

Saint Matthew's Academy



STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT

June 2026

This report will inform you of the school's progress and achievements in the last session and let you know about our plans for 2026-2027.

I hope that you find it helpful and informative.

Stephen Colligan

Head Teacher

OUR SCHOOL

Saint Matthew's Academy is a six-year denominational secondary school situated in Saltcoats, North Ayrshire. The catchment area of the school covers the whole of North Ayrshire. Pupils who attend the 10 denominational primary schools have the right to enrol in St Matthew's as do pupils who attend any primary school in North Ayrshire. In our most recent S1 pupils joined us from over 20 different primary schools. The current roll (September 2025) is 1340, many whom live in recognised areas of socio-economic deprivation: 51% of leavers in 2025 live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 or 2. It is anticipated that our roll for Session 26-28 will be over 1380.

At present, the school has a teaching staff of 90.3 full-time equivalent (FTE). The Senior Management Team comprises the Head Teacher and 4 Depute Head Teachers. There are currently 6 Principal Teachers of Pastoral, a Faculty Head of Pupil Support and 11 Curriculum Leaders each of whom manages a group of subjects. The teaching staff are supported by a full complement of Administrative, Technician, Librarian and Pupil Support Assistant staff.

St Matthew's Academy is a denominational school and, as such, we seek to be a centre of excellence providing the highest possible quality of education in a Catholic community where care, cooperation and mutual respect are at the heart of everything we do. We want to give all the members of our community the opportunity and encouragement to achieve their full potential in order to best support the Common Good.

OUR VISION, VALUES AND AIMS

Vision

Our vision for Saint Matthew's Academy is one of a community of faith and learning dedicated to Gospel Values. We work together to ensure the effective formation and development of the whole child by providing the highest quality of education. We strive to ensure our young people develop their talents and abilities to best support the common good.

Values

Our values are CLEAR: Community, Love, Equality, Achievement and Respect. They are firmly rooted in the Gospel and we strive to ensure they are visible throughout the life and work of the school.

Community - we understand that each of us - pupils, parents, staff, parishes and partners - are called to engage as full members of our Community of Faith and Learning. We must use our gifts and abilities to help and support those around us while at the same time allowing ourselves to be supported.

Love - Jesus teaches us that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart. The second is that we must love our neighbour as ourselves. We show love in our charity,

in our service, in our forgiveness, in our compassion and in our patience. Love is the foundation of all our actions.

Equality - we believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God. By recognising the equal dignity of all, we celebrate difference and strive to create an inclusive, tolerant and welcoming ethos where each individual has the opportunity and support to participate fully in our community.

Achievement - our Catholic school is one in which everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential. By providing high quality learning experiences we encourage all to achieve. We pursue excellence in all that we undertake to ensure each member of our community has opportunities to develop and grow their talents and skills to fulfil their potential in every area of their lives.

Respect - Gospel Values only truly exist in our interaction with each other and with the world around us. By ensuring that all relationships are built on a mutual and genuine respect we create a Community of Faith and Learning where all can attain their full potential. We have respect for others and for ourselves as we understand and greatly value the gift of life we have been given.

Aims

As a Catholic school, our aims are:

- to promote Gospel values of love, understanding and respect through all our activities and at all times;
- to develop all members of our community spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially and physically.
- to provide the highest possible standards of learning and teaching;
- to develop in our young people awareness of and respect for different cultures and an understanding of our social responsibilities;
- to nurture in our young people creativity and aesthetic appreciation.
- to provide a safe, stimulating and welcoming environment.
- to work in close partnership with parents, the Church and the wider community; and
- to provide opportunities for the personal and professional development of staff.

Our Gospel values are at the heart of the Curriculum for Excellence which Saint Matthew's Academy provides. We strive to ensure our young people have opportunities to put faith and learning into practice. We encourage our students to act justly and with compassion. We challenge them to use their gifts and abilities to work together for the good of the whole community so that they may aspire to become:

- successful learners.
- confident individuals.
- responsible citizens and
- effective contributors.

