

'Rooted in Nature, United in Community, Growing in Kindness.'

Head Teacher Friday Blog (18) – 9 January 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we begin a new year, I would like to wish all our parents and carers a very **Happy and Healthy 2026**. The start of a new year always brings a sense of reflection and renewal, and it has been a pleasure to see our school community return with such positivity and purpose.

At the start of term, I shared with staff the importance of *living our school values* and using the New Year as an opportunity to reflect on the small but meaningful resolutions we can make as a school community. These values — ***Inclusivity, Community, Kindness and Growth*** — are being embedded throughout the Broad General Education in the Humanities Faculty lead by Mr Wyroslawski and beyond, shaping not only what we teach but how we learn, interact and support one another.

In an increasingly divisive world, these values are more important than ever. ***Inclusivity*** reminds us that everyone belongs and deserves to feel valued. ***Community*** strengthens the connections between pupils, staff and our families. ***Kindness*** underpins respectful relationships and wellbeing, while ***Growth*** encourages ambition, resilience and a belief that everyone can improve and succeed. Together, these values help our young people navigate the world with confidence, empathy and purpose.

This term is always a particularly busy one for the whole school community. It is especially important for our Senior Phase pupils, who will be receiving key feedback from recent assessments. This feedback is vital in helping them understand their progress and identify next steps as they work towards their qualifications. At this stage of the year, regular attendance, good preparation and a positive attitude are crucial. We encourage every pupil to come to school ready to do their very best — to be **prepared, ambitious and respectful** in all that they do.

As always, we know that a child's success is ***strongly*** influenced by the support and encouragement they receive at home. We very much value the partnership we have with our parents and carers, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you throughout the year ahead. By working together, we can ensure that every young person is supported to achieve their full potential.

Thank you, as ever, for your ongoing support of McLaren High School. We look forward to all that 2026 will bring.

Important Dates

22 January – S1 Parents' Evening 1630-1900 – Assembly Hall

26 January – Parent Council Meeting – In Person (McLaren Room) and online 1800-1930
(meet.google.com/smr-osfe-ccw)

School Immunisations – Thursday 15 & Friday 16 January

A reminder that next week, on **Thursday 15 and Friday 16 January**, the NHS Immunisation Team will be in school to administer the Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio and Meningitis ACWY vaccines. These vaccinations are for all S3 pupils, as well as S4–S6 pupils who have not previously received it. Pupils should check the social area on the day of their appointment for their allocated time. Immunisations will take place in the dance studio.

To help ensure the process runs smoothly, pupils should:

- Bring a **water bottle** and their **mobile phone** to their appointment
- Wear a **t-shirt under their school shirt**, or a **loose-fitting short-sleeved school shirt**

Consent forms can still be returned to the **Main Office** up to and including **Thursday 15 January**. Thank you for your continued support in helping us keep our young people safe and well.

Christmas Parcel Appeal

At McLaren High School, our values of **Community** and **Kindness** are not just words – they are lived out through the actions of our pupils, staff and families.

Our pupils and staff would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who so generously donated



food, festive treats and toiletries. The response was truly overwhelming, with a tremendous amount of donations received. As a result, we were able to create and gift hampers to many of our families within the McLaren community, offering practical support and seasonal kindness at a time when it is most needed.

A special thank you goes to our **S6 pupils**, who gave their time willingly to sort donations and carefully prepare the hampers. Their compassion, teamwork and sense of responsibility are a wonderful example of kindness in action.

Thanks to the generosity shown, we were also able to extend our support beyond the school, donating hampers to local food banks and charities across our rural communities, including **Killin and Ardeonaig Trust**, **Callander Church Hall Food Bank**, and **Start Up Stirling**. This reflects our strong belief that community extends beyond our school gates. We are also incredibly grateful to one of our local families who kindly donated all of the hamper boxes, along with Christmas sweet treats, mince pies, cakes, puddings and much more. Your generosity made a significant difference and was deeply appreciated. Finally, heartfelt thanks go to **Ms Montgomery, Mrs Fraser and Mrs Robertson** – our amazing organisers – whose dedication and hard work ensured this initiative was such a success.

Moments like these remind us of the strength of our McLaren community and the impact we can have when we show kindness to others.

Why Every Parent Should Know About *Internet Matters*

In today's digital world, young people spend more and more time online — whether it's for homework, socialising, gaming or just watching videos. With this increasing time online comes real opportunities and real risks. That's why we're encouraging all families in our school community to explore **Internet Matters** — a free, expert-led UK website full of *practical advice and tools to help keep children safe online*.

Internet Matters was created to support parents, carers and educators in navigating the ever-changing digital landscape. Since its launch in 2014, it has helped millions of families take positive steps to protect children online. More than nine out of ten parents who use the site take action to improve their child's online safety as a result.

How the Website Helps Parents

Here are some of the great ways Internet Matters supports families:

Tailored Advice by Age and Topic

The site organises guidance by **age group** (from early years through secondary) and by issue, such as cyberbullying, online gaming, fake news, inappropriate content, screen time and privacy settings. This helps parents find support that's directly relevant to their child's stage of development.

Step-by-Step Setup Guides

One of the most useful features is the *parental controls and device guides*. These walk you through how to set up safety features on phones, tablets, games and social platforms — making it easier to protect your child from harmful or unsuitable content.

Family Agreements & Conversations

Internet Matters encourages families to talk openly about online habits and agree on boundaries together. The website provides tips on how to start important conversations and set up a family tech agreement — a simple way of setting expectations around screen time and online behaviour.

