

Summarised inspection findings

Kilsyth Academy

North Lanarkshire Council

12 May 2026

Key contextual information

Kilsyth Academy is a comprehensive secondary school which serves the town of Kilsyth. The headteacher was appointed in 2024. The school has three substantive depute headteachers including one who is 0.6 FTE. There is one acting depute headteacher who is 0.4 FTE.

School Name:	Kilsyth Academy
Council:	North Lanarkshire
SEED number:	8358532
Roll:	417

Attendance is generally above with the national average.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average.

In September 2024, 15.8 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2024, 17 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2024, the school reported that 37.9 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements.

The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- The school values of fairness, ambition and respect underpin effectively the positive and nurturing ethos in the school. Almost all young people are motivated to do well and are proud of their school. Young people learn in calm, nurturing and inclusive environments. Staff understand the socio-economic and geographical context of the community well. Young people and staff work collaboratively together and the school value of respect is evident in their interactions. As a result, there are very few incidences of dysregulated behaviour. When these do occur, staff model school values with a clear focus on encouraging young people to focus on engaging with their learning.
- Middle leaders and teachers access a wide range of information effectively including well-being trackers and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) plans to help identify and reduce barriers to young people's learning. This contributes to effective targeted support for the minority of young people who need it. All staff should now make full use of the available data to inform planning and strengthen universal approaches to teaching and learning that benefit all learners.
- Young people and staff have worked together well to create the Kilsyth Academy Learning and Teaching Charter. The charter reflects clear expectations for young people and what teachers can do to create effective learning environments. Most teachers are using the charter well to improve the structure of their lessons. This has led to a more consistent learning experience for young people. Most teachers begin lessons with helpful starter activities. They share what young people will learn and how they can be successful in their learning. Most teachers should consider how to ensure that the purpose of learning reflects the development of knowledge and skills, rather than the completion of tasks. Senior and middle leaders should identify strong practice to ensure it is shared and embedded widely.
- Almost all teachers use interactive whiteboards in lessons to share information about the purpose of learning and display resources. Teachers in almost all departments use digital learning platforms well to share notes and support materials. Young people are able to access helpful learning resources including revision notes and advice. This is supporting young people well to ensure all resources are accessible to them outwith class times. Young people who miss learning due to absence are also able to access the same learning materials as their peers. This is supporting them to be more included in learning and address any potential gaps caused by absence from school.

- Staff are at an early stage in developing a more consistent approach to formative assessment in all classes. The majority of teachers use cooperative learning strategies well. Most young people are engaged with such approaches and find these approaches support them well. A majority of teachers use questioning well to check for understanding. A minority of teachers use questioning successfully to adapt planned learning to meet the needs of young people. Most teachers provide high quality verbal feedback to support young people to understand their next steps in learning.
- Almost all teachers use a range of well-considered approaches to assessing young people's progress. Most teachers use the information gathered from assessment well. They use an appropriate range of assessment evidence effectively including observations, classwork, pupil discussions and digital learning to build a clearer picture of learners' progress. In a few examples, teachers use assessment information highly effectively to support their planning for future learning. This includes providing appropriate supports for young people who may encounter barriers to learning.
- In a minority of classes, teachers use questioning that supports young people to think more deeply about topics. Teachers should continue, as planned, to develop the use of effective feedback, high-quality questioning and formative assessment strategies to promote higher-order thinking consistently in all young people.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders should now ensure that assessment of progress through curriculum levels reflects appropriate breadth and challenge. All staff should make more robust use of national Benchmarks when planning learning in the broad general education (BGE).
- Senior leaders have prioritised the local authority approach to the full moderation of planned learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers across all faculties have worked with colleagues from other schools through the Small Schools Collaborative (SSC). This approach is helping teachers to strengthen their understanding of assessment standards across the school. Most teachers plan learning effectively using assessment information to monitor all young people's progress over time. This is supporting them to identify where young people may need additional support or challenge in their learning. Teachers are more confident in these approaches for senior phase learners. Middle leaders should consider how to share the strongest practice across faculties.
- Moderation activities take place within all departments. This work, and the work of the SSC, is helping teachers to develop a clearer understanding of young people's achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level in the BGE. Approaches to recording and monitoring progress are varied across departments. Senior and middle leaders now need to work collaboratively to ensure greater alignment between classroom assessment, departmental tracking processes and whole-school monitoring systems.
- Staff have a clear understanding of national standards of assessment in the senior phase. Staff who work as Qualification Scotland appointees share their expertise effectively with colleagues. As a result, almost all teachers are more confident in using assessment to inform next steps in the senior phase.

