

University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Estd. 2023.
YOUNG
Strathclyder
the place of useful learning

Young Strathclyder



Impact Report
2024 - 2025

Young Strathclyder

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Foreword

We are delighted to present our Young Strathclyde Impact Report for 2024/25. It has been an exciting year for the programme, which has increased dramatically in size and scope since its inception in 2022. Our ethos is to allow potential to flourish, regardless of economic or personal circumstances and there have been several exciting developments this year that have supported this mission, expanding the reach of the programme while bringing more depth and quality to the pupil experience. We would like to offer a special thank you to all our student mentors, Strathclyde staff and colleagues in schools and local authorities who help us provide these opportunities for young people to flourish. And our congratulations to the more than 2,000 pupils who have successfully taken part in Young Strathclyde in 2024/25. We hope you enjoy reading about their achievements.

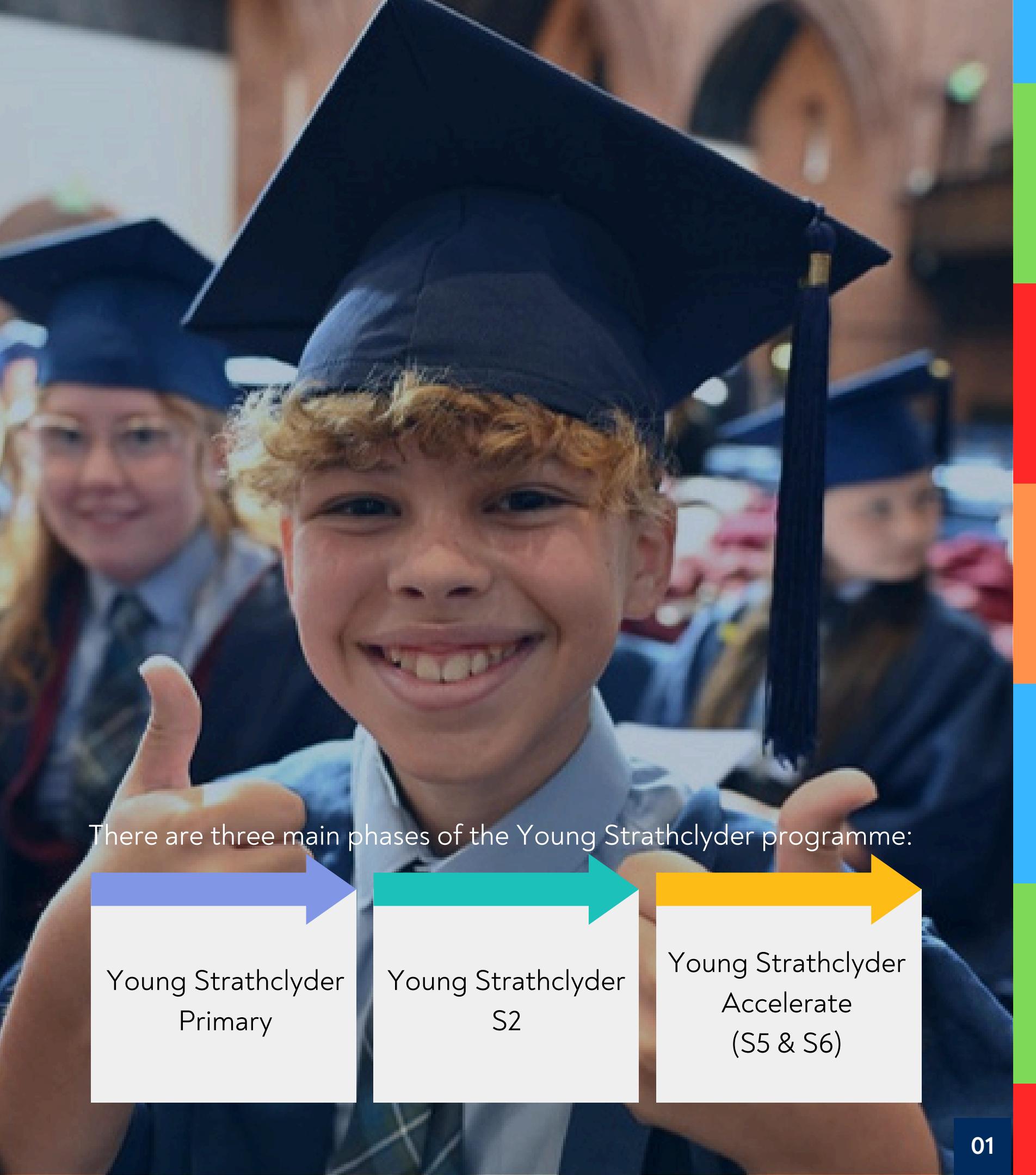
The Young Strathclyde Team

Introduction

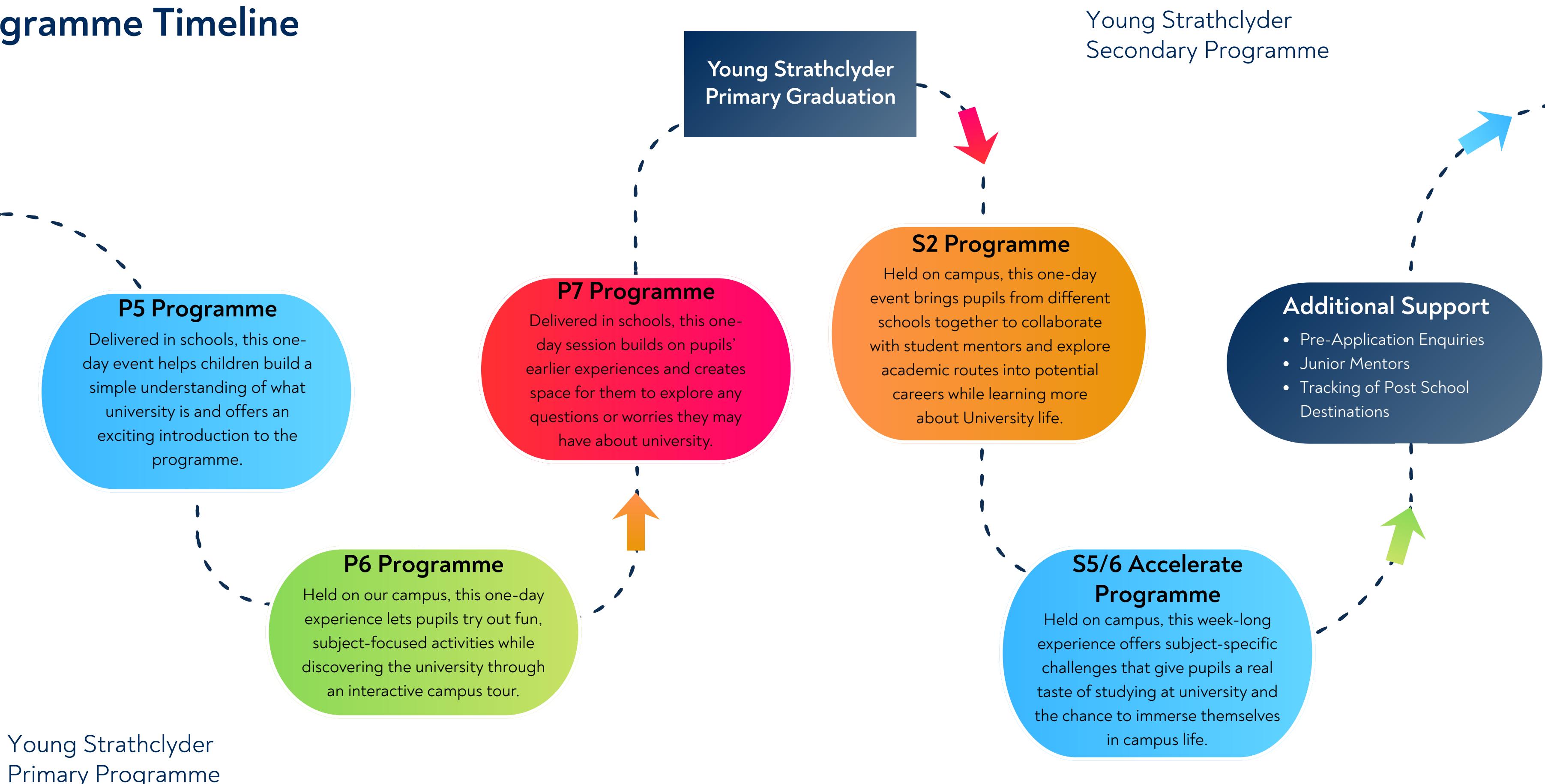
Young Strathclyde is a programme of long-term sustained contact and support for pupils throughout their compulsory schooling and is designed to raise awareness of higher education, support attainment, and offer learning opportunities. Schools and pupils are selected to participate on Young Strathclyde based on a range of widening access criteria, allowing us to support young people who face educational or socio-economic disadvantage and groups who are traditionally under-represented in higher education. Supported by Strathclyde student mentors, many of whom are from widening access backgrounds themselves, pupils participate in a range of engaging and interactive educational activities. This helps them to build a sense of belonging and confidence within a university setting and advice and guidance on subject choices and career opportunities helps to maintain a focus on post-school goals.

Moving from raising pupils' awareness and aspiration of university in the Primary phase, through to more individualised, subject-specific support in the Senior phase, pupils are engaged and supported at key stages in their educational journey. Young Strathclyde incorporates several elements that evidence suggests are important in successful widening access outreach programmes;

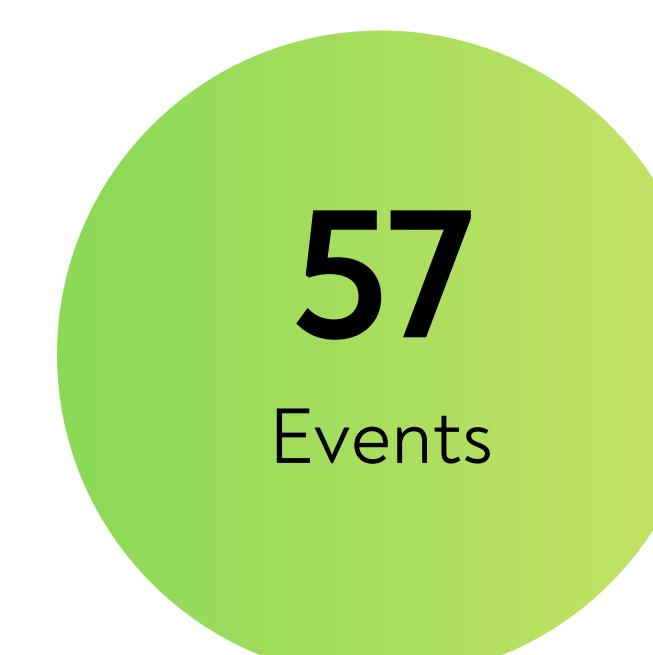
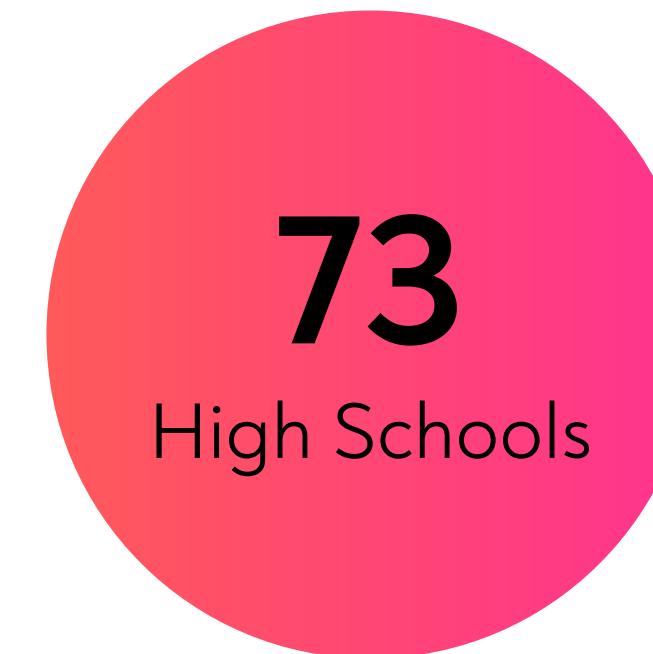
- Working with current students
- Finding out about specific university subjects
- Spending time on campus
- Participating in multiple engagements
- Providing reward and recognition that is valued by pupils and schools
- Comprehensively tracking pupils as they move through the elements of the programme



Programme Timeline



Young Strathclyder 2024-25 at a Glance



Young Strathclyder Primary

Introduction

After 10 Glasgow City Council (GCC) primary schools had participated in the pilot year of the Young Strathclyder Primary P6 and P7 programmes in 2022-23, the P6 and P7 programmes were expanded to work with 15 GCC schools in 2023-24 and a pilot of the P5 programme was run with two of these schools. In 2024-25, 15 schools participated in the P6 and P7 programmes and four of these schools participated in the P5 programme.

87 P5 pupils, 648 P6 pupils and 572 P7 pupils took part in a full day of interactive activities. P6 pupils visited the Strathclyde campus while P5 and P7 pupils were visited by staff and mentors at their school. Each stage of the Young Strathclyder Primary programme allows pupils to take part in activities representing each of Strathclyde's faculties: Business, Engineering, Humanities & Social Sciences and Science. Pupils are led through these activities by student mentors, representing each Strathclyde faculty.

494 pupils from 13 of the schools on the Young Strathclyder Primary programme attended the P7 graduation event on the Strathclyde campus on completion of the programme, with over 200 of their parents/guardians attending the ceremony.

