



The Robert Burns Academy And Supported Learning Centre

“Where We Belong”



School Handbook

2025.26



Welcome

Welcome to the handbook of The Robert Burns Academy. Our school motto, “*Where we belong, where we reach our potential*” captures the essence of what we stand for as a community.

We are committed to improving outcomes for all of our children and this is reflected in our school improvement priorities:

Our Attainment, Achievement and Destinations	Our Attendance and Belonging	Our Skills Development
To improve our ethos of inclusion, equity and equality to support attainment and achievement for all young people. To raise overall standards in attainment at all levels and stages with a campus wide focus on improving standards in literacy and numeracy. There will be an additional focus on ensuring we work towards closing the poverty related attainment gap	To improve Health and Wellbeing to enable our children and young people to thrive focusing on increasing school attendance and readiness to learn. To develop our approaches to school connectedness. To improve Health and Wellbeing of our young people, families and overall school community with a focus on developing better approaches to promoting positive relationships	To improve our approaches to learning, teaching and assessment To develop and improve our curriculum offer. Support all school learners to develop skills for learning, life and work. Develop a comprehensive professional learning framework to support leadership development at all levels including collaborative enquiry, practitioner enquiry, evidence-based practice and pedagogies
Underpinned by our Values of		
Achievement	Respect	Equity

Our values guide everything we do:

Achievement

We celebrate success in all its forms and provide rich opportunities to grow and learn.

Respect

We treat one another with kindness, dignity and fairness, nurturing confidence and strong relationships.

Equity

Every learner is supported to access the education, experiences and opportunities they deserve.

Our **Ready, Respectful and Safe** expectations help us build a positive learning culture where young people can thrive academically, socially and personally. We are an inclusive school rooted in the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), children's rights, and a trauma-informed approach to wellbeing.

Our school is a non-denominational comprehensive mainstream school with a supported learning centre within - **Together we ARE The RBA!**

Our school roll as of January 2026 is 1572 broken down as follows:

S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
307	279	311	326	240	109

Our current school roll is 1572 and we have capacity for circa 1700. We have approx. 102 core teaching staff and we do not offer Gaelic Medium.

We are really proud of all of our pupils: their achievements, their spirit, their creativity and their kindness. We are equally proud of our dedicated staff who strive every day to provide high-quality learning, strong support, and a wide range of experiences that prepare our young people for life beyond school.

It is our desire that all parents/carers, pupils, staff, and partners also take great pride in being members of our school community. We have a large school community and welcome pupils from Cumnock, Auchinleck and surrounding villages. See Appendix 1 for details of our associated primary schools.

Please get in touch if you would like to arrange a visit or attend one of our open events—we look forward to meeting you.

Tracy Stewart

Head Teacher

A message from our School Captains

We are incredibly proud to be School Captains of The RBA and even prouder to represent a school that means so much to us. The RBA has been a place where we have grown—not only in our learning, but as people. We've had opportunities to take part in clubs, leadership, community projects and experiences we'll never forget.

What makes this school special is the sense of belonging. Whether you love sports, are passionate about music and Art/Science and Maths, or are still figuring out what interests you most, there is a place for everyone here. You'll be supported, encouraged and challenged to reach your potential, just like we have been.



We hope that your time at RBA is filled with achievement, friendships and memories that will stay with you long after you leave.

Jayden and Lennon

Communication

Methods of communication which are inclusive of telephone calls, meetings, letters and emails will be utilised by staff across the school to communicate with parents/carers.

At The RBA, we believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- provides parents/carers with the information they need to support their young person's education and attainment.
- helps us as a school community to improve through on-going feedback and consultation with parents/carers.
- builds trust between home and school, which ensures each young person's needs are supported.

Below you will find our methods of communicating with parents – this helps to set clear standards and expectations for responding to, and communicating with parents/carers.

IOS/Android APP

Communication may take a variety of forms and our main method of communication is via Parent Pay. Download 'Safer Schools Scotland' from the App store and search for The Robert Burns Academy. Office staff can provide the joining code.

SMS

SMS messages are sent to the main contact held on SEEMIS to provide daily attendance updates. Occasionally, we will also issue SMS messages directing parents/carers to specific information on the school app, or if providing updates on matters such as return times from residential trips. Some department Principal Teachers will share homework updates via SMS on occasion.



Email

To contact our office please contact us on earobertburns.ac@eastayrshire.org.uk

Our Address

The Robert Burns Academy Auchinleck Road
Cumnock
KA18 1FQ
01290 427 280

Newsletters

From January 2026 we will issue a monthly Newsletter via the Parent Pay App to all parents/carers to highlight activities, successes and key messages. Each Newsletter will contain House Team contact details should you need to identify the appropriate member of staff to contact.

Tracking Reports and Full Report Cards

These are issued throughout the academic session to share information with parents/carers regarding their young person's learning. These will be issued directly to the young people at Personal Support. A text will be sent home to parent to alert them to the release of these reports.

School Website and Social Media

THE ROBERT BURNS ACADEMY – The Barony Campus

This is regularly updated and contains key information pertaining to The RBA, alongside this we use Instagram [@TheRBA_2024](#) to share information with parents/carers and the wider community.

Contact Details – Parental Responsibility

All parents/carers will be asked to complete an annual data check. This allows us to double check contact and emergency contact details for all pupils. At all other points in the school year, we ask that you contact us if any of the following change.

- Home Address
- Telephone Number(s)
- Email address
- Name and details of emergency contacts

If we are unaware of changes to any of the above, we may not be able to pass on important information or make contact in the case of emergency. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that we hold accurate contact details.

Communication Turnaround Times

Instant communication with staff can be challenging during a school day where teachers may be teaching full time, running clubs at social times, attending/leading meetings and supporting young people. We understand that it may be frustrating or disappointing if contact does not elicit an immediate response, however our aim is to respond to parents/carers within **3 working days** unless the matter is deemed to be an emergency. The sharing of crucial information with the office staff will ensure that a comprehensive message is passed to the appropriate member of staff. Return contact may be made by someone other than the person to whom the original contact was made, should it be felt that this is more appropriate.

