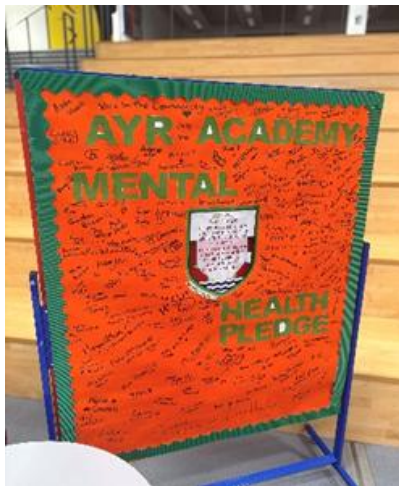




Ayr Academy

Standards and Quality Report: Session 2025-2026





Head Teacher's Introduction

Dear Parent / Carer,

It is my pleasure to present this report evaluating the work of Ayr Academy for session 2025-26. It provides an overview of our achievements this year and identifies the areas we will continue to focus on as we move forward. Our evaluations draw on a wide range of evidence, including:

- analysis of SQA performance, wider accreditation and tracking data
- annual surveys of pupils, parents, staff and partners
- ongoing self-evaluation using *How Good is Our School?* (4th edition)
- strengthened quality-assurance processes, including learning visits, pupil-voice activities and departmental reviews

This session has been one of significant development for our school community. We have continued to build on our vision *Believe...Achieve* and our refreshed values of Success, Honesty, Ambition, Respect and Kindness. These remain central to our work and underpin the positive culture we are striving to create. Staff, pupils and parents have contributed meaningfully to shaping our direction, and their views have informed the improvements outlined in this report.

We strengthened our approaches to wellbeing, inclusion and targeted support through clearer systems, improved information-sharing and a more robust staged-intervention model. Weekly Inclusion Team meetings and six-weekly impact reviews have enabled us to respond more effectively to learners' needs. Our whole-school attendance strategy has supported improved engagement for targeted pupils, and enhanced pupil-voice structures have ensured young people play a more active role in decision-making.

Learning, teaching and assessment have remained a key priority. This year we embedded *The Ayr Lesson* across the school through professional learning, peer collaboration and a renewed focus on high-quality learning environments. Staff engaged in CLPL on adaptive teaching, effective questioning, differentiation and scaffolding, and this is increasingly evident in classroom practice. Improved tracking systems, learning conversations and a more coherent BGE structure have strengthened our understanding of pupil progress and supported earlier intervention.

We have continued to develop our curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all learners. Departments expanded their pathways through new SCQF Level 4–6 courses, and our wider-achievement offer has grown significantly. Our DYW programme continues to strengthen, providing pupils with a wide range of vocational experiences, leadership opportunities and accredited awards. The introduction of short courses, expanded Advanced Higher options and the development of our "school of" model have further enhanced the opportunities available to our young people.

We are proud of the progress made this year and of the commitment shown by our staff, pupils, parents and partners. Ayr Academy is a vibrant and ambitious learning community, and we look forward to building on this strong foundation as we move into the next phase of our improvement journey.



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ayr Academy is a six-year, non-denominational comprehensive school serving the north of Ayr. The school roll remains stable at 511, with a demographic profile that continues to present significant socio-economic challenge: 57% of pupils live in SIMD 1/2, 42% are registered for free school meals, and fewer than 1% live in the most affluent quintile. Care-experienced and previously looked-after pupils each represent 8% of the cohort.

Attendance remains a key area for improvement at 87%, below the authority average of 89%. Exclusions remain low at 11 per 1000, and positive destinations remain exceptionally strong at 99-100%, reflecting the effectiveness of our curriculum pathways and targeted support.

The school benefits from a modern, purpose-built campus (opened 2017) and strong partnerships with Ayrshire College, UWS, community police, counsellors, and three Educational Welfare Officers. The leadership team comprises the Head Teacher, five DHTs, eight curricular PTs and three Pastoral PTs, supported by 41 teaching staff and 10 school assistants.



PROGRESS TOWARDS NATIONAL PRIORITIES & SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Priority 1: Raising Attainment

This session we made strong progress in raising attainment across both the BGE and Senior Phase, closely aligned with the SIP focus on progression, pathways and data-informed intervention. Policies and curriculum rationale were reviewed to ensure clearer progression and more coherent learning pathways. Staff engaged in professional learning on tracking tools, resulting in more confident use of data to identify underachievement earlier and plan targeted interventions.

