.

The neurodevelopmental screening group is made up of representatives from several services across South Ayrshire. These include education, CAMHS, Health and Social Care colleagues, and the Neurodevelopmental Empowerment and Strategy Team.

Between April 2024 and March 2025 24 young people were referred to the Screening Group

Amongst other details, the group record the neurodevelopmental concern at the point of referral and also the age of the young person referred.

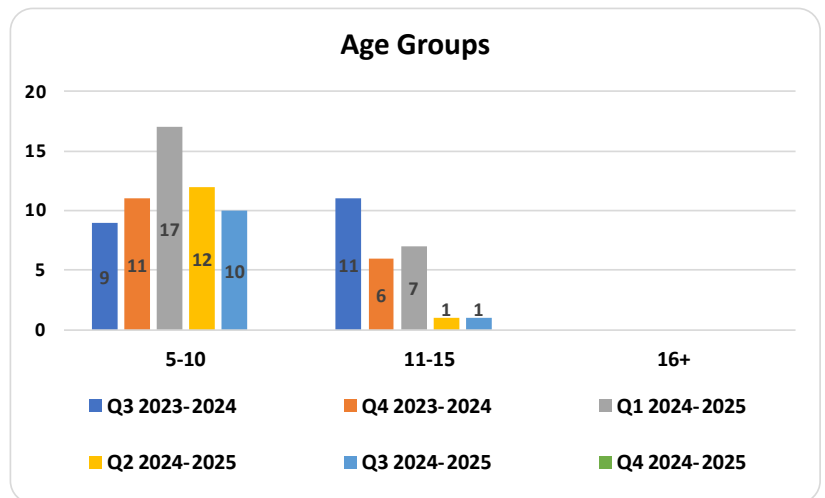




Young people, schools and families also benefit from support from the Autism Outreach Team and Psychological Services.

In surveys conducted by the Autism Outreach Team, 100% of parents supported felt that:

- their child enjoyed and valued their time with their Autism Outreach teacher
- their child was treated with respect and knew their child as an individual.
- their Autism Outreach teacher increased their child’s confidence in achieving their goals and they were happy with the updates and progress reports.
- they were able to talk openly about their child’s needs and make suggestions.
- they would recommend the Autism Outreach Team to another parent.



70% of schools reported high levels of satisfaction with the assessment, strategies and supports were put in place.

85% of schools felt that there had been a positive impact on their ability to meet autistic pupils needs.

85% of schools reported effective communication with Autism Outreach Team and that the staff worked effectively with school staff to promote partnership working.

87.5% of pupils advised that they were confident in approaching the Autism Outreach Team with suggestions about their goals, understood what their next steps are and would recommend the Autism Outreach Team.

Social group stakeholder survey and attendance data

100% pupils said they felt they could talk honestly with the Autism Outreach Team and would recommend a social group.

71% of social group pupils said they felt it helped them to settle in secondary.

The pupils identified getting a regulation break, making new friends, and understanding what it means to autistic as the main benefits of attending a social group.

# Improve our approaches to involving children and families in decision making

An immense amount of work has taken place this session to ensure that our children and young people participate in decision making.

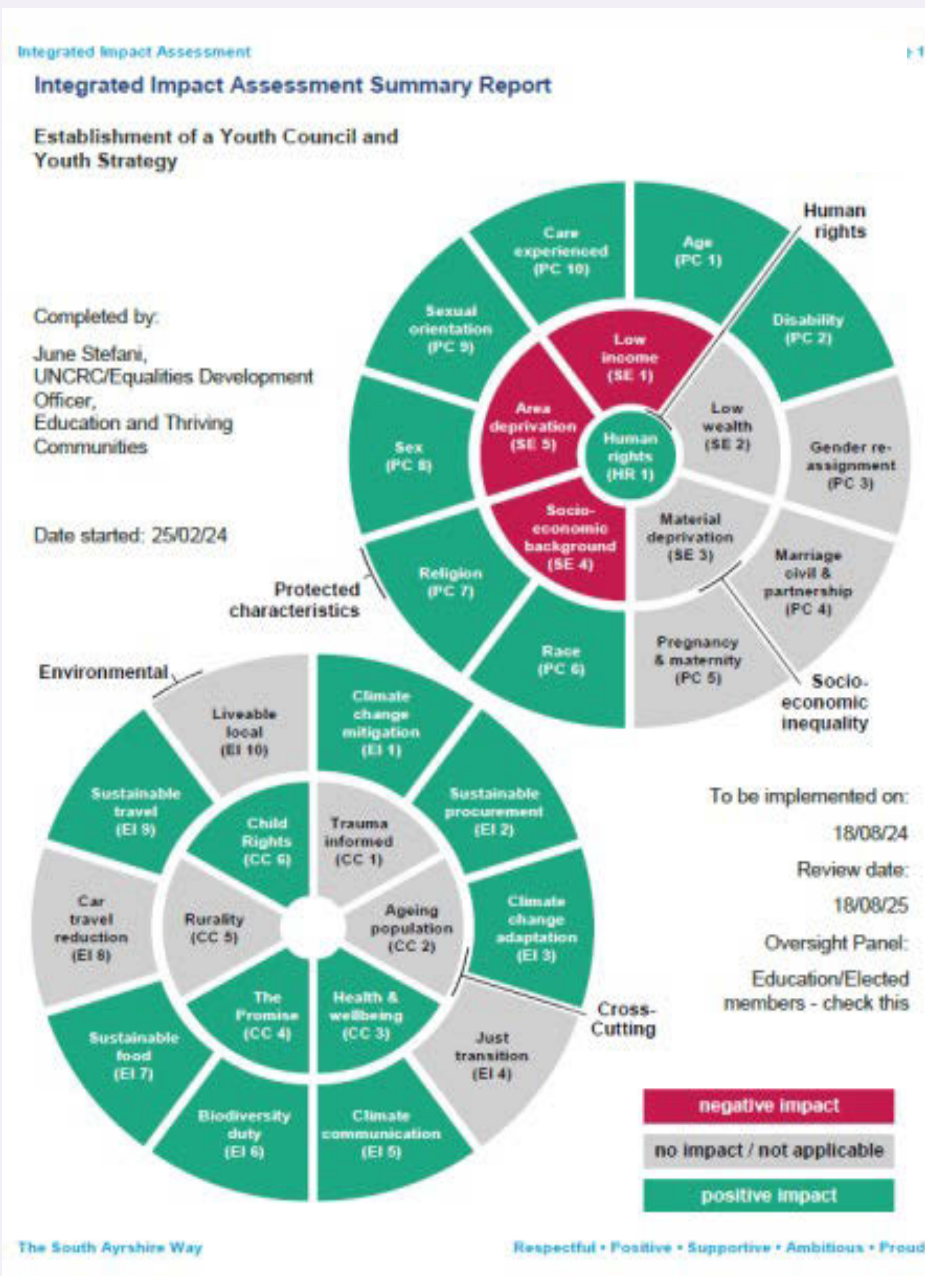
Below is a summary of the calendar of the main events that took place. It is not extensive but will give you a flavour.

## FEBRUARY

An extensive consultation road show took place.

## MARCH

Integrated Impact Assessment / Childrens rights and wellbeing impact assessment (IIA/CRWIA) Youth Strategy and Youth Council devised.



# MAY

Formation of the youth council



## REPRESENTATION OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL

A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF 29 YOUNG PEOPLE ELECTED AGED 11 TO 21 YEARS FROM:

- 2 PUPILS FROM EVERY SECONDARY SCHOOL
- 2 PUPILS FROM SOUTH CRAIG
- 1 PUPIL FROM INVERGARVEN
- 2 PUPILS FROM THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL
- 4 OVER 16'S (POST SCHOOL)
- 4 PRIMARY 7'S (STILL TO BE APPOINTED)

**MEMBERS ARE ELECTED EVERY 2 YEARS**

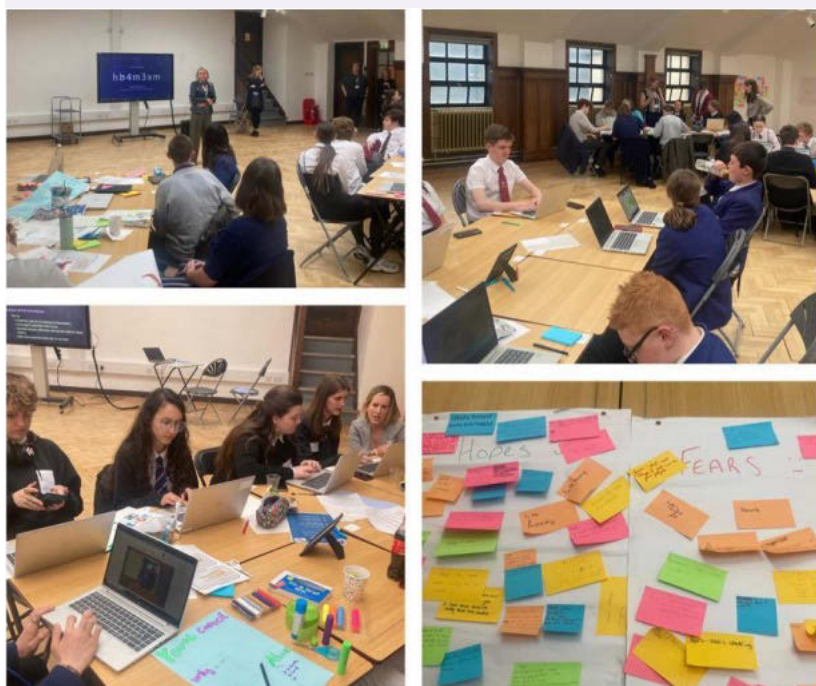
## ELECTION PROCESS

- A TOTAL OF 67 YOUNG PEOPLE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST
- 13 CARE EXPERIENCED & 7 YOUNG CARERS
- 50 FINAL CANDIDATES PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING AND CREATING CAMPAIGNS
- 7 SCHOOLS HOSTED ELECTIONS
- 2558 YOUNG PEOPLE VOTED VIA THE BALLOT VOTES
- 28 YOUNG PEOPLE ELECTED



# JUNE

Youth council training took place followed by the Youth Council Elections



A total of 28 young people were elected: 11 care experienced and 1 young carer, the final results were announced via live online link to all Schools with Director of Education, Lyndsay McRoberts as the Presiding Officer.



## AUGUST

Youth Council launch event.



## NOVEMBER

Youth Council and our elected P7 Representatives Live 'teams' announcement from Asst Director Scott Mulholland.