Parents/carers should not expect staff to respond to their communications out with school hours or during holidays. This is at the discretion of individual members of staff.

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with East Ayrshire Council's Managing Unacceptable Contact Policy.

Communication Protocols

We understand that not all parents/carers reside together. Please note the following in terms of communication with parents/carers residing apart.

The school hold a reasonable expectation that the main contact held on SEEMIS will pass on details of daily attendance and any informal communication received from school. This applies universally, in that even where parents/carers reside together, the school SEEMIS system holds one main contact only. There is no distinction made on SEEMIS as to the living arrangements of parents/carers. Regardless of where the other parent/carer resides, SEEMIS will send daily

attendance notifications to the main contact only. It is not possible against the limitations of the system to generate the automated message necessary to inform all parents/carers.

Likewise, for informal communication, such as general updates around behaviour, attainment and progress, Pastoral Care and school staff will call or contact the main contact only. For obvious reasons against time and resource, it is not practical to call two different parents/carers about the same matter. In this regard, no pupil is treated differently, as only the main contact for each child will receive attendance updates and/or informal communication. However, should a parent/carer not residing with the main contact have cause to be concerned that the main contact is not passing information on, they should contact their child's Pastoral Care teacher who will engage with the main contact to request that they do so. The school's position is that as adults with shared responsibility for a child, parents/carers should work together to take a shared interest in the learning journey of their child.

Formal Communication – Parental Rights

As long as the school are made aware, we will always send on formal communication to parents/carers residing apart from the main contact. The main challenge in this regard is internal tracking, as parental and family arrangements can change without our knowledge, as can the administrative staff managing contact lists. Where you know that you should have received something from the undernoted list that you have not received, please make contact with office staff as soon as practically possible, and we will ensure that you receive that which you are entitled to.

- School Reports
- Parents' Night invitations
- Prelim Results and formal change of level for SQA/national courses
- Invitations to Team with the Family or Child's Plan meetings
- Communication pertinent to formal exclusion

Meetings and Parents' Nights

On occasion, there may be need for school staff to meet with parents/carers in person. This may be because school staff, parents or a partner agency has called a Team with the Family meeting, or to review a child's plan. For all meetings, staff will host one meeting only, whereby all parents/carers are invited to attend. Against available school resource, and the fact that almost all staff have teaching commitments and a high caseload, it is not practical or necessary to host different meetings for different parents/carers. This is well established standard practice. The only exception is in cases whereby legal limitations prevent this, e.g. a restraining order or similar.

While empathetic, school staff have no role to play in mediating between parents/carers who may not otherwise communicate with one another often. Hosting separate meetings presents many unworkable challenges, mainly around securing attendance against resource at different times/on different dates and securing attendance of partner agencies where relevant. As the meeting concerns the needs of a pupil, and is not a meeting about parents/carers, it is viewed as reasonable and appropriate to host one meeting only, as is the case in almost all public sector services for children.

The same is true of Parents' Evenings. Staff have a finite number of appointments, and in a secondary school context, may not be able to see all families (albeit staff often go beyond time to do so). We cannot reasonably schedule two separate parents' night appointments for the parents/carers of one child at the expense of offering appointments to parents/carers of all children. Similarly, we cannot reasonably ask staff to duplicate work unnecessarily against all of the above.

General Information

School Day

We share our Campus with Lochnorris Primary and Supported Learning Centre, Hillside School and Cherry Trees Early Years Centre.. The various opening hours of all establishments contribute to the need for our school to run an asymmetric week, with four longer days than most schools and one shorter day on Fridays.

School Hours Monday – Thursday

Period	Starts	Ends
PS	8.45	8.55
1	8.55	9.45
2	9.45	10.35
Interval	10.35	10.50
3	10.50	11.40
4	11.40	12.30
5	12.30	1.20
Lunch	1.20	2.00
6	2.00	2.50
7	2.50	3.40

School Hours Friday

Period	Starts	Ends
PS	8.45	8.55
1	8.55	9.45
2	9.45	10.35
Interval	10.35	10.50
3	10.50	11.40
4	11.40	12.30

School Holidays and Inservice Days

East Ayrshire Council has published school holiday and Inservice information here:

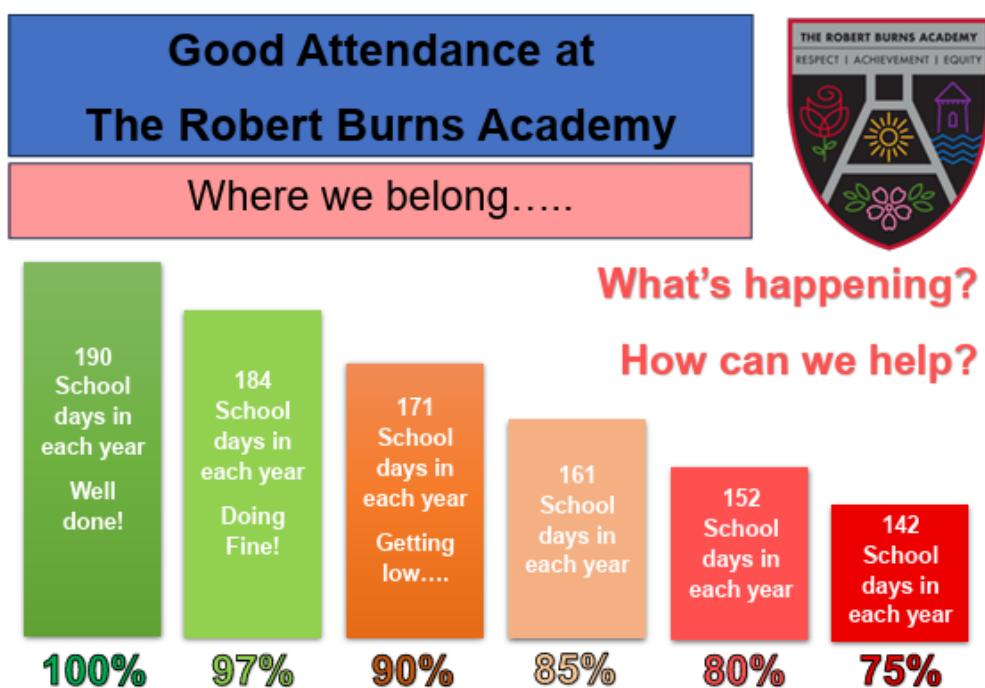
<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schoolholidays.aspx>