- Almost all teachers engage young people in regular and helpful discussions about their learning and to identify their next steps in learning. Young people use target sheets effectively in the majority of faculties to reflect on their learning and record next steps. This practice is stronger in the senior phase. In the BGE, this practice is used well in a minority of subjects. Senior and middle leaders should consider how to share the strongest practice across the school. This should lead to a more consistent experience for all young people.
- All teachers have access to tracking and monitoring tools. They are developing their confidence in using this information to support planning of learning. Senior leaders and middle leaders should continue to use this wealth of information to support high-quality learning, teaching and assessment, high aspirations for all learners, and coherent curriculum planning.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Senior leaders use effective methods to track and monitor the attendance of young people. Staff are currently improving attendance for identified groups of young people through targeted approaches. For example, senior leaders have deployed resources effectively to engage directly with young people and their families for whom attendance at school is a particular concern.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Senior leaders and staff recognise raising attainment as a key priority. Senior leaders have established detailed systems and processes to monitor young people's progress over time. Staff are beginning to make more effective use of this data.

Broad General Education (BGE)

- Young people attain well in literacy and numeracy and these high standards have been sustained over time. In 2024/25, almost all young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3. Most achieved CfE fourth level in both literacy and numeracy. These high levels of performance are broadly in line with local and national levels at third level. At fourth level, these figures are higher than both local and national levels.
- Senior leaders and staff with responsibility for literacy and numeracy should continue with the planned transition project. This will support staff across the cluster to develop more confidence in assessment judgements.

Senior phase

Leavers

Literacy

- Between 2020/21 and 2023/24, almost all young people who left school attained Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy. This has been in line with the Virtual Comparator (VC) in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Most young people who left school from 2019/20 to 2023/24 attained SCQF level 5. This is significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 and is an improvement from being in line with the VC in previous years. A majority of leavers achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy in four of the five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24, in line with the VC.

Numeracy

- Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, most young people who left school achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This figure has been steadily increasing over time and in 2023/24 was significantly much higher than the VC. In 2023/24, a minority of young people who left school attained SCQF level 6 in numeracy. Whilst this figure is generally in line with the VC, there have been decreases in attainment from 2021/22 to 2023/24.
- Staff have recently introduced Applications of mathematics at Higher level into the curriculum. This is intended to support more young people to achieve a SCQF level 6 award in numeracy before leaving school. It is too early to see the impact of this approach on young people's attainment.
- An increasing number of leavers who require additional support with their learning (ASN) are leaving having attained SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and numeracy from 2020/21 to 2023/24. Staff are using more effective tracking and monitoring of young people's progress to identify and support those who are not on track. This ensures that teachers use appropriate supports early that result in positive outcomes for young people.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy in 2024/25. This represents an improving pattern of attainment that has been significantly higher than the VC from 2022/23 to 2024/25. By S5 and by S6 based on the S4 roll, a majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better in 2024/25. This is in line with the VC.
- Teachers with responsibility for literacy have increased the number of young people being presented for SCQF level 6 courses in line with the school's positive approach to presentation.

Numeracy

- At S4, performance in numeracy at SCQF level 5 is now significantly much higher than the VC in session 2024/25. Teachers with responsibility for numeracy have reviewed approaches to learning and teaching to better meet the needs of more learners.
- By S5, performance at SCQF levels 5 and 6 are generally in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- By S6, attainment at SCQF level 6 has been in line with the VC each year since 2020/21.