Travelling Cabinet – Meeting First Minister and posing questions

## DECEMBER

Kayla and Aaryn contributed to our Youth Strategy Group.



# JANUARY

Youth Council to Observe at both the Education and the Full Cabinet



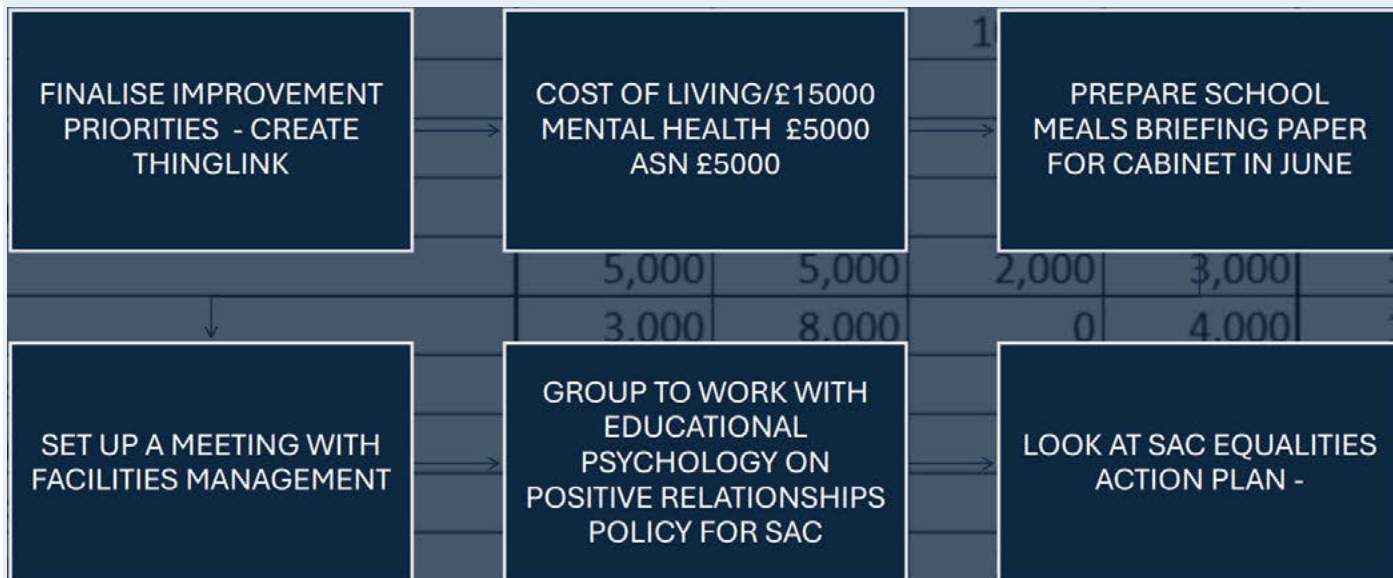
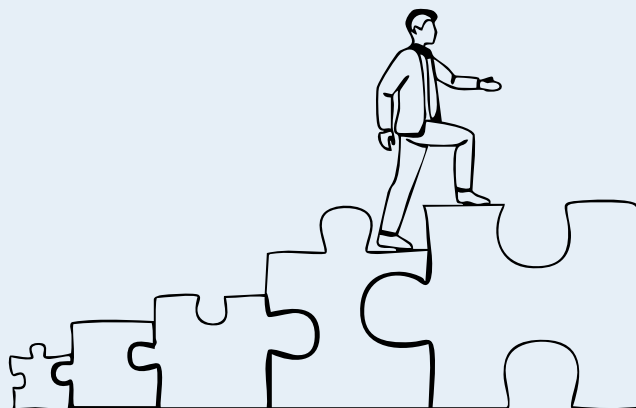
# FEBRUARY-APRIL

The youth council engaged in a number of meetings to share their views including:

- Cost of living
- Thematic inspection review
- Childrens services planning

# MAY

Next Steps



## Improve outcomes and experiences for our care experienced children and young people

In 2024-25 The Virtual School has supported over 50 children and young people with one to one interventions. 24% of the young people were supported to improve their attendance at school, with 83% of those young people having a sustained improvement in their attendance. The Virtual School has provided additional support to 12 young people who are at risk of leaving school with no qualifications, with 100% of them achieving at least 5 qualifications at level 3 and some up to level 5.

The Virtual School Head Teacher worked in partnership with The Corporate Parent Officer to implement a pilot programme to support previously looked after young people, to co-create a curriculum to improve engagement. This pilot programme looks at the barriers to education for some of our most vulnerable young people and will enquire how best to remove these barriers; or look at overcoming them. This will be evaluated in 2025-26.

A joint programme between Education and Health and Social Care Partnership was established; creating and implementing a new education and steps to positive destinations provision for South Ayrshire children and young people returning to South Ayrshire from out with provisions. Currently three young people are being supported in this pilot provision who have returned from out with education establishments. This pilot will be reviewed in 2025-26 for impact.

The attainment trajectory for care experienced young people continues to reflect positively, with care experienced leads in all secondary schools closely tracking and monitoring attainment at all levels, for support and early intervention.

The exclusions trajectory continues to decline, with rigorous discussions to support and implement alternatives that meet the needs of our young people.

The Promise Award in Education has been rolled out across all schools, supporting trauma informed practice, escalation, and nurture principles.

### Leavers attainment

Figure 5: Percentage of care experienced leavers with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 or higher, 2017-18 through 2022-23

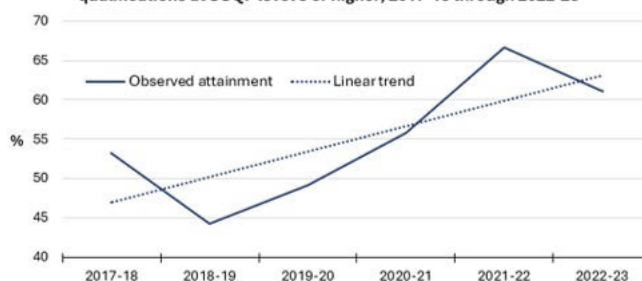


Figure 6: Percentage of care experienced leavers with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 6 or higher, 2017-18 through 2022-23

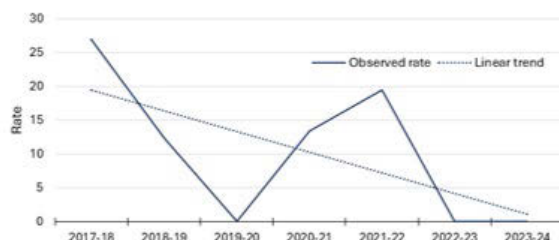
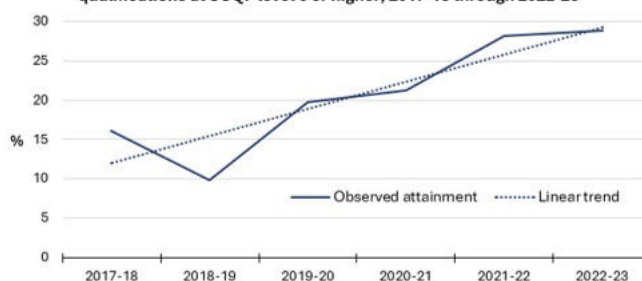
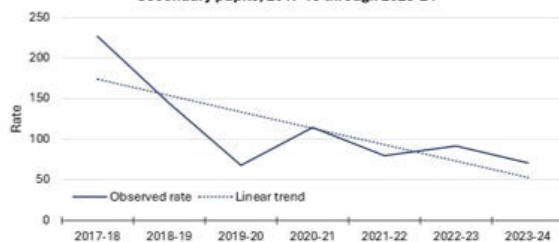


Figure 4: Rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils, care experienced Secondary pupils, 2017-18 through 2023-24





**RIGHTS  
RESPECTING  
SCHOOLS**

## Ensure that UNCRC is central to our work

South Ayrshire continues to embed a human rights ethos across all school to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in schools and the wider community.

To ensure success a wide range of activities have taken place including:

- Children's rights and Wellbeing Officer in post 0.6 until March 2026
- Professional Learning sessions are delivered to EYC/Primary/Secondary/ Cluster and Special Schools on a bespoke basis. Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) Strategic Lead has supported and visited 44 establishments across the authority to support knowledge and understanding of implementing rights in their settings. This has led to an increase on uptake of RRS accreditations.
- A memorandum of understanding has been agreed between UNICEF and South Ayrshire Council. South Ayrshire Council receive a 75% discount due to having a team of assessors 3 soon to be 4 who support UNICEF at Silver Level. Assessor Guidance has been produced to support the team and ensure consistency of approach.
- In collaboration with Thriving Communities an SAC Youth Council

has been established to look at issues affecting young people across South Ayrshire – these include Cost of Living Crisis, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Additional Support Needs. Children's Rights participatory budgeting is being meaningfully considered as the Youth Council has a budget of £10,000 from the Financial Inclusion Fund for Cost of Living as well as £20,000 from HSCP for all 3 priorities. The Youth Council will also work on the Youth Strategy as part of their priorities.

- UNCRC Scotland 2024 Act professional learning session has been delivered to Elected Members and Senior Leaders.
- Education Central Services Team has been updated on UNCRC and Rights Respecting schools moving forward.
- Children's Rights Steering Group in collaboration with Education and Children's Services has completed the Let's Get Going Gender Equality Toolkit. This has been shared with Head Teachers and 5 schools are piloting during session 2025/2026.
- Children's Rights updates and training are regularly shared in the Education and Career long professional learning (CLPL) bulletin.
- Development Officer sits on the Child Protection Committee sub group and work is shared across partners.
- Collaboration between Education and FIB Youth Theatre to complete Rights Drama pack for SAC primary schools ready for August 2025.
- 4 Schools are ready to re-accredit at Gold and 2 schools ready to accredit at Gold. 5 schools are ready to accredit at Silver. 1 school is ready to present for Bronze as is 1 partner EYC. Many of these assessments should be completed by June 2025. Gold reaccreditations by October 2025

Training August 2023 - Present				
Schools	Early Years	Childminder	Assessor	Assessments
35	8	1	3	7
HT Training	Learning Conf	Twilight	Staff Training	Youth Council
3	1	1	9	Various

	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Gold Re-accredit	Beyond Time
No	9	24	6	13	2
%	17%	46%	12%	25%	4%
52 schools / EYC's involved					
98% of our schools are signed up to RRSA Programme					



## Priority 2

**Outstanding learning, teaching and assessment In South Ayrshire, we want all of our children and young people to experience the highest quality learning and teaching in our schools. We are committed to ensuring a relentless focus on learning, teaching and assessment at the heart of all that we do.**



## Improve quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment across all our EYC and schools

Building on the success of last session's Improving Pedagogy and Equity programme, the initiative was implemented for a second consecutive year across shared headship schools (Barr and Barrhill and Maidens and Fisherton Primary Schools) as well as Barassie Primary School. This focus on a whole-school approach and the collaborative nature of the programme created meaningful opportunities for staff to engage in reflective dialogue, share best practices, and provide mutual support and constructive challenge. As a result, there was a noticeable enhancement in the quality and consistency of learning, teaching, and assessment across all participating schools, contributing to improved outcomes for all learners.