Year on Year Participants

Year	P5 Schools	P5 Pupils	P6 Schools	P6 Pupils	P7 Schools	P7 Pupils	Total Pupils
2022/23	N/A	N/A	10	404	10	417	821
2023/24	2	58	15	631	15	584	1,273
2024/25	4	87	15	648	15	572	1,307

The following schools participated in the 2024-25 primary programme:



- Annette Street Primary*
- Bankhead Primary
- Carntyne Primary
- Chirnside Primary
- Cranhill Primary
- Cuthbertson Primary
- Dunard Primary
- Glendale Primary

- Miller Primary*
- Oakwood Primary*
- St Benedict's Primary
- St Rose of Lima Primary
- St Patrick's Primary*
- St Timothy's Primary
- Wellshot Primary

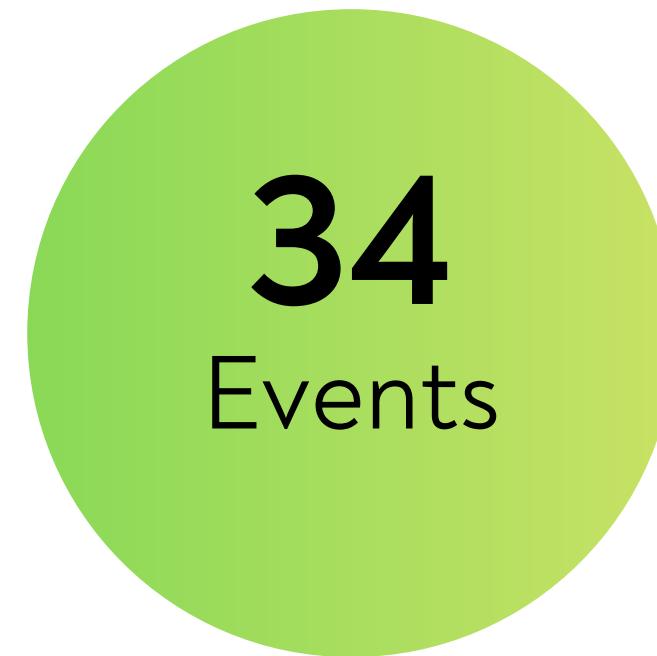
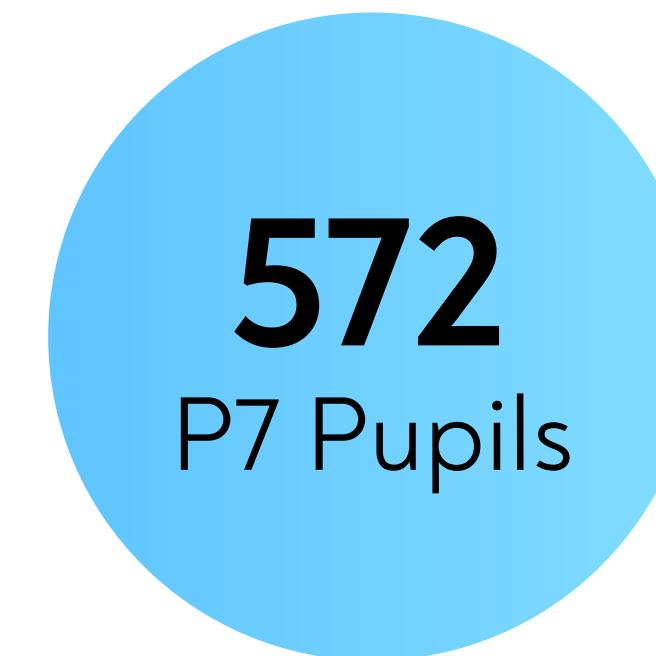
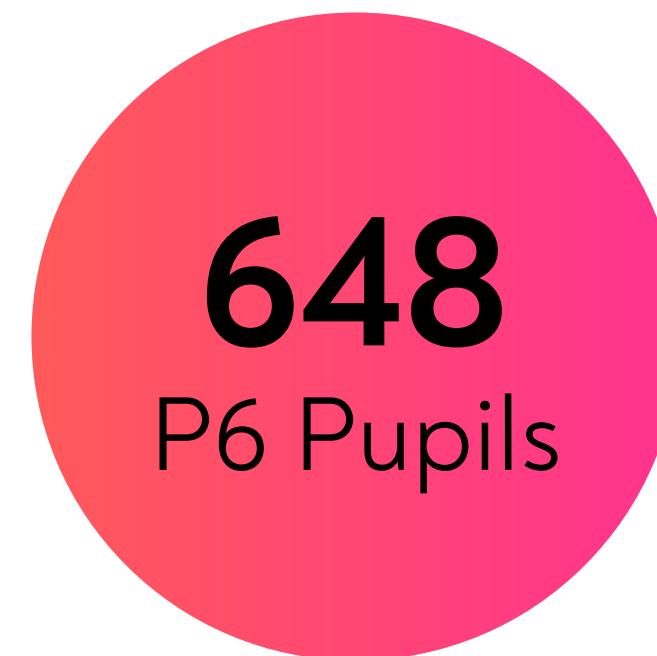
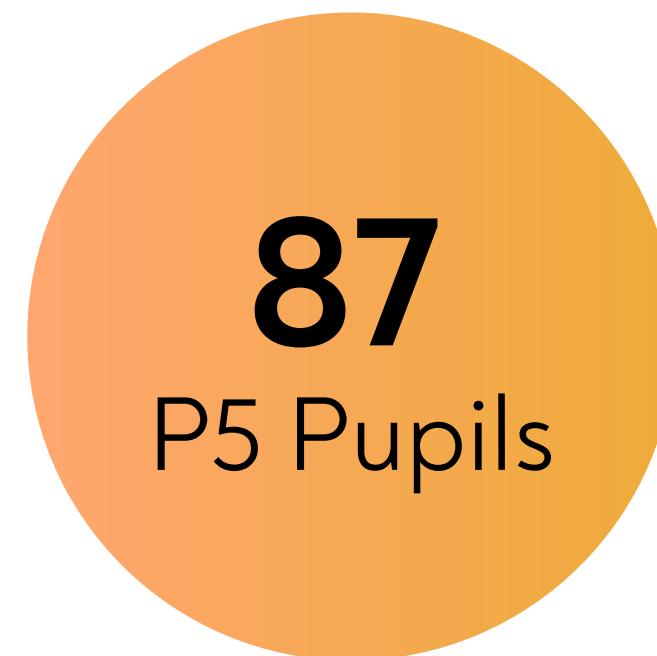
*Participated in P5 programme

The Primary programme looks to have representation from across Glasgow city and schools are selected based on percentages of pupils in the following categories:

- SIMD Quintile 1
- Receipt of Free School Meals
- English as an Additional Language
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

Schools were selected for the P5 programme based on percentages of the above criteria and the need for extra pupil support.

2024-25 at a Glance: Primary



Primary Programme Impact

Aims

The Young Strathclyde Primary programme aims to address pupil knowledge, aspiration and perception with regard to university study. There are some common aims across the whole primary programme and some that are differentiated by stage:

Primary 5

- To give pupils a basic awareness of university, including structure and purpose
- To give pupils positive exposure to university, including fun activities and friendly and encouraging atmosphere and staff

Primary 6

- To provide pupils with more information on university life, including finance and day-to-day student life

Primary 7

- To allow pupils to see range of support services available to students
- To make clear links between university subjects, careers and high school subjects
- To raise pupils' aspiration to do well in high school
- To raise pupils' aspiration with regard to specific university subjects

Overall

- To allow pupils to find out about specific university subjects through interactive and engaging activities
- To raise pupils' aspiration with regard to university study
- To make pupils aware of careers that need university study
- To allow pupils to have their queries and concerns about university addressed
- To allow pupils to feel more confident with regard to university study
- To allow pupils to see university as a less daunting place, with regard to level of difficulty, meeting new people etc

P5, P6 and P7 pupils completed a pre-programme questionnaire at the beginning of their Young Strathclyde activity day and a post-programme questionnaire at the end of the day. These evaluations were designed to measure programme impact in the following areas:

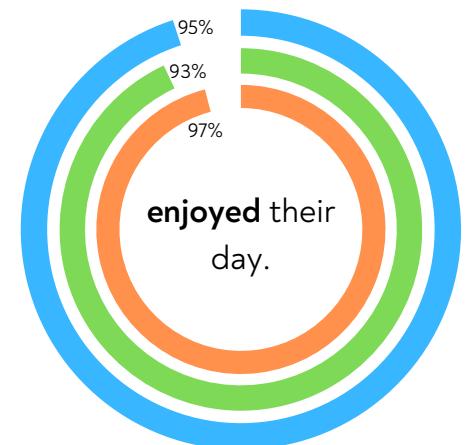
1. Perceptions of the Programme
2. Aspiration with regard to undertaking University study
3. Knowledge of University
4. Perceptions of University



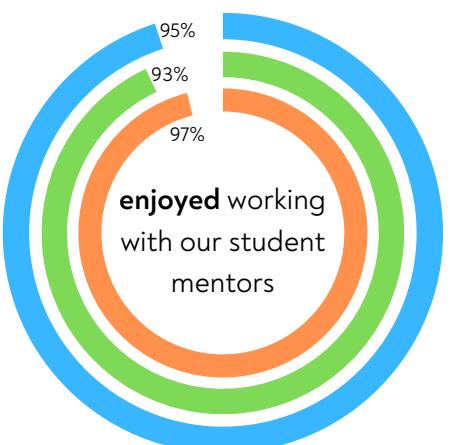
2024-25 Primary Participant Evaluation

1. Perceptions of the Programme

Pupils found the Primary programme experience interesting and enjoyable, with many feeling that it stimulated their learning in a range of areas. Participants also enjoyed working with Strathclyde student mentors, who they felt were helpful and contributed to a positive, relaxed atmosphere.



"It was AMAZING!"
"I loved it, best day ever!"

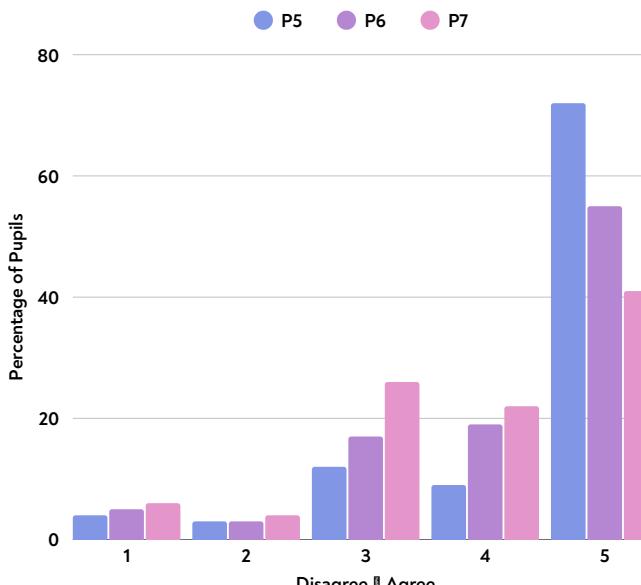


"The mentors were really nice and helpful too."

2. Aspirations to attend University

It is a general aim of the overall Young Strathclyde Primary programme to raise pupils' aspiration to attend university and phases of the programme have a significant positive impact in this area although it is also encouraging to note high levels of aspiration pre-programme. 70% of P5-P7 pupils agreed that the programme made them want to study at university. There is some evidence of greater impact on P5 and P6 pupils compared to P7 pupils which perhaps suggests retention of impact from Young Strathclyde events in which pupils participated in previous years.

Today Made Me Want to Study at University



"The idea of going to university is so exciting."
"It makes me feel like all grown-up, responsible, proud and in control of myself."
"It's gonna be an amazing future experience."
"It makes me want to go to university now."

3. Knowledge of University

One of the main areas of impact for the Young Strathclyde Primary programme is in the development of pupils' knowledge of university.

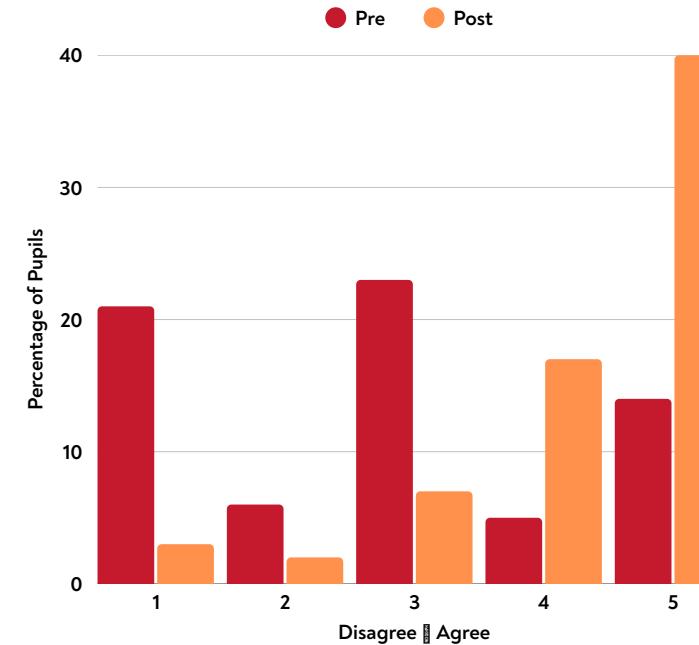
In P5 pupils develop a simple understanding of university's structure and purpose, particularly with regard to future careers;

"To learn what to do for a certain job."

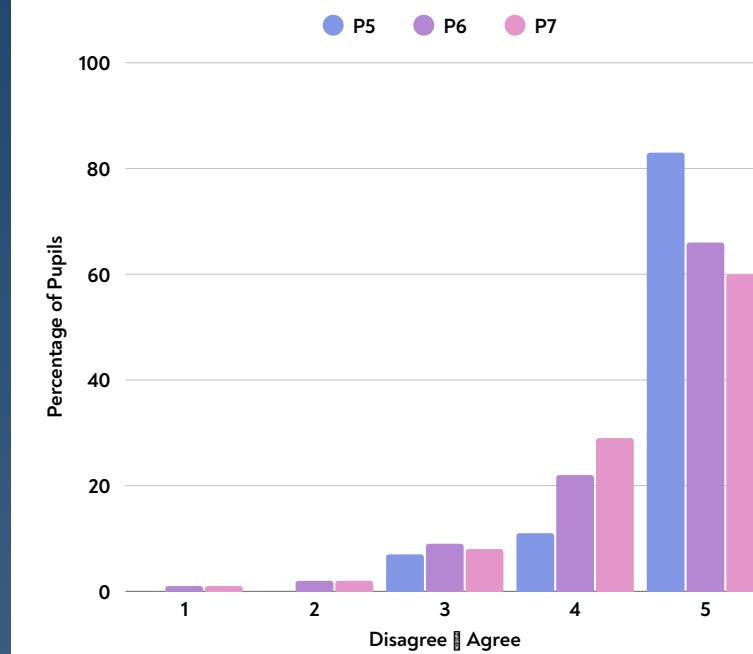
"To improve their career."

