



**CASHBACK  
2025/26**



# CASE STUDY

**Rugby Ambassadors & Young Leaders**  
From Participants to Leaders

# RUGBY AMBASSADORS & YOUNG LEADERS

## From Participants to Leaders

“Our ambassadors have been hugely involved in local events and developing leadership skills.” Staff Member, Leith Academy

Across several schools and communities, one of the most noticeable developments throughout Phase 6 has been the extent to which young people increasingly help shape the environments around them rather than simply participate within them.

Across Greenfield Academy, Leith Academy, St Paul’s RC High School and wider festival activity, Rugby Ambassadors regularly support transition events, primary festivals, lunchtime sessions and younger pupils entering the programme for the first time. In many environments, younger participants arriving at events are just as likely to be greeted by senior pupils refereeing games, leading warm-ups or helping sessions run smoothly as they are by staff or coaches.

That visibility matters.

For younger pupils, it helps rugby environments feel more welcoming and familiar. For the ambassadors themselves, responsibility often becomes one of the strongest drivers of long-term engagement, confidence and leadership development within the programme.

At Greenfield Academy, ambassadors regularly support transition festivals and primary activity, helping younger pupils feel more comfortable entering secondary school environments and extracurricular sport. Staff reflected positively on the way younger participants responded to encouragement from older pupils who had recently experienced many of the same anxieties around transition and participation themselves.

Leadership opportunities also proved most effective where they felt genuine rather than tokenistic. Across several schools, young people were not simply “helping out” occasionally at events. Many increasingly took responsibility for refereeing fixtures, leading activities, supporting younger groups and representing their schools within community settings on a regular basis.

At St Paul’s RC High School, senior pupils increasingly progressed from participation into coaching and officiating roles, gaining qualifications while supporting the delivery of primary rugby festivals and wider school activity. Leadership became part of the natural progression through the programme rather than something separate from it.

One pupil reflected:

“The course has allowed me to further develop communication and leadership skills.” Pupil, St Paul’s RC High School

Across several schools, staff also noted that leadership opportunities often had the greatest impact on young people who may not previously have viewed themselves as leaders within traditional school settings. Through responsibility within rugby environments, some pupils became more confident communicating with others, supporting younger groups and taking ownership within school activity more generally.

At Leith Academy and Greenfield Academy, ambassadors increasingly acted as a bridge between younger pupils, schools and local clubs. Their involvement helped strengthen continuity between different stages of participation while reinforcing wider community connection around the programme.

Within girls’ rugby activity, the visibility of female ambassadors and pathway players also became increasingly important. Across Dundee and Glenrothes activity, younger girls regularly saw older pupils coaching, refereeing and supporting sessions, helping participation pathways feel more visible and achievable.

The ambassador model also strengthened the connection between schools and their wider communities. Young people increasingly represented their schools not only within rugby fixtures, but through transition activity, local festivals and wider community events. In several cases, ambassadors continued volunteering beyond their direct involvement within School of Rugby activity, maintaining positive relationships with younger participants and local clubs over longer periods of time.

Importantly, leadership within the programme did not always emerge from the loudest voices or strongest players. In many environments, responsibility helped quieter young people become more confident, visible and engaged within school life over time.

## Reflection and Learning

Across Phase 6, leadership opportunities were most effective where young people experienced genuine responsibility, visible progression pathways and consistent encouragement over time. Rather than sitting separately from participation, leadership increasingly became part of the wider culture of the programme itself.

In several schools, Rugby Ambassadors helped strengthen transition, support younger participants and reinforce positive school and community connections. At the same time, the experience helped many young people develop confidence, communication, employability and leadership skills that extended well beyond rugby activity alone.