



**CASHBACK
2025/26**



CASE STUDY

Transition & Retention

Creating Consistency, Familiarity and Long-Term Engagement

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For many young people, the decision to continue with rugby after a first session often depended less on the sport itself and more on whether the environment felt familiar, welcoming and connected to the people around them.

Across Phase 6, one of the clearest areas of learning was that retention followed familiarity. While many young people first engaged through taster sessions, festivals or curriculum delivery, long-term participation was strongest where school, club and community environments felt connected rather than separate.

In several schools, transition activity increasingly began before pupils even arrived in secondary school. Primary festivals, ambassador-led sessions and school visits helped younger pupils become familiar with staff, coaches and older pupils before formal transition took place. In environments such as Greenfield Academy and Larkhall Academy, this early connection helped reduce uncertainty around moving into secondary school while strengthening confidence and engagement with wider school life from the outset.

The visibility of older pupils within the programme also carried significant weight. Across Greenfield Academy, Leith Academy and St Paul's RC High School, Rugby Ambassadors and senior pupils increasingly supported transition festivals, primary activity and school events, helping younger participants feel welcomed while also creating clearer pathways into wider school and community activity.

At St Paul's RC High School, senior pupils increasingly supported the delivery of primary rugby festivals and wider school activity, helping younger participants feel more comfortable within rugby environments while also strengthening continuity between primary and secondary school experiences. One pupil reflected:

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

One of the strongest areas of learning across the phase was that school-to-club transitions were far more successful where the gap between those environments felt smaller. In places such as Auchmuty High School and Glenrothes RFC, the regular presence of club coaches across both school and community activity helped young people view club rugby as a continuation rather than a completely new commitment.

This approach not only strengthened retention within rugby, but also helped young people build wider community connections and longer-term support networks through local clubs and positive peer groups. Reflecting on this, one stakeholder explained:

"Young people now see a clear pathway into club rugby and feel much more connected to the sport." Stakeholder, Glenrothes RFC / Auchmuty High School

For girls, the conditions around first engagement were particularly important. Across several schools, girls-only sessions helped create more comfortable and supportive environments where young people could try rugby without fear of judgement or pressure. In many cases, smaller groups allowed confidence, friendships and enjoyment to develop gradually before young people progressed into wider school or club activity.

As one member of staff reflected:

"The girls sessions gave pupils a chance to try rugby without feeling judged or pressured." Staff Member, Castlebrae High School

A similar pattern emerged for young people who had not traditionally seen themselves as sporty or likely to engage in rugby. Staff at Inverclyde Academy and Irvine Royal Academy reflected that sustained participation was strongest where first experiences prioritised encouragement, enjoyment and positive peer interaction rather than performance or ability.

One PE teacher explained:

"The programme has opened opportunities for young people to come out of their comfort zone and try rugby for the first time." PE Teacher, Inverclyde Academy

Across the phase, schools also reflected on the importance of consistency around young people. Staff at Alness Academy, Wester Hailes High School and Leith Academy highlighted the value of pupils regularly encountering familiar adults who provided encouragement, structure and positive expectations over time.

One stakeholder at Leith Academy explained:

“Relationships are the biggest factor. Pupils engage because they trust the staff delivering the programme.” Stakeholder, Leith Academy

Meanwhile, a stakeholder at Alness Academy reflected that School of Rugby had become:

“The one real positive association they have with school.” Stakeholder, Alness Academy

Importantly, retention across the phase was rarely driven solely by rugby performance or competition. Young people remained involved because they felt connected — to teammates, coaches, ambassadors, clubs and positive peer groups. In many environments, feeling welcomed and included became the foundation upon which wider confidence, resilience and engagement with school life were built.

As one pupil at Leith Academy described:

“You feel part of something bigger than just your year group.” Pupil, Leith Academy

Reflection and Learning

Across Phase 6, the strongest transitions were rarely created through one-off events or isolated activity alone. Young people remained engaged where environments felt familiar, supportive and connected over time. When schools, clubs, ambassadors and staff worked together to reduce uncertainty and create visible pathways, participation became easier to sustain and young people were far more likely to remain connected to both rugby and wider school communities over time.