In order to assess the school's current level of performance, a range of self-evaluation procedures were used including analysis of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination and other assessment results, visits to classrooms, consultations and discussions with pupils, parents, staff and outside agencies, and detailed consideration of some of the key Quality Indicators (QIs) from "How Good Is Our School 4" (HGIOS4) and "Developing In Faith".

A wide range of evidence was collected in the process of carrying out this evaluation of performance including minutes of meetings, pupil tracking data, classroom observation summaries, staff surveys and focus groups, departmental displays of pupil work, pupil evaluations, press articles, questionnaire results, presentations to various groups, draft policy and procedure documents, improvement plans and evaluations of the impact of initiatives.

Data is measured against a variety of comparators – Authority and National Averages are used to consider whether Saint Matthew's Academy is achieving in comparison to schools across the authority and the country. The key comparator is known as the "Virtual Comparator". This figure is based on young people from the same socioeconomic circumstances as our students and offers an insight into how similar pupils from across Scotland are achieving in other establishments.

NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

School Improvement Planning is structured around the National Improvement Framework (NIF). There are five National Priorities for Scottish Education:

- Placing the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education.
- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people.
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people.

ATTAINMENT & ACHIEVEMENT

The most recent validated Insight data relates to the 2025 leaver cohort. A total of 231 pupils left Saint Matthew's Academy in summer 2025. Of these, 139 were from S6, with only 22 young people choosing to leave at the end of S4 by the time of the September census. This reflects our continued commitment to encouraging as many young people as possible to remain in school and progress through the senior phase.

The 2025 leaver data was significantly above the Virtual Comparator (the figure in brackets against which Saint Matthew's Academy is judged) across key SCQF Level 6 and Level 7 measures and represented the strongest performance recorded by the school since opening in 2008. The figures were also higher than the North Ayrshire average across these categories.

Leavers Attainment	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1+ at Level 6 Saint Matthew's	84% (63%)	84% (63%)	89% (64%)	83% (65%)	90% (72%)
3+ at Level 6 Saint Matthew's	64% (56%)	60% (48%)	56% (49%)	55% (50%)	64% (56%)
5+ at Level 6 Saint Matthew's	49% (38%)	48% (35%)	49% (37%)	43% (37%)	55% (43%)
1+ at Level 7 Saint Matthew's	24% (26%)	24% (23%)	22% (26%)	26% (23%)	32% (27%)

Beyond attainment, leaver destinations were strong. In 2025, 97% of leavers moved into a positive destination, including education, employment or training. This was above both the Virtual Comparator and the national figure. 76% of pupils progressed to Higher or Further Education.

Literacy and numeracy continue to be monitored through Insight, ACEL, SNSA, BGE tracking and senior phase tracking. English and Mathematics have continued to develop BGE moderation, consistent assessment and Progress and Achievement tracking.

English reported that 85% of pupils had achieved Third Level Literacy before the end of S3, with further work planned around Fourth Level. SNSA evidence reviewed through the Raising Attainment plan showed that pupils were generally above the trend of the national norm in Numeracy, Writing and Reading.

Attendance remained a major improvement priority. A January 2026 snapshot showed that 51% of pupils were at or above the school attendance target of 91%, 29% were between 80% and 90%, and 20% were below 80%. Final 2025-26 attendance and exclusion figures will be added once the session has closed and validated data is available.

WIDER ACHIEVEMENT

Wider achievement remained a significant strength of the school and reflected our commitment to developing the whole child. Pupils were able to participate in leadership, service, faith, sport, creativity, STEM, DYW and community-based opportunities throughout the session.

