



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

Head Teacher Friday Blog (27) – 20 March 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Important Dates

25 March – 3rd S4-S6 Report and SQA Estimated Grades Issued

30 March – Launch of the C61 Bus Service - Callander, Thornhill, Port of Menteith, and Aberfoyle

2nd April – Last Day of Term – Easter Break Begins (Normal School Day)

20 April – Term 4 Begins & S6 Graduation (1115 – Assembly Hall) – Please confirm your attendance by email by Friday 20 March

21 April – Study leave begins for S4-S6 pupils

S6 Graduation

As we look ahead to our S6 Graduation on **20 April**, we are keen to celebrate the journey our young people have taken—from their very first days at school to the confident young adults they are today.

To help create a special photo montage for the occasion, I am asking for the support of our S6 pupils and families. If you happen to have a copy of your **Primary 1 class photograph**, particularly one that may have appeared in the *Stirling Observer*, I would be very grateful if you could share this with us.

These photographs will play an important part in marking this milestone and reflecting on the memories and experiences that have shaped this year group. If possible, please email any photographs to mclarenhs@stirling.gov.uk by **Friday 27 March**. Thank you in advance for your support in helping us make Graduation Day a truly memorable occasion for our S6 pupils.

World Happiness Report

Recent international research into young people's wellbeing highlights some important trends that are highly relevant for families and schools.

While countries such as Finland, Iceland and Denmark continue to report the highest levels of happiness globally, there is growing concern about declining wellbeing among young people in English-speaking countries, including the UK. In contrast to much of the world, young people here are reporting lower levels of happiness than they did 15 years ago.

One of the key factors identified is the impact of social media. The research shows that heavier use of social media is generally linked to lower life satisfaction. However, it is not simply about 'screen time' — how young people use technology matters. Positive activities such as messaging friends, learning, and creating content can support wellbeing, while passive scrolling and comparison-driven use can have a negative effect.

Importantly, many young people report feeling ‘trapped’ by social media, using it not because they enjoy it, but because it feels socially expected.

What stands out most clearly is that real-life connection remains the strongest driver of happiness. A sense of belonging — within school, friendships, and the wider community — has a far greater impact on wellbeing than simply reducing screen time.

The key message from this research is clear: supporting young people to build strong, meaningful relationships and a sense of community is more important than ever.

As we reflect on this research, it is particularly timely that we mark the **International Day of Happiness today**, a global initiative that encourages us all to think about what truly supports wellbeing in our daily lives.

This year’s theme focuses on the relationship between social media and happiness, recognising both the challenges and the opportunities that digital platforms bring. The message is not about removing technology altogether, but about using it more intentionally and positively.

The Day of Happiness website highlights three simple but powerful ways we can all support young people — and ourselves — to build a healthier relationship with social media:

1. Choose

Be more mindful about when and how social media is used. Encouraging young people to pause and reflect — ‘*What do I really want to do right now?*’ — can help them make more intentional choices. Setting limits, creating phone-free spaces (particularly in bedrooms), and making time for offline activities such as walking, reading or spending time outdoors can all make a significant difference.

2. Connect

Social media should never replace real human connection. The strongest contributor to happiness remains relationships. Encouraging young people to pick up the phone, spend time with friends and family, and build meaningful connections offline is key. Technology should support connection, not replace it.

3. Curate

What we see online shapes how we feel. Helping young people to follow positive, supportive content and to be aware of comparison and negativity can improve wellbeing. Promoting kindness online and encouraging young people to share uplifting messages can also help create a more positive digital environment.

For more information, please visit Action for Happiness at <https://actionforhappiness.org/>

Developing the Young Workforce

Through our *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) programme at McLaren, we continue to strengthen meaningful connections between our pupils and employers—helping to bridge the gap between the classroom and the realities of the modern workplace.

So far this session, our data highlights a significant and sustained commitment to this work:

- **122 employer-led activities** delivered
- **98 unique organisations** engaged

- **20 industry sectors** represented, including the Green Economy, Digital Technology and Healthcare

These experiences bring learning to life in a variety of impactful ways. Recent examples include:

- **Sector Insights:** Partners such as NatWest, Kier Construction and Forth Electrical Services sharing valuable perspectives on careers in finance and construction
- **Curriculum Links:** RHET and Wild Strathfillan enhancing learning in Agriculture and Biology through real-world industry engagement
- **Employability Skills:** Local employers supporting our S5/S6 Mock Interviews, helping young people develop confidence and professionalism

We are incredibly grateful to all the professionals who give their time and expertise to enrich our pupils' learning and aspirations.

Join our DYW Employer Network

If you or your organisation would be interested in supporting McLaren through a career talk, mentoring, or other partnership opportunities, please contact our DYW Coordinators, Miss Burrell or Mr Lynch: burrella04s@glow.sch.uk / lynchj04s@glow.sch.uk

A New Bus Service Supporting Our Pupils – Launch of the C61

I am delighted to share some very positive news for our school community. From **Monday 30 March**, a **new C61 bus service** will begin operating through our area, with journeys running via **McLaren High School**. This pilot service, provided by Stirling Council, is a welcome addition to local transport links and offers real benefits for our young people.