"Some jobs require a degree."

P5: I Know What People Do at University



I Learnt New Things About University Today



As they progress through the P6 and P7 programme, pupils develop more complex understanding of university courses, student finance and student life. Pupils become more aware of the range of subjects you can study at university and how these relate to potential future careers;

"I learned about some of the things you can study at university to get a job."

"I learned that University is a place where you can study for certain occupations."

"You go to university to get jobs like teaching, engineering and other stuff."

Time spent on campus had given the P6 pupils more insight into the daily experience of university life;

"You could live in dorms."

"There is a big gym to work out and a library and lots more fun stuff."

Pupils were also more aware of matters such as student finance;

"The Scottish Government can pay for you."

4. Perceptions of University

Post-programme, pupils are more likely to feel positively about university, with many seeing it as beneficial, interesting and exciting.

"It makes me feel good as it sounds fun and informative."

"Great! I feel that in time I will be ready and prepared."

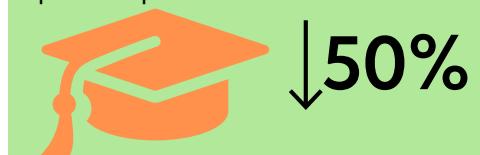
The main areas of concern that pupils have with regard to university, pre-programme, are the level of difficulty of the work and social situations e.g making friends. Many pupils also mentioned feeling nervous in general about the idea of going to university.

The overall number of pupils expressing worries about university drops significantly pre to post, with many pupils mentioning that their worries about university had been addressed by the programme;

"No more worries."

"I was nervous before but now I like the sound of it."

Number of P6 and P7 pupils feeling nervous about university dropped 50% pre to post.



Pre

Post

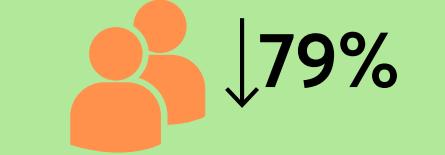
Number of P6 pupils concerned about difficulty of work fell by 47%.



Pre

Post

Number of pupils worried about social situations fell by 79%.



Pre

Post

A major benefit of the P6 programme, particularly related to the time spent on campus, is that pupils realise that university is not as daunting as they had perhaps previously thought;

"I learned that university is not scary."

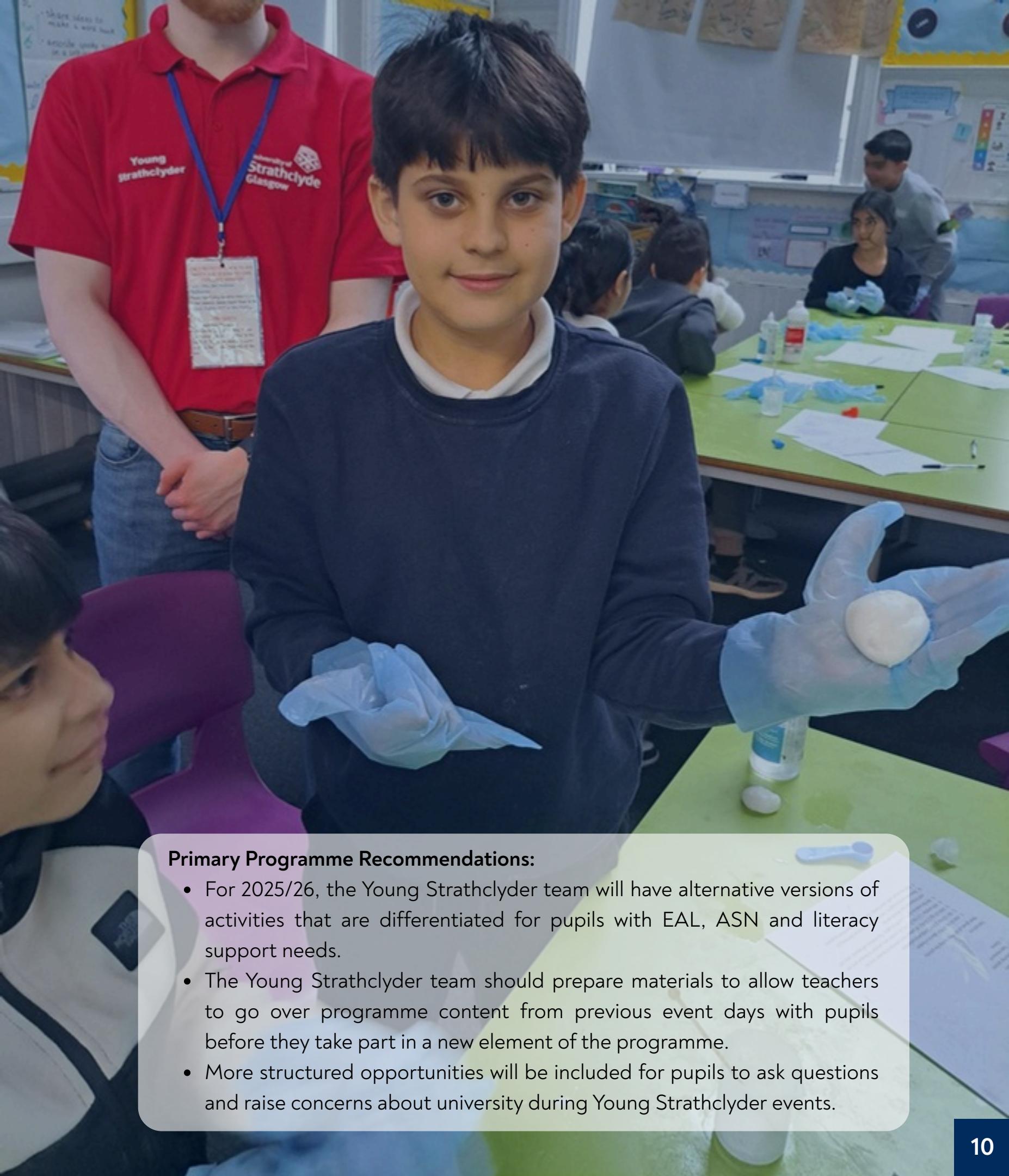
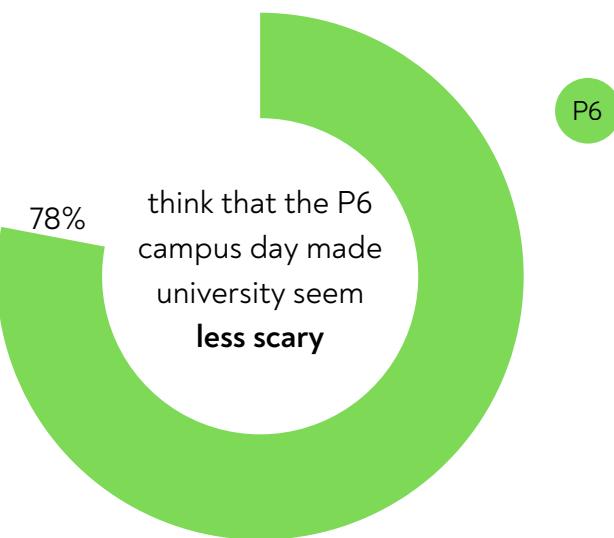
"I learned that it is so fun and you don't have to be scared to go to university."

P6 Pupils' perceptions of the Strathclyde campus were overwhelmingly positive;

"Amazing, cool and fantastic!"

"I was impressed, it was big!"

"I thought it was modern and pretty."



Primary Programme Recommendations:

- For 2025/26, the Young Strathclyde team will have alternative versions of activities that are differentiated for pupils with EAL, ASN and literacy support needs.
- The Young Strathclyde team should prepare materials to allow teachers to go over programme content from previous event days with pupils before they take part in a new element of the programme.
- More structured opportunities will be included for pupils to ask questions and raise concerns about university during Young Strathclyde events.

P7 Graduation Event

Two P7 graduation ceremonies took place in the University's Barony Hall in June 2025, adhering to all the customs of a normal university graduation, with pupils wearing gowns and mortar boards and crossing the stage in front of the congregation to be 'capped' by the Strathclyde Principal and receive their certificate of completion. Family members were invited to attend the ceremony. 494 pupils from 13 of the schools on the Young Strathclyde Primary programme attended the P7 graduation event.

The graduation events were designed with the following aims in mind:

- To give pupils' wider experience of university, including the university campus
- To increase pupils' confidence and resilience
- To allow pupils to feel a greater sense of belonging within the university campus
- To allow pupils to feel a sense of achievement

After feedback from some pupils in 2024 that the graduation ceremony could be a nerve-wracking or scary experience, and did not perhaps have the desired effect of making university seem less intimidating, several strategies were put in place for 2025 that would prepare the pupils better for the ceremony and pitch it more at their level. These changes made a significant impact, with overall pupil perceptions of the 2025 ceremonies being very positive and indicating that graduation day was a highly successful and beneficial experience. 85% of pupils described the event as fun, amazing, enjoyable or exciting. Many pupils mentioned being with their friends, wearing graduation robes and taking photos as being highlights of their day. The number of pupils describing the event as nerve-wracking or scary decreased dramatically from the previous year. Post-graduation evaluations also show improvements in results from 2024 to 2025 with regard to pupil enjoyment of the event, perceptions of university and aspirations towards university study.

141 Parents/guardians who attended the graduation completed an evaluation with regard to the ceremony and the wider Young Strathclyde programme. Parents generally thought the programme had had a very positive impact on their child with many feeling that it was an enjoyable experience that instilled confidence. Parents felt it had allowed their children to think more about their future options and raised aspirations towards university study. Some responses mentioned that the programme had given children the inspiration to work harder at school. Parents felt that the graduation events would also inspire pupils to attend university in the future and work harder at school. Some felt that their child would be more engaged with education as they now had a better understanding of the benefits of doing so. Some parents thought that their child would feel a sense of achievement from attending the event.

“I think graduation day was one of the best places I’ve been to in P7 and graduating in a university was mind-blowing and awesome.”

“I thought that it was very fun and I felt really happy that I graduated with my friends.”

“It was very fun and it encouraged me to want to go to University.”

-Pupils



“Giving a sense of belonging and a great experience to take part in.”

“I hope it shows her anything is possible with hard work & effort.”

“It made him have the ambition of being a university graduate.”

-Parents

Teachers

69 teachers who accompanied pupils on the different elements of the Young Strathclyde Primary programme were asked to complete pre- and post-programme evaluation forms. Teacher responses were very positive overall, and it was perceived that the programme had a positive impact on pupils in a range of areas:

Teachers were very enthusiastic about the programme, believing that the pupils had enjoyed events and working with student mentors and that mentors were well-organised and excellent representatives of the university.

“Honestly one of the best school trips ever.”

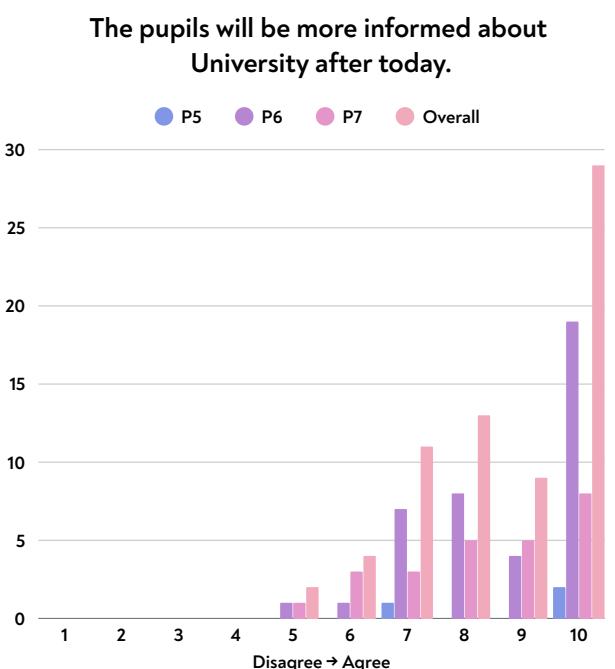
“I enjoyed today and so did all the pupils.”

“The students were so approachable and enthusiastic that it motivated the pupils and made uni more realistic.”

Teachers believed that, post-programme, pupils were more informed about university and potential courses and careers.

“The children will be well informed of what a university is. They can see all the cool things you do at uni and hopefully open their eyes to all the things they could do.”

“They have a better understanding and can think about it practically. Can also think about courses that interest them.”

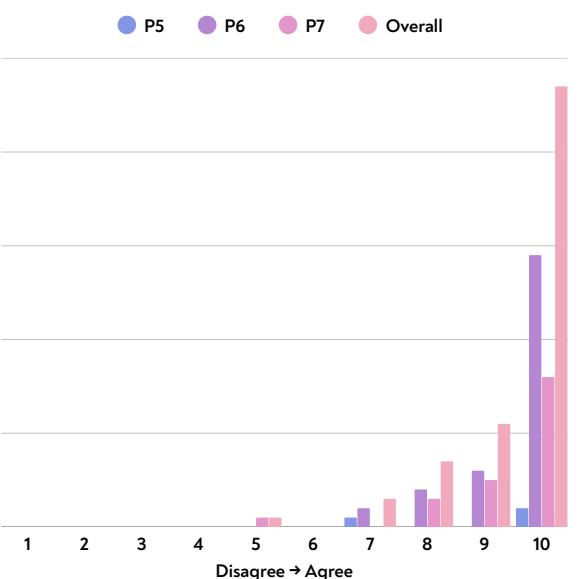


Many teachers believed that more pupils will now aspire to attend university in the future and will now find university more attainable and less daunting.

“I think our children will now consider university as an option whereas before I don't think they would have thought they could go to university.”

“I think they will now see university as an option for them. Many will not have family members who will have gone to university so won't necessarily have felt this was open to them.”

The pupils will be more informed about University after today.



Young Strathclyder S2

Introduction

Building on insights from the pilot year in 2023-24, the Young Strathclyder S2 programme has been developed with greater emphasis on helping young people explore the academic areas that interest them and understand the pathways that can lead to future study and careers.

The S2 programme aims to improve pupil knowledge in several areas, including how university courses relate to careers and how to access specific courses that pupils are interested in. This knowledge is intended to support pupils with their subject choices for S3 and programme dates are designed to tie in with when pupils are deciding on their options.