### Assessment and Moderation

A series of four authority-wide training sessions were delivered to promote consistency in assessment and moderation practices. These sessions served as both a refresh and a revisit of key principles, aiming to enhance practitioners' confidence and support high-quality, flexible approaches to assessment. The focus was on using assessment purposefully to support learning, with an emphasis on formative strategies that effectively elicit evidence of progress and enable responsive, in-the-moment planning. Practitioners also explored the importance of involving learners in the assessment process, ensuring they understand their learning and next steps. The sessions reinforced the idea that assessment is integral to teaching and learning—not a separate activity—and that it should inform planning to lead to improved outcomes for all learners.

## Improve quality and consistency of play-based learning approaches across early level and beyond

The South Ayrshire Learns Team delivered targeted CLPL to introduce the pilot of the Playboxes method to school assistants. These took place at Maidens and Braehead Primary School. This pilot was designed to support learners who find play challenging, as well as those who would benefit from one-to-one adult attention. The approach offers learners the opportunity to engage in 10 motivating and enjoyable Playboxes sessions, using carefully selected resources tailored to their interests, alongside an enthusiastic adult.

The focus of these sessions is to help learners build confidence, enhance their social and communication skills, and develop a broad range of other essential skills through guided play. These include fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, emotional regulation, turn-taking, and cooperation.





Teachers across the authority immersed themselves in direct learning and enhancing their understanding of Block Play. These 4 in-person sessions explored ways to integrate block play across the curriculum with all stages P1-7. Practitioners explored the developmental value of block play and its potential to support learning in areas such as storytelling and literacy, STEM and creativity, problem-solving and collaboration.

As part of this work, bespoke training was also developed and delivered for Minishant Primary School. This training was tailored to the needs of the staff team and the learners to allow for deeper reflection on practice.

### Percentage of pre-school Early Years pupils achieving 8 or more developmental milestones in Health & Wellbeing, Language & Communication, and Mathematics & Numeracy domains: 2020-21 to 2024-25

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	91.9	95.1	92.5	95.5	96.0
<b>Language and Communication</b>	75.9	85.0	76.7	82.7	83.1
<b>Mathematics and Numeracy</b>	76.6	88.5	88.0	88.7	91.7

Pleasingly the percentage of early years pupils having achieved 8 or more milestones has improved in all areas.

Health & Wellbeing – increase 0.5 %

Language & Communication – increase 0.4%

Mathematics & Numeracy –significant increase of 3 %

## Improve our approaches to the teaching of reading across our EYC and schools

# South Ayrshire Reads



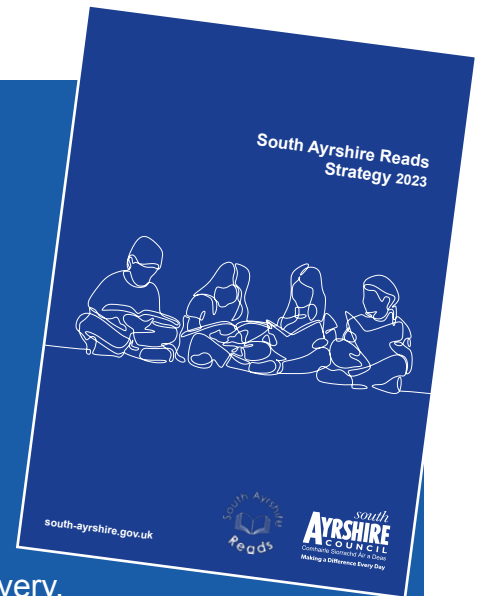
In its second year, the South Ayrshire Reads (SAR) team significantly enhanced system-wide capacity by designing and delivering both bespoke and universal professional learning opportunities. These sessions included high-quality workshops and targeted in-school support, all grounded in the principles of the Science of Reading. This work was instrumental in promoting alignment between research-informed practice and classroom delivery. The focus in Year 2 was on building collective efficacy, fostering a shared vision and consistent understanding of effective reading pedagogy across all participating schools.

Looking ahead to Year 3, the SAR team will continue to provide sustained support to Phase 1 and 2 schools, with an emphasis on embedding and deepening high-quality, evidence-based practice. Simultaneously, the team will begin working with Phase 3 schools to ensure effective implementation of these approaches, maintaining a coherent and scalable model for literacy improvement across the authority. All mainstream schools across South Ayrshire are actively participating in the South Ayrshire Reads strategy to varying degrees.

The South Ayrshire Strategic Aims are:

- To develop confident and skilled readers in South Ayrshire with a lifelong love of reading and the confidence and tools to access all aspects of education, culture and society.
- To support and develop all education staff in South Ayrshire to implement best practice through a culture of shared knowledge, collaboration, and enquiry.
- To promote the implementation of excellent reading curricula and planning in schools and early years centres which prioritise best practice, challenge, and adapted teaching for children with additional support needs.
- To gather, use and analyse data effectively to drive change and improvement in children's reading skills, reading confidence, and reading attainment.

You can read more about the strategy [HERE](#)



## Professional Learning for Primary Education Colleagues

South Ayrshire Reads successfully delivered targeted professional learning to 14 Phase 1 and 14 Phase 2 schools, effectively meeting phase-specific developmental needs. Phase 1 strengthened understanding of evidence-based reading practices, including adaptive word recognition, comprehension, and explicit vocabulary instruction. Phase 2 deepened skills in phonological awareness, advanced phonics, fluency, and word recognition, boosting practitioner expertise and classroom impact.

Collaborative work with partnership schools fostered a robust looking outwards approach, facilitating the sharing of best practices, enhancing collective efficacy, and embedding sustainable, consistent approaches through enriched professional dialogue. End-of-year consultations demonstrated increased practitioner knowledge and confidence, resulting in significant, positive shifts in classroom practice and improved learner outcomes.



Universal professional learning was effectively delivered across the authority, covering key areas such as critical literacy, reading in play-based environments, and strategies to support learners with reading challenges.

The training focused on ‘Reading in a Play-Based Environment,’ supported practitioners to embed reading meaningfully within a play-based context. The session explored how early literacy development can be naturally supported through a balance of meaningful child-led, adult-initiated, and adult-led play. The aim was to support practitioners to create environments that promote curiosity, language development and a love of reading.

Building on these strong foundations, Phase 1 schools will deepen their understanding of language comprehension and literacy, while the SAR strategy broadens to include writing, listening, and talking. Phase 2 schools will further develop vocabulary and comprehension skills to embed and continue progress.

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, 10 additional primary and 4 secondary schools will engage in Science of Reading-based professional learning, expanding collaborative capacity and driving continued literacy excellence across South Ayrshire.



## Professional Learning for Early Years Colleagues

Following previous phonological awareness training, 14 Early Years Centres identified a need for further professional development and requested bespoke early literacy sessions to enhance practitioner knowledge and skills. This targeted support has strengthened phonological awareness and improved the delivery of play-based, inclusive literacy experiences across most centres. The co-creation of engaging activities embedded in daily routines has increased practitioner confidence. Further development of the literacy lead role is planned to sustain effective practice and drive ongoing improvement collaboratively.



## Reading Leaders

Following consultations with Senior Leadership Teams in May 2024, all Phase 1 and 2 schools identified a Reading Leader, and the SAR team developed a strategic plan for their termly professional learning sessions in 2024/25. This aims to build capacity and ensure long-term sustainability of the SAR strategy. Engagement has been strong, with almost all Reading Leaders attending all four meetings. Almost all have delivered parental and staff workshops and implemented a reading fluency test of change. Reading Leaders report that their enhanced strategic understanding has strengthened their leadership, fostering professional growth, confidence, and improved literacy outcomes. Next, support will extend to Phase 3 leaders, with data informed ongoing development.

## Communication Friendly Environments

In Year 2, the Communication Friendly Environment (CFE) priority was further embedded through continued multi-agency collaboration. Staff across 53 establishments (14 EYCs, 35 primaries, 2 secondaries, 2 specialist provisions) engaged in targeted professional learning, with almost all reporting increased confidence and improved practice. Most settings completed baseline audits and identified Communication Champions, whose leadership has developed through structured mentoring. The majority of EYCs achieved first-level accreditation, with Forehill and Wallacetown Early Years Centres reaching full accreditation. Strengthening secondary engagement and expanding family involvement are key strategic priorities for the next phase.



## Assessment

The strategic embedding of data-informed practice across Phase 1 and Phase 2 schools has led to a consistent and rigorous implementation of standardised assessments. These assessments have been effectively used to inform pedagogical decisions and measure the impact of the teaching and learning of reading. End-of-year consultations have provided strong evidence that all participating schools value the robustness and reliability of the data. This data has been instrumental in strengthening the link between professional learning and classroom practice. Looking ahead, the use of assessment to inform and drive high-quality teaching and learning will remain a central focus. In Year 3, this approach will be embedded within Phase 3 schools as they begin implementation, ensuring continuity and consistency across the authority.

### Reading Schools Accreditation

The Reading Schools programme continues to grow across South Ayrshire, with strong sector-wide engagement. Notably, the majority of primary schools have successfully attained Reading Schools accreditation, reflecting positive progress across a range of award levels. Accreditation at Gold, Silver, and Core levels reflects sustained commitment to embedding a reading culture. All secondary schools have achieved accreditation, highlighting a shared understanding of reading as a key driver of attainment, wellbeing, and engagement. Increased professional collaboration and consistent whole-school approaches are evident across sectors. Next steps include supporting remaining schools, strengthening cross-sector networks, and developing a strategic digital hub to share training, resources, and effective practice.