National Qualifications (NQ)

English

- Young people's attainment in National 5 (N5) and Higher English is generally in line with national levels. Presentation numbers are generally above national levels. Teachers with responsibility for English have identified areas for development to improve young people's attainment at N5 and Higher. They are sharing and adopting best practice across the department and have amended resources and teaching approaches to support learners better.

Mathematics

- Presentations for N5 Applications of Mathematics in S4 are higher than national levels. However, top level awards are below national levels. A minority of young people are presented for both N5 Mathematics and N5 Applications of Mathematics in S4. Senior leaders should consider the reasons for double presentation and the benefits for learners.
- Presentations and passes at N5 Mathematics in S4 are generally in line with national levels. Higher Mathematics presentations levels at S5 are below national patterns. Whilst awards are generally in line with national levels, staff should continue to work with young people to improve the quality of passes.

Attainment over time BGE

- In most curriculum areas other than literacy and numeracy, based on data provided by senior leaders, almost all young people achieve third level by the end of S3 in the majority of subject areas. A majority of young people achieve fourth level by the end of S3. Staff should continue to work with colleagues in other schools across the local authority on approaches to moderation. This will support a strengthened approach to moderation and ensure more robust attainment judgements.

Senior phase

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- Based on average complementary tariff scores, leavers' attainment is in line with or above the VC in four of the five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people has steadily improved from 2019/20 to 2023/24 and is now significantly higher than the VC. Senior leaders used tracking data to identify young people in this group who were at risk of underachieving. A range of targeted supports have been put in place and this is leading to an increase in attainment overall.
- The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of leavers is mostly in line with the VC. Whilst in line with the VC in 2023/24, there is no clear pattern of improvement in attainment for this group.
- The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers is generally in line with the VC. There is no clear pattern of improving attainment for this group.

Cohorts

- By S4 the attainment of the lowest and highest attaining 20% of young people is generally in line with the VC over the period from 2020/21 to 2024/25. The attainment of the middle 60% of young people has been significantly higher from 2020/21 to 2024/25. There has been a steady increase in the average complementary tariff scores for this group.

- By S5, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is significantly higher than the VC in 2024/25, having been in line with the VC from 2020/21 to 2023/24. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is in line with the VC between 2022/23 and 2024/25. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people has been significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and significantly much higher than the VC 2023/24. The attainment of this group in 2024/25 was in line with the VC. There is no clear pattern of improved attainment for this group.
- By S6, attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC from 2021/22 until 2024/25, having been significantly much lower than the VC in 2020/21. The attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people is generally in line with the VC between 2020/21 and 2024/25. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

Breadth and depth

- Senior and middle leaders reviewed the curricular offer for senior phase learners. This has led to more appropriate course options for more young people. A more ambitious approach to presentation levels is leading to more young people being presented for the highest level of qualification possible.
- At S4, the majority of young people achieved five or more courses at SCQF level 5C or better from 2021/22 to 2024/25. This has improved from being a minority between 2020/21 and is significantly higher than the VC between 2021/22 and 2024/25. A majority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25. This is in line with the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25 but was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Overall, young people's performance for one or more to five or more courses at SCQF level 5A or better has been in line with the VC in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.
- By S5 the majority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better from 2020/21 to 2024/25. This has been decreasing since 2021/22. The percentage of young people achieving one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6C and SCQF level 6A has decreased from 2021/22 to 2024/25. Whilst this is generally in line with the VC, staff should improve the number of young people in S5 achieving high quality passes at SCQF level 6.
- By S6, a majority of young people achieved one or more awards, and a minority achieved six or more awards, at SCQF level 6C from 2020/21 to 2024/25. For one or more awards, this is generally in line with the VC for the same period. For six or more awards, this is significantly higher than the VC from 2021/22 to 2024/25. There is no clear improvement in attainment.
- The percentage of young people gaining one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better is generally in line with the VC in 2024/25.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Staff understand that geographical and socio-economic barriers may limit wider experiences and opportunities for young people. As a result, staff and partners have worked well to ensure that young people can participate in an increasingly wide range of activities across the school. This has helped to establish a positive culture of participation in the school. An increasing minority of young people now attend regularly a range of clubs and activities across the school