Attendance and Timekeeping

Absences should be reported by using the facility within the school app or by calling the school on

01290 427 280

We monitor attendance closely, with three group calls per day sent to main contacts to pick up on anomalies and ensure that we are aware of any transient absence. Where a young person is not marked as present and we are unaware of any valid reason for their absence, parents/carers will generally receive text message notification of absence.



Why attend?

Build a bright future: Every day in school helps you gain skills, knowledge, and qualifications that open doors to exciting opportunities.

Discover your talents: School gives you the chance to explore subjects, hobbies, and skills you might love and excel at.

Make and keep friends: School is where lifelong friendships begin, and being present helps you stay connected.

Achieve your personal goals: Regular attendance keeps you on track to meet your aspirations, whether it's university, college, or a dream career.

Feel safe and supported: School is a place where adults care about your wellbeing, provide guidance, and keep you safe.

Have your voice heard: Attending gives you opportunities to share your opinions, ideas, and make a difference in your school community.

Routine and structure: Coming to school every day helps develop routines and life habits that support success beyond education.

Ready to Learn and Achieve

Dress Code

We work hard to foster a sense of community and identity. Promotion of school uniform helps us to create unity and togetherness. Given that we welcome pupils from a vast geographical area, we feel that this is an important feature of our school and ensures that our pupils can be recognised across East Ayrshire. Please be assured of the fact that we will always assist families for whom uniform costs are a barrier to following our dress code.

Our school dress code is black and white and consists of the following:



Compulsory Items:

- S1 to S4 pupils - white shirt, polo shirt
- S5 & S6 pupils – black shirt, polo shirt
- Black trousers, skirt, smart non-branded jogging trousers, shorts or thick leggings,
- Black jumper/cardigan, sweatshirt or hooded top.
- Black shoes or trainers
- School bag



Non-Compulsory Items:

- School blazer
- School tie



Technical and other Practical Subjects

Pupils will be asked to remove hooded tops and loose clothing like scarves, to ensure they are safe when using any form of machinery. Please ensure your child has an appropriate item of clothing on underneath their hoodies.

In other practical subjects like Home Economics (HE), Science & Art & Design pupils may be asked to tuck in their hoods/toggles (if wearing a hooded top) or remove them completely to ensure they are safe when using some pieces of equipment.

Hooded Tops and Hats

It's expected that hoods are worn down and hats should be removed when in the school building. This enables clear identification of pupils and intruders.

Logos

Clothing with logos are discouraged. Where an item has a branded logo, this should be discrete and smaller than a bank card.

Mobile Phones in School

We are always looking for ways to improve the learning experience and wellbeing of our students. After careful consideration and feedback from staff and young people, introduced a mobile phone procedure called “Bag It or Box It”

This aims to reduce the negative impact of mobile phones during lesson times, while still allowing responsible use during break and lunchtimes.

Why did we do this?

Our young people and staff have increasingly spoken about issues caused by mobile phone use during the school day, including:

- Disruptions in class, particularly when pupils make or take calls during lessons;
- Recording teachers or other pupils without their permission;
- Reduced focus and engagement with learning activities;
- Social media distractions and online safety concerns including bullying comments and unkind images being sent

To address this, pupils will be expected to either:

Bag it – keep their phone switched off and stored in their school bag during lessons, or

Box it – place their phone in a classroom box at the start of the lesson, to be returned at the end of the lesson

Mobile phones may still be used during break and lunchtime, provided usage is respectful and does not disrupt others.

We believe this policy strikes a fair balance between promoting focus and encouraging responsible mobile phone use. Your support at home in reinforcing these expectations is very much appreciated.

However, where pupils take mobile phones out without permission during class time, school staff will correctly ask that the phone is put away. Young people will always be given an opportunity to put their phone away. If a young person refuses to do so, phones will be held in the school office for collection by the pupil at the end of the school day.

Where there is a habitual pattern of young people using their phones during class time without the permission of staff, we will ask that families keep the device at home for a time limited period. On some occasions, families request that young people hand their phone in to the office in the morning and collect it at close of day. We would only facilitate this request if there is a pattern of phone use outwith break and lunch.

We are grateful to parents/carers for recognising that the above approach is both correct and proportionate. There is ample opportunity at break, lunch and when at home to use mobile devices for social purposes. Any pupil doing so habitually during class time has no reason to do so and we have a duty of care to ensure that they neither fall behind in their learning nor develop a dependence on their phone that is potentially unhealthy in the long term.

Our Curriculum



Fig:5.0: Scotland's Curriculum Framework (Education Scotland, 2019a)

Scotland's Curriculum is evolving and through engaging with the work carried out by our Local Authority and Nationally we are reviewing our model.

Developing our curriculum is part of our improvement journey and we are currently working through year two of our three-year cycle.

Our curriculum is designed to provide a **broad, coherent and inclusive learning experience** from S1 to S6 that supports all children and young people to achieve their full potential. This curriculum is planned and delivered in line with **Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)**, which aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for learning, life and work in an ever-changing world. The curriculum is structured around *Experiences and Outcomes* across all curriculum areas, with flexible progression pathways reflecting individual needs and aspirations.