## Improve our approaches to the teaching and assessment of writing across our EYC and schools

Members of our Strategic Writing Working Group have been undertaking small tests of change to improve writing pedagogy, learner motivation and, attainment in their establishments over the course of the academic session. Moving into session 2025-2026, the strategic group will share practice and approaches with a view to supporting colleagues to make improvements in writing in their own settings. Our long-term vision is to develop an authority approach to writing which mirrors the South Ayrshire Reads strategy approach.



### Percentage of P1, P4, & P7 pupils combined achieving at or above the Expected CfE Level: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	85.5	85.0	75.8	79.0	81.6	84.5	84.6
<b>Writing</b>	80.2	81.1	71.2	72.7	78.0	80.4	80.2
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	89.2	88.2	83.3	86.0	88.8	91.0	91.0
<b>Literacy</b>	78.1	79.7	68.3	71.0	76.6	79.2	79.1
<b>Numeracy</b>	85.5	84.1	77.2	80.2	82.9	85.2	84.9

The percentages for all areas in 2024-25 are very similar to those of the previous year.

### Percentage of S3 pupils achieving at or above CfE Level 3: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	89.9	92.2	87.2	87.8	91.5	92.5
<b>Writing</b>	90.3	91.9	86.1	87.3	91.1	91.9
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	91.3	93.2	87.7	88.4	91.3	92.6
<b>Literacy</b>	88.8	91.2	85.1	86.3	90.8	91.6
<b>Numeracy</b>	91.0	90.3	84.0	89.7	93.9	92.8

The percentage of pupils in S3 achieving level 3 or above has increased in all areas apart from Numeracy which has decreased by 1.1%.

### Percentage of S3 pupils achieving at CfE Level 4: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	56.5	60.4	58.1	67.9	67.5	73.9
<b>Writing</b>	55.4	58.7	56.4	67.1	67.5	72.7
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	56.4	62.2	58.6	69.5	69.2	76.4
<b>Literacy</b>	50.9	55.1	55.5	66.1	65.7	71.8
<b>Numeracy</b>	48.1	50.1	54.1	58.7	62.3	69.2

The percentage of pupils in S3 who have achieved level 4 has increased significantly in all areas. A very pleasing average increase of 6.36%

**Source: SAC**

**Deprivation-related attainment gap amongst P1, P4, & P7 pupils combined achieving at or above the Expected CfE Level: 2017-18 to 2024-25**

		2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Quintile 1- Most deprived</b>	78.0	74.7	68.7	68.4	74.9	76.6	75.6
	<b>Quintile 5-least deprived</b>	93.7	94.6	83.3	88.3	89.3	90.8	92.1
	<b>Attainment gap</b>	16pp	20pp	15pp	20pp	14pp	14pp	17pp
<b>Writing</b>	<b>Quintile 1- Most deprived</b>	72.4	70.1	59.6	59.4	68.9	70.7	68.1
	<b>Quintile 5-least deprived</b>	91.0	92.1	81.2	84.8	89.3	89.1	90.0
	<b>Attainment gap</b>	19pp	22pp	22pp	25pp	20pp	18pp	22pp
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	<b>Quintile 1- Most deprived</b>	86.1	78.7	76.8	77.6	83.6	85.8	83.1
	<b>Quintile 5-least deprived</b>	94.5	94.9	91.2	92.1	94.2	94.7	95.8
	<b>Attainment gap</b>	8pp	16pp	14pp	15pp	11pp	9pp	13pp
<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Quintile 1- Most deprived</b>	68.5	68.1	55.8	56.7	68.0	69.4	66.5
	<b>Quintile 5-least deprived</b>	89.8	90.8	78.3	83.3	87.3	88.0	89.5
	<b>Attainment gap</b>	21pp	23pp	22pp	27pp	19pp	19pp	23pp
<b>Numeracy</b>	<b>Quintile 1- Most deprived</b>	80.3	75.5	69.8	71.7	76.3	75.2	75.2
	<b>Quintile 5-least deprived</b>	92.5	93.3	86.1	89.8	91.6	92.0	91.4
	<b>Attainment gap</b>	12pp	18pp	16pp	18pp	16pp	17pp	16pp

The attainment gap has increased in all areas apart from Numeracy which has improved by 1pp.

### Deprivation-related attainment gap amongst S3 pupils achieving at or above CfE Level 3: 2017-18 to 2024-25

		2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Reading	Quintile 1- Most deprived	79.8	83.9	77.7	76.7	88.4	86.7
	Quintile 5-least deprived	97.2	96.9	93.7	93.1	93.9	98.4
	Attainment gap	17pp	13pp	16pp	16pp	6pp	12pp
Writing	Quintile 1- Most deprived	79.8	82.8	76.4	75.8	87.6	85.8
	Quintile 5-least deprived	96.8	97.3	93.2	93.1	94.4	98.4
	Attainment gap	17pp	15pp	17pp	17pp	7pp	13pp
Listening and Talking	Quintile 1- Most deprived	80.8	83.3	78.2	77.1	87.5	87.1
	Quintile 5-least deprived	96.8	97.3	94.2	94.1	94.9	98.4
	Attainment gap	16pp	14pp	16pp	17pp	7pp	11pp
Literacy	Quintile 1- Most deprived	76.7	81.3	75.0	74.6	86.6	85.8
	Quintile 5-least deprived	96.4	96.9	92.6	93.1	93.9	98.4
	Attainment gap	20pp	16pp	18pp	18pp	7pp	13pp
Numeracy	Quintile 1- Most deprived	84.5	82.3	70.9	83.2	91.8	87.6
	Quintile 5-least deprived	97.2	96.4	92.1	95.0	96.7	98.9
	Attainment gap	13pp	14pp	21pp	12pp	5pp	11pp

In S3 at level 3 the gap has increased from the very low figures in 2023-23. However, the 2024-25 data shows that the gap is lower than all other previous years from 2017-18.

### Deprivation-related attainment gap amongst S3 pupils achieving CfE Level 4: 2017-18 to 2024-25

		2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Reading	Quintile 1- Most deprived	38.3	38.0	39.5	50.4	57.5	58.2
	Quintile 5-least deprived	75.8	79.6	77.4	84.2	81.8	88.2
	Attainment gap	37pp	42pp	38pp	34pp	24pp	30pp
Writing	Quintile 1- Most deprived	36.3	39.1	37.7	50.0	59.7	57.8
	Quintile 5-least deprived	71.8	78.3	76.8	83.2	82.2	87.6
	Attainment gap	36pp	39pp	39pp	33pp	23pp	30pp
Listening and Talking	Quintile 1- Most deprived	39.9	42.7	39.1	51.3	59.9	60.0
	Quintile 5-least deprived	71.4	80.1	80.0	85.1	83.2	92.5
	Attainment gap	31pp	37pp	41pp	34pp	23pp	32pp
Literacy	Quintile 1- Most deprived	33.2	35.4	37.7	48.8	55.2	56.0
	Quintile 5-least deprived	66.5	74.8	75.8	82.7	81.3	86.6
	Attainment gap	33pp	39pp	38pp	34pp	26pp	31pp
Numeracy	Quintile 1- Most deprived	26.8	25.5	41.4	39.8	45.9	54.2
	Quintile 5-least deprived	68.5	72.0	74.2	80.2	80.8	89.2
	Attainment gap	42pp	46pp	33pp	40pp	35pp	35pp

In S3 at level 4 the gap has increased from the very low figures in 2023-23 apart from Numeracy which has remained at 35pp. However, the 2024-25 data shows that the gap is lower than all other previous years from 2017-18.

### Percentage of Care Experienced P1, P4, & P7 pupils combined achieving at or above the Expected CfE Level: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	49.0	57.3	42.4	45.2	65.3	66.2	58.0
<b>Writing</b>	46.0	47.6	37.0	34.5	58.7	62.2	49.4
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	61.0	63.1	54.3	60.7	70.7	79.7	66.7
<b>Literacy</b>	44.0	46.6	34.8	33.3	56.0	59.5	46.9
<b>Numeracy</b>	56.0	53.4	42.4	48.8	64.0	59.5	60.5
<b>Number in cohort</b>	100	103	92	84	75	74	81

Percentage of care experienced achieving at the expected level or above in 2024-25 have decreased in all areas apart from numeracy.

### Percentage of Care Experienced S3 pupils achieving at or above CfE Level 3: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Reading</b>	54.0	73.2	56.6	44.7	66.0	70.2
<b>Writing</b>	57.1	73.2	50.9	40.4	68.0	70.2
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	58.7	75.0	56.6	48.9	66.0	72.3
<b>Literacy</b>	49.2	71.4	49.1	38.3	66.0	70.2
<b>Numeracy</b>	69.2	71.4	58.5	55.1	66.0	66.0
<b>Number in cohort</b>	63	56	53	47	50	47

The percentage of care experienced pupils in S3 achieving CfE level 3 or above has increased in all areas from 2022-23. An average increase of 4.2 %

### Percentage of Care Experienced S3 pupils achieving at or above CfE Level 3: 2017-18 to 2024-25

	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
<b>Reading</b>	23.8	25.0	18.9	17.0	16.0	25.5	
<b>Writing</b>	23.8	26.8	15.1	19.1	18.0	23.4	
<b>Listening and Talking</b>	25.4	25.0	15.1	21.3	18.0	27.7	
<b>Literacy</b>	22.2	17.9	15.1	14.9	16.0	21.3	
<b>Numeracy</b>	9.2	12.5	28.3	16.3	18.0	21.3	
<b>Number in cohort</b>	63	56	53	47	50	47	

The percentage of care experienced pupils in S3 achieving CfE level 4 or above has increased in all areas from 2022-23. A pleasing average increase of 6.6%.

## Languages



“The Scottish Government’s policy, [Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach](#), is aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn a modern language (known as L2) from P1 until the end of the broad general education (S3). Additionally, each child is entitled to learn a second modern language (known as L3) from P5 onwards.”

### Live Lessons

French and Spanish learning continued to thrive this year through monthly live language lessons delivered via Microsoft Teams, engaging over 20 primary schools across the council. Aimed at Primary 6 and 7, the sessions supported effective L2 and L3 delivery, enhanced transition to secondary, and upskilled teachers with follow-up activities. Each participating teacher received a suite of assessment tools—covering listening, reading, talking, and writing at Level 2—to support robust tracking of pupil progress. Feedback from staff and pupils was overwhelmingly positive, with noted improvements in literacy and pupil confidence. This initiative underscores the value of innovation, consistency, and professional learning in language education.

