



2025/26 has been a landmark year for The Polar Academy.

For the first time, we successfully delivered two expeditions alongside one another.

Despite the expansion of our programme, the impact on our young people, families, schools and communities remained as powerful as ever. We are proud to share the achievements of these remarkable teenagers and the lasting difference The Polar Academy continues to make through rigorous training, challenges, and scientific exploration.

The need for The Polar Academy has never been more apparent. Tragically the backgrounds of some of our young people include those who have been bullied, faced significant trauma, abuse, bereavement, or neglect. Some of our participants are New Scots who have been forced to leave their country because of war, and are facing the reality that, regardless of future

outcomes, they can never truly go home as their home no longer exists.

Family involvement is just as important as the effort required from the young people to train. We welcome parents, siblings and extended family into The Polar Academy and show that the community we build around them can give them a sense of belonging once more.

I'm very proud of our 2026 Graduates. Both teams undertook a transformative 12-month journey culminating in physically and mentally demanding Arctic challenges. As this was our 10th Greenlandic winter expedition, it felt like a significant milestone. The inaugural expedition to Finland was also very special to us as you never get a second chance to do a 'first'.

Thank you to the young people and families who embraced this, and to all the people who made it possible. Please enjoy a snapshot of our programme.

Craig Mathieson - Founder

THE POLAR ACADEMY'S 2025/26

May 2025 - Apr 2026: With the introduction of the Finland Expedition, we knew this year's teams needed to be pushed to be the fittest teams yet. We completed 50 fitness sessions, had over 130 days/1460 hours of engagement, provided over 1670 meals, and supplied all kit and equipment required for all activities.

May - June: Selection Weekends were in Aviemore at The Glenmore Lodge. We welcomed 30 participants, 30 parents/carers and 5 schoolteachers to our unique introduction to the outdoors.

Oct: Return visit to Glenmore Lodge for expedition skills training, including 4 classroom days and 6 days camping in the Cairngorms.

Dec: Tyre hauling endurance ran every month from December onwards. The strength of character of our young people during these sessions was humbling. They learned you can always go further than you think.

Jan: The science teams from St Andrews and Glasgow universities taught the young teams field studies in preparation for undertaking some STEM research while in country.

Feb: A logistics evening included all parents and team members to share in the planning and logistics in advance of departure day.



March 2026 expeditions

The Balwearie team skied 95km through the dense, snowy forests of Arctic Finland, while the young people from Glenrothes faced Arctic storms head on in East Greenland.

While both expeditions were in very different locations, the fundamentals of the challenges were in parallel.

Learning how to navigate, cross frozen lakes, and pull all your equipment up mountains was equally challenging in both regions.

The essentials and duties required to run a camp with around 18 people, were mirrored.

The basic skills of learning how to work together as a slick, professional team had all been honed during the past 12 months, so the confidence and competence our young people exhibited was impressive.

These young people have emerged from the Arctic stronger, fiercely confident, and fully equipped as the next generation of resilient leaders and role models.

The Polar Academy training programme continues to prove that the potential of our youth is limitless. ✨

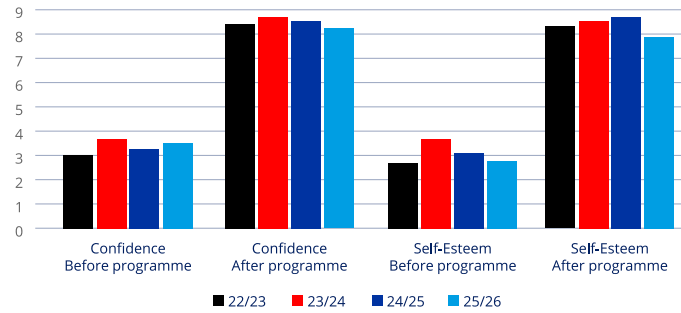
IMPACT

Over the past 4 years our track record of positive impact has maintained consistently high standards.