Planning and Delivery

Our curriculum is collaboratively planned by department heads, teachers, and support staff to ensure a balanced programme of learning, teaching and assessment. Learning is delivered through a combination of classroom-based experiences, outdoor learning, digital technologies and real-world contexts. We actively integrate cross-curricular skills, ensuring that literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are developed across all subjects and through whole-school approaches.

Skills for Learning, Life and Work

We provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop essential skills for learning, life and work in and out of the classroom. This includes:

- Developing **literacy and numeracy** across all subject areas.
- Enhancing **health and wellbeing**, including emotional resilience, active lifestyles and positive relationships.
- Careers education, work-related learning, enterprise activities and partnership work that supports progression into employment, further education, training and volunteering.

Pupil Voice and Choice

Young people have meaningful opportunities to influence their learning and experience choice in what and how they learn. This includes involvement in planning learning pathways, course option

choices, and participation in pupil voice groups and leadership forums. Parents and carers are consulted through curriculum evenings, open communication channels and regular reporting, ensuring home-school partnership supports learner success.

Senior Phase Choices and Pathways

In the Senior Phase (S4–S6), pupils receive guidance to make informed course and pathway choices that align with their strengths, interests and future plans. This includes options for staying on at school, **work-based learning, college links, community-based learning, volunteering and other accredited qualifications** that support progression to positive destinations. It should be made clear that **current course options reflect our present curriculum offer and, due to changing pupil numbers, may vary when a new cohort reaches the Senior Phase.**

Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence

CfE is fully embedded across the school through a shared focus on the four capacities — *Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors*. Learning experiences are designed to balance depth of knowledge with development of skills and attributes that pupils will use throughout life.

Sensitive Aspects of Learning

We recognise the importance of informed, age-appropriate learning in areas such as **sexual health, relationships, parenthood, drugs and alcohol awareness**. These topics are delivered within PSE programmes, ensuring pupils receive accurate, respectful and supportive education. Parents will be informed in advance about the nature and timing of sensitive curriculum through a PSE update and can contact school staff to discuss any concerns or insights.

Religious Instruction and Observance

As a non-denominational school, we provide opportunities for religious education and reflection within our curriculum. Parents who wish to exercise the right to withdraw their child from religious instruction or observance should contact the school to discuss arrangements in line with national guidance and East Ayrshire Council policy.

Assessment and Reporting

Young people will be assessed regularly through a mixture of formative and summative assessment. Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels still include work that is assessed by teachers and lecturers, but pupils will also have to pass a course assessment for these qualifications – usually an examination paper and/or coursework which will be marked by SQA.

The purpose of reporting is to support and improve learning. It should be an on-going process which provides clear information on a learner's strengths, areas for development and specifically what needs to be done to ensure continued progress. As much as possible, learners should be involved in the reporting process through on-going reflection and dialogue about their learning. It is also important that reporting fully involves and values the role of parents and carers. We know that parental engagement has a significant impact on learners' progress.

Full reports contain in-depth comment on a learner's progress and next steps in learning, along with strategies to support learning at home. Reports are often issued around the time of option choices for the next session to ensure young people can make informed choices about future pathways.

All reports will be issued by bag drop and a text will be sent home to parents/carers to let them know that the report is in their child's bag. It is always our intention to ensure that reports are issued to all parents/carers who should receive reports. We understand that some family circumstances necessitate the issuing of report to more than one parent/carer separately. We make every effort to retain an accurate list of those pupils for whom we need to issue two reports separately. Where your family circumstances change and you require separate reports, please notify us as soon as possible.

Information to help clarify the meaning of the terminology used in reports is sent out at the time of reporting. Parents' Evening and Reporting dates for session 2025/26 will be released in August 2025 via the school app. The app also provides ongoing access to a parent/carer calendar.

Senior Leadership Team

Our Senior Leadership Team is comprised of:

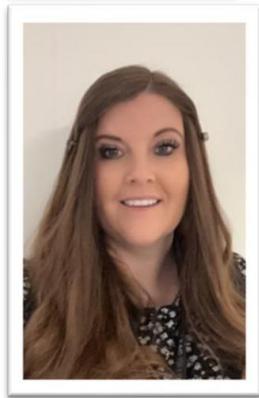
- 1 Head Teacher/Head of Campus
- 1 Depute Head Teacher (Primary and Secondary Transition)
- 5 Depute Head Teachers (Secondary)



Tracy Stewart

Tracy.stewart@eastayrshire.org.uk

Tracy is the Head Teacher of The Robert Burns Academy and the Head of the Barony Campus



Michelle Anderson

Michelle.Anderson@eastayrshire.org.uk

Depute Head Teacher Primary/Secondary Transition Year Group Head for S1

Michelle's remit involves her working with all of our associated primary schools getting to know our children and their families as early as possible to ensure that we are ready for their transition to the academy.

Michelle is also the Year Group Head for all pupils in their S1 at The Robert Burns Academy and Supported Learning Centre.

Amanda McPheator

Amanda.McPheator@eastayrshire.org.uk

DHT Pupil Support / Supported Learning Centre (SLC)

Amanda's main strategic remit is to have the overview for our Support for Learning procedures and processes. This involves her leading on the improvements at universal, targeted and enhanced targeted levels of support for young people with additional support needs.

Amanda is also the Child Protection and Prevent Coordinator for The Robert Burns Academy and all safeguarding concerns should be reported to her in the first instance.

Amanda is also the Year Group Head for S3 pupils until June 2026





Ruth Sheppard

Ruth.Sheppard@eastayrshire.org.uk

Depute Head Teacher

Ruth's strategic remit is to develop a strategic overview for learning, teaching and assessment. This includes developing a system to record, track and recognise positive achievements both in and out of school. She links with a number of departments and has the year group head responsibility for S4 pupils.

From June 2026, Ruth will be year group head for S2 at The Robert Burns Academy and Supported Learning Centre.

Jennifer Macara

Jennifer.Macara@eastayrshire.org.uk

Depute Head Teacher

Jennifer's main strategic remit is to lead on all developments regarding to pupil wellbeing. As part of her remit, she is the lead for the Principal Teachers of Guidance and has the strategic overview for all matters pertaining to wellbeing for example, school ethos and culture, attendance and relationships. She is instrumental in working to refresh our school identity.