- 101 pupils successfully completed the Pope Benedict XVI Caritas Award, with no school having more successful candidates than Saint Matthew's Academy.
- The school successfully retained the Gold UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award, with feedback highlighting the school culture, relationships and sense of belonging.
- Saint Matthew's achieved the CyberFirst Schools Gold Award, recognising excellence in cyber security education and digital learning. We are one of only four secondary schools in Scotland to have achieved the Gold Award.
- The S1-S3 Art Exhibition at the Harbour Arts Centre attracted strong parental and community engagement and positive local media coverage.
- The school show, Grease, involved a large number of pupils on stage and behind the scenes and was strongly supported by families over three evenings.

- S6 Office Bearers, House Captains, Young Leaders of Learning, Wellbeing Ambassadors, Family Engagement Ambassadors, Assisi Group members and pupil committees provided extensive opportunities for learner leadership.
- Pupils participated in a wide range of experiences including Police Scotland work experience, Future Asset Scotland, Girls Into Physics, Science Club, Advanced Higher Science Showcase, sports competitions, Paris, Rome and Malawi partnership activity.
- The St Vincent de Paul group, Caritas pupils and wider school community supported foodbank collections, Winter Wardrobe activity, Red Wednesday, SCIAF and other charitable initiatives.

HOW SUCCESSFUL HAVE WE BEEN IN IMPROVING OUR ESTABLISHMENT?

Priority 1: Improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy

- We continued to work towards our Excellent Learning and Teaching strategy through feedback, professional reading, CLPL, teaching sprints and an updated classroom observation model.
- External trio feedback highlighted very good practice in school ethos, the purpose of learning, pupil engagement and sharing of good practice.
- Departments developed BGE moderation approaches in line with Progress and Achievement, including revised assessment materials, judgement tables and improved tracking.
- Senior phase preparation was strengthened through prelim analysis, study skills, Achieve, e-Sgoil webinars, masterclasses and targeted intervention.

Priority 2: Closing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people

- Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) supported leadership capacity, targeted intervention, family engagement, supported study and activity to reduce poverty-related barriers.
- The Activity Tracker continued to support the recording and recognition of wider achievement and helped inform targeted participation.
- Family Engagement Ambassadors, the Community Wardrobe, breakfast club, CHAP, Money Smart and Parents in Partnership strengthened support for pupils and families.

Priority 3: Improvement in skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations

- Curricular pathways continued to be reviewed across departments, with alternative SCQF pathways and awards developed to meet learner needs.
- Pupils accessed work-related learning, Police Scotland work experience, Ayrshire Film Company, Future Asset Scotland, Scottish Apprenticeship information and employer/partner input.

- Positive destinations remained strong, with 97% of 2025 leavers moving into education, employment or training.

Priority 4: Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

- The wellbeing strategy was developed through pupil and parent feedback, wellbeing surveys, a Health and Wellbeing Committee and targeted interventions.
- S6 Wellbeing Ambassadors delivered mentoring, Challenge Events, Kindness Day activity, See Me See Change resources and support for younger pupils.
- Attendance remained a clear priority, with communication to families, targeted pastoral support and recognition that non-attendance is a key barrier to achievement.

Priority 5: Placing human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education

- Catholic ethos remained central through Catholic Education Week, Developing in Faith, liturgical celebration, Advent, Ash Wednesday, weekly Mass during Lent and Graduation Mass.
- The Gold Rights Respecting Schools reaccreditation, Assisi Group, Rights Week, Snazzy Sock Day and 16 Days of Action supported equality, dignity, inclusion and pupil voice.
- The Malawi partnership marked its 18th anniversary, strengthening links with St Peter's Catholic Secondary School and wider partners in Mzuzu.

QUALITY INDICATORS

Provide your evaluation & brief summary statement for each of the 4 core QIs

QI 1.3 Leadership of Change	Evaluation	<u>4 Good</u>
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We believe Leadership of change across Saint Matthew's Academy is good. The school has a clear and ambitious vision as a Community of Faith and Learning, rooted in Catholic values and understood across the school community. Improvement planning is increasingly evidence-informed, with priorities shaped by attainment data, self-evaluation, departmental review, pupil voice, parent/carers feedback and national/local priorities.

