

ABERDEEN GRAMMAR RUGBY



Embedded within this document are Strategic Aims including the ongoing management of Senior Male Rugby, the development of Female Rugby generally and the development of Junior and Youth Rugby within Aberdeen Grammar Rugby

Playing, Coaching,
Officiating: Strategic
Development Plan
Season 2025/26
Onwards

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Throughout this document text in **red** reflects aspirational initiatives for the Club.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby Strategic Plan

Embedded within this document are Strategic Aims including the management of Senior Male Rugby, the development of Female Rugby generally and the development of Junior and Youth Rugby within Aberdeen Grammar Rugby.

Mission Statement

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby has a long tradition of fostering grass roots rugby in and around Aberdeen. The vision the club is building towards is one where the pathways from the first experience of rugby through to all stages of engagement within the game is one that is clear and easy for all to understand.

Our aspiration is to create a welcoming environment to bring together a broad spectrum of individuals encompassing players, coaches, referees, supporters, local schools & Universities and the community of central Aberdeen.

Key Goals

Our key goals are to:

- develop a supportive and challenging environment to allow players, coaches, referees and all persons affiliated to Aberdeen Grammar Rugby to achieve their true potential within the sport of rugby
- create rounded individuals based on hard work, talent and social responsibility to reflect the community status of our club in central Aberdeen
- consistently produce the players and teams of the future with the support of the wider community of Aberdeen Grammar Rugby

Strategy

We will seek to achieve this by:

- adopting a forward-thinking approach to the changing nature of the game
- investing our resources in the future while engaging fully with the SRU
- providing every opportunity for the community connected to our club to be the best they possibly can be in whatever aspect of the game they chose to commit to

Key themes

Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Rugby Philosophy

Our philosophy is founded on two main guiding principles:

1. To play a brand of rugby that both excites and entertains and that achieves engagement in success for every member of Aberdeen Grammar Rugby.
2. To develop every person associated with Aberdeen Grammar Rugby as an individual and give them every possible support on their way to fulfilling their potential in rugby.

Rugby Playing Aims

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby aims to deliver an inclusive, positive playing environment and excellent player development, based on Scottish Rugby's core values of Respect, Leadership, Achievement, Engagement and Enjoyment.

To achieve this Aberdeen Grammar Rugby will:

- Provide an environment for players to develop their technical, tactical, mental and physical skills
- Educate players in nutrition, lifestyle management and game understanding
- Provide the foundations for advancement within the game for all who are engaged with the club
- Support the development of coaches and referees
- Create a strong growth mindset development culture across the club
- Engage with the local Community to enhance the club's position as a community-based centre of sporting excellence

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Culture

To develop players that embody Scottish Rugby's core values of Respect, Leadership, Achievement, Engagement and Enjoyment it is vital that the club lives and breathes the Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust ethos.

The Club actively encourages all members to respect & support each other, those associated with the club and the wider community. As well as actively recognising players that embody the core values, we propose that the Club encourages an engaged culture in multiple ways, including:

- **Match mascots:** P1-P7 players are given the opportunity to be the team mascot at home Senior 1st games.
- **Match ball boys/girls :** P7-U14 players are given the opportunity to ball boys/ girls at all home Senior 1st games.
- **Half-Time skills/matches:** P1-U13 teams are given the opportunity to play half-time matches/demonstrate skills at home First XV games.
- **Active Support:** All Youth players are encouraged to attend and support the Senior team games.
- **Senior Champions:** All Youth teams have named Senior player(s) that mentor them including attending some of their training sessions.
- **Champions Day:** Once a year all youth players attend a match day celebration of Rugby. It is intended to be a family occasion and develop our philosophy and understanding of club culture whilst assisting the integration between youth and senior teams, and Aberdeen Grammar as a whole.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Coaching and Playing the Game

At all levels we utilise qualified and experienced coaches working with a vision to produce quality rugby players where their development as a person as well as their development as a rugby player is foremost in our thinking.

From this we model these players into teams where they learn the value and worth of playing for each other and the fundamental meaning of being part of a team and a community.

To do this, as our players at all levels develop they will be supported through an evolving programme which has at its core expert individual and team rugby coaching. This is developed with strength and conditioning coaching that is age and stage appropriate, and further extended by advice on sports psychology, nutrition, and lifestyle.