Jennifer is the current Year Group Head for S2 and will move to S3 from June 2026 for the RBA and the Supported Learning Centre



Paul McGurn

Paul.McGurn@eastayrshire.org.uk

Depute Head Teacher

Paul's strategic remit is to lead on developing our school curriculum in line with the national developments. Paul is the SQA coordinator which means he ensures that all processes and procedures relating to the Scottish examination system are followed.

His year group head responsibility is for S5 and from June he will take over S4 for the RBA and the Supported Learning Centre



Vicky Grove

Vicky.Grove@eastayrshire.org.uk

Depute Head Teacher

Vicky's strategic remit is to develop policies and procedures pertaining to the national agenda "developing the young workforce". She also leads on ensuring our young people all leave school into a positive and sustained destination. She is our school timetable maker and has an overview of staffing.

She is the year group head for S6 and in June she will also be the year group head for S5 for the RBA and the Supported Learning Centre.

Vicky is our Depute Child Protection and Prevent Coordinator.

Parent Council

Welcome to The Robert Burns Academy's Handbook.

My name is Jillian D'Agostino, and I am the current Chairperson of the school's Parent Council.

Starting at a new school is an exciting chapter in the lives of our young people. As parents and carers, we all want it to be the best possible experience for them and it is important that we, as parents, are represented.

Your Parent Council is involved in shaping the immediate and longer-term priorities of our school and participate in the recruitment of senior staff and pupil leaders.

Our annual Parent Council Annual General Meeting (AGM) usually takes place in the September of each year. The AGM is a time also when new parents and carers are formally invited to join the Parent Council. However, I want to let you know that all carers and parents are welcome to attend any meeting should you wish to. We all have one common goal; to support the whole school community to be a success. The success of our Head Teacher and all staff is the success of our children. We are here to help.

We also have a very active fundraising committee within the Campus and would welcome your input there.

You can view the minutes of all of your Parent Council meetings on our school website.

Although the Head Teacher is not a member of the Parent Council, she has the right to attend and participate in all Parent Council meetings.

If you have an interest in attending a meeting or joining the Parent Council, you are welcome! If you simply want to have a chat about school with another carer/parent, you are also welcome to drop me a message. I can be contacted via therobertburnsacademy@gmail.com

Jillian

Parent Council Chairperson

Primary to Secondary Transition

A robust Primary Transition programme is vital so that all of our Primary 7 pupils have a smooth transition to secondary school.

To ensure this happens here at The Robert Burns Academy, we work closely with our associated primary schools to gather relevant pastoral and attainment information.

This work is led by our DHT Michelle Anderson.

Universal Transition

Our universal (open to all) transition programme includes

- two “bump up days”,
- evening activity events that all pupils and parents/carers are welcome to attend,
- a Primary 7 information evening
- school tour,
- and the offer of a parents/carer drop-in session prior to starting S1.

We are also offer a Universal Support and Literacy Evening to give parents/carers and pupils the opportunity to ask questions and meet our Support for Learning Team. Throughout your child's P6 and P7 stages in primary Mrs. Anderson visits all pupils in our associated primaries. In P7 she meets them once in October and again in March where she spent time with them talking about their hopes and dreams for the future. All of this work helps us to get to know our pupils and prepare better for their arrival.

Mrs. Anderson produces a termly 'Transition Newsletter' to issue to Primary 7 pupils and parents/carers via the primary school office. The newsletter details upcoming transition events as well as information about is happening in the school, specifically with regards to our current S1s.

Enhanced Transition

Transition can look different for everyone and some pupils may require Enhanced Transition. Enhanced Transition is there to support young people with the highest level of need or who may require an alternative provision when they come to The Robert Burns Academy.

Our Enhanced Transition programme includes **five** additional visits to The Robert Burns Academy and bespoke plans for our children requiring additional support.



Staff at The Robert Burns Academy work closely with primary colleagues to arrange Transition 1 and 2 meetings for pupils who have an additional support need or may require alternative provision in secondary school.

Transition meetings are a good opportunity for our Pastoral Support and Support for Learning Team to meet young people and parents/carers, to get to know them and discuss possible supports.

In some cases, our associated primary schools may have in place a Child's Plan. Where it becomes clear that the plan is functioning as a means by which ongoing monitoring is in place, with no known need, our staff will arrange a review meeting during S1 to determine if there is still a requirement for a Child's Plan in the context of secondary schooling.

In the past, some of these plans have rolled on without clear established need. This process will be explained in full to parents/carers during P7/S1 transition meetings.

How do we create our S1 Classes?

We generally have an intake of around 300/320 S1 pupils annually. One of the tasks of the Primary Transition DHT is to work with the Principal Teachers of Guidance and the Primary 7 Staff and Primary colleagues to gather as much information as possible to ensure that we create classes for our new S1.

The following guidelines apply:

- 1 Matching brothers and sisters – if your child have a brother or sister already attending The Robert Burns Academy we will ensure they are placed with the same Principal Teacher of Guidance.
- 2 We ensure as much as possible that there is a 50/50 split of boys and girls per class.
- 3 We ensure that we create mixed ability classes.

Details of S1 classes will be published around May of the school entry year.

Our Transition Policy is currently in development and will be available from February 2026.

Transition at Key Stages

We work in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and Ayrshire College to deliver input at the point where our young people make subject and course choices. Our published advice will be updated annually, with the most recent version found on our website.

Transition to Employment, College, Training or University

Skills Development Scotland (S DS) is the national skills body, and we deliver Scotland's careers service. Our Careers Advisers deliver career information, advice, and guidance in our school to pupils from S1-S6. SDS colleagues are there to help you understand the world of work and develop the Career Management Skills you need as you progress through school and beyond.