Purposeful learning conversations were strengthened across departments, helping pupils articulate their strengths, next steps and progress. S3 was used more effectively to build foundations for Senior Phase success, with clearer alignment to National 5 expectations. Staff used tracking data more confidently to stretch high-potential learners and support those not making expected progress.

Curricular pathways were expanded across all faculties. SCQF accreditation increased, broadening choice and supporting personalised pathways. The offer of 7 qualifications in S4 and 5 in S5/S6 increased opportunities for attainment and improved retention.

Departments embedded the Career Education Standard, enabling pupils to articulate skills and plan pathways more confidently.



Wider-achievement pathways also contributed meaningfully to attainment. Sixty-six S2 pupils achieved CREST Awards, demonstrating strong scientific enquiry skills and increased engagement in STEM learning. Pupils also won the Footprint Challenge, evidencing creativity, teamwork and problem-solving skills that directly support progression into Senior Phase STEM pathways. All S1 pupils completed Seastory, an interdisciplinary project that strengthened literacy, numeracy and environmental understanding, providing a strong foundation for skills in the BGE progression.

Outdoor learning and sustainability projects further supported attainment. Pupils engaged in structured outdoor learning, including paddle club and horticulture work in the newly reskinned polytunnels, which strengthened resilience, teamwork and applied learning. These experiences contributed to improved engagement for pupils who benefit from practical, skills-based learning.

Our partnership work continued to enhance attainment and skills development. Pupils raised £3000 for a local charity through YPI, demonstrating leadership, advocacy and communication skills. The visit to Italy provided cultural and language immersion that strengthened motivation and broadened learner horizons. Most of S4 achieved a Level 6 First Aid Award, significantly enhancing their employability profile and contributing to increased attainment in skills-based qualifications.

The launch of our new DYW Hub further strengthened our employability and pathways offer. It has increased employer engagement, broadened vocational options and improved pupils' confidence in articulating skills and next steps. S5/6 pupils completed a successful Senior Induction Programme, supporting readiness for the demands of the Senior Phase.

Impact:

- Increased attainment in literacy and numeracy at key measures
- Improved progression from BGE into Senior Phase
- Higher tariff points for S4-S6, particularly middle 60% and top 20%
- Increased attainment in skills-based awards, including SCQF Level 6 First Aid
- Stronger STEM engagement through CREST, Curiosity Cube and Footprint Challenge
- Improved engagement and resilience through outdoor learning and sustainability projects

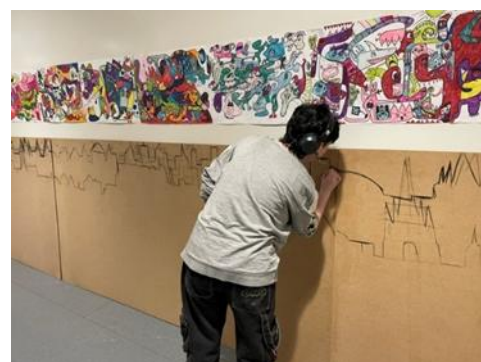


- Broader range of qualifications and pathways supporting personalised progression
- Pupils more able to articulate strengths, skills and next steps

Priority 2: Learning, Teaching & Assessment

Learning, teaching and assessment continued to strengthen this session, with the Ayr Lesson now embedded across most classrooms. Staff report that the 5Ps structure supports clarity, pace and progression, and learning visits show that pupils increasingly articulate what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will know they have been successful. Expectations around high-quality learning environments have improved, with more consistent routines, clearer success criteria and stronger use of modelling and exemplars.

Professional learning remained a key driver of improvement. Staff engaged in high-quality CLPL on adaptive teaching, differentiation, scaffolding and effective questioning, and this is increasingly evident in classroom practice. Retrieval practice, modelling and feedback are now more consistently used across departments, contributing to improved learner recall, confidence and independence. Learning & Teaching Leads supported this through podcasts, walkthroughs, exemplars and peer observation, helping to build a shared understanding of what high-quality learning looks like at Ayr Academy.



The introduction of the collaborative model has had a notable impact on both staff practice and pupil progress. Joint planning, shared moderation and structured peer observation have strengthened consistency in expectations and improved the quality of learning experiences. Staff report increased confidence in adaptive practice, and pupils benefit from more coherent approaches across subjects. This model has also supported early career teachers and new staff, who describe feeling more confident and better supported in delivering high-quality learning.

Assessment practice improved through increased moderation, clearer guidance on tracking responsibilities and more purposeful assessment design. Staff engaged in moderation both within and

beyond the school, supported by cluster work in literacy and numeracy. The new BGE tracking tool and four-stage model enabled earlier identification of underachievement and more targeted interventions. Learning conversations are now more purposeful, with pupils increasingly able to articulate their strengths, next steps and progress.