The S2 programme was adapted in 2024-25 in order to use student mentors more effectively, focussing less on the benefits of university and more on the experience of university life and study. Addressing persistent areas of concern for pupils with regard to university study, mentors were given more time to discuss their university experience with pupils, particularly with regard to student finance and the level of difficulty of university study.

444 pupils from 18 GCC high schools participated in the Young Strathclyder S2 programme which ran from January to March 2025. 12 of these schools were core-funded by the Young Strathclyder programme with Glasgow City Council providing funding for the six additional schools.

Aims

- Help pupils understand how school subjects connect to university courses and future careers, therefore supporting informed S3 option choices.
- Increase awareness of university pathways, subjects, facilities, finance, and support available to students.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore academic interests, ask questions, address concerns, and build confidence about university study.
- Support pupils in mapping a clear journey from S2 through university into potential careers.
- Raise aspirations around university study, specific subjects, and overall high-school achievement.
- Build pupils' sense of belonging in a university environment and confidence working with peers from other schools.



Young Strathclyder Schools: S2

Schools were selected to participate based on the following criteria:

- The associated primary schools who are already taking part in the Young Strathclyder Primary programme
- Schools who are not taking part in other widening access initiatives run by other institutions
- Achieving a good representation from all areas of Glasgow City
- Percentage of pupils in SIMD Quintile 1
- School Higher Education Progression Rate (HEPR)

Schools were asked to select 30 pupils to participate on the programme based on the following criteria, with priority given to pupils who matched more than one criterion. Schools were also asked to prioritise pupils who would be the first in their family to attend university:

- Pupils who live in an SIMD20 or SIMD40 postcode area
- Pupils who are care-experienced
- Estranged pupils
- Refugee or asylum seeker pupils
- Pupils with caring responsibilities
- Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)
- Low income family
- Family in receipt of benefits
- Other adverse circumstances

2024-25 was the first year of the Young Strathclyder programme where it was possible that S2 pupils might have taken part in the programme while in P7. Schools were asked to select these pupils if they matched at least one of the above criteria.

Given that traditionally more girls than boys are selected to come on widening access outreach programmes, and in light of the recent research into the educational underachievement of working class boys, schools were asked to try and have as close to a 50/50 gender balance in pupil selection as possible. 56% of pupils who attended the programme in 2024-25 were female and 42% were male.

The following schools participated in the 2024-25 S2 programme:



- All Saints Secondary
- Castlemilk High
- Drumchapel High
- Eastbank Academy
- Govan High
- Hyndland Secondary
- Knightswood Secondary
- Lochend Community High
- Lourdes Secondary
- Notre Dame High
- Shawlands Academy
- Smithycroft Secondary
- Springburn Academy
- St Andrews RC Secondary
- St Margaret Mary's Secondary
- St Mungo's Academy
- St Roch's Secondary
- Whitehill Secondary

Programme Impact: S2

S2 pupils completed a pre-programme questionnaire at the beginning of their Young Strathclyde S2 activity day and a post-programme questionnaire at the end of the day. These questionnaires were designed to gather quantitative and qualitative data in order to measure programme impact in the following areas:

1. Pupils' previous experience of university, including if they had any family members who had attended university
2. Pupil perceptions of university, including student finance
3. Pupil aspiration with regard to future study and career options
4. Working with student mentors
5. Pupil knowledge of different aspects of university, including how university courses link to school subjects and future careers

1. Previous Experience of University

- 31% of participants had visited a university campus before. This was a noticeably higher percentage of pupils than among the 2023/24 S2 cohort.
- 60% of participants had a family member who had studied at university. From these, a large number had a parent/guardian who had been to university.
- From these findings, the Young Strathclyde programme will investigate whether First in Family should be one of the programme's main selection criteria.



2. Perceptions of University

The programme shows positive results regarding pupils' perceptions of university, particularly around student finance, with pupils feeling, post-programme, that university is more affordable and that there is financial support available. Given that addressing pupils' financial concerns, partly through more input from student mentors, was a main aim of the programme, this is a very positive outcome. Many pupils also relate university with a positive opportunity to enhance their job and career opportunities.

Along with student finance, pupils' other main pre-programme concerns related to the level of difficulty of university work and adjusting to the university environment. Pupils were much less concerned about both of these areas post-programme. Many pupils said that the programme had directly addressed any worries they had about university.

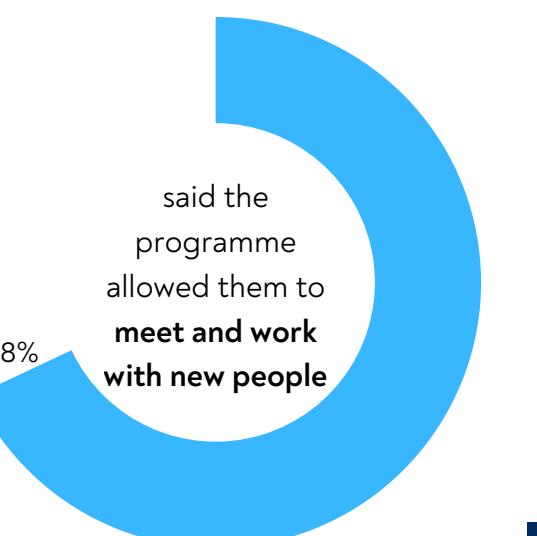
"I don't have any worries anymore since all my questions were answered."

One of the main concerns that pupils had post-programme was with regard to meeting new people. The programme deliberately gives pupils the opportunity to work with pupils from other schools. While this can be challenging for pupils, it is a main aim of the programme to allow pupils to get used to working with pupils from other schools, helping them develop confidence and social skills that would be useful if going on to university study. While the majority of pupils had a positive or neutral response to working with others on the S2 programme, with many pupils finding the programme a fun and positive social experience and relishing the opportunity to work with others, 12% of pupils mentioned feeling awkward, nervous or scared to talk to pupils from other schools and 17% of pupils noted a lack of interaction with other school pupils. The 2025-26 S2 programme will be adapted to allow pupils greater opportunities to interact with pupils from other schools.

"I liked getting to meet some people and making new friends."

"It was good to hear about other people's opinions."

"I feel good to meet new people as that's how life is."



3. Pupil Aspiration with regard to University Study

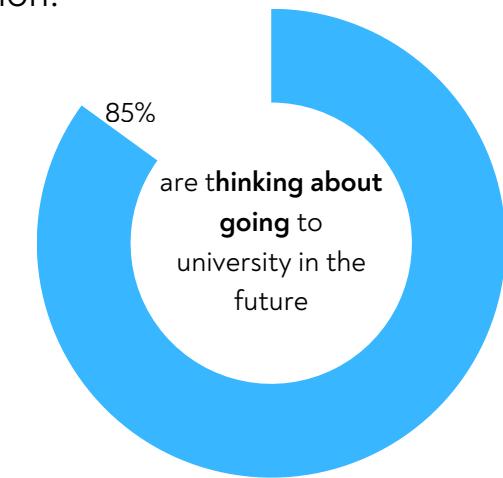
There is some improvement in pupil aspiration to go to university, pre to post programme, though it should be noted that a large number of pupils (74%) expressed a pre-programme aspiration to go to university. 85% of pupils expressed a post-programme desire to attend university. Only 3% of pupils said they were not thinking about going to university, post-programme. Qualitative analysis shows that the day had a positive impact on many pupils' aspiration to attend university and that it has solidified many young people's future aspirations towards higher education.

"Amazing and made me want to go to uni."

"It was good, making me rethink about not going."

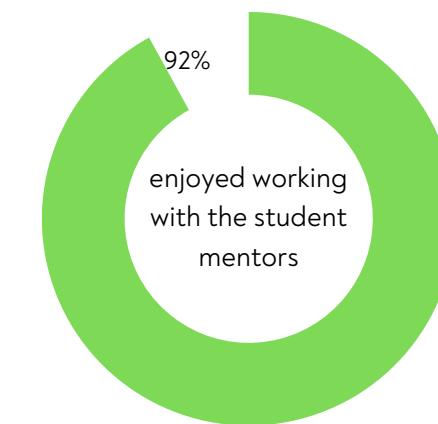
The visit made me want to come to uni because of all the learning and career opportunities.

"I think it looks fun and a cool place to go. I honestly would love to go here."



4. Working with Student Mentors

The S2 programme was specifically adapted in 2024/25 to use student mentors more effectively, allowing them more time to discuss their experience of university life and study and therefore help to address persistent areas of concern for pupils with regard to university, including student finance and the level of difficulty of university study. Pupils were also offered the opportunity to speak to a wide range of student mentors on the 24/25 programme. There were several benefits that pupils perceived from working with student mentors;



Knowledge of Student Life

"It's good as we get an insight on how they do things in everyday life in University."

Mentor Experience

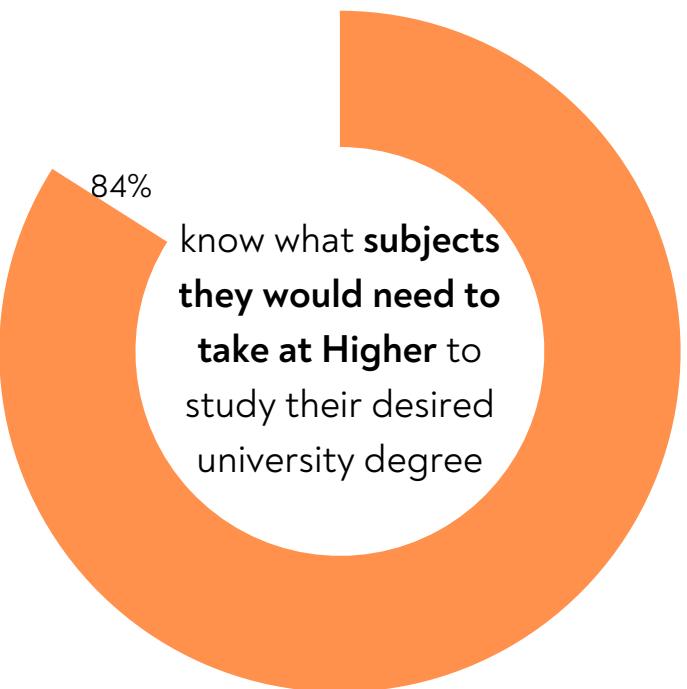
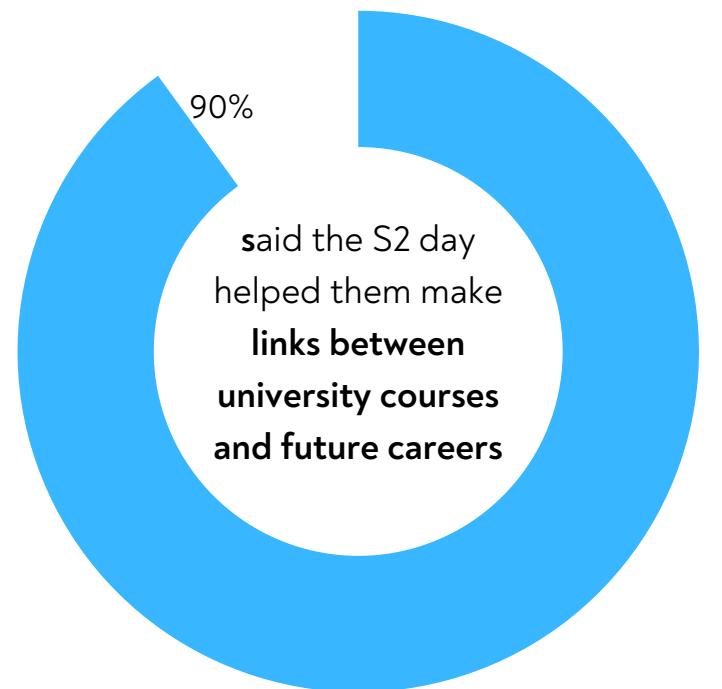
"They told their own personal experiences and opinions which helped with anything I was unsure of."

Knowledge of University Courses

"Found out the different courses you can do and what grades you would need to do a particular course."

5. Knowledge of University

Overall, pupils felt the programme had developed their knowledge of university, including improved awareness of what university life is like and improved understanding of the process for applying to university. Post-programme, pupils had greater knowledge of the range of university courses available and the links between university courses and potential careers. Connected to this, the programme improved pupils' knowledge of what they wanted to study at university and what Highers they need in order to access these courses. In turn, this raised awareness has helped pupils directly with regard to deciding on their subject choices for S3 – a key aim for the programme.



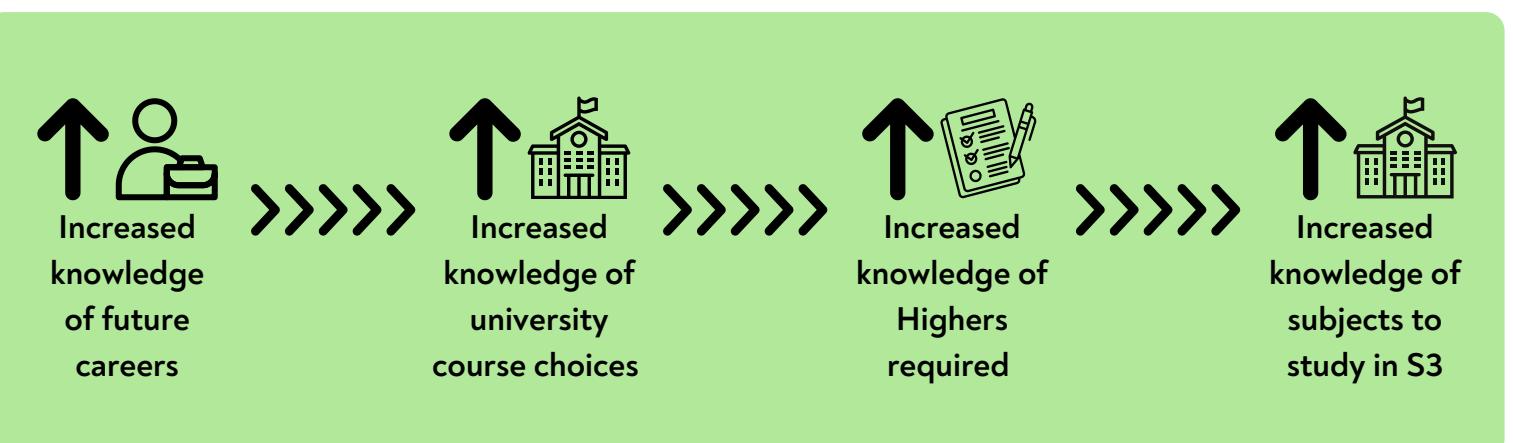
"It was an amazing experience and I would definitely recommend to other people. It's really helpful because it really helped me with my subject choices."