All these factors are in place to allow every player, as they progress to have the best opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Key Playing Initiatives

At Senior level actively participate within the SRU National and local League and Cup (Men) structures to maintain and develop first and second team squads competing at the highest levels available within the national club game. Each season senior head coaches will identify achievable targets for the first and second teams jointly with the supporting coaches and the Director of Rugby. These will be disseminated to Senior players via managers and coaches, monitored and reviewed regularly by the Director of Rugby and the coaching staff throughout the season.

With reference to developing Women's rugby we will seek engagement with Aberdeen University to explore facilitating training sessions with a view to entering the Women's Aspiring League from **Season 2027/28**.

At youth and junior levels through a programme of focused, enjoyable weekly training and regular matches at all levels within the club, we aim to develop our players to be absolutely the best that they can be, but also to retain the spirit of enjoyment and fun that runs through the core of rugby.

Each age group in the youth section to be paired with senior squad players, to reinforce the "one club" culture. The senior players get to know, support and mentor our youth players and in turn the youth players are encouraged to support their 'Champions' during senior matches, sustaining our club ethos.

Through the appointment of a Development Officer the club will provide outreach to local schools in central Aberdeen to provide the opportunity of rugby to young people in our community. We use rugby as a vehicle to engage with youngsters and assist them in developing their fitness and skills whilst having fun.

The club will also provide outreach to both Universities in the city to assist and develop the coaching and playing structure within both Universities.

The club will reach out to the local community in central Aberdeen to encourage participation in the sport of rugby and to engage with the club in opportunities to support Aberdeen Grammar Rugby.

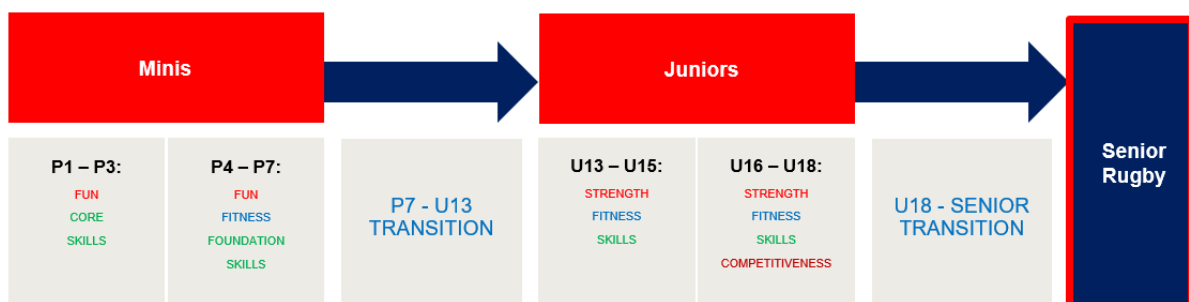
Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

The Aberdeen Grammar Granite Path

We have identified the following path for player participation within the club. This will be backed by appointed coaches, a structured programme for player and coach development and opportunities for the wider community to engage with the Aberdeen Grammar Rugby at multiple levels.

At Senior Level we have a Player Leadership Group with the Club Captain to offer leadership and guidance as well as allow players a platform to easily identify and agree matters and issues that arise during the season. That Leadership group will manage and bring forward those items on behalf of the Senior players generally.

The Granite Path



‘New-Start’ Players at Mini to Youth Level

We recognise that at all Levels, new players may join whose foundation skills and/or confidence require to be developed before they can be integrated fully with their peers in all activities. We will allocate coaches to supervise that group of players in a ‘Development’ group to focus on Foundation Skills in a 2 to 6-week period before any player is fully integrated to the relevant year group.

New players to any year group will be assessed for foundation skills by the Lead Coach for that year group and will be tracked to the Development group as directed by the Lead Coach. The point at which the new player fully joins the year group will be determined by the Lead Coach for that year group.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Player Development Programme