### Professional Learning to Support 1+2 Language Delivery

In March, six language practitioners collaborated to deliver innovative workshops for over 20 primary and Early Years educators across the council. The sessions focused on making language learning engaging, inclusive, and literacy-rich through practical ideas and accessible resources. Emphasizing interactive games and cross-curricular links, the workshops showcased creative strategies to inspire young learners. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants leaving equipped with new approaches to enhance language teaching. This initiative plays a crucial role in fostering a love of language learning and strengthening literacy skills from the earliest stages of education.



## Leadership and Language

S6 language students took a direct approach to leadership by planning and delivering French and Spanish lessons, quizzes, and food-tasting activities in local primary schools as part of their Leadership Award. Supported by the 1+2 Development Officer, students from Queen Margaret Academy, St Patrick's Primary, Marr College, and Troon Primary collaborated to create engaging, culturally rich experiences for younger pupils. The initiative promoted language learning and global awareness while providing S6 students with valuable opportunities to develop leadership, communication, and organisational skills. Their successful coordination of these events showcased both initiative and a strong commitment to promoting languages in their communities.



## Le foot et la Francophonie

Pupils from four secondary schools came together at the Ayr United Corporate Suite for a unique event combining football and French. As part of a cross-curricular initiative promoting language learning through sport, teams completed a series of creative tasks—all in French—including video demonstrations, post-match interviews, and presentations of their “Équipe de Rêve” featuring famous French-speaking players. Pupils also designed team logos and showcased impressive language skills and teamwork. The event highlighted how language learning can be active, collaborative, and enjoyable. Due to its success, the event will return next year, expanding to include both French and Spanish.



## Headstart Languages

Early language learning has been enhanced with the introduction of Camembear, a French resource for EYC and P1–P2 pupils. Teachers have been offered training to deliver the programme, which includes interactive activities, songs, games, and worksheets. The accompanying website supports the development of basic French vocabulary while introducing children to French culture in an engaging, age-appropriate way.

## Gaelic Language Learning (GLL)

### Professional Learning for Teachers

In the 2024-2025 school year we launched a six-part CLPL programme to develop basic Gaelic skills and support teachers in delivering L3 Gaelic lessons. This formed the foundation of a Level 1 course, which was delivered online this year to accommodate participants across different locations. Many progressed to the in-person Level 2 course at Maidens Primary, with strong engagement from the Girvan cluster. Ayr Grammar Primary has also continued to embed Gaelic across the school environment. A Level 3 course is in development for next year, supporting progression towards the 16-week Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS) course.

### Gaelic Choir

This year has been another successful one for Gaelic choral singing, with our young people sharing their learning across a range of contexts. Pupils have developed a repertoire of both traditional and contemporary Gaelic songs, performing in Kilmarnock, Troon, and Ayr.

Kincaidston Primary played a key role in the inaugural 'Nollaig ri Chèile' project, while Coisir Gàidhlig Bun Sgoil Ceann a' Mhonadh (Muirhead Primary Gaelic Choir) collaborated with the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra for a second year, performing at Troon Concert Hall in March 2025 and again at the 'Celebrating Language' event in May. The choirs' performances were highly praised by parents, communities, and staff, with school personnel also enhancing their own Gaelic skills through their involvement.



### Sìth is Cuimhn' (Peace and Remembrance)

This project marked the 80th anniversary of VE Day, involving six South Ayrshire schools and approximately 100 pupils, including the Sgoil Coille Nuadh Gaelic unit in Kilmarnock. Pupils were tasked with composing haiku poems on the themes of peace and remembrance, incorporating Gaelic by translating key words using dictionary skills to create bilingual poems. These haiku were then transferred onto calico, decorated, and sewn together to form a renga—a collaborative chain of thematically linked haiku. The final piece represented a collective reflection on peace, memory, and language, showcasing both creativity and cross-curricular learning.

## Seinn Còmhla Rium (Sing With Me)

This ongoing early years project, funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, introduces young learners to Gaelic through original songs incorporating common phrases, questions, and responses. Forehill Early Years Centre and Primary 1 at Muirhead Primary participated in the programme, which provides a foundation for continued language development by focusing on key topics such as greetings, numbers, and feelings.

## Celebrating Diversity through Language and Culture

Now in its second year, this event celebrated the active engagement of young people in language learning across the Authority and the rich diversity of languages being spoken and learned. Held on 13 May at the Cutty Sark Centre, the event featured contributions from the EAL team, with pupils from Barassie and Newton Primaries confidently sharing their home languages. Highlights included performances from Muirhead Gaelic Choir, Ayr Grammar's Gaelic showcase, and Troon Primary's French and Spanish presentations. A Marr College student also delivered a powerful rendition of Hymne à l'Amour. Plans are underway to expand the event next year.



## Improve the range of outdoor experiences across our EYC and schools

### Outdoor Learning - Secondary Conference

As part of the Secondary Conference in October, the SAL team delivered a session on Outdoor Learning to help secondary teachers develop their understanding of what outdoor learning is and the benefits it offers for their learners. The session provided teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, plan an outdoor activity, and consider how they can incorporate outdoor learning into their teaching—regardless of the subject they teach. Bespoke support was also provided across individual primary schools, and plans are in place to improve teacher confidence and expand the range of outdoor experiences across the Girvan Cluster, 2025–2028.



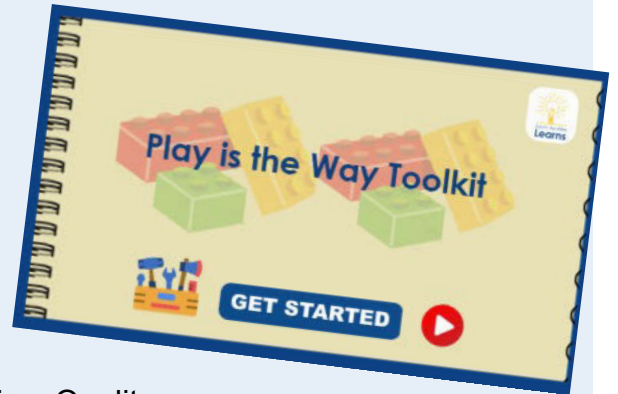
## Improve our approaches to differentiation/adaptive teaching in our classrooms ensuring we meet the needs of all our learners

To support the wider implementation of Adaptive Teaching across the authority, the South Ayrshire Learns (SAL) team extended their work to include a further eight primary schools: Ballantrae, Colmonell, Dailly, Coylton, Symington, Holmston, Kincaidston, and Braehead Primary. In November, First Minister John Swinney and Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth visited to learn more about the work taking place in our schools around Adaptive Teaching. During their visit to Grammar Primary School, they met with pupils and teachers who spoke confidently about the positive impact of the programme and the professional learning their teachers had undertaken, highlighting how it had enhanced their learning experiences. Four of our Secondary schools are now on the Adaptive Teaching journey.



## Ensure all our staff have access to a comprehensive professional learning offer that supports our continual drive for improvement

As part of the ongoing commitment to high-quality professional learning, the South Ayrshire Learns (SAL) team delivered a targeted programme of support for Primary 1 teachers entitled 'Building Confidence in a Primary 1 Classroom.' This programme consisted of six in-person CLPL sessions, which were well attended by practitioners across the authority. These sessions were delivered by a range of experienced professionals and focused on key aspects of early years pedagogy ranging from The Power of Relationships, Quality Interactions and Environment to Digital Learning, Reading and Numeracy in P1 and Block Play. The programme was well received, with positive feedback highlighting the relevance and practical application of the content delivered. Building on the success of this initiative, a similar CLPL programme will be offered to First Level teachers during the 2025–26 session, ensuring continued professional development aligned with the needs of learners and practitioners across Early Level and into First Level.



The Play is the Way Toolkit was thoughtfully designed and developed to support teachers across South Ayrshire at every stage of their play journey. Whether teachers are just beginning to explore learning through play, looking for fresh inspiration, or seeking to refresh and deepen their existing knowledge, the toolkit provides a comprehensive and accessible resource. The platform is easy to navigate with content organised around key themes from Quality Interactions and Learning Spaces to Loose Parts and Provocations.

## Improve the quality and consistency of our approaches to using digital learning

Our schools continue to engage with the National Digital Schools Awards, a programme that promotes, recognises, and encourages the effective use of digital technology in the classroom.

This recognition demonstrates our commitment to embedding digital learning into our practice; ensuring that our learners are well-equipped with the necessary digital skills for the future.

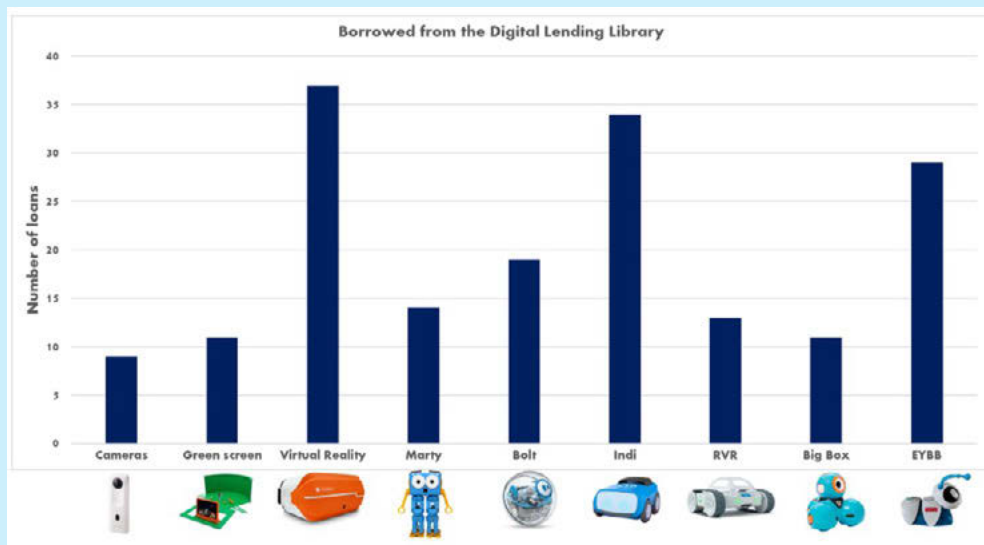


We are proud to announce that Coylton Primary and EYC, Crosshill EYC, Kirkmichael Primary and EYC, Prestwick North EYC, and St Ninian's Primary have all successfully achieved awards this session. To date, 87% of schools and early year settings have registered on the programme, 35% successfully achieving at least one award.

In addition, we have seen a significant increase in the number of teachers achieving Promethean Expert status, with seven more teachers reaching this milestone. These teachers are now better equipped to support their colleagues in optimising the use of interactive panels, thereby enhancing learning, and increasing pupil engagement.