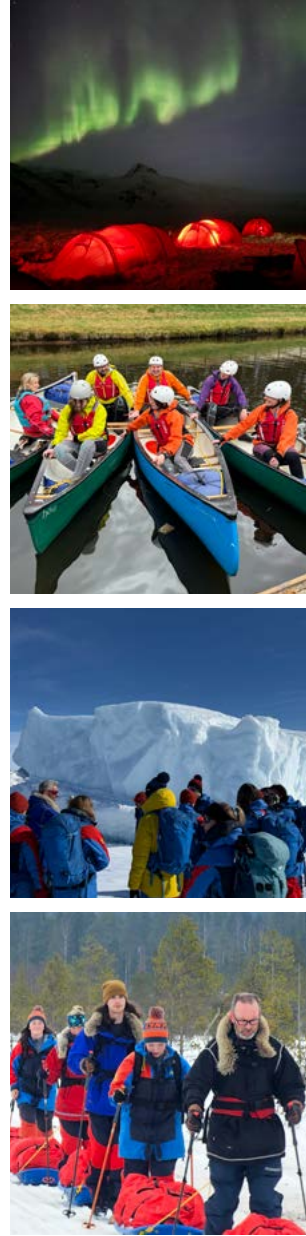
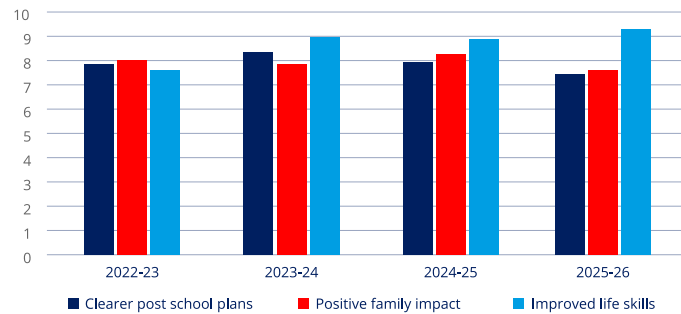
Beyond the ice, the true impact of The Polar Academy is always felt deeply at home when our explorers return.

Backed by dedicated pastoral support, our participants have stepped up as leaders, delivering transformative talks to schools and corporate sponsors. Simultaneously, their families have championed the cause through local fundraising, raising awareness, and community engagement projects.

Self-esteem and confidence impact



Post programme scores on wider impact/10



YOUNG PEOPLE FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

"Before Polar Academy I was a complete wreck because of my trauma that I thought I would never be able to recover. I didn't have any plans other than to just survive. I was always alone. My teammates are my friend group now. I never thought I'd ever manage to be this happy. Polar Academy is one of the most wonderful and beautiful things out there and I don't know how I could ever fully verbalise how grateful I am."



"The Polar Academy is completely life-changing. It was the best experience of my entire life. The Polar Academy has built my confidence enough for me to leave the house. Nature and being outdoors is now my happy place."

PARENTS WITNESSING TRANSFORMATION

"An amazing experience for our son that has taken him out of his comfort zone. He has increased his confidence levels which has led him to secure a part time job and a college course."



"Our son became the target of sustained bullying. I could see the light go out inside of him as his personality shrank. Then Polar Academy came along. I couldn't believe what I was watching... the spark he had lost was coming back. After witnessing everything he has achieved this year, I know he will get there."

A RIPPLE EFFECT ACROSS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

"Every week we saw our daughter grow in strength and confidence. Bullying, anxiety, and the social isolation she felt after Covid left her almost entirely unable to leave the house. No professional could get her to go out in public. They, and we, tried everything to help.

Now we cannot believe how transformed her life is. I watch her stride up hills and camp with her Polar Academy friends. She now fills her time with music, friendship, and being outdoors in nature. It has completely changed us as a family. Our daughter is now the person she was always meant to be."

We are enormously grateful to everyone who made this programme possible.