Red text is aspirational for Season 2026-27 and beyond

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Senior Male Whole Squad | Rugby skill optimisation Fitness Strength Tactical Mindset Competitiveness Player Plan | Rugby training twice weekly plus matches Front row workshops weekly Strength & conditioning workshops weekly Core skills evaluation monthly Nutrition workshops twice a season Growth mindset sessions twice a season Wellbeing Workshop |
| Senior Female Squad | In development | Seek engagement with Aberdeen University to explore facilitating training sessions with a view to entering the Women's Aspiring League. |
| U18 Boys Whole Squad | Rugby skill consolidation Fitness Strength Competitiveness Player Plan | Rugby training twice weekly plus matches Strength & conditioning workshops weekly Core skills evaluation monthly Nutrition workshops monthly Tactical workshops monthly Growth mindset sessions twice a season |
| U16 Boys Whole Squad | Rugby skill consolidation Fitness Strength Competitiveness | Rugby training twice weekly plus matches Regular Strength & conditioning workshops Core skills evaluation monthly Tactical workshops monthly Nutrition workshop twice a season Growth mindset session once a season |
| U15 Boys Whole Squad | Rugby skill development Fitness Strength | Rugby training weekly plus matches Core skills evaluation twice a season Nutrition workshop once a season Growth mindset session once a season |
| U13-U14 Boys Whole Squad | Rugby skill development Fitness Strength | Rugby training weekly plus matches Core skills evaluation twice a season Nutrition workshop once a season |
| U13-U15 Girls Whole Squad* | Rugby skill development Fitness Strength | Rugby training weekly plus matches Core skills evaluation twice a season Nutrition workshop once a season |
| P4-P7 Whole Squad | Fun Fitness Core rugby skills | P5-P7 training weekly plus matches P4 training/matches weekly Girls to train separately from boys in a single P4 – P7 group. P4 – P7 girls wishing to train with boys to be allowed to do so* |
| P1-P3 Whole Squad | Fun Rugby fundamentals Principles of play | Multi-sport training/fun games weekly |

* Embedded within this proposal is the requirement to establish specific Coaching teams for girls in P4-P7 and u13-u15.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Player Development Programme Specifics for Youth & Senior Rugby






Coached Strength & Conditioning (S&C) - These sessions range from basic coordination and functional movement exercises some of which can be delivered on field as part of warm ups or throughout regular rugby sessions and become more complex as the players develop, working towards core lifts that improve rugby performance and provide players with a carefully managed gym programme from u16 onwards. S&C Lead **Jack Burnett** will undertake pre-season testing and conditioning (holiday dependant) and provide a season training plan for players. In addition communication workshops at strategic points of the season such as, pre-season, start of season-season and any in-season breaks – these are physical training related with programme explanations.

Field Sessions - Additional field sessions or field session visits from specialist coaches throughout the season. These sessions to focus greatly on the development of our player's technical and tactical understanding of the game with key topics being delivered. Often these sessions may be linked to both coach education and referee development also.

Player Evaluation - All players from u13 to Senior will get periodic independent skills evaluations to ensure that players continue to develop at the right pace allowing us to offer our players specific feedback on areas to work on as well as opportunities to do so.

Classroom - Not all development needs to take place on the training ground and we propose to regularly take to the classroom to further develop our players, coaches and referees. Topics could include: Nutrition, goal setting, growth mindset, video analysis. We will also aim to provide indoor workshops to aid player understanding of the technical and tactical sessions being delivered on the field.

At the heart of our PDP lies Scottish Rugby's Blueprint and its SCOTS principles:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| S SELFLESS help the team |  | A SCOTS player will put the team first before individual success. |
| C CREATIVE problem solve in different ways |  | A SCOTS player will have a positive mindset on mistakes and the role they play in learning. |
| O OPTIMISTIC hopeful and confident about the future |  | A SCOTS player will actively seek a positive outcome to all situations and use them as learning experiences. |
| T TENACIOUS persistent in pursuit of excellence |  | A SCOTS player will have a high work ethic and push themselves to improve. |
| S SELF-ORGANISE use information to effectively coordinate as a team |  | A SCOTS player will work as a team to find solutions to tactical challenges without coach intervention. |

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Support

Development Officer **Liam Buchan** is the designated DO to develop youth and junior rugby engagement at all levels within the club.

Physiotherapy – designated physio support will be provided to the club through an identified resource. This is currently available to all senior players but could be extended to u18 and u16 youth players as well in future seasons.

Technology - The club embraces the use of technology to enhance the development of its players, coaches and referees. We facilitate the use of video analysis and individual player monitoring for Senior teams 5 via the Senior Coaching team under the Head Coach **Justin Taljaard**.

The following player wellbeing initiatives are proposed under the guidance and leadership of the Player Wellbeing lead **Don Vasey**:

- a values exercise for both the players and the club.
- taking players for up to 1 hour a week during pre-season, to look at 'framing discussions' with players.
- 'Dressing Room Focus' sessions when weather is too bad for training.