The Digital Lending Library has also been a popular resource, with over 60% of schools and early year settings taking full advantage of the opportunity to borrow a wide range of digital technologies. This initiative has greatly enriched learning and teaching across the curriculum, providing learners with hands-on experience with the latest digital tools.



Furthermore, all secondary schools within South Ayrshire Council continue to be recognised with NCSC CyberFirst School status. This year, Belmont, Kyle, Prestwick, and Marr College achieved Silver status, while Ayr and Carrick maintained Bronze status, and Girvan maintained Gold status. Our schools have successfully delivered the CyberFirst Trailblazers and Adventurers courses to S1 and S2 pupils, inspiring and developing the next generation of cyber security professionals. This comprehensive programme, designed by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre, plays a crucial role in preparing our students for future careers in cyber security, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a digital world.



## Priority 3

**Developing our Curriculum in South Ayrshire, we will ensure that our children and young people benefit from an ambitious curriculum that helps them gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century.**



## Increase opportunities for children and young people to develop knowledge, understanding and skills for life within a global society and Improve opportunities within our curriculum to develop creativity skills

In session 2023–24, Holmston Primary School and Marr College piloted an interdisciplinary learning experience using the Solarpunk Island project, developed in partnership with Daydream Believers. This innovative and immersive challenge invited pupils to imagine, design, and build a sustainable island neighbourhood. The project promoted collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving by encouraging learners to work in teams to develop solutions that aligned with the principles of sustainability, community, and harmony with nature. Pupils engaged in design thinking processes, explored multiple solutions, and developed valuable interpersonal and presentation skills. Teachers noted an increase in pupil confidence, resilience, and ownership of learning. Learners who might typically be less vocal in the classroom demonstrated leadership, articulated ideas clearly, and presented confidently to peers.

Building on the success of this pilot, in session 2024–25 we expanded the Solarpunk Island experience across the entire local authority. A total of 33 teachers from all eight secondary schools took part in a dedicated professional learning programme with Daydream Believers, focused on the principles of creative thinking, real-world problem solving, and learner-led inquiry. Following this, each school planned and implemented a tailored Solarpunk experience for pupils in S1, S2, or S3. The aim was to provide an inspiring and relevant learning opportunity that would both reignite the joy of learning for young people and re-energise practitioners through collaborative curriculum innovation.

The implementation was highly successful, as evidenced by robust feedback from both pupils and staff. Pupil surveys indicated that 98% of participants either enjoyed or mostly

enjoyed the Solarpunk activity day. Learners highlighted task completion and collaborative problem-solving as their favourite aspects, with 68% identifying satisfaction in completing all the tasks and 31% enjoying the creative aspects of planning and presenting their island. When asked whether prior classroom learning had helped them complete the activities, 94% responded positively—demonstrating the value of interdisciplinary preparation and progression. Notably, nearly all pupils reported completing their tasks successfully in their groups, and the same majority affirmed that their groups worked well together and allowed all voices to be heard.

Qualitative feedback further reinforced the value of the experience. Pupils described the day using words such as fun, creative, exciting, amazing, and challenging, reflecting a rich, engaging learning environment. The collaborative nature of the project helped reinforce key skills such as communication, negotiation, time management, and critical thinking. The importance of sufficient time and clear guidance emerged as key considerations for future iterations, with learners requesting longer sessions, more resources, and better group organisation.

Teachers also reflected positively on the experience. Comments included appreciation for the chance to collaborate with pupils in a less formal, skills-focused setting, where learners were more engaged than in traditional subject classes. Practitioners valued the opportunity to make skills more explicit and develop a clearer understanding of how creativity and collaboration can support deeper learning. Many expressed a desire to embed similar approaches into future curriculum design and welcomed the chance to continue interdisciplinary work at scale.

The authority-wide rollout of the Solarpunk Island project has successfully deepened our commitment to interdisciplinary, pupil-centred learning. It has provided a meaningful context in which learners could connect classroom learning with real-world issues, develop key skills for life and work, and engage with global challenges in a creative and empowering way. The overwhelmingly positive response from both pupils and teachers confirms the value of this approach and sets a strong foundation for continued innovation in curricular design.



## Innovative Schools Projects (ISPs)

The well-established Innovative School Projects (ISPs) programme, funded by DYW Ayrshire, continues to be a key feature across secondary schools in supporting young people to develop knowledge and skills in a range of contexts. Courses running across schools include:

- Barista
- Childcare
- Food & Drink
- Rural Skills

In June 2025, the Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire and Arran officially opened Invergarven School's Coalpots Café. Supported by trained staff, the children and young people will be able to develop their confidence and communication skills as they serve customers.



## Influencing the Influencers

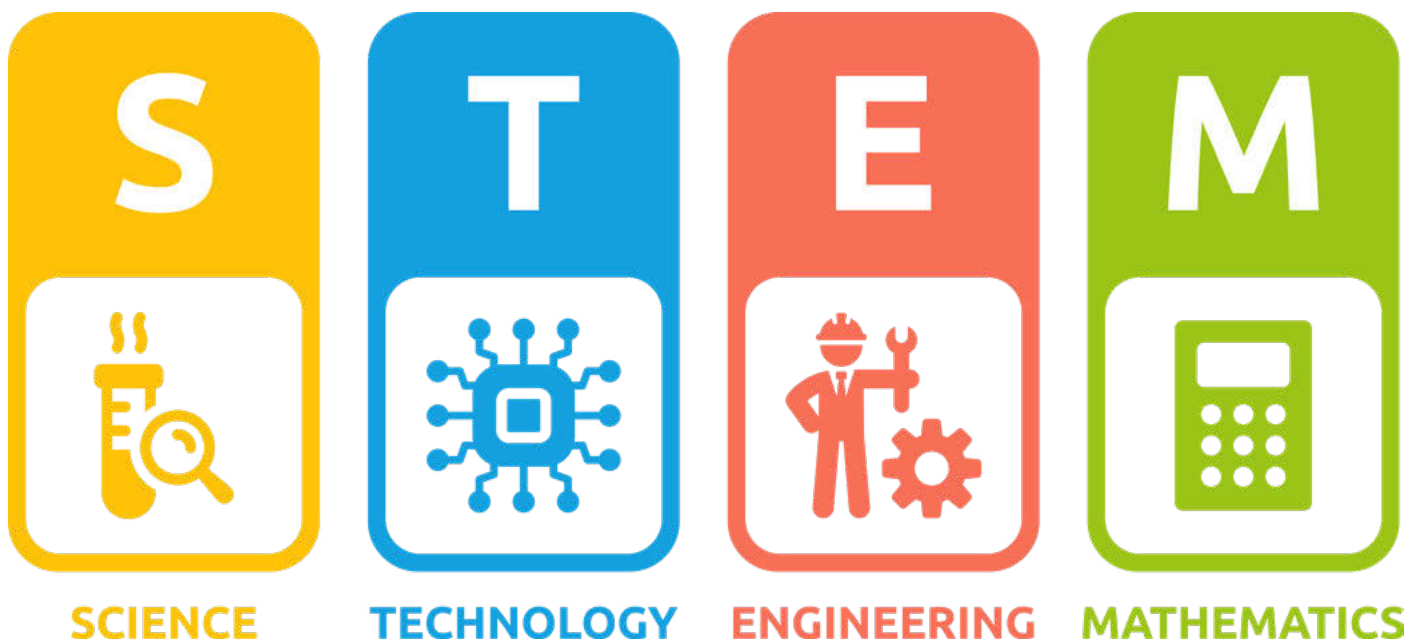
Developing the knowledge and awareness that teachers and schools have around the local labour market has been a key area of focus during the session. In May, groups of Science, Maths and Technical teachers visited Neogen, Wallace McDowall and GE Aerospace to gain greater insight into the skills and qualities required to be successful in these industries. In June, as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal, school staff attended Dumfries House to hear from industry experts about the Food and Drink industry. Staff left the visits with partnerships and real world examples that they can take back to school and incorporate into learning and teaching experiences. Further opportunities are planned for session 2025-26.



## SAC Futures Event

On Wednesday 5th February the third annual South Ayrshire Futures event in partnership with DYW Ayrshire was held at Ayr Racecourse. More than 50 local businesses, employers and education providers had the opportunity to meet with over 700 young people, parents/carers and teachers to highlight the wide range of employment and training opportunities available within South Ayrshire. Feedback has been very positive following the event and we are now looking to build upon this success to increase partnership working across our schools.





## Improve opportunities for progression within STEM subjects, taking advantage of the opportunities within the Ayrshire Growth Deal

### Cyberfirst

Through a partnership with the Education Scotland and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) young people across secondary schools have been undertaking a range of cyber related courses. 1200 young people achieved the Trailblazer (S1) and Adventurer (S2) qualifications, with 7 young people in the senior phase achieving the Advanced qualification. In addition, Marr College (10th) and Girvan Academy (4th) participated in the national Cyber First Girls competition. In the Cyber Explorers Cup Marr College came 2nd in Scotland and 15th in UK.

### STEM Week – Prestwick Airport

In September 2024, in advance of the Air Show, 700 S2 pupils attended a STEM week hosted at Prestwick Airport. The purpose of this was to raise awareness of STEM related industries and jobs with a specific focus on the aerospace industry. Army and Navy STEM teams worked with groups to develop their communication and problem-solving skills. A collaboration of local aerospace companies created a range of engaging learning activities which developed pupils' knowledge of the aerospace industry and potential pathways into employment.

### Performance Engineering Operations

Session 24-25 saw a consolidation of the Schools/Ayrshire College partnership which included two cohorts of young people undertaking the Performing Engineering Operations (PEO) course. The SCQF Level 5 course was jointly delivered by College and School staff in response to the skills demands of the aerospace and engineering industries. 30 senior phase pupils from across 8 secondary schools successfully achieved the award and are now well placed to progress on to college or into employment through a modern apprenticeship route. Over the past 3 years, the success of this course has been evident with around 50% of young people moving on to an apprenticeship within the local aerospace and engineering sectors.

## Improve learner's experiences within the PSE curriculum in secondary schools.

In session 2023–24, sustained progress was made in improving the quality and consistency of Personal and Social Education (PSE) across secondary schools. Building on the establishment of the PSE Steering Group in September 2023, the group continued to play a key role in reviewing and developing the PSE curriculum across the Broad General Education (BGE) phase.