"Good, fun and helped a lot with options."

"I enjoyed it as it showed me all the choices I have in my future and what I can do."

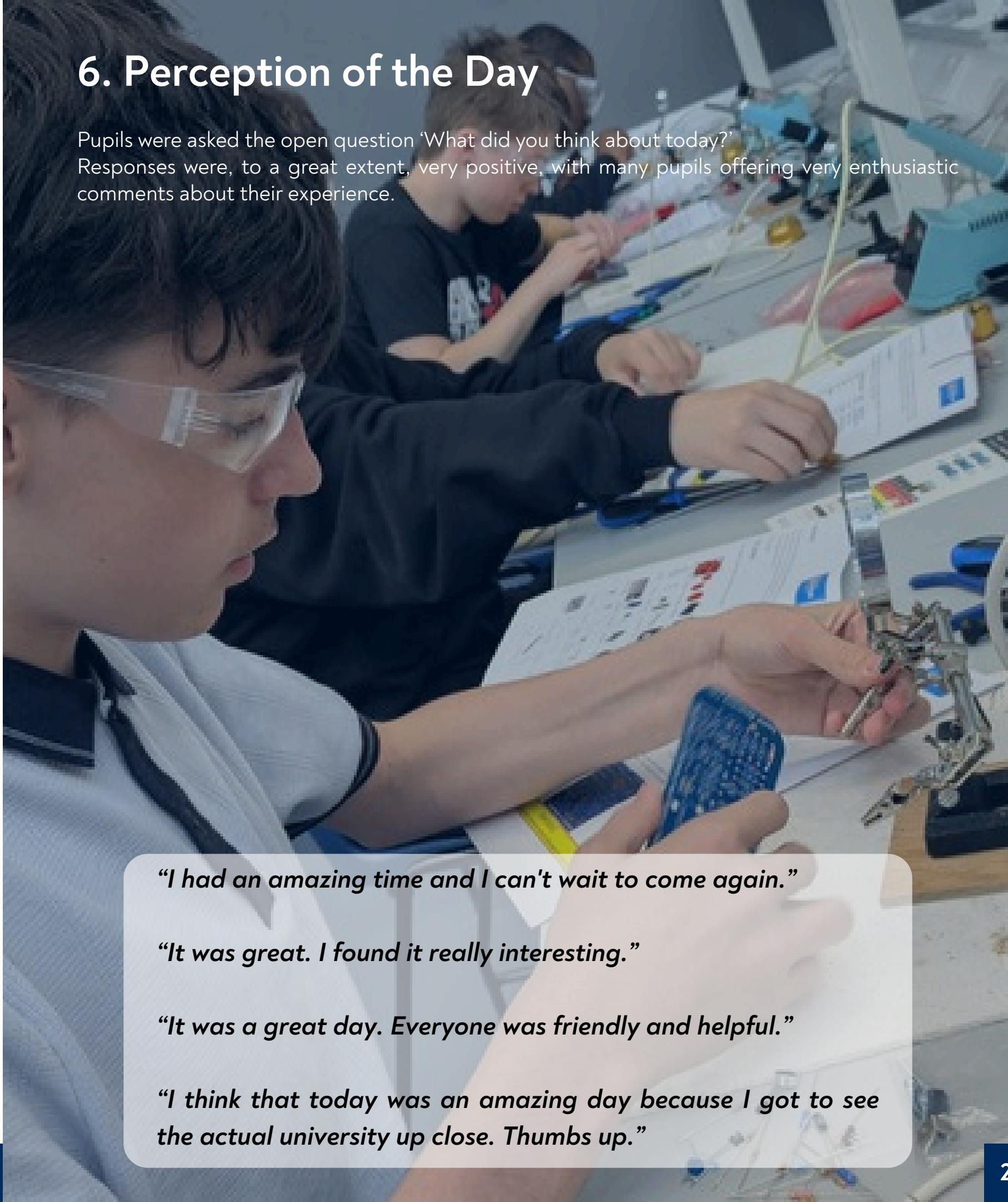
"Learnt a lot about possible future jobs."

"Amazing, I learned a lot about what job I want to do."



6. Perception of the Day

Pupils were asked the open question 'What did you think about today?' Responses were, to a great extent, very positive, with many pupils offering very enthusiastic comments about their experience.



Young Strathclyder Accelerate

Summer 2025 saw the 16th year of the Accelerate programme, a one-week programme that provides new S5 and S6 pupils with a targeted focus on their chosen area of potential academic study, allowing them to find out about the university study and career opportunities open to them. The programme provides a subject-specific focus which offers pupils a 'try before you buy' opportunity with regard to university courses. This is an important element in addressing lack of knowledge of university courses, and subsequent poor choice of course, among prospective students.

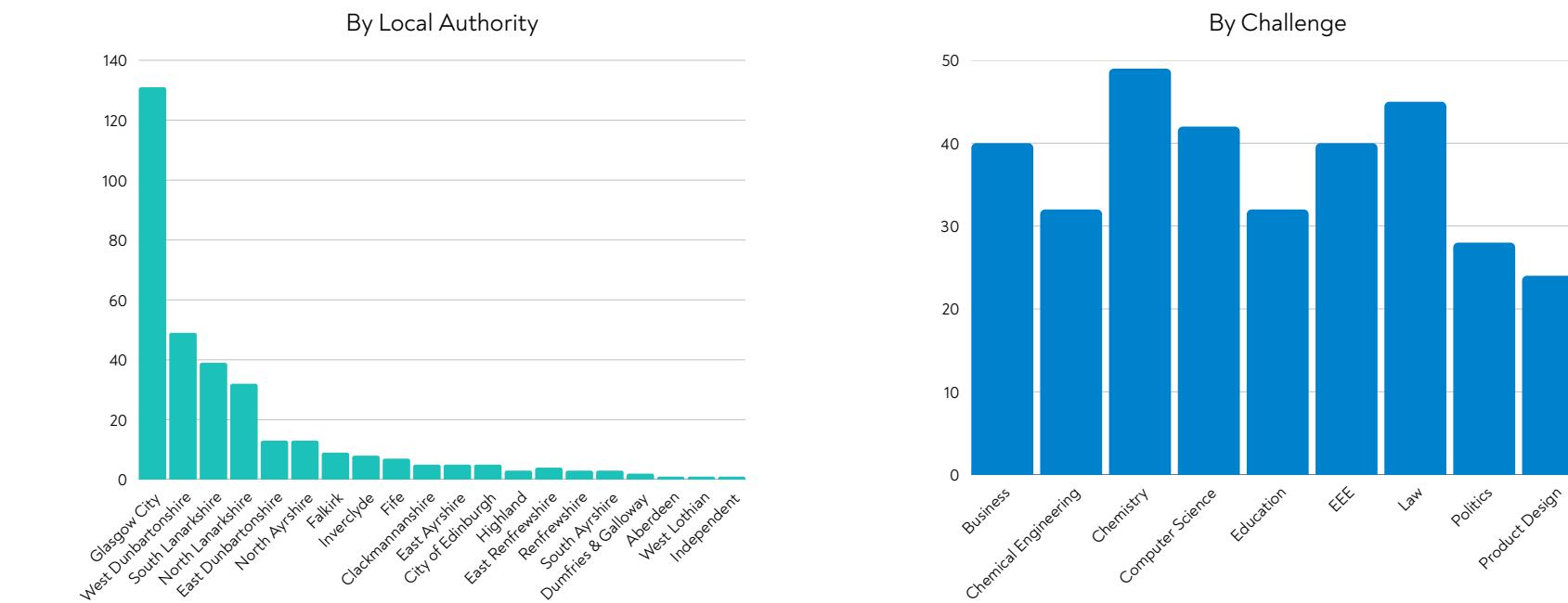
The programme ran from 16th to 20th and from 23rd to 27th June and featured nine subject areas for pupils to choose from:

- Business
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Education
- Electronic & Electrical Engineering
- Law
- Politics
- Product Design (Design, Manufacture and Engineering Management)

As the senior phase of the Young Strathclyder programme, it is important that the Accelerate programme represents subjects from all four of Strathclyde's faculties. The nine different Accelerate Challenges are created by staff from the relevant academic departments, working in conjunction with the Young Strathclyder team. Led by a Challenge Leader and a team of undergraduate and postgraduate student mentors, pupils undertake a variety of interactive activities and work towards the completion of a final group challenge, culminating in a presentation of their work to a panel of industry and academic experts on the final day of the programme.

Each Challenge also hosts a careers/industry event during the programme, featuring presentations from academics and professionals from the specific challenge areas. The programme also includes an interactive lecture on student finance and a presentation on UCAS applications.

332 pupils, from 67 schools and 19 local authorities across Scotland, completed the Accelerate 2025 programme. Since its inception in 2009, **3,498** pupils have participated in the Accelerate programme.



With regard to participant experience, the main aims of the Accelerate programme are:

- To provide participants with information and guidance on the university courses and careers within their field of interest.
- To give participants an opportunity to experience study within a university department and life as a university student.
- To allow pupils to experience first year university-level work and assessment.
- To allow participants to take part in interactive group challenges that allow them to put into practice the subject-specific knowledge that they acquire during the week.
- To allow participants to work alongside student mentors who provide pupils with information, advice and encouragement and act as inspirational role models.
- To allow pupils to work with other young people from a wide range of geographical areas.
- To provide participants with advice and guidance on university applications and student finance.
- To support pupils in their applications to Strathclyde and other higher education institutions by offering them the opportunity to gain credits at level 7 on the SCQF.
- To act as the entry point to programmes of sustained, subject-specific support for pupils from widening access backgrounds, providing them with an extended induction process that will produce confident, engaged and informed students of the future.
- To ease the transition into first year of study at university and therefore help to improve retention rates for students from widening access backgrounds.

Accelerate 2025 at a Glance

332

Pupils

67

Schools

80%

from low
progression
schools

19

Local Authorities

9

Challenges

58

Mentors

53%

from MD20

77%

from MD40

45

Parents/
Guardians

256

Pupils earning
SCQF credits

18

Junior Mentors

Programme Content

Business

Participants were given a brief from the Marketing Manager at AG Barr to develop a new product. They were introduced to key elements of marketing, data analysis and market research and pitched their products to representatives of AG Barr on the Friday of the programme.

Chemical Engineering

Pupils on the Chemical Engineering challenge carried out a series of practical activities in the laboratories of the Department of Chemical and Process Engineering, focussing on key areas and exciting new developments in Chemical Engineering. This included work on polymers, product design and costing, plastic recycling, bioplastics and waste. Pupil presentations on the final day of the programme focussed on their bioplastic and polymer experiments and research into sustainability.

Chemistry

Working in the Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry's laboratories, Chemistry Challenge participants synthesised paracetamol and tested its purity through thin-layer chromatography. They also undertook Titration and Spectroscopy analysis.

Computer Science

Pupils on the Computer Science challenge were charged with designing a new interactive wearable or mobile device or application that is socially inclusive and would improve people's lives. They had to conduct market research, sketch designs, storyboard their concept and develop an interactive and/or physical Prototype before pitching their ideas to an expert panel.

Education

The Education Challenge showed participants how Education takes many forms, looking at Philosophy, Psychology, Schools and Schooling and Creativities. The programme featured a session on sustainability, which involved exploring and utilising the local green space.

Electronic & Electrical Engineering (EEE)

The EEE students took part in a number of exciting challenges, designed to demonstrate the range of course and career options open to EEE students, including Aerospace, Electronics Design, Cybersecurity and Renewable Energy. Participants also took part in tours of the EEE department and the Technology and Innovation Centre.

Law

Participants on the Law challenge visited the Sheriff Court, took part in mediation activities and finished the week by staging their own mock trial, complete with real-life judges. Speakers at the Careers/Industry event included representatives from Pinsent Masons, McGovern Reid, the Faculty of Advocates, the Strathclyde Law Clinic and the University's Law Admissions Team. Law Challenge pupils also had the chance to meet and ask questions to Lynda Towers, visiting professor and most recently Director of Public Law at Morton Fraser.

Politics

Groups of participants on the Politics challenge were allocated a political party and asked to reflect upon and analyse their manifesto from the previous year's general election. Pupils also received a series of lectures on politics and international relations and were given access to the university library's archive of historical election leaflets. They also received a presentation on recent electoral voting patterns from Professor Sir John Curtice.

Product Design

Run by the Department of Design, Manufacture and Engineering Management (D MEM), the Product Design challenge gave pupils a brief to design applications that would make the transition into University life easier for students. They produced models of their products using the Design, Manufacturing and Engineering Management department's rapid prototyping equipment. They then designed the packaging, branding, and marketing campaigns for their products and pitched them to a panel of Design and Engineering experts.