For Youth players we will adopt the **2-Year Youth Banding** in Boys rugby from u13 to u16 inclusive. See the Key Links in Appendix 2 for further information.

Transition from Youth rugby into the Senior Teams

One of our aims is to support our senior teams by developing our young players to the point where they can successfully make the transition into the senior rugby. We propose a structured and managed programme of continuous improvement with u18 and Senior players developing a personal plan for their own development. Each players' personal plan will be critically reviewed to establish areas of further development.

Where players are deemed ready to progress into the senior game, our DO, Senior Team Managers and u18 coaches will ensure that they are supported through this transition via a graduated approach to ensure a successful move that supports both the needs of the player and the senior teams. It is important to recognise that this transition is not necessarily a traditional linear progression through the senior teams from u18 to Senior second to Senior first but where deemed appropriate the DO, managers and coaches will provide opportunities for players to enter at a level appropriate to their abilities.

Player Welfare

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby strives to achieve best practice in player welfare with the safety and well-being of always at the forefront of all activities. From World Rugby's best practice of Putting the Player First through to Scottish Rugby's own frameworks for player welfare a strong set of advice, guidance and protocols are available to ensure everyone understands their roles in player welfare. To achieve this, our management, coaching and support staff strive to:

- Keep up to date with and follow good practice coaching guidelines
- Properly supervise players during rugby activity
- Make rugby enjoyable and promote fair play principles
- Treat all players with respect, dignity and fairness
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust and respect
- Include players in the decision-making process wherever possible and appropriate
- Work in an open environment, wherever possible
- Be excellent role models
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the individual developmental needs and capacity of players

To help achieve this at Junior and Youth level we will work with the Scottish Rugby Unions model of best practice that includes:

- Following Scottish Rugby Ready and age grade policies
- Ensuring suitable and robust recruitment for volunteers and staff to work with young players
- All coaches holding a PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) certification, in line with current practice
- Placing value on the efforts and achievements of all players involved, including those on other teams
- Putting the welfare and development of players first before winning or achieving team performance goals
- Appointing suitably trained (both UKCC and First Aid) coaches and managers
- Ensuring there is a clear way for young players and parents to raise any concerns
- Proactively working to our child protection policy
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible
- Ensuring staff/volunteers are up to date with good practice in welfare and child protection
- Following medical advice and protocols relating to injury prevention and management.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Coach Development Programme

In parallel to the Player Development Programme the club is also committed to developing a Coaching Development Programme, working closely with the Scottish Rugby Union to ensure that our coach education and support is well planned, thorough and allows our coaches to fully support the PDP. The Coaching Development Programme is based on maintaining a minimum number of 2 coaches holding recognised qualifications at Senior and at each Junior and Youth age Group.

Refereeing Development

Rugby cannot take place without match officials. The development of a pathway to refereeing is a key aim of Aberdeen Grammar Rugby. Working with the Scottish Rugby Union the club will offer opportunities for referee development and support. We will actively support those members seeking to become match officials within the sport.

The Community

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby is committed to contributing towards our community in and around central Aberdeen.

We have a dedicated Finance Director to lead a team to develop a number of different long-term programmes including:

- engaging community-minded businesses to become involved in a range of sponsorship initiatives at Aberdeen Grammar Rugby
- fundraising
- providing volunteers for activities
- helping to promote the Club's exposure within our area

All players, coaches, officials, supporters and parents will be encouraged to become actively involved in as many of these activities as possible.

Examples could include:

1. With the support of the SRU, organise at least two community clean-up days a year that aims to bring everyone together to have fun and improve the appearance of the local community
2. Fundraising for charities. Hold at least one large event every year
3. Helping out at local hospices and care centres.

Engagement with Other Local Clubs

Where appropriate it will be the aim of Aberdeen Grammar Rugby to support other local rugby clubs in sharing knowledge and resource at every level to further the development of the sport of rugby in the north-east of Scotland.

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby: Enjoyment-Engagement-Trust

Infrastructure Development Plan

Aberdeen Grammar Rugby will implement an Infrastructure Development Plan focussing on Harlaw Playing Fields to provide a Community-facing facility for the sport of Rugby, with the backing of Scottish Rugby, Aberdeen City Council and the wider local community. The phasing could include:

Phase 1: Removal of the wall between Harlaw and Rubislaw. Provision of a secured (fenced) floodlit Third Generation (3G) full size rugby pitch, at least one grass full size rugby pitch plus two half-size training pitches. Target Completion **November 2028**.