Following a comprehensive survey of Guidance staff and a review of national data, the Steering Group developed a standardised PSE curriculum overview for S1–S3. This overview was shared widely with stakeholders, including members of the 'Healthy' sub-group of the Children's Services Plan. As a result, health and social care partners now have improved awareness of the themes being delivered across schools and are able to align their input more effectively. This enhanced collaboration has allowed external partners to provide targeted, up-to-date contributions to the curriculum, ensuring relevance to the real-life experiences of young people.

During this session, the Steering Group identified specific gaps within the BGE curriculum and responded by developing new lesson plans and associated resources to address emerging needs. A dedicated Microsoft Teams platform was established to host these materials, offering a centralised area for staff across all schools. The platform also includes a collaborative sharing space to encourage the co-construction of resources, reduce workload, and avoid duplication of effort. This initiative was positively received by colleagues at network meetings, who welcomed the improved access to high-quality, shared materials.

One key focus area identified was the rising concern around youth vaping. The Steering Group engaged directly with a representative group of young people from all secondary schools to consult on messaging and strategy. Learners identified four main objectives: raise awareness of the health risks, make vaping socially unappealing, provide support for those affected, and encourage peer- and community-led initiatives. This led to the launch of an anti-vaping poster campaign, targeted at S1–S3 pupils, with winning designs to be displayed across all eight secondary schools.

Financial education was another identified priority. In collaboration with South Ayrshire's Information and Advice Hub, the Steering Group piloted a new series of financial education lessons in Prestwick Academy. The lessons focused on practical financial literacy, including budgeting, understanding payslips, and financial planning for life beyond school. Feedback from learners was highly positive, with one senior pupil commenting, "This was really helpful, and I can understand how to budget properly now for when I go to uni," and another stating, "I know what all the parts of my wage slip mean." Following the success of the pilot, the programme will be adapted for BGE delivery in session 2024–25, starting with Ayr Academy, with resources shared across the Teams platform for wider implementation.

Finally, the Steering Group initiated early work on the development of a positive masculinity programme, recognising the need to address gender stereotypes, toxic behaviours, and promote healthy relationships. The group has begun co-designing a pilot programme in partnership with Police Scotland. While still in the initial stages, this work reflects a commitment to proactively address emerging social issues within the PSE curriculum.

Overall, the continued development of the PSE curriculum across the authority has led to a more coherent, relevant, and responsive learning experience for young people. Through sustained collaboration between schools and external partners, alongside meaningful pupil consultation, learners are being supported in navigating key aspects of health and wellbeing, relationships, and personal development. The steering group model has proven highly effective and will remain central to driving ongoing improvement in this area.

## Improve the confidence and capacity of schools to develop their curriculum in line with national expectations and within their unique context.

During session 2024–2025, significant progress was made in enhancing the confidence and capacity of school and centre leaders across South Ayrshire in relation to curriculum development. Building on the success of the previous year, the Curriculum Design professional learning programme, co-created and delivered in partnership with Education Scotland, was implemented for a second time. Structured across six sessions, it continued to provide valuable opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of curriculum design, learner pathways, and the importance of local context.

A key development was the return of participants from cohort one to co-deliver the programme. These experienced practitioners shared their curriculum leadership journeys, modelling impactful practice and fostering a strong culture of practitioner-led learning.

An additional 20% of South Ayrshire schools and Early Years Centres engaged in this second cohort, bringing total representation to 60%. The programme supported sustained collaboration across sectors, contributing to the development of networks that promote innovation and effective practice-sharing.

Participant feedback remained highly positive:

**“I valued the wide range of collaborative discussions and opportunity to learn about areas of good practice across the SWEIC and beyond. The visiting speakers were always excellent and very worthwhile. I genuinely found this to be an excellent experience.”**

**“This course has scared me, excited me, and motivated me. It was exactly the course that I needed at a time when I had lost my way with all the small tasks in school. It has given me more drive to improvement and reminded me why I am in education. So inspiring!”**

*(Session 1 at Ayr Academy)*



## Emerging Impact

The professional learning is continuing to influence the way schools approach curriculum design—embedding relevance, context, and ambition. Leaders are applying their learning to implement change that reflects their own learners and communities.

During session 2024–2025, this work was extended through the formation of an S1 Curriculum Steering Group, focused on improving the quality of learner experiences in the first year of secondary education. The group has engaged with national examples and school-level innovations, leading to structural changes in some schools, such as the introduction of double periods and single-teacher delivery in science and social subjects. These changes aim to reduce transitions, deepen learning, and strengthen relationships during a key phase of educational transition.

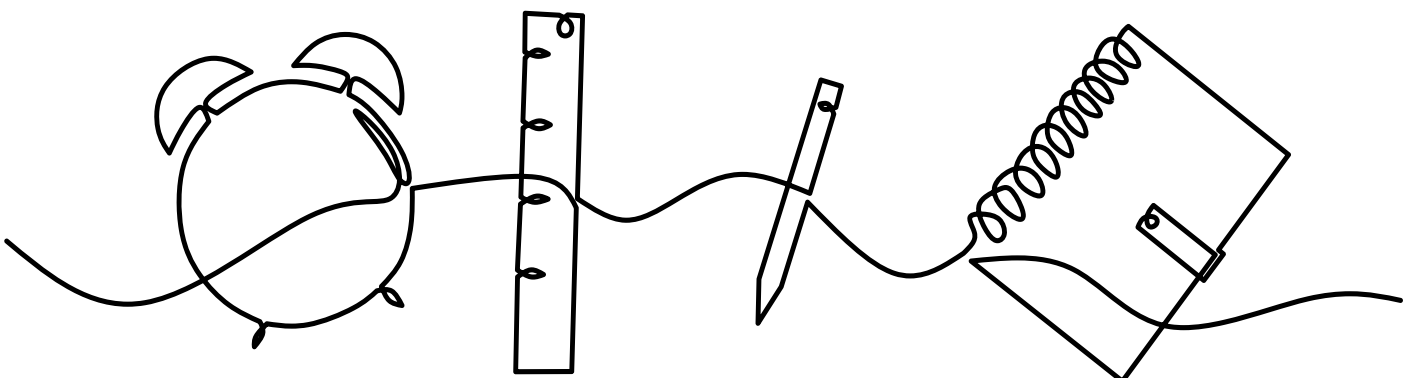
Additionally, the group has explored the potential of project-based learning to increase coherence and encourage meaningful interdisciplinary learning experiences.

## Science Curriculum: Planning for Inspiration and Engagement

Recognising that S1 pupils consistently identify science as the subject they most look forward to, a dedicated science planning day was held in partnership with Education Scotland and school practitioners. The aim was to explore ways of sustaining and enhancing engagement in science through curriculum, pedagogy, and partnership working.

Key themes from the planning day included:

- Decluttering and re-focusing the curriculum to emphasise core Experiences and Outcomes while maintaining excitement and relevance.
- Enhancing careers education by embedding real-world connections and STEM career links throughout S1 science, including through industry engagement, pupil research tasks, and visual prompts in classrooms.
- Maximising opportunities for practical science from early secondary onwards, rather than reserving high-quality experiments for later stages.
- Building primary-secondary continuity, including shared planning, transition events, and the development of cluster-based initiatives.
- Expanding leadership opportunities through the Young STEM Leader Programme (YSLP), including using pupil leaders to run science clubs and primary transition activities.
- Developing real-life, contextualised learning through interdisciplinary and project-based approaches, including sustainability challenges and STEM-focused fayres.
- Identifying strategic opportunities for partnership funding (e.g., Royal Society Partnership Grants) and developing a more coordinated local approach to STEM education.



Practitioner reflections from the event reinforce its value:

**“This has completely reframed how I think about making science relevant. The ideas shared today show how we can create real-world connections in every topic.”**

**“I left the session feeling inspired and energised. There was a strong sense that we’re not alone in this, and that there are real opportunities to transform our curriculum together.”**

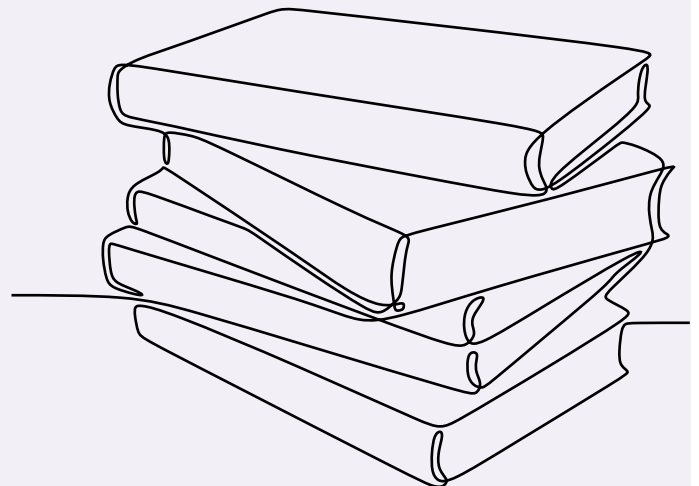


(Photo from Science Planning Day with Education Scotland at Ayrshire College)

These developments reflect a growing culture of collaboration, practitioner leadership and curriculum innovation across the authority.

### Advanced Higher Delivery

Session 2024-25 saw a continued focus on supporting schools to deliver an efficient and appropriate curriculum that meets the needs of learners. The collaboration across North, South and East Ayrshire, as well as Dumfries and Galloway, is continuing to deliver high quality learning experiences in Advanced Higher subjects. In session 2024-25 over 40 young people from South Ayrshire took part in a range of courses. In preparation for session 2025-26, extensive work has been undertaken across secondary schools to ensure requests for Advanced Higher courses are met.





## Partnership Working to Address Skills Gaps

Throughout the session, central education team staff have been working across industry sectors and with a range of partners, including North and East Ayrshire, to develop a strategic approach that addresses the identified skills and labour gaps across Ayrshire. The Ayrshire Skills Group meets regularly and is a key driver in making improvements in this area. On a more sector specific basis, the Prestwick Aerospace Organisational Group (PAOG), is looking at the skills gaps that exist within the aerospace sector. Central team staff have worked closely with schools to pilot and embed courses from across the SCQF catalogues. These include National progression Awards (NPAs), wider achievement awards and industry standard work-based learning qualifications.

Raising awareness of the local labour market continues to be a key focus. In advance of parents' information and options evenings, a presentation on Labour market Information (LMI) was developed to be shared with parents/carers, school staff and young people. This highlighted the growth areas and opportunities within the Ayrshire economy and also covered the proposed impact of the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD).