Creative Resources for Home Support

You will find leaflets, posters and downloadable guides that explain online safety topics in clear, accessible ways that can help you and your child think and talk about digital risks at home.

Interactive Tools

For personalised support, Internet Matters offers tools like *My Family's Digital Toolkit*, which asks a few quick questions and then provides tailored online safety advice based on your family's needs.

A New Year's Internet Safety Resolution for Families – A Call to Action by Mr Fleming!

The New Year is often a time for fresh starts and new habits. As children spend more time online than ever, this could be the perfect moment for families to consider making an **Internet Matters resolution** — a small, manageable step that can make a big difference to online safety and wellbeing.

Your Internet Matters New Year Checklist

✓ Start the Year with Safe Settings

- ☐ Check and update **parental controls** on all devices your child uses
- ☐ Review **privacy and safety settings** on apps, games and social media
- ☐ Make sure passwords are strong and known only to your child and you

✓ Agree Clear Boundaries

- ☐ Set realistic expectations for **screen time** during the school week and weekends
- ☐ Agree device-free times, such as during meals or before bedtime
- ☐ Keep devices in shared family spaces where possible

✓ Make Talking the Norm

- ☐ Build regular check-ins about online activity into everyday conversations
- ☐ Ask what your child enjoys online — not just what worries them
- ☐ Reassure them that they can always come to you if something doesn't feel right

✓ Support Positive Online Behaviour

- ☐ Talk about kindness, respect and responsibility online
- ☐ Discuss how to deal with **upsetting content or unkind behaviour**
- ☐ Make sure your child knows how to **block and report** users or content

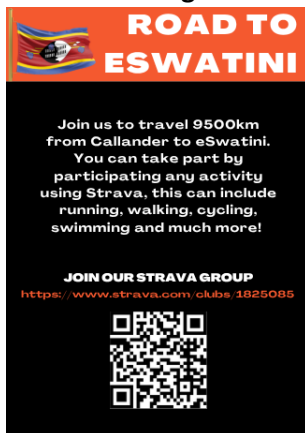
Make It Manageable

An Internet Matters resolution doesn't need to be complicated. It could be as simple as:

- setting up parental controls on one new device
- having one extra conversation about online safety
- or spending 10 minutes exploring the Internet Matters website together

Small steps now can help build safer, more confident online habits throughout the year. 🖱️ **Visit:** www.internetmatters.org for trusted advice, step-by-step guides and personalised support for families.

Active Challenge: McLaren to Eswatini



This term, our school community is taking on an exciting challenge — to **run, walk or cycle all the way to Eswatini** in support of our upcoming **World Challenge expedition in June**.

Using the **Strava app**, we are aiming to collectively cover **10,300 km**, the distance from McLaren High School to Eswatini. Every step, cycle and run logged by pupils, staff and families will contribute to our shared total.

We would love as many people as possible to get involved, particularly after the Christmas break. Simply join our **McLaren Strava Group** on your phone and log your activities to help us reach our goal.

Along the way, we'll be setting **mini challenges** with opportunities to earn **house points**, so pupils should keep an eye on **daily announcements** and their **year group Google Classroom** for updates.

Let's work together, stay active, and see how quickly we can make our way to Eswatini! **Strava Group link:** <https://www.strava.com/clubs/1825085>

Good luck, McLaren — **let's do this!**

Pupil Shout Outs

Although the holidays may be over, I am keen to share with you some of the wonderful creative work produced by our **S1 pupils**. Over the Christmas period, pupils were set a homework task to create a booklet of festive poetry, and the quality of the work submitted was impressive.

With her permission, I am delighted to include a poem written by **Elizabeth Perman (S1)**. Elizabeth has shown real creativity and care in her writing, and it is a pleasure to be able to share her work with our wider school community. I hope you enjoy reading her poem as much as we have enjoyed seeing the creativity and enthusiasm of our young learners.

Decorating the tree

We gather round a box labelled BAUBLE
My brothers begin and start to squabble
'That's my one!' 'It's yours?' 'Since when?' 'Who knows.'
While mum grabs another box of bows
We shower in tinsel. We dance in the lights.
My brothers just continue their fight.
Watching us, our elves on the shelves.
And we finish our Christmas tree, all by ourselves.

Celebrating Success at McLaren High School

At McLaren High School, we are immensely proud of our amazing and talented pupils who achieve excellence not only in school, but also within the local community and on national and international stages. Their successes — whether in academics, the arts, sport, leadership, or service — reflect the hard work, commitment, and creativity of our young people.

We are always eager to hear about these fantastic achievements and to celebrate them as a school community. To help us do this, we encourage parents and carers to share any success stories with us using the form below. By recognising and promoting these accomplishments, we can shine a spotlight on the many ways our pupils make a positive difference and inspire others.

Celebrating pupil success is an important part of our ethos at McLaren, as it strengthens our values of **inclusivity, community, kindness, and respect**, ensuring that every achievement is valued and every young person feels a sense of pride and belonging.

<https://forms.gle/QaHeFumjzXopjCFL6>

Free School Meals & Clothing and Footwear Grant

If you have a school age child and are on a low income, you may be entitled to support with school meals, clothing and footwear.

[Free School Meals & Clothing Grant](#)

Educational Maintenance Allowance

This is a payment of £30 a week, for young people who remain in school **after their 16th birthday** and meet the eligibility criteria.

[Educational Maintenance Allowance](#)

Quote for the Weekend

‘What the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year.’
Vern McLellan.

Kind regards,
Marc Fleming
Head Teacher