Our Careers Adviser can speak to you about:

- Finding out about yourself, your strengths and skills
- Making subject choices
- Different types of careers
- Developing the types of skills that are useful in a job
- Routes into careers including apprenticeships, college and university
- Building and developing your networks
- Creating CVs
- Making job applications and applying for courses

At The Robert Burns Academy we have two Careers 'Advisors'

Elaine Whates

Elaine.whates@sds.co.uk



Gillian McMahon

Gillian.mcmahon@sds.co.uk



My World of Work

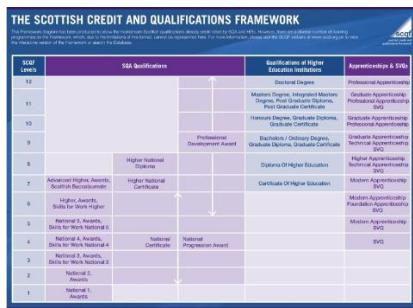
[My World of Work | My World of Work](#)

My World of Work is Scotland's career information and advice website. [Skills Development Scotland \(SDS\)](#) – the national skills agency have created this resource to use in school and at home.

Through our PSE programme and through subject careers discussion the website is used to explore careers which match pupils' skills, personality and strengths. It is also a great resource to introduce our pupils to the huge range of jobs that they could get into.

It is not just for pupils! No matter what stage you're at in your career, My World of Work will help you develop [career management skills](#). These will allow you to stay in control of your career as the job landscape changes around you.

SCQF Ambassadors



We also have SCQF Ambassadors who support parents and pupils during the option process.

This is a pupil leadership role and interested pupils are trained by Mr McGurn DHT to be able to discuss the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework and our curriculum.

Find out more about the qualification's framework at [SCQF levels: Understand Scotland's qualifications](#)

Pastoral Care

Our Pastoral Care staff are your first point of contact and have a specific remit for working with young people and families. All parental requests and queries should be directed to Pastoral Care staff in the first instance.

We changed our house structure reducing from six houses to five in August 2024 and increased the number of Principal Teachers of Guidance from nine to ten in order to better support our young people. At the moment our houses are identified through colours however, there is work underway to rename our houses and to promote house identify as a mechanism to increase a sense of belonging.

The role of Pastoral Care staff is sometimes referred to as Pupil Support or Guidance. The remit of Pastoral Care staff is extensive.

Each Pastoral Care teacher has a caseload of around 165 young people.

Our Guidance Team are happy to help.

Please contact them if you need any help or advice. They are class committed and are sometimes in meetings both in and out of school and so they will get back to you as soon as they can.

To report an absence

Karen.McBeth@eastayrshire.org.uk

House	PT Guidance	Email address
Blue	Mrs Jagodowski	claire.jagodowski@eastayrshire.org.uk
	Mr Kyle	stephen.kyle@eastayrshire.org.uk
Green	Mr Elliot	steven.elliot@eastayrshire.org.uk
	Miss Smith	carrie.smith@eastayrshire.org.uk
Violet	Mrs Szumlakowski	h.szumlakowski@eastayrshire.org.uk
	Mr Tickner	steven.tickner@eastayrshire.org.uk
Red	Miss Mitchell	lauren.mitchell@eastayrshire.org.uk
	Mrs Naismith	carly.naismith@eastayrshire.org.uk
Yellow	Mrs Burgoyne	aimee.burgoyne@eastayrshire.org.uk
	Mr Dempster	andrew.dempster@eastayrshire.org.uk

Mr Maclean is our Principal Teacher for our pupils who attend The Supported Learning Centre however, where pupils access mainly mainstream they are also supported by the principal teachers of guidance,

The role of Pastoral Care staff is summarised below.

- Provide pastoral, curricular, social and vocational guidance for all young people in their charge
- Manage attendance, timekeeping, general progress and the welfare of their caseload in line with the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).
- Maintain pastoral notes, pupil records and agency referrals/reports as required in line with GIRFEC principles.
- Liaise with parents / carers, teachers and relevant partners to create support packages for young people as required.
- Complete references and reports, including UCAS and College references for current and former pupils.
- Carry out a planned programme of pupil wellbeing interviews throughout the academic year.
- Carry out a range of wellbeing assessments with/for individual young people as appropriate.
- Prepare for, contribute to, and lead internal support meetings, Team with the Family Meetings (TWFs) and parental meetings.
- Attend external and multi-agency meetings such as Children's Panel hearings, Social Work Meetings and Child Protection meetings as required.
- Liaise with external partners such as Social Work, Psychological Services, Skills Development Scotland, CAMHS, School Nurse, Campus Police Officer, Vibrant Communities, and School Counselling services as appropriate.
- Liaise with our Principal Teacher of Support for Learning to develop, implement and review Child Plans for young people with additional support needs.
- National and local project/initiative implementation, such as: Mentors in Violence Prevention, No Knives Better Lives, I am Me, Nurture, Equally Safe in School, Respect Me, Mindful Mentors etc.
- Attend P7 and S4/5/6 Transition meetings
- Co-ordination of Developing the Young Workforce events.
- Plan, develop, deliver, and review our Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum for all year groups.

Personal and Social Education (PSE)

All pupils have one period of PSE per week, and this is usually taught by their Pastoral Care teacher. PSE addresses and/or consolidates a large proportion of the Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes.

The Health and Wellbeing curriculum is organised into six key areas.

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing
- Planning for Choices and Changes
- Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport
- Food and Health
- Substance Misuse
- Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood

Our PSE curriculum incorporates the necessary benchmarks, experiences and outcomes, health and wellbeing indicators and equalities material. Our revised offering aligns with the sixteen recommendations of the most recent government review into PSE provision.

Our Pastoral Support Team engage with our partners to ensure that our pupils receive the best support available to supplement their achievements or to support them to move onto a positive destination. Here are some of the activities they have been involved in the 2024/25 session.