Hosting the Curiosity Cube provided high-quality STEM engagement, with pupils demonstrating increased curiosity, questioning and application of scientific concepts. This experience broadened pupils' understanding of scientific careers and contributed to improved engagement in science, particularly among learners who previously lacked confidence in STEM subjects.

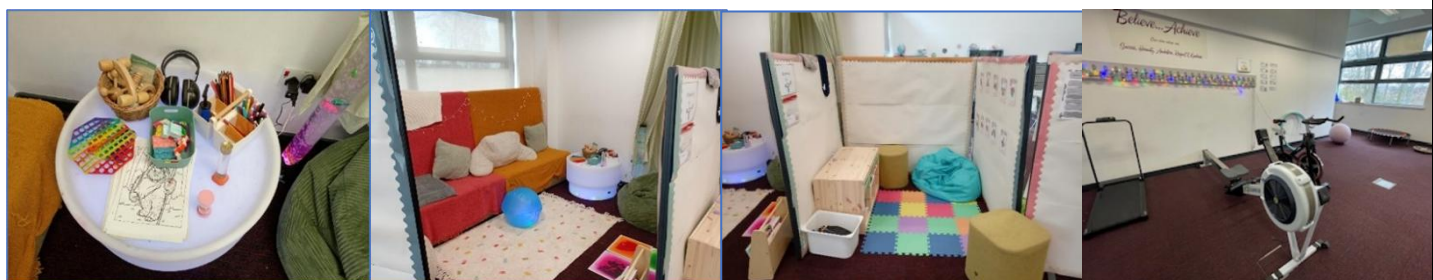
Outdoor learning also contributed positively to learning and teaching. Pupils engaged in structured outdoor experiences, including paddle club and sustainability projects in the newly



reskinned polytunnels, which now support more coherent horticulture and environmental learning. These experiences have strengthened resilience, teamwork and problem-solving, particularly for pupils who thrive in practical contexts.

Impact:

- More consistent lesson structure and expectations across the school
- Increased use of effective questioning, differentiation, scaffolding and modelling
- Earlier identification of underachievement through improved tracking and learning conversations
- Stronger progression from S3 into Senior Phase
- More robust assessment and moderation practices
- Increased staff leadership and professional learning engagement
- Improved learner engagement, confidence and clarity of purpose (LI/SC)
- Enhanced STEM engagement through Curiosity Cube and CREST-linked pedagogy
- Greater coherence in learning through the collaborative model



Priority 3: Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion

This session we strengthened our inclusive, rights-based culture, with a clear focus on consistency, belonging and early intervention. The refreshed Relationships Policy, co-designed with pupils, staff and parents, has led to clearer expectations, more predictable routines and a calmer school climate.



Targeted interventions for pupils with low attendance or additional support needs were strengthened. Weekly Inclusion Team meetings ensured timely allocation of support, with six-weekly reviews enabling more rigorous tracking of impact. Our counsellors, SALT partnership and targeted PEF interventions supported improved engagement, particularly for pupils with communication needs, anxiety or disrupted learning histories. Attendance remained a major strategic focus. The new whole-school attendance strategy, linking attendance to ambition and pathways, has strengthened expectations and improved

communication with families. EWOs worked intensively with targeted pupils, resulting in improved attendance for several high-risk learners.



The Base has continued to develop as a nurturing, stable environment. It is now increasingly settled, with pupils benefiting from structured routines, targeted support and the introduction of sensory circuits, which have improved regulation, readiness to learn and overall engagement. Staff report that pupils accessing The Base are more settled in class, more able to sustain attention and more confident in managing transitions.



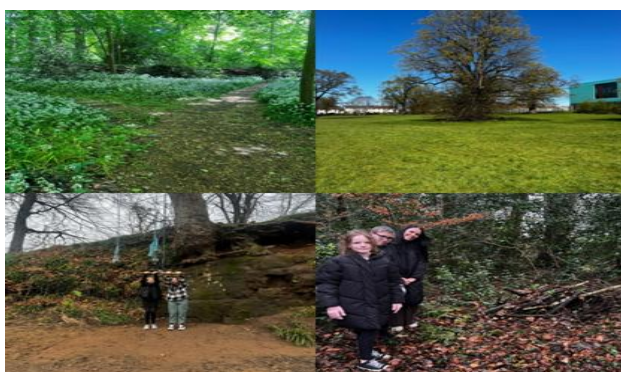
We strengthened systems for tracking wider achievement, ensuring departments consistently record skills, awards and participation. This has increased visibility of pupil success across the school and supported more positive post-school destinations. The introduction of more coherent



systems has also helped staff identify pupils who would benefit from targeted opportunities, ensuring equity of access.