Young Strathclyder Schools: Accelerate

Aberdeenshire

Hazlehead Academy

Clackmannanshire

Alloa Academy

Lornshill Academy

Dumfries & Galloway

Kirkcudbright Academy

East Ayrshire

Doon Academy

Kilmarnock Academy

Loudon Academy

Robert Burns Academy

East Dunbartonshire

Kirkintilloch High School

Turnbull High

East Renfrewshire

St Luke's High

Woodfarm High

Edinburgh City

Drummond Community High

Falkirk

Denny High

Graeme High

Fife

Beath High School

Glasgow City

Eastbank Academy

Glasgow Gaelic School

Hillhead High

Hillpark Secondary

Holyrood Secondary

John Paul Academy

Knightswood Secondary

Lochend Community High

Lourdes Secondary

Notre Dame High

Rosshall Academy

Smithycroft Secondary

St Andrew's RC Secondary

St Margaret Mary's Secondary

St Mungo's Academy

St Paul's High

St Roch's Secondary

St Thomas Aquinas Secondary

Whitehill Secondary

Highland

Kingussie High

Inverclyde

Inverclyde Academy

St Stephen's High

North Ayrshire

Auchenharvie Academy

Irvine Royal Academy

Kilwinning Academy

St Matthew's Academy

North Lanarkshire

Airdrie Academy

Bellshill Academy

Braidsurst High

Brannock High

Caldervale High

Coatbridge High

St Aidan's High

St Andrew's High

St Margaret's High

South Lanarkshire

Calderside Academy

Calderglen High

Hamilton Grammar School

Lanark Grammar

Larkhall Academy

Lesmahagow High

St John Ogilvie High

Stonelaw High

West Dunbartonshire

Clydebank High

Our Lady & St Patrick's High

St Peter the Apostle High

Vale of Leven Academy

West Lothian

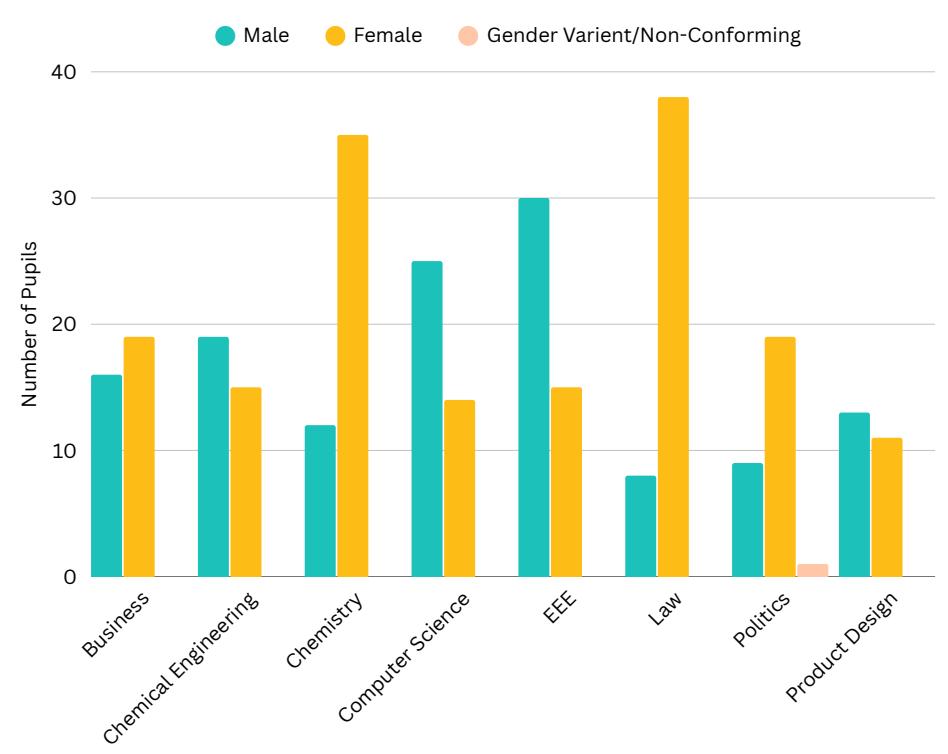
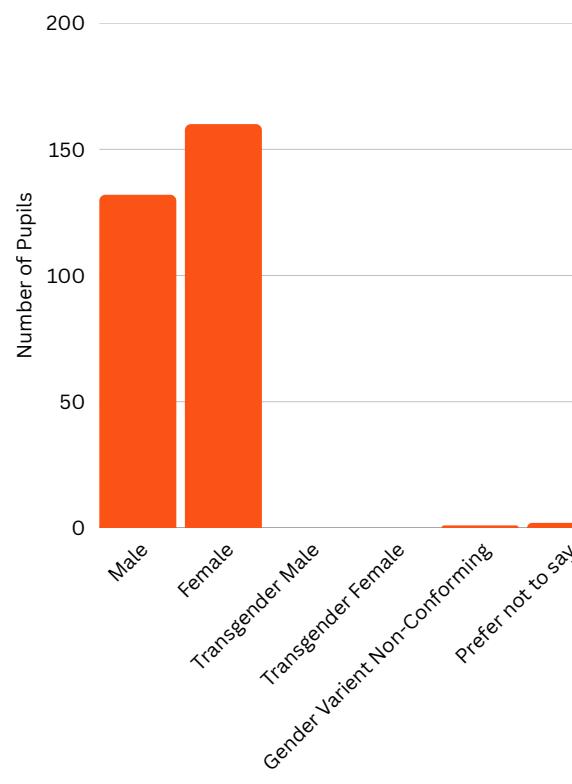
St Kentigern's Academy



Participant Breakdown

Gender

In-keeping with previous cohorts on the Accelerate programme and many other widening access initiatives, there was a majority of female pupils on the overall 2025 programme. From the pupils who offered a response to being asked about their gender, 55% identified as female and 45% as male. This is a higher percentage of male participants than in 2024. However, it should be noted that gender data was not available for the Education challenge which had a significantly larger number of female participants than male.



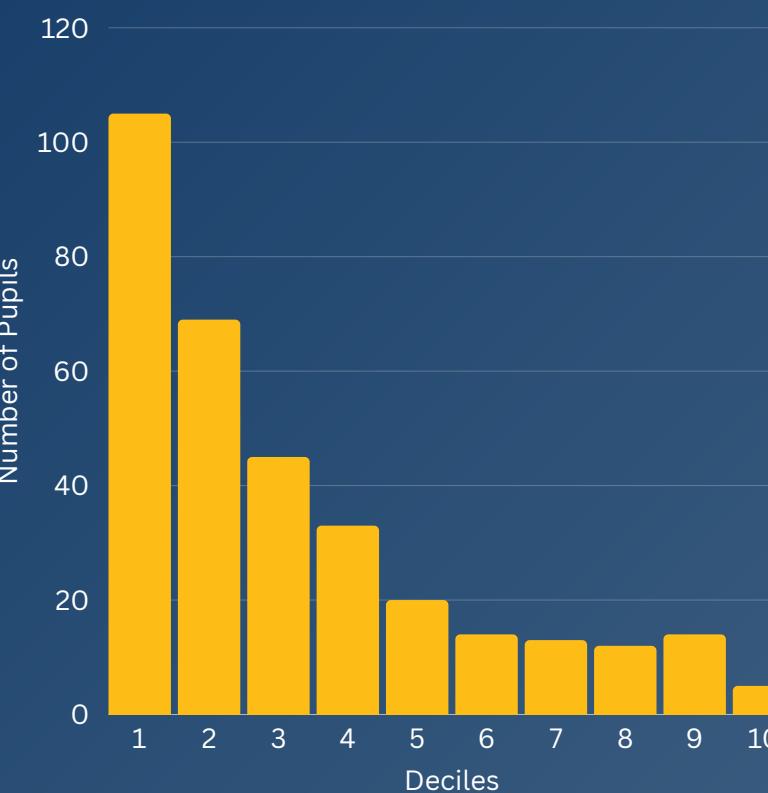
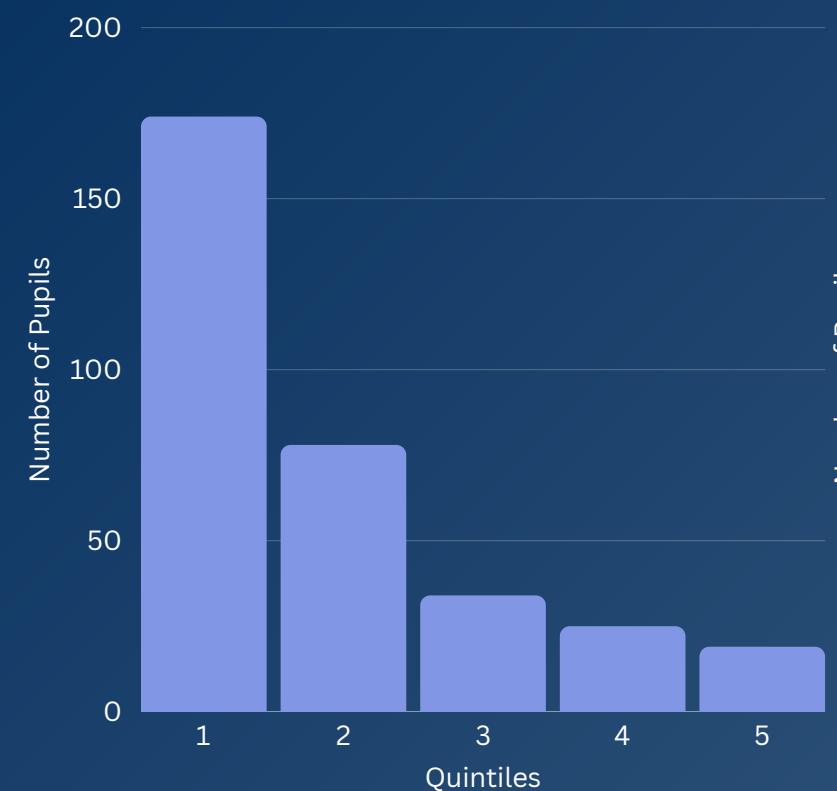
Widening Access

Accelerate is a dedicated widening access programme with fully funded places offered to pupils based on the following widening access criteria:

- MD20 or MD40 Postcode
- School Higher Education Progression Rate
- Care Experienced status
- Young Carer status
- Receipt of Free School Meals
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker status

SIMD

77% of participants in 2025 were from MD40 postcodes i.e. the 40% most deprived postcodes in Scotland. 53% were from MD20 postcodes and 32% from MD10 postcodes.



School Progression Rate

80% of participants attended low progression schools as measured by the University of Strathclyde's widening access policy.

Free School Meals

29% of participants on the Accelerate 2025 programme were in receipt of free school meals.

Care-Experienced People & Young Carers

The Strathclyde Widening Access team works closely with schools, local authorities and other external partners to improve the educational outcomes for children who have experience of the care system. The university is also dedicated to supporting young people and students who have caring responsibilities that may impact on their studies and school work. Nine care-experienced young people and 14 young carers successfully completed the Accelerate 2025 programme.

SCQF Credits

Eight of the Accelerate Challenge programmes are credit-rated on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). If participants on these challenges pass the programme assessments, they are awarded either 5 or 10 credit points at level 7 on the SCQF. Level 7 is the equivalent to Advanced Higher or first year University level work. This allows successful pupils to demonstrate that they are capable of successfully undertaking first year level university work in a specific subject area. This is a significant confidence boost for pupils and means that the programme carries more recognition within Strathclyde and in other institutions.

Recognising the Accelerate programme on the SCQF allows the credits that pupils gain on the programme to be transferrable, increasing opportunities for participants to benefit from a successful performance on the programme. The Accelerate qualifications can be formally selected on the UCAS application form and it is hoped that academic selectors from relevant departments across different institutions will now have a greater level of certainty that potential students, particularly those from a widening access background, could successfully make the transition to working at a first-year University level.

For 2025, a credit-rating review of the Chemical Engineering, Chemistry and Product Design challenges was carried out. Having previously been worth 5 credits, these challenges are now all worth 10 credits meaning that seven of the Accelerate challenges are worth 10 credits. A new process was implemented in 2025 that allowed consistency across all Accelerate challenges with regard to submission and re-submission of assignments.

From the **292 pupils** who completed the credit-rated Accelerate challenges in 2025, **256**, or **88%**, completed and passed all the assessments and gained either 5 or 10 credits at level 7 for doing so.

Breakdown by Challenge

Challenge	Number of Participants	Percentage Achieved Credits
Business	40	93%
Chemical Engineering	32	94%
Chemistry	49	96%
Computer Science	42	83%
Education	32	75%
Law	45	91%
Politics	28	89%
Product Design	24	75%
Overall	292	88%

Additional Support

Pre-Application Enquiries

For the 2025 Accelerate programme, the Young Strathclyder team provided the opportunity for participants to take part in an undergraduate “pre-application enquiry” (PAE) process for the coming academic year. If pupils were planning to apply to study a course at Strathclyde which is starting in September 2026, they were invited to complete a form providing information about themselves (i.e. widening access criteria, grades to date and qualifications pending), as well as about any course(s) they were interested in studying at Strathclyde. A member of the Widening Access team then reviewed the information and responded to the individual to let them know:

- If they were to be made an offer, which conditions (if any) would be likely to form part of the offer.
- If they would most likely not be made an offer, and why (e.g. missing an essential subject at the appropriate level).

While not a part of the formal university application process, PAE is a process designed to allow candidates to double-check whether they have the necessary qualifications to be on track to make a competitive application to the university and therefore ensure that they are making the most effective use of any UCAS application.

During Autumn 2025, the Widening Access team received 133 Pre-Application Enquiries from Accelerate 2024 and 2025 participants who intended to apply to the university for 2026 entry. Those pupils who participated in the 2025 programme but do not intend to apply to university until next year, for a September 2027 start, will be given the option to submit a PAE next autumn.

In autumn 2024, 72 pupils who participated in the Accelerate 2024 programme submitted PAEs. 72% of these went on to apply to the university.

‘Innovation as a Force for Good’ Entrepreneurial Challenge

2025 saw the second year of the ‘Innovation as a Force for Good’ entrepreneurial competition for Accelerate participants in conjunction with Strathclyde Inspire, who support and encourage entrepreneurship within the university and in the wider community.

Pupils were challenged to come up with an entrepreneurial solution to support one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and asked to submit their ideas online. These were then judged by a panel of entrepreneurs and the three finalists were invited to an awards ceremony held in the Strathclyde Inspire Hub in August.