There is strong evidence of leadership at all levels. Senior leaders, faculty heads, principal teachers, working groups and pupil leaders have all contributed to improvement activity during the session. Young people have had meaningful opportunities to influence the life and work of the school through pupil leadership groups, Young Leaders of Learning, House Captains, wellbeing ambassadors and focus groups. Staff have engaged well with professional learning, moderation, teaching sprints and departmental evaluation.

Saint Matthew's Academy has continued to develop a culture of reflection and improvement. External trio feedback, classroom observation, learning walks, departmental improvement plan evaluations and stakeholder consultation have supported a shared understanding of strengths and next steps. This provides a strong basis for continued improvement as the school moves into the 2026–2027 improvement priorities.

QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching & Assessment	Evaluation	<u>4 Good</u>
The quality of learning, teaching and assessment across Saint Matthew's Academy is good, with some aspects of very good. The school has continued to develop its Learning and Teaching Strategy, with a clear focus on feedback, teaching sprints, professional reading, classroom observation and the sharing of effective practice. Staff have engaged positively with CLPL and professional dialogue, supporting a more consistent understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Observation feedback and external trio feedback indicate that most learners experience purposeful learning, positive relationships and effective feedback. The school has also made good progress in strengthening Broad General Education assessment through moderation, benchmarking and the implementation of Progress and Achievement. Departments have reviewed assessment approaches, developed shared standards and used assessment evidence more consistently to support tracking, reporting and planning next steps for learners. There is strong evidence of learner engagement across the curriculum and beyond the classroom. Pupils have benefited from a wide range of learning experiences, including supported study, masterclasses, trips, wider achievement opportunities, practical learning, pupil leadership and digital learning. Further work will continue to focus on consistency, assessment evidence and ensuring all learners can articulate their progress and next steps. This will ensure a grading of Good across all aspects of the school.		
QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion	Evaluation	<u>4 Good</u>
Wellbeing, equality and inclusion are strong features of the school's work. Saint Matthew's Academy has a clear and lived commitment to the dignity and worth of every young person, reflected in its Catholic ethos, CLEAR values, Rights Respecting Schools Gold status, wellbeing strategy and wide range of inclusive supports. Relationships across the school are positive and there is strong evidence that pupils are encouraged to feel safe, respected and valued. The school has continued to develop targeted approaches to wellbeing through the work of pastoral staff, the Wellbeing PT, wellbeing ambassadors, mentoring, Challenge Events, pupil focus groups and partnership working. The use of wellbeing data has supported early identification of pupils who may require additional support, with interventions focused on confidence, resilience, motivation, attendance and engagement. There is also strong evidence of pupil participation and inclusive practice through the Assisi Group, Rights Week, Snazzy Sock Day, 16 Days of Action, Young Leaders of Learning, Malawi partnership work, Caritas, community fundraising and wider faith-based and social justice activity. Family engagement has continued to strengthen, with creative approaches used to build relationships with parents and carers and reduce barriers to participation. The next stage is to continue to link wellbeing, attendance and attainment data more closely to measure impact for targeted learners.		
QI 3.2 Raising Attainment & Achievement	Evaluation	<u>4 Good</u>

Raising attainment and achievement is good. The school continues to perform strongly when compared with its Virtual Comparator, with 2025 leavers achieving very positive outcomes across key measures at SCQF Levels 6 and 7. The proportion of pupils moving into positive destinations remains high, reflecting the school's commitment to supporting young people into sustained pathways beyond school.

The school has a clear focus on attainment through tracking and monitoring, supported study, senior phase interventions, prelim analysis, masterclasses, mentoring, departmental assessment review and targeted support for literacy and numeracy. Departments have continued to review pathways to ensure learners can access appropriate courses and qualifications, including wider SCQF options and alternative routes to success.