Pupil voice continued to grow through structured feedback, SHARK tank, focus groups and “You Said, We Did” processes. Pupils report feeling more included, listened to and involved in shaping their school experience. This was further strengthened through whole-school events such as the Empathy Festival, which deepened pupils’ understanding of rights, relationships and global citizenship, and provided meaningful opportunities for young people to lead discussions and influence change.

Outdoor learning and community engagement also contributed positively to wellbeing. These experiences have strengthened resilience, teamwork and confidence, particularly for pupils who thrive in practical, outdoor contexts.



Transitions into and out of Ayr Academy were strengthened through a series of Careers Café events, enhanced P7 transition activities and improved Senior Phase pathway support. These ensured pupils and families felt informed, supported and confident at key points of change. Feedback from pupils and parents indicates improved clarity, reduced anxiety and stronger connections with partners.

Impact:

- Improved attendance for targeted pupils; fewer pupils below 50%
- Increased participation in wider achievement and school activities
- Stronger sense of belonging, safety and inclusion
- More consistent expectations and routines across the school



- Improved regulation and engagement for pupils accessing The Base
- Greater visibility of pupil achievements and skills
- Positive feedback from pupils and parents on relationships and support
- Enhanced wellbeing through outdoor learning, sustainability projects and community engagement
- Stronger transitions into S1 and from S4–S6 into positive destinations
- Improved post-school destinations supported by broader skills profiles

Evaluative summary

QI 1.3 Self-evaluation- Good

Ayr Academy continues to demonstrate strong and increasingly distributed leadership. The SLT provides stability, clarity and strategic direction, and this has enabled staff to engage confidently with change. A strong relational culture underpins improvement, with staff demonstrating a clear understanding of the school's context and a shared commitment to equity and high expectations. Distributed leadership is growing, with an increasing number of staff leading working groups, professional learning and improvement activity. Pupil voice is becoming a more meaningful driver of change, with young people influencing policy, curriculum and aspects of the learning environment.



Self-evaluation processes have strengthened, with more regular learning visits, improved departmental reviews and clearer use of data to inform planning. However, greater rigour and consistency are still required to ensure that all departments evaluate impact with sufficient depth and use evidence systematically to drive improvement. While the school's vision and refreshed values are well understood, further work is needed to ensure they are consistently embedded in practice across all areas of the school.

Overall, the school demonstrates a strong capacity for improvement, with clear leadership direction, growing staff agency and a culture increasingly focused on evidence-based change.



QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching & Assessment - Good

Learning and teaching continue to improve, supported by the embedding of the Ayr Lesson, which has strengthened consistency in lesson structure, expectations and clarity of learning. Relationships remain a strong feature of practice, contributing to positive engagement and a supportive learning climate. Increasingly, pupils can articulate what they are learning and



why, and are beginning to engage more confidently in tasks requiring deeper thinking.



Professional learning has been a key driver of improvement. Staff have engaged in high-quality CLPL on adaptive teaching, differentiation, scaffolding and effective questioning, and this is increasingly evident in classroom practice. Retrieval practice, modelling and feedback are developing well, though further embedding is required to ensure consistency across all departments. The collaborative model has strengthened shared practice, with joint planning, peer observation and moderation contributing to improved coherence and confidence.

Assessment and moderation practices continue to develop. Tracking systems have improved, enabling earlier identification of underachievement, but require more consistent use across departments to ensure timely intervention. Moderation, supported by cluster work and local authority guidance, is strengthening assessment literacy, though further work is needed to ensure all staff apply standards with confidence and consistency.

Overall, the school is making clear progress in improving learning, teaching and assessment, with strong foundations now in place for further improvement.

QI 3.1 Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion - Very Good

Ayr Academy has a well-established nurturing, rights-based ethos that is evident in relationships, routines and the overall climate of the school. Staff know pupils well and use their understanding of barriers to learning to plan appropriate support. The refreshed Relationships & Behaviour Policy has strengthened consistency, predictability and expectations, contributing to a calmer and more purposeful environment.

Targeted support is strong. The staged-intervention model is robust, with weekly Inclusion Team meetings and six-weekly reviews ensuring timely allocation of support and clear tracking of impact. Safeguarding procedures are well understood and implemented effectively. Attendance and engagement have improved for targeted groups, supported by a strengthened whole-school attendance strategy and close partnership with EWOs. The Base provides a highly nurturing environment, with sensory circuits and structured routines improving regulation, readiness to learn and overall engagement.