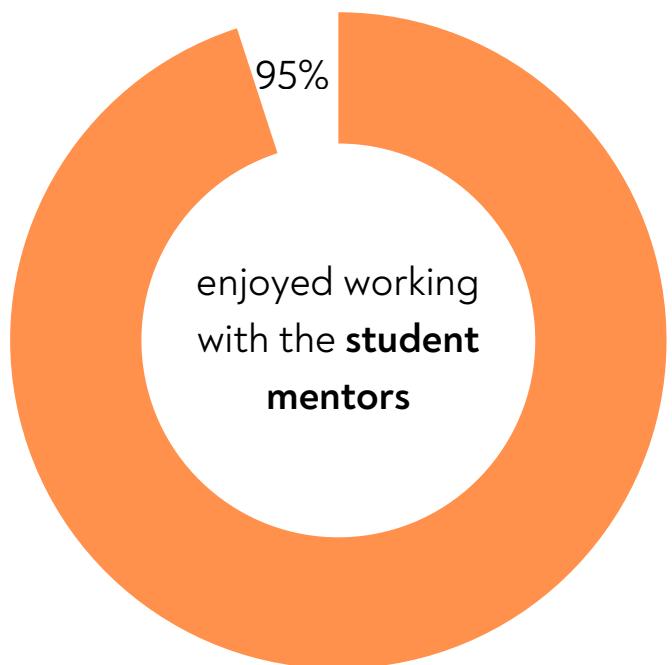
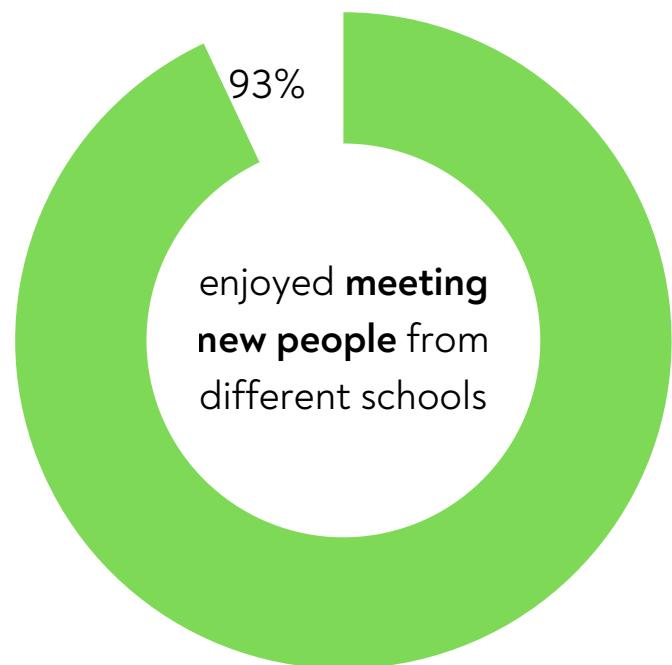


The winning entry, from Morven Kennedy, addressed SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, through using bracken as building material.

Programme Impact: Participants

1. Perceptions of the Programme

Overall, pupil perceptions of the Accelerate programme are extremely positive. Many pupils mentioned that, if it were possible, they would like to do the programme again or return as a Junior Mentor next year. Pupils mentioned that they had enjoyed the activities they had taken part in during the week. For many, this related to the interactive nature of the programme, as well as access to unique opportunities involving university level resources and equipment.



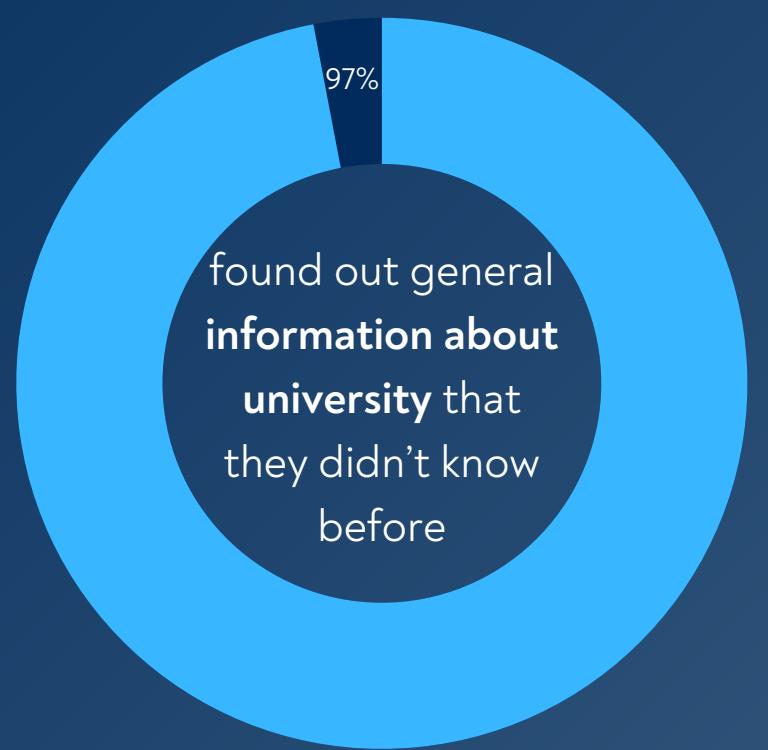
"I thought that the Accelerate programme was an amazing experience, it has given me valuable insight on what university will be like and I can more confidently say I am capable of doing first year uni work."

"I will recommend this to all my friends and would love to come back again."

"Best week in the last 5 years. I really enjoyed this challenge because I had an opportunity to get actual experience in the marketer role. This week was unforgettable. I met a lot of new friends and enjoyed spending time with them. I think everyone should apply to the accelerate programme in Strathclyde uni."

2. Knowledge of University

A very common benefit of the programme mentioned by participants was that it provided them with useful information. As well as finding out about their specific Accelerate subject area, many participants found benefit in learning, more generally, about university. Many participants also mentioned that they had enjoyed experiencing what life is like as a university student.



"Allowed me to make good friends, experience working in a professional lab, explore areas of the campus, step out of my comfort zone and enhance my confidence and develop my knowledge of Chemistry as well as give me an insight on what life and studying at University is like."

"I also got to feel what the experience of university would be like so I could be more prepared in the future."

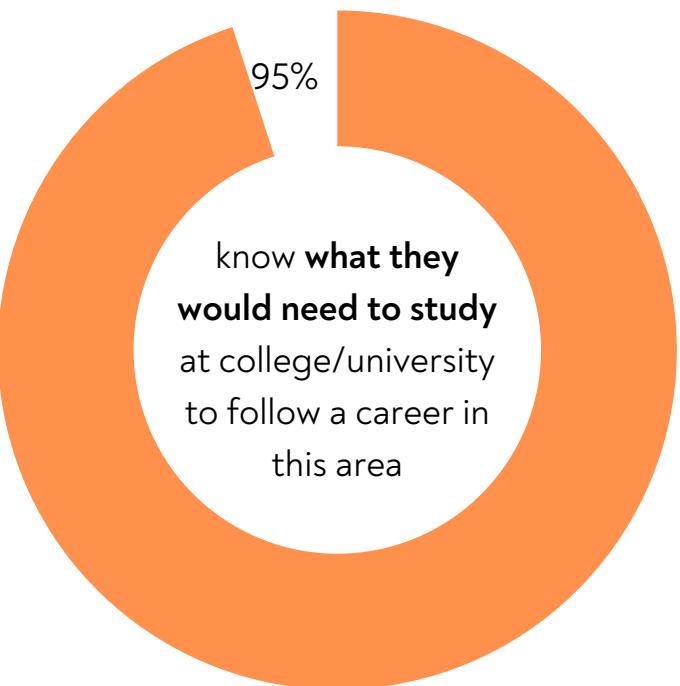
"I found it very helpful to learn more about UCAS and SAAS and it really calmed my nerves about applying to university."

"I thought my program is very helpful in giving me experience of what uni will be like, I feel confident about attending Strathclyde. It has given me experience with technology I never would have access to at school and I now feel like the jump to uni will be slightly easier."

3. Knowledge of Accelerate Subject Area

A main focus of the Accelerate programme is for young people to find out more about the courses they can study at university in their specific Accelerate subject area and more about the various careers to which these courses can allow them to progress. Many participants felt that the programme had offered them a valuable insight into potential courses in their field of interest and what would be involved in studying these courses.

Pupils told us, post-programme, that:



"I believe the Product Design challenge gives you a clearer, more influential insight to the sector. Improves your overall insight to university life and opens up a whole world of opportunities."

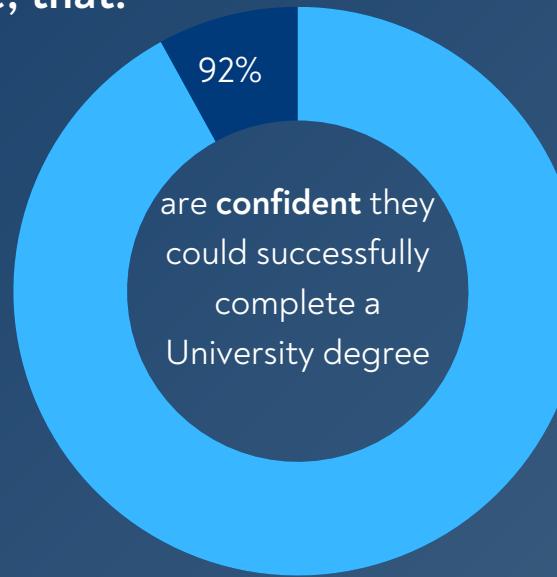
"I really enjoyed the programme! It had so many interesting lectures and the practical work was fun. Really showed me what a Chemical Engineering course looks like at university."

"I thought it was very informative as it taught me all the different ways to learn the pathway to take to be a teacher and how to work in a group setting."

4. Perceptions of University: Confidence

Overall, pupils feel very positive about university post-programme. In particular, pupils feel confident that they could successfully undertake university study. There are, traditionally, two areas of how pupils perceive university that the Young Strathclyde programme consider important and that pupils tend to hold entrenched views about throughout the different stages of the Young Strathclyde programme; that the level of work at university will be too difficult and that the financial cost of university is too high. Evaluations show that the programme has a positive impact on pupils' perceptions in both these areas, particularly with regard to the level of difficulty of university work.

Pupils told us, post-programme, that:



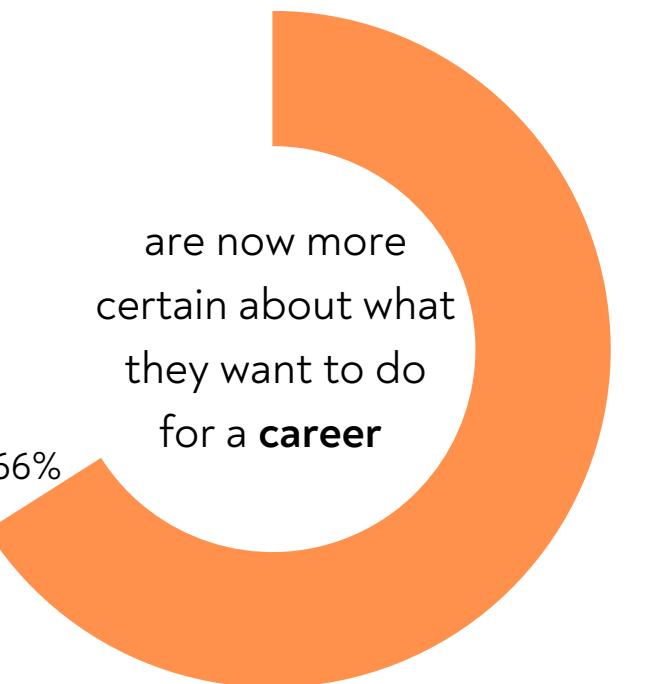
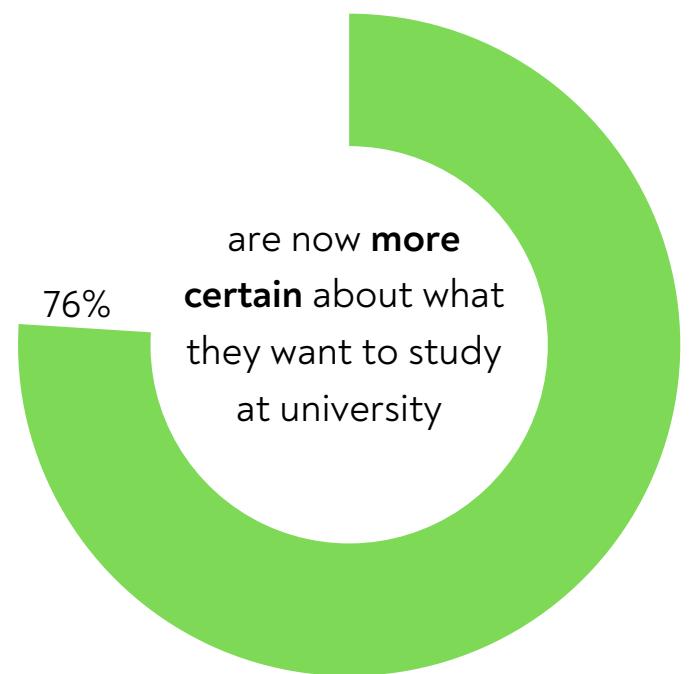
"I thought my programme is very helpful in giving me experience of what uni will be like, I feel confident about attending... It has given me experience with technology I never would have access to at school and I now feel like the jump to uni will be easier."

"I now have an insight of what life would be like at University, and it allows me to envision a future here."

"It has made me more confident in myself and what I want to do when I leave school."

5. Influence on Study and Career Choices

Many pupils commented that the course had influenced their future choices, and, for some participants, the programme had made them realise that, in a general sense, they now wanted to attend university after school. This also included building confidence in what subject and course they wanted to study at university. Other pupils mentioned that the influence of the programme had allowed them to make decisions about their future career.



“It clarified things I was not sure about and was an incredible experience overall, one which has made me 100% decide that I would like to go to university.”

“This opportunity has made me adamant about wanting to go on to study Primary Education in university.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed it and would love to do this again as I feel this has made my overall decision in what I wanna pursue in uni.”

“It also motivates me to achieve my dream career because lawyers were explaining their journey to us.”

“I think that this course has been a lot of fun and helped me find a career course for the future that I was not knowledgeable about before this course. It has excited me for my future after high school.”

“Certainly one of the best experiences of my life, giving me a better insight into my pursuit of an engineering career.”

6. Development of Skills and Abilities

Many pupils mentioned that the Accelerate programme had allowed them gain new skills or improve upon existing skills. Some pupils appreciated that the programme had allowed them to develop skills related to their specific academic area of interest. Many other pupils mentioned that they had developed a range of other, more general, personal and professional skills that would be useful in a range of fields. These included presentation, problem-solving and team-working skills. A large emphasis was placed by many pupils on the development of their communication skills. For many, there was an understanding that this came from the opportunity to work closely with others, as well as the chance to present their ideas in both informal and formal contexts. For some pupils, these contexts were initially challenging but proved very positive with regard to the development of communication skills.