### Percentage of leavers achieving Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF levels 4–6, South Ayrshire, Virtual Comparator, & National: 2017-18 to 2023-24

		2017-18			2018-19			2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
		SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat
SCQF Level	4 or higher	<b>92.0</b>	88.8	89.1	<b>91.4</b>	88.9	89.3	<b>92.7</b>	90.2	89.6	<b>90.8</b>	89.1	89.0	<b>90.8</b>	87.1	88.4
	5 or higher	<b>71.5</b>	66.8	67.1	<b>71.0</b>	66.6	66.6	65.9	<b>70.8</b>	68.2	66.4	67.9	<b>68.0</b>	<b>70.0</b>	68.2	69.1
	6	<b>31.9</b>	28.0	27.6	<b>29.9</b>	26.7	25.9	24.4	<b>26.0</b>	23.8	23.0	<b>24.3</b>	23.4	23.2	<b>25.6</b>	25.5

**\*highest figure for any given year / metric highlighted in bold**

The percentage of leavers achieving Literacy and Numeracy at SCQF level 4 has been greater than both the Virtual comparator (VC) and the National average (NA) since 2017-18.

At level 5 the percentage for 2023-24 has increased by 3.6% from 2022-23 and is greater than the VC and the NA.

At level 6 the percentage has increased by 0.2% from 2022-23 but still remains lower than the VC and NA.

## Breadth & depth achievement of school leavers by SCQF level, South Ayrshire, Virtual Comparator, & National: 2017-18 to 2023-24

	2017-18			2018-19			2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat	SA	VC	Nat
5 or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better	<b>94.9</b>	90.2	90.1	<b>94.1</b>	88.7	89.1	<b>96.0</b>	90.4	90.1	<b>94.6</b>	88.0	88.6	<b>94.7</b>	86.5	88.0
5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better	<b>91.3</b>	86.8	86.7	<b>89.0</b>	84.8	85.5	<b>90.9</b>	<b>87.1</b>	86.5	<b>89.1</b>	84.7	85.0	<b>88.2</b>	82.4	84.1
5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better	<b>70.2</b>	64.2	64.4	<b>70.6</b>	64.6	64.3	<b>70.4</b>	69.8	67.7	66.3	66.0	<b>66.3</b>	<b>66.8</b>	65.8	66.6
1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	<b>68.1</b>	65.6	66.2	<b>66.5</b>	66.2	66.2	67.5	<b>68.6</b>	67.1	63.0	64.6	<b>65.6</b>	64.1	65.3	<b>65.5</b>
3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	49.8	50.0	<b>50.3</b>	51.5	<b>51.5</b>	50.9	<b>56.4</b>	56.2	53.0	51.6	51.2	51.1	<b>52.1</b>	52.1	51.7
5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better	<b>36.1</b>	35.6	35.5	<b>37.8</b>	36.8	36.0	41.8	<b>42.0</b>	38.7	<b>40.3</b>	38.7	37.9	<b>40.3</b>	40.2	39.0
1 or more awards at SCQF level 7	22.0	23.2	<b>23.2</b>	20.4	<b>22.3</b>	22.1	27.2	<b>28.3</b>	26.0	<b>26.4</b>	25.6	25.4	23.6	<b>26.9</b>	25.4

**\*SA vs VC maximum for any given year/ metric highlighted in bold**

The percentage of leavers attaining 5 or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better were significantly higher than both the virtual comparator (VC) and the national average (NA). This has been the case since 2017-18.

This is also the pattern with 5 or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better and 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 or better.

The percentage of leavers attaining 1 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better had increased since 2022-23 but remains lower than both the VC and the NA.

The percentage attaining 3 or more awards at SCQF level 6 or better had increased since 2022-23 and was the same as the VC but higher than the NA.

The percentage attaining 5 or more awards at level 6 was the same as 2022-23 but remains higher than the VC and the NA.

The percentage attaining 1 or more awards at SCQF level 7 decreased in comparison to the high value of 2022-23. It was lower than both the VC and the NA.

## Maintain and where possible improve upon already high positive destination figures especially for our most vulnerable learners.

In February 2025 Scottish Government published figures on the percentage of school leavers (June 2024) who moved on to a positive post-school destination. In South Ayrshire, 98.7% of school leavers progressed from school into a positive destination. This is above the 2024 figure of 98.1% and sees South Ayrshire placed 1st of the 32 local authority areas. The national average is 95.7%. 99.6% of young people living in our most deprived areas progressed to positive destinations.

### School leavers in positive destinations - February follow-up (South Ayrshire, Virtual Comparator, & National): 2019-20 to 2023-24

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>South Ayrshire</b>	<b>98.4</b>	<b>98.3</b>	<b>98.6</b>	<b>98.1</b>	<b>98.7</b>
<b>Virtual Comparator</b>	93.5	95.7	96.3	95.6	95.6
<b>National</b>	93.4	95.5	95.7	95.9	95.7

\*highest figure for any given year highlighted in bold

### Deprivation-related attainment gap amongst school leavers in positive destinations (South Ayrshire, Virtual Comparator, & National): 2019-20 to 2023-24

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<b>Quintile 1 - most deprived</b>	98.4	97.3	99.1	96.4	99.6
<b>Quintile 2 - least deprived</b>	98.5	98.0	98.7	100.0	98.7
<b>Attainment gap</b>	0pp	1pp	<b>0pp</b>	4pp	<b>1pp</b>

\*bold denotes incidence of Q1 percentage being greater than Q5

## Priority 4

**Self-improving service In South Ayrshire we will ensure that strong leadership and self-evaluation practice is a core feature of work. We will analyse and learn from a range of data, supporting and challenging our schools to drive improvement.**

### Strengthening Self Evaluation Across the System - Using Data to Drive Improvement

A revised Self-Evaluation Framework was introduced to ensure a consistent and evidence-informed approach to improvement. These frameworks support continuous reflection and planning across central services and schools. Performance data is being used more systematically to drive school and service-level priorities.

A strong emphasis was placed on building staff confidence in using data to inform planning and interventions. Through CLPL, senior leaders and practitioners developed skills in analysing Insight, Scottish National Standardised Assessment, Broad General Education Improvement Tool, SAC Closing the Gap Tracker, and Early Years Trackers. Head Teachers (HT) and Senior Leaders have engaged in sessions during HT meetings and conferences to explore the setting of individual school level stretch aims. This has been supported by rigorous approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance. This has led to more targeted and effective improvement planning.

It is now anticipated that further data should be gathered to support self-evaluation activities. This will include the reintroduction of staff, HT and wider stakeholder surveys in session 2025/26.



## Leadership Development for Middle Leaders

South Ayrshire Educational Services have continued to develop and evolve the longstanding professional learning opportunities for aspiring middle and senior leaders. The programme has been implemented and augmented alongside a school inspection support model to build leadership capacity. These opportunities enhanced understanding of strategic leadership, change management, and improving equity in outcomes.

Great use of many of the Education Scotland Programmes have also supported leadership development and succession planning. Details can be seen on page 8 of this report.

In addition to the leadership development programmes for aspiring middle and senior leaders the directorate has sought to develop opportunities for existing leaders to develop their strategic capacity and further support succession planning.

In addition to the information on page 8, 12 participants over the past two years in the HT Business Mentor programme. This pilot project has been delivered alongside Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and allocates an experienced senior business leader with existing HTs and EY Centre Manager



## Reviewing Our Vision and Values

A dedicated focus group was convened to review and refresh the current vision and values in response to findings from Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher consultation. The group engaged in thoughtful discussion around the most effective methods for wider stakeholder engagement, ensuring that future consultation activities are inclusive and meaningful.

As part of the review process, the group revisited the existing vision. This reflective exercise helped to identify which aspects of the original messaging continue to resonate and which elements may require adaptation to better reflect current priorities and aspirations.

Discussions were held around the core values underpinning our work, with key questions raised regarding the alignment between the overarching values of the local authority and the specific values of education.

A strong theme emerging from the discussion was the need for the revised vision and values to be easily understood, owned, and lived by all stakeholders, including pupils, staff, parents, and community partners.

The group will reconvene next session to share draft statements and proposed visual representations. These materials will form the basis for wider consultation with key stakeholder groups including Parent Councils, Pupil Councils, school staff, Thriving Communities teams, elected members, and partner agencies such as Social Work. This collaborative approach will ensure that the finalised vision and values reflect a shared understanding and collective ambition across South Ayrshire.

## Revising the School Improvement Model

We piloted a refreshed model for school improvement visits that emphasises professional dialogue, validation of school/EYC self-evaluation and joint evaluation. The Collaborative Improvement Visits (CIV) model has been successfully implemented across 7 schools in 2024/25. ( names of schools on page 7) Feedback gathered has supported refinements in the model from the pilot visits to the full model implementation. Early evidence suggests stronger collaborative working and clearer identification of strengths and areas for development.

Further work will be undertaken in the future to formalise the gathering of views to support continued improvement.

- 6 HMIE inspections were graded good or above.
- 4 Care Inspectorate inspections achieved grades of good or above.

Improvements were implemented in the regular engagement and quality improvement visits carried out by the central team. A new model to support proportionate engagement with schools was introduced in session 2024/25. This uses a range of criteria to support decision making on the level of support provided to schools during the academic year. Head Teachers identified the criteria and levels of support used to support this model.

During 2024/25 HMIE conducted a thematic inspection into South Ayrshire's approaches to supporting school improvement. The feedback provided by inspectors highlighted a range of strengths and examples of highly effective practice to be shared more widely. Inspector's highlighted:

The recently introduced 'three tiered' approach to quality improvement visits is designed to ensure that support and challenge are effectively targeted to promote improvement. Schools in tier two and three receive enhanced or targeted support. Targeted support for specific schools arise as a result of a range of potential circumstances. This may include for example, recent or sustained decline in attainment, high numbers of parental complaints or staff absences. Each school's agreed allocation to a tier is flexible. Schools may move between tiers during a session as circumstances, needs and staffing change. Local authority officers' professional judgment is discussed with the headteacher and is pivotal when determining a school's current 'live' tier. Targeted offers of support are determined collaboratively between headteachers and local authority officers. This approach helps to ensure proportionate support is provided where most needed, within the scope of finite resourcing. HMIE – Summarised Findings – South Ayrshire - 2024

## Strengthening Self-Evaluation Across the System

A revised Self-Evaluation Framework and new Performance Management Framework were introduced to ensure a consistent and evidence-informed approach to improvement. These frameworks support continuous reflection and planning across central services and schools.

- Performance data is being used more systematically to drive school and service-level priorities.

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