PEF is used effectively to support literacy, numeracy and wellbeing, with interventions demonstrating clear impact for identified learners. Pupil voice is strong, with young people reporting that they feel listened to, included and able to influence aspects of school life. Wider-achievement systems have improved, increasing visibility of pupil success and supporting positive destinations.

Overall, the school provides a high-quality, inclusive environment where wellbeing is prioritised and pupils feel safe, supported and valued.

QI 3.2 Raising Attainment & Achievement - Satisfactory





Attainment in literacy and numeracy continues to improve, though remains inconsistent across measures and cohorts. BGE tracking and progression have strengthened but require further embedding to ensure all pupils experience appropriate pace and challenge. Senior Phase attainment shows clear strengths in the top 20%, with improved tariff points for higher-attaining pupils, but variability remains across the middle 60% and lowest-attaining learners.



Wider achievement is a notable strength, with increased participation in accredited awards, leadership opportunities and skills-based programmes. The expansion of pathways, including SCQF courses, vocational options and skills-based awards, has strengthened personalisation and supported improved retention in S5 and S6.

Data literacy has improved across the school, with staff more confident in identifying underachievement and planning targeted interventions. These interventions are beginning to show impact, particularly for pupils with identified barriers. There is a strong commitment to improvement, with clear systems, strengthened leadership capacity and a growing culture of high expectations.

Overall, while attainment remains variable, the school has strong foundations for continued improvement and a clear strategic focus on raising outcomes for all learners.

Ayr Academy: Percentage of pupils achieving SQA/SCQF National Awards at grades A-C by end of S4, S5, S6										
	Stage	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	% point change on 2024-25
5+ awards @ Level 3	S4	82.2	96.4	97	83	96 (98)	99 (99)	99(99)	99(100)	0%/1%
5+ awards @ Level 4	S4	64.4	65.1	74.1	63	75(78)	66 (67)	67(68)	78(79)	11%/11%
5+ awards @ Level 5	S4	17.8	25.3	38.5	26.6	10(19)	15 (24)	27(46)	40(55)	13%/9%
1+ awards @ Level 6	S5	36.8	42.5	36.1	44	39	32(37)	35(47)	35(49)	0.2%/2.1%
3+ awards @ Level 6	S5	13.2	24.7	18.1	26	18	7 (22)	12(30)	17(36)	5%/6%



5+ awards @ Level 6	S5	1.3	6.8	7.2	9	8	5 (9)	5(10)	5(15)	0.3%/5%
1+ awards @ Level 7	S6	6.7	2.6	12.3	9.6	14	5	2	5	3%

Key priorities for 2026-27

In 2026–27 we will build on the progress made this session by strengthening consistency in high-quality learning and teaching, raising attainment through more precise use of data, and deepening our whole-school approach to wellbeing, inclusion and equity. Our focus will be on ensuring that every young person experiences consistently high-quality learning, clear progression and timely intervention.

We will continue to embed adaptive practice across all departments, ensuring that differentiation, scaffolding and challenge are applied with confidence and consistency. Strengthening the rigour of quality assurance and moderation will remain a priority, with clearer expectations for departmental self-evaluation and more systematic use of evidence to drive improvement.

Raising attainment will be supported through sharper analysis of BGE and Senior Phase data, earlier identification of underachievement and more targeted interventions. We will expand Senior Phase pathways further, ensuring a broader, more coherent offer that meets the needs of all learners and supports improved progression into positive destinations.

Wellbeing, equality and inclusion will remain central to our work. We will continue to strengthen attendance systems, staged intervention and targeted support, ensuring that pupils with the greatest barriers benefit from timely, coordinated and impactful interventions. A key target for 2026–27 will be to improve attendance across all year groups so that attendance rates are within 2 percentage points of the South Ayrshire Council average, supported by robust tracking, early intervention and strengthened partnership working with families and external agencies. Pupil voice will continue to drive change, with young people influencing curriculum, culture and improvement priorities.

These priorities will consolidate this year's progress and accelerate improvement in outcomes, experiences and equity for all learners at Ayr Academy.

CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Ayr Academy is well placed to continue improving. Strengths include a committed staff team, strong partnerships, a clear vision and values, and improving systems for learning, teaching and support. The school's inclusive ethos, growing leadership capacity and strengthened curriculum pathways provide a strong platform for sustained improvement in attainment, wellbeing and learner experience. With continued focus on consistency, data-informed practice and high-quality learning and teaching, the school is well positioned to deliver improved outcomes for all learners.

Laura Traynor

Head Teacher