“I really enjoyed this programme as I feel it really helped my confidence and people skills. I was able to meet new people and develop skills such as writing and leadership skills.”

“I thought that the programme gave me skills and knowledge for the lab. I learned how to use unfamiliar equipment.”

“I think it was so fun, I think is great to meet new people here and I now feel confident speaking in groups and expressing my opinion.”

Accelerate Programme Recommendations:

- The Computer Science challenge, currently worth 5 credits, will be reviewed in 2025/26 and it is hoped that the EEE challenge will also be credit-rated in the coming year. This will mean that all Accelerate challenges should be worth 10 SCQF credits at level 7 for the Accelerate 2026 programme.
- While participants receive a detailed presentation on student finance and all the financial support available at University, more work could still be done in this area to address pupils' concerns about the cost of University. The programme could potentially make more use of the experience of student mentors to demonstrate how manageable finance is at University.

Previous Accelerate Pupils: Applications to Strathclyde

The Young Strathclyder team tracks the university applications of previous Accelerate participants.* The collated results from participants from 2022 and 2023 are below.

67% of participants have **applied** to study at Strathclyde

29% of participants are **currently** studying at Strathclyde

26% of participants are currently studying at **another university**

56% of the participants who applied to Strathclyde are studying at a university

85% of participants applied to study a degree **related** to their Accelerate subject

The Young Strathclyder team also tracks whether pupils mention their attendance on, and qualifications from, Accelerate on their UCAS applications, thereby maximising the programme's impact. 93 pupils from credit-rated challenges applied to Strathclyde for 2025/26 entry and 70% of these selected Accelerate from the drop-down menu within the Qualifications section on the UCAS form. 78% of applicants to Strathclyde mentioned Accelerate in their UCAS personal statement and 34% of applicants had Accelerate mentioned in their UCAS reference.

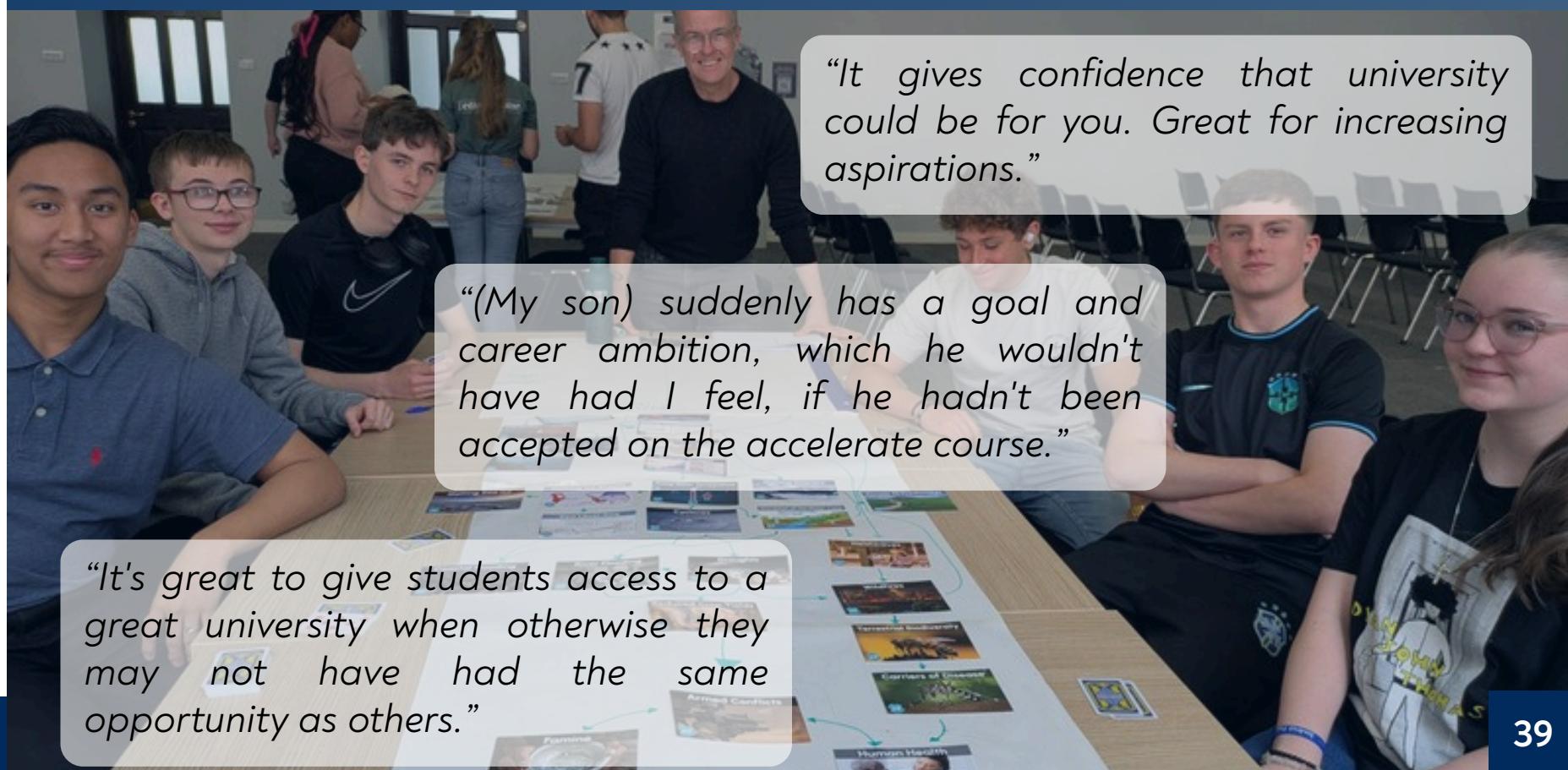
*The university is unable to see the university destination of any participant who did not apply to Strathclyde.

Parents/Guardians

Two events for parents/guardians, one in-person and one online, were held during Accelerate 2025. These were designed to allow parents to find out more about the Accelerate programme as well as supplying information and guidance with regard to university courses and related careers, university applications, student finance and student support services. 45 parents attended these sessions with 34 completing a post-event evaluation.

Parents found these sessions very informative, interesting and helpful, with many feeling that they were given information that they would not have had access to elsewhere. Many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to attend.

Parents appreciated the opportunity to communicate directly with staff and students from the relevant university subject area in which their child was interested. Some parents mentioned the impact that the event and the wider Accelerate programme will have on their young person with regard to future academic and career options.



Junior Mentors

18 pupils who had participated on the 2024 Accelerate programme worked as Junior Mentors on the 2025 programme. The following challenges featured Junior Mentors:

- Business
- Chemical Engineering
- Computer Science
- Education
- EEE
- Law
- Politics
- Product Design

It was considered that working as a Junior Mentor on the programme would benefit the pupils in three main ways:

- **Greater familiarity with the University environment**

The opportunity to work with university staff and students, spend time in a university department and to find their way independently around campus would increase pupils' familiarity with, and confidence within, the university environment and ease the future transition into university.

- **Development of subject-specific knowledge and skills**

Pupils would have the opportunity to find out more information about their Challenge subject area and the relevant Strathclyde department, developing knowledge and skills that would benefit them in their future studies.

- **Development of interpersonal and employability skills**

The range of roles and responsibilities that Junior Mentors would take on would be very useful in developing their communication, team-working, leadership and presentation skills within an adult working environment.

Evaluative data gathered from the Junior Mentors post-programme strongly suggests that these outcomes were achieved. In particular, Junior Mentors felt that their leadership, communication and team-working skills had improved, along with their knowledge of their subject area. Many also mentioned that their confidence had improved and it is clear that the experience was considered to be both very enjoyable and very valuable.



Young Strathclyder: Further Initiatives

Support for ASN Pupils

The Young Strathclyder programme is working in conjunction with Glasgow City Council to support pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) who are interested in making the transition from high school to university. In May 2025, a group of pupils from Parkhill Secondary, an ASN high school in Glasgow's east end, were welcomed to Strathclyde and spent the day exploring the campus, speaking to student mentors and taking part in interactive activities that allowed them to find out more about University courses and student life.

"We found out that university is a lot more relaxed in atmosphere than secondary school. They were very funny and accommodating and helped me realise that university isn't SUPER serious."

"I found out that university helps massively in building a future career and support network."

CSR Pathway (Strathclyde Business School)

The Social Responsibility Pathway (CSR Pathway) is a module option for third year students participating in the Strathclyde Business School Management Development Programme (MDP). MDP is a core element of undergraduate degree programmes from first to third year in the Business School and focusses on the development of students' employability skills. CSR Pathway students have worked on several elements of the Young Strathclyder programme, including the Accelerate Business Challenge and, since 2021/22, on the Young Strathclyder Primary and S2 programmes. Many CSR Pathway students have been invited to continue working on these programmes as paid mentors once their time on the pathway has finished.

One Step Forward

One Step Forward is a unique programme, designed specifically for the CSR Pathway, that has been running since 2014-15. It offers CSR Pathway students the opportunity to design, manage and deliver a one-day on-campus event for senior school pupils from Widening Access backgrounds who are interested in going on to study Business at university. The content of the event changes year-on-year, based on the ideas of each student cohort, but always allows pupils to engage in interactive group activities with pupils from other schools, find out more about studying Business at university through presentations and discussions with Strathclyde Business School staff and explore the Strathclyde campus. Students are also charged with the evaluation of the event. Since 2014-15, 232 pupils have attended One Step Forward. 38 pupils from seven high schools attended the 2024/25 One Step Forward event.

"I found the presentations very informative and helpful and the group activities helped to develop my team-working skills."

"My time spent at the One Step Forward event was very successful. I believe that I now know what to expect and what careers I can pursue from university."



Mentors

Being a mentor on the Young Strathclyder programme involves a wide range of roles and responsibilities and mentors who work on the programme over a continued period of time are often likely to gradually assume roles of greater responsibility and complexity. The basic duties of a student mentor are to guide groups of pupils through a programme of activities, act as a role model and provide advice and information. In addition, Accelerate mentors can also take on a wide range of further roles, including:

- giving presentations
- administrative and logistical duties
- design of activities, events and programmes
- leading activities
- evaluation and data analysis

The sustained engagement of Strathclyde students on widening access programmes offers a regular source of well-paid work and continued opportunities for professional development. It also develops an in-depth understanding of widening access issues within the Strathclyde student community.

It is an integral part of the ethos behind the Young Strathclyder team's work that the development of the Strathclyde student mentors who work on the team's programmes is as important as the development of the participating pupils. The Young Strathclyder team's evaluation and research in this area shows that working on widening access and community outreach initiatives has a range of benefits for Strathclyde students, including the development of personal and employability skills, a strong influence on career and study choices, and significant benefits to wellbeing. The fact that many mentors come back to work on the Young Strathclyder programme year on year over a prolonged period of time is indicative of the importance that the Young Strathclyder team places on strong working relationships with mentors and the development of their professional skills.

“The engaging conversations and interactions that you have with the young pupils are really meaningful as well; they share their own views on the activities and you can see how creative, curious and imaginative their minds can be which can also make me, as a mentor, feel nostalgic and happy all at once.”

“You'll have the opportunity to make friends with lots of lovely people from very different backgrounds.”

“Hearing pupils at the end of the day be excited about the idea of going to university, when they thought it was not possible for them at the beginning is, by far the most fulfilling aspect of this job.”



111
student mentors
worked on the
2024-25 Young
Strathclyder programme

58
mentors worked on
the 2025 Accelerate
programme

 **48** current Strathclyde
undergraduate students

10 postgraduate students

 **23** mentors had worked on the Accelerate
programme previously



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, consist of 17 global goals that aim to address the most pressing challenges facing the world today. These challenges include poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The SDGs are universal, indivisible, and aim to leave no one behind. (United Nations, 2015)

Young Strathclyder addresses several of these goals, with a specific focus on SDG4 (Quality Education) and SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities). Education is a powerful tool for change, opening doors to opportunities and breaking cycles of poverty. The Young Strathclyder programme believes in the importance of accessible, inclusive, and high-quality learning experiences for all, ensuring equal opportunities for individuals based on their potential and regardless of their socio-economic or personal circumstances.

2025-26

The Young Strathclyder team aims to develop the programme in the following ways over the coming year:

Primary

- Asynchronous follow-up activities will be designed for teachers to carry out in class to reinforce and expand on programme content and maintain engagement with the Young Strathclyder programme.
- The Young Strathclyde programme will deliver more than one P5 and P7 event in several primary schools in 2025-26. These schools have been selected according to widening access and ASN criteria. Evaluation will be undertaken to see if having more points of engagement with the programme has an impact on retention of aspiration, knowledge and perceptions of university.

S2

- The programme could include more activities designed to break the ice and allow students to work closely together. There could also be defined roles in groups so pupils are encouraged to talk to each other.
- The S2 programme could potentially be run earlier, potentially in Semester 1, to ensure that every school has experienced the programme in good time for pupil S3 option choices.

Accelerate

- The numbers of care-experienced young people participating in widening access outreach activity, including the Young Strathclyder Accelerate programme, has decreased significantly post-covid-19. The Young Strathclyder team should develop further strategies with our external partners to engage greater numbers of care-experienced pupils in the future.
- Some faculties and subject areas may feel that issues of under-representation of gender and/or ethnicity, are also reflected in their current student population and the Young Strathclyder team will work with them, where appropriate, to take more concerted proactive steps to recruit accordingly in certain Accelerate subject areas.

Overall

- The Young Strathclyder Team will implement more effective means of communicating with parents/guardians about Young Strathclyder to maximise parental awareness of and engagement at all stages of the programme.
- The Young Strathclyder team should consider whether First in Family status should be an additional criterion for selecting pupils to come on the programme.
- The Young Strathclyder Primary and S2 programmes will expand into North Lanarkshire.
- Programmes of individualised support will be developed for pupils in the senior phase.
- Strategies will be developed to help support the engagement and attainment of working class boys on the different stages of the programme.
- The Young Strathclyder programme will look to develop short programmes for pupils in the Broad General Education phase of High School focussed on addressing gender imbalance in certain University subject areas and careers.



Thanks

The Young Strathclyder team would like to thank the Nairn Family Trust, Elizabeth Fagan, and the Hawthorne Family for their very generous funding of the Young Strathclyder programme.





YOUNG Strathclyde

the place of useful learning



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