week. For example, football, dance, debate club and role-playing games. In particular, young people benefit from a range of activities held after the end of the school day on the weekly 'Future Friday' afternoons. Young people participating in these activities are developing skills including communication and team working skills.

- Senior leaders have worked well with young people to achieve in leadership roles for young people in S5 and S6. As a result, a few young people in these year groups are developing their leadership skills in a structured and sustained way. They are building skills such as team working and leadership through their roles, for example, as school and house captains, or as mentors working with younger learners. This is helping to improve young people's sense of responsibility. An increasing minority of young people in S5 and S6 have initiated and now run clubs and activities for younger learners. Young people who lead these groups are developing well their practical, organisational and leadership skills. As planned, senior leaders should consider how this will align with young people's understanding and use of meta-skills which they are also developing in their learning.
- Young people appreciate recognition of their achievements in assemblies and weekly newsletters. Staff are increasingly exploring how young people gain accreditation while they engage with the school's wider achievement programme. For example, in sports training, Saltire Awards and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Almost all young people in S1 achieve a skills and project-related award as part of a well-considered transition project from primary school. Senior leaders should continue to explore how more young people achieve greater accreditation in their time in school.
- Senior leaders have introduced a system which is now supporting them to track more effectively almost all aspects young people's involvement in wider achievement activities. As planned, staff should use this tracking information to identify young people who may be less involved or at risk of missing out. This will support staff to encourage identified young people to be more involved in activities that will help to develop their skills. Staff should also consider how to gather information about young people's involvement in activities outwith school and the skills they are developing as part of these achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use tracking data to identify a few young people who may be at risk of underachieving due to barriers to learning. Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used to fund the appointment of key staff to support such young people. Key staff work with young people who are at risk of underachieving due to the impact of poverty. They have developed a number of very effective strategies to support the individual needs of identified young people. A few young people benefit from approaches such as one-to-one support to achieve literacy and numeracy awards, soft starts and online learning resources. Interventions are carefully tracked to ensure they are having a positive impact on young people's progress, attendance and attainment. As a result of these interventions, more young people are leaving with a minimum of five qualifications. There is scope for senior leaders to consult more widely on the ways that PEF is used to support young people.
- Staff have worked with young people and parents to identify ways to reduce the cost of the school day. All S1 learners are provided with physical education (PE) kit items when they start school. This is leading to more young people actively participating in PE lessons. Young people in the senior phase all receive a pack of stationery items to support their study and

preparations for assessments. A well-attended breakfast club ensures that all young people have a nutritious start to their day. All young people are able to access uniform and stationery banks so that they are well equipped for the school day. Young people feel supported by these initiatives. Staff should identify further ways to identify young people who are not accessing these supports and who may well benefit from these interventions.

- The attainment of leavers in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 1 and 2 has been broadly in line with the VC for the last five years. Attainment in SIMD 3 was significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24 compared to being in line with the VC in the previous three years.
- Almost all young people leave school to a positive destination, in line with the VC. Staff work well with partners such as Skills Development Scotland, local partners and employers to ensure positive and sustained destinations for leavers.

Other relevant evidence

- Young people receive their entitlements of two periods of high-quality PE from S1 to S4. Religious and moral education (RME) is delivered from S1 to S4. Senior leaders should ensure young people's entitlement for RME is met in the senior phase. All young people study French and Spanish in S1 and S2. They study Spanish in S3 and so do not receive their full entitlement to modern language learning. Senior leaders should work with languages teachers to ensure all young people receive their entitlement under the Scottish Government 1+2 language learning policy.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing young people through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.