Achievement is recognised and celebrated widely across the school. Pupils have experienced success through Caritas, Lux Mundi Awards, CyberFirst Gold, Rights Respecting Schools Gold, arts and creative achievement, sports, school show, leadership roles, work experience, DYW activity, wider community engagement and faith-based service. This breadth of achievement reflects the school's commitment to developing the whole person and ensuring young people have opportunities to grow their talents and contribute to the common good. Further work will continue to focus on sustaining strong attainment, improving attendance, strengthening literacy and numeracy, and ensuring that poverty-related barriers do not prevent young people from achieving their full potential.

PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

Pupil Equity Funding was used to reduce poverty-related barriers to attendance, engagement, wellbeing, participation and attainment. Final financial reconciliation is recorded separately within the PEF Impact Statement; however, the main areas of spend and impact were linked to staffing, targeted leadership, family engagement, supported study and removing barriers to participation.

- *Leadership capacity through Principal Teacher remits supported work in Family Engagement, Learning and Teaching, Raising Attainment and Wellbeing.*
- *Targeted teaching and intervention supported learners affected by poverty-related barriers and contributed to strong attainment and destination outcomes for leavers.*
- *Family engagement work supported parents evenings, Parents in Partnership, the Community Wardrobe, financial advice, CHAP/Money Smart links and targeted support for families.*
- *Supported study, study skills guidance, revision support and subject intervention helped young people preparing for national qualifications.*
- *Wider achievement and participation funding helped reduce the activity gap and ensured cost was not a barrier to taking part in school life.*

The impact of PEF can be seen through improved access to support, stronger family engagement, wider participation, increased recognition of achievement, targeted wellbeing intervention and sustained strong leaver outcomes. Further refinement will continue in 2026-27 to ensure PEF is even more closely linked to measurable impact for identified learners.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN PRIORITIES 2026-2027

Priority 1: Improving learning outcomes for all

- Continue to develop high-quality learning, teaching and curriculum development through Teaching Sprints, professional learning, classroom observation, subject-specific frameworks and the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).
- Strengthen literacy and numeracy outcomes through targeted intervention, small group support, consistent use of assessment evidence, Progress and Achievement data, SNSA/ACEL analysis and whole-school approaches to reading and numeracy.
- Embed the Saint Matthew's skills framework across the BGE and senior phase, supported by pupil voice, good practice sharing, skills learning seminars and the appointment of a PT Developing the Young Workforce.
- Sustain and improve attainment by setting appropriate targets for 5+ awards at SCQF Level 6, reviewing progression pathways and using Insight, CfE Machine, ACEL and senior phase tracking to improve quality of grades.

Priority 2: Supporting needs, wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Continue to implement the whole-school wellbeing strategy, including relational practice CLPL, the Wellbeing Ambassador programme, staff wellbeing work, The Promise, young carers support, digital wellbeing and use of the Wellbeing Tracker for early intervention.
- Further develop the attendance strategy through attendance mentors, an attendance committee, regular sharing of data, use of the NAC Attendance Tracker and the appointment of a PT Attendance.
- Strengthen family engagement through Parents in Partnership, subject taster events, health and wellbeing sessions, curriculum information evenings, improved communication, parental feedback and targeted support from the Area Inclusion Worker.
- Continue to develop Catholic ethos through liturgical celebration, visible school values, curriculum rationale work linked to CIC, partnership with parents and parishes, the Lux Mundi podcast and progress towards the Oscar Romero Developer Level Award.

Priority 3: Building a self-improving service

- Extend learner participation through the Young Leaders of Learning programme, pupil focus groups, House Captain-led consultation, Parent Council engagement and visible 'You Said - We Did' departmental displays.
- Improve assessment support through staff training in Exam.net, creation of an Additional Assessment Arrangements working group, updated pupil profiles and a clearer departmental overview of learner assessment needs.