One of our ongoing priorities as a school is ensuring that pupils can fully access the wide range of opportunities we provide beyond the classroom. Whether that is **supported study**, **after-school clubs**, **sports training**, or other enrichment activities, transport can sometimes be a barrier for families. The introduction of the **C61 service** will help address this by providing additional travel options at key times of the day.

For many pupils, this means greater flexibility to remain in school after the formal day has ended—making it easier to take advantage of **extra help with learning**, prepare for **exams**, or participate in the many **clubs and activities** that form such an important part of life at McLaren High School.

The service links communities including **Callander, Thornhill, Port of Menteith, and Aberfoyle**, and travels via the **McLaren High School / Leisure Centre**, helping to strengthen connections across our local area.

As this is a **pilot service**, feedback from the community will be very important. I would encourage pupils, parents and carers who use the service to share their views so that partners can understand how well it is working and how it might develop in the future.

You can find the timetable information, FAQs and the Feedback QR Code by clicking [here](#)

I would like to thank our colleagues at **Stirling Council's Public Transport Team** for their work in introducing this new route. We hope it will make a real difference in helping our pupils stay engaged in learning, participate more fully in school life, and access the many opportunities available to them.

We look forward to hearing how pupils get on with the new service once it launches on **30 March**.

Stirling Council has an Accessibility Strategy

This is currently being revised to create a further 3 year strategy and action plan for 2026-2029.

The Accessibility Strategy is in place to ensure that we meet the requirements of Sections 1-3 of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) Act 2002. There is a legal requirement for education authorities to have an accessibility strategy for all the schools they are responsible for. When we refer to schools within the strategy this includes nursery schools and classes.

An accessibility strategy must refer to how the responsible body, in this instance the education authority, intends to plan for the following duties:

- increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability can participate in the school's curriculum
- Improve the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which pupils with disability can take advantage of education and associated services
- improve communication with pupils with disability along with communicating to them, information that is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled, in appropriate alternative formats and taking account of any preferences expressed by them and their parent/carer(s).

Stirling Council's Accessibility Strategy is part of our approach to meeting the needs of all children and young people who might require additional support to access education at some point in time. Although the strategy is required in support of learners with disabilities, our commitment is to the wider group of children and young people who have additional support needs as defined in the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004.

Your views are important to us as we revise the 3 year strategy and we thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this online survey <https://forms.gle/XfFXr3RQHJtSJBxj7> by **Friday 27th March**.

Pupil Shout Outs

McLaren Rugby

We were absolutely delighted to take part in the SP Energy Networks (SPEN) Glasgow Warriors School Championship at Scotstoun Stadium last week—an event that continues to go from strength to strength in its ninth year. Celebrating the very best of grassroots rugby, the championship brings together young people from across the country, championing teamwork, resilience and healthy, active



lifestyles. It is particularly encouraging to see the continued growth in girls' participation, reflecting the increasingly inclusive nature of the sport.

Our pupils represented the school with pride across three teams: the S1 Boys, S2 Boys and a combined S1/2 Girls squad. Across a series of competitive fixtures against Grange High School, Oban High School and Belmont Academy, all three teams secured impressive wins on the day. While we narrowly missed out on progression to the semi-finals against a strong Belmont side, the standard of play, commitment and teamwork on display were exceptional.

Beyond the matches themselves, the day offered a rich and varied experience. Pupils enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of Scotstoun Stadium and took part in an engaging STEM workshop delivered

by SP Energy Networks, providing valuable insight into careers in science and engineering. These wider opportunities are a vital part of such events, broadening horizons and sparking future aspirations.

I am incredibly proud of the dedication, sportsmanship and enthusiasm shown by all of our young people throughout the day—they were outstanding ambassadors for our school.

My sincere thanks go to Emma Forbes from McLaren Rugby Club and to Esme (S6) for their invaluable support with the girls' teams. Their contribution played an important part in making this such a successful and memorable experience for our pupils.

Ben & Alex Hart

We are absolutely delighted to celebrate a fantastic achievements in Table Tennis for our pupils.

On Sunday 15 March, at the Scottish Secondary Schools Championships held at Bathgate Academy, Ben secured the U18 Boys National Title—an outstanding accomplishment at this level of competition.

This success marks a remarkable *hat-trick* for Ben, following his back-to-back victories in the **U16 category in 2024 and 2025**. To continue this winning streak into the senior age group is a testament to his dedication, skill and commitment to his sport.



The success doesn't stop there. Ben's younger sister, Alex, also performed superbly, finishing runner-up in the U14 Girls competition—a fantastic achievement in her own right. I am also delighted to share that both Ben and Alex have been selected to represent Scotland at the British Secondary Schools Championships, which will take place in Cardiff at the end of June. This is a tremendous honour and recognition of their hard work and talent.

We are incredibly proud of both pupils and wish them every success as they go on to compete at national level once again.

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. Please use the google form if you want to keep the school updated with any achievements: [Celebrating Success - Google Form](#)

Quote for the Weekend

‘Happiness is something that comes into our lives through doors we don’t even remember leaving open.’

Rose Lane

Kind regards,

Marc Fleming
Head Teacher