NB. Aberdeen City Council are proposing to provide sports changing rooms with wc/showers, lecture/meeting space at the existing (currently derelict due for demolition) Harlaw Pavilion at the north (Harlaw Road) boundary. Current scheduled completion is September 2027.

Phase 2: Provision of a one- storey building for use as a Community Facility comprising gymnasium/weights room, social/events space with adjacent wc areas, reception/administration, plant and storage areas.

A programme for the full phasing will be developed in conjunction with Scottish Rugby and Aberdeen City Council.

Coaching Appointments for Season 2025/26

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | Development Officer | Liam Buchan |
| Senior Male Squad | Head Coach Specialist Coaches S&C Lead Player Wellbeing 1 st Team Manager 2 nd Team Manager | Justin Taljaard Marc Muir, Matt Rowlands Jack Burnett Don Vasey John Stewart TBC |
| Senior Female Squad | In development | |
| U18 Boys | Lead (Coaching by Senior Coaching team) | Aaron Robertson |
| U13 to u16 Boys (separate squad for each age grouping) | Refer to Club Website for Appointments | |
| U13-U15 Girls (single squad) | In development | |
| P4 – P7 Boys (separate squad for each age grouping) | Refer to Club Website for Appointments | |
| P4 - P7 Girls(single squad) | Refer to Club Website for Appointments | |
| P1 – P3 | Refer to Club Website for Appointments | |
| Development Group | Lead | Refer to Club Website for Appointment |

Author

This Plan has been developed by Kevin Burnett, Director of Rugby, through Season 2025/26 for adoption by the whole club of Aberdeen Grammar Rugby.

Appendix 1 : u14s Code of Conduct for 2022/23 (kept as Guiding Principles for all Aberdeen Grammar Rugby Players)

These are the guiding principles the **2022/23 u14s** squad created themselves:

We show respect

1. We will pay attention when the coaches are talking
2. We will not interrupt our team-mates when they are talking
3. We will arrive at training on time, or early

We demonstrate a work ethic

1. We will do our best whether the task is new or repeated
2. We will ask when we are not sure about what we are doing
3. We will encourage our team mates to work hard

We feel included and have fun

1. Rugby is a team sport and we will ensure that no one is excluded
2. We learn from mistakes so we will encourage each other when we make them
3. If we see someone struggling we will speak up and/or tell the coaches

Appendix 2 : SR SCRUMS Key Links

Player Eligibility and Game-time regulations and best practice [SR Player eligibility video](#)

A number of helpful downloads have been linked on SCRUMS GAINLINE as below:

SR Blueprint: [Gainline \(scottishrugby.org\)](#)

Law Trials Season 25/26: TBC

Age Grade Law Variations: [Gainline \(scottishrugby.org\)](#)

Boys Blueprint: [Gainline \(scottishrugby.org\)](#)

Girls Blueprint: [Gainline \(scottishrugby.org\)](#)

Scottish Rugby Contacts: [Competition Team](#)

Age Banding – Play Up/Down Applications All guidance is on the [Age Banding webpage](#).

Schools & Youth National Competition Rules Season 25/26. The revised document is available for download from the [S&Y Competitions webpage](#).

Schools & Youth E-Learning Course 25/26 for all Youth Directors/Convenors, and coaches or team managers of U15-U18 teams. [The course can be found here](#), or alternatively via the Browse Courses tab on the lefthand menu when you log in to SCRUMS.

Appendix 3 : Guidance and Behaviour of Parents and Spectators

It is really important for parents to support their and **all** children in the Sport of Rugby. Key Principles we ask all Parents and Spectators attending games, training and all interactions at Aberdeen Grammar Rugby to commit to and adopt are:

- **Remember children play for their fun, not yours**
- **Applaud all good play**
- **Never ridicule a child for losing or making a mistake**
- **Praise your child's efforts, win or lose**
- **Focus on the performance and not the result**
- **Children learn best from good role models!**
- **Don't use bad language or allow others on the touchlines to use it either**
- **Respect the decisions of the match officials**
- **Respect and encourage ALL players, regardless of the team they play for**

We encourage all parents to '**Be a Great Rugby Parent**'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hgi1ole4BB0>