UWS Foundation Academy

A cohort of S6 students recently completed their UWS Foundation Academy course which they have been working on since June. Students attended a campus day and then had weekly sessions with UWS staff and then had to complete university related tasks in order to gain accreditation. The students will receive 20 SCQF points at Level 7 for undertaking this and it has also helped prepare them for university life.

Focus West Higher Education Support

Tutors from Focus West based at Strathclyde University recently came into school to have a meeting with every S6 student to explore options for college and university. This was of great benefit to our students and has helped them look at pathways for the future. They will come back in January to work with S5 students.

Routes For All

A selection of S6 students recently completed the Routes for All programme designed to help students enroll at college and also look at articulation from college to university. Students will attend a campus visit at Ayrshire College in January to meet with college staff to give them further insight.

Duke of Edinburgh Award



We have recently enrolled a new cohort of students for their Bronze DofE award following a successful year with record numbers out on silver expeditions. We have enrolled over 100 S3 and S4 students and again this is a record amount for us.

Training for the summer expeditions will start in January and all pupils will be involved in volunteering in our local communities.

Wider Support Team

Campus Police Officer

PC Aitken's role includes, but is not limited to:

- improving relationships between young people and the Police
- engaging with young people and developing their role within the community
- problem solving in the school and the community
- delivering and developing specific projects such as internet safety, young crime prevention and personal safety
- providing a visible presence in and around the school community
- supporting and developing activities to address challenging behaviour
- liaising with departments and organisations already involved in delivering programmes for young people (mentoring, street working, youth groups etc)
- promoting a restorative justice approach to encourage young people to take responsibility for their decisions within school and in the community



School Counselling

The Exchange are our local authority counselling service and started working with us in 2021. Pastoral Care staff refer pupils to school counsellors. Pupils can also self-refer by speaking with their Pastoral Care teacher. More information is available from Pastoral Care staff and is shared with pupils via our PSE curriculum.

Educational Psychologist

Blake Kilean is our allocated Educational Psychologist. Blake works closely with our staff and families to ensure that we are trained and supported to help young people manage a range of behaviours and emotions that they may exhibit when in school or at home. Blake provides regular training for our staff, with this session's focus as detailed below.

Trauma Informed Practice

Autism in Girls

Nurture

Support for Learning



Mrs Devine is our Principal Teacher of Support for Learning. We have an excellent group of staff within our support for learning department and they offer lots of opportunities for young people in order to help reduce or remove barriers to education.

Should you have a concern that is related to additional support needs, please contact your child's Principal Teacher of Guidance in the first instance.

The Support for Learning Department is responsible for:

- supporting young people with literacy difficulties including dyslexic difficulties and other additional support needs.
- empowerment of teachers to meet the needs of their pupils.
- dyslexia friendly learning environments (designed to help all learners).
- early identification of young people at risk of developing literacy difficulties
- ensuring consistency in using the Staged Intervention Model embedded within East Ayrshire's Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties Assessment Guidelines.
- effective monitoring and tracking systems to record pupil's literacy development.
- Implementation of SQA AAA Guidance for SQA exams (*see further information below*)
- organisation of CLPL opportunities for staff.
- development of young people's empathy towards and awareness of additional support needs.
- work in partnership with EAST to assess pupils for visual stress, Dyslexia and Dyscalculia.

Assessments are carried out in line with the East Ayrshire Assessment Policy.

We have an established Additional Support Needs overview for each year group. Pupil profiles (based on information from primary school, parents, pupils, and other agencies) give all staff information on individual pupil needs. Furthermore, support strategy reference materials are also shared with staff. These give teachers a comprehensive overview of various additional support strategies that can be used when working with specific pupils.

SQA – Additional Assessment Arrangements/Additional Assessment Requests

The school are bound to operate within and against SQA policy when providing Additional Assessment Arrangements for SQA exams.

Identifying the possible assessment needs of a learner

Assessment arrangements are only for learners identified as having a physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty.

Information on the learner's needs and strategies are often shared by Support for Learning to aid teaching and learning. Knowing this is key to identifying any difficulties the learner may or may not have in accessing assessments.

A learner's needs and difficulty accessing an assessment is often identified before they begin study. It may also become apparent during study

Above is extracted from SQA guidance for centres.

In light of the above, the onus on the school is to evidence need, not to evidence absence of need. Where a young person does not qualify against the above, they cannot be considered by the school for SQA AAA/AAR.

The SQA also operate against four key principles when advising schools on how to determine need in light of a body of evidence.

- Principle 1:
Assessment arrangements are intended to enable learners to demonstrate their attainment, not to compensate for lack of attainment.
- Principle 2:
Assessment arrangement must not compromise the integrity of the qualification.
- Principle 3:
Assessment arrangements must be tailored to meet a learner's individual needs.
- Principle 4:
Assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the learner's usual way of learning and producing work.

Where the school are of the view that providing AAA/AAR contravenes any of the above, we cannot in good faith request AAA/AAR. Similarly, where parents/carers believe that the arrangements put in place either do not allow pupils to demonstrate attainment against their established need, or that the arrangements are not being tailored to individual needs against said need, you should make direct contact with your child's Pastoral Care teacher.

Assessment

For a variety of reasons, school staff may have need to conduct further assessment in advance of coming to a decision as to whether a pupil qualifies for AAA against SQA policy. Without conducting further assessment, usually by means of providing additional arrangements in either prelims or class assessments, we will not meet the SQA threshold for evidence gathering in advance of a final decision.

Please note, providing additional arrangements for class tests or prelims is not an indication that analysis of evidence will result in AAA/AAR, it is simply the process we need to follow to meet the guidance we are duty bound to work within for SQA purposes.

Should you have a concern around SQA AAA/AAR, please contact your child's Pastoral Care teacher in the first instance.

Understanding the distinction between opinion and evidence

School staff are bound to act within SQA guidance, as to act out with is in direct contradiction of their responsibilities, but do understand that SQA AAA evidence gathering, and the final decision, can be a stressful time for young people and families. While acutely aware of the above, school staff do not have the freedom to act out with SQA guidance and provide AAA/AAR as a result of pressure or opinion that does not alter the various thresholds that requests must meet against SQA policy.

Positive Relationships/Anti-bullying

Staff have a legal responsibility to record every instance of perceived bullying and investigate the matter thoroughly. We are not naïve to the fact that not all perceived or actual bullying is reported to school staff or family members. For this reason, it is essential that you do not hesitate to bring concerns to our attention.

Our curriculum and general staff vigilance allow us to promote appropriate conduct with young people regularly. Pupils can report any perceived bullying via their Principal Teacher of Guidance and know that all staff within the school are available to discuss concerns at any time.

All schools in East Ayrshire follow the guidance outlined within the council's [Anti-Bullying – Respect for All Policy](#).

Managing Pupil Conflict

It is not uncommon across a young person's teenage years to encounter situations whereby conflict or difference of opinion exist between two or more pupils, very often pupils who are part of the same broader friendship group.

In our extensive experience of dealing with issues that are open to interpretation/perception, we encourage parents/carers to consider that school staff simultaneously fulfil the roles of investigator, jury and counsellor. It is completely natural for parents/carers to emotionally invest in any such circumstance and school staff understand this. Unfortunately, and given that school staff are often the first person these issues are discussed with, there are occasions where the emotional strain associated with these situations is misdirected at staff before staff have had an opportunity to investigate an issue.

There can often be difficulty in unpicking the intricacies of inter-personal relationships amongst a group of peers, particularly at a time when young people are still developing the social skills necessary to manage conflict and change. School staff will take decisions based upon the evidence available to them and will do so in good faith. It is always necessary to consider the views of all pupils and families involved, and very often school staff hear an almost identical view from both parties in respect of what one pupil may have said or did to another.

Please know that when managing situations of this nature, staff will offer support to all pupils involved and will update parents/carers as to actions taken.

Please also note that school staff are not at liberty to discuss any actions or interventions put in place for pupils other than those for whom you are the parent/carer

School Catering

Our catering staff provide break and lunchtime sustenance for pupils and staff across the Campus. The links shown below provide more information in respect of catering.

[Cashless Payment using ParentPay Current Menu](#)

[Allergies and Specific Dietary Requirements](#)

Please note, responsibility for use of the canteen or otherwise on a pupil-by-pupil basis does not sit with school staff. On occasion, we will take requests from parents asking that we prevent pupils accessing the canteen. On a practical level, we do not have the resource to do so, albeit we can provide advice on your behalf where possible. Given pupils are of secondary school age and understand well that use of a canteen will incur a cost (unless free school meals), it is important that parents/carers have these conversations with their children. School staff will not be held accountable for pupil-by-pupil use of the canteen, nor will any debt accumulated be waived on retrospective advice from parents/carers that their child should not have used the canteen service. The above is a matter for parents/carers to discuss and manage with pupils.

Free School Meals and Clothing Grants

We strongly encourage parents/carers entitled to apply for Free School Meal (FSM) or Clothing Grants to do so. In recent years, we have noticed an emerging trend whereby some parents/carers who do qualify are not applying. Naturally, this prevents pupils from accessing provision that they are entitled to. Our priority in this respect is to make sure that no young person is prevented from accessing support that is in their best interests, and school staff are always available to help with the application process.

In addition, it is important to note than an accurate overview of Free School Meal status at school level impacts on Pupil Equity Funding and our Virtual Comparator. Our Virtual Comparator is used by Scottish Government to compare attainment in our school to that elsewhere. Where FSM and Clothing Grant uptake is not accurate, we may not receive additional PEF we would otherwise be entitled to.

[Find out if you qualify](#)

[Apply for Free School Meal or Clothing Grants](#)

School Transport

Many of our pupils use School Transport to get to and from school. East Ayrshire Council's website provides parents/carers with the criteria for free school transport.

[East Ayrshire Council – School Transport](#)

In addition, all young people in Scotland can now use their National Entitlement Card to travel on bus services across Scotland for free. National Entitlement Card applications will be managed in school on an annual basis.

Building and Site Maintenance

We work closely with East Ayrshire Facilities Management (FM) to ensure that all matters pertaining to building maintenance and cleanliness are taken seriously and acted on. We have a very close working relationship with colleagues in FM. Should any member of our community have a concern in relation to building maintenance, please report it to the Head Teacher.

Complaints Handling

It is natural that throughout the course of an academic year, Parents/Carers will have reason to contact the school to seek assurance on a wide range of matters. School staff understand this. Given that the nature of a complaint is indeterminable before it comes to our attention, we cannot know in advance who would be best placed to manage the complaint or query in hand.

For this reason, we request that formal complaints be directed to Depute Head Teachers or the Head Teacher only. The Head Teacher will be notified of all complaints and has responsibility to delegate management of the complaint to the promoted member of staff best placed to deal with the issue. In some cases, this may mean that the Head Teacher deals with the totality of a complaint raised, but more commonly, complaints will be managed by Principal Teachers, Pastoral Care Staff or Depute Head Teachers.

The promoted member of staff dealing with the matter will outline potential turnaround times and will communicate next steps as soon as possible. If you do not believe that the matter has been addressed, you should notify Miss Stewart. Miss Stewart would then follow up with you and take the matter on internally.

On rare occasions, you may feel it necessary to escalate a complaint to local authority level. In almost all cases, complaints that reach the local authority will be referred to Miss Stewart for an overview of the issue from the school's perspective. Any actions or next steps would be communicated to you and taken from there.

An overview of East Ayrshire Council's complaints handling procedures can be found [here](#).

Emergency Procedures / Medical Matters

General First Aid and Illness

In situations where a young person feels unwell staff trained in first aid will speak with the young person and make a judgement as to the best course of action. On occasion, this will mean calling home to request that a young person is collected from school.

Administration of Medication

For some pupils, it will be necessary to facilitate the administration of medication on a regular basis. Parents/Carers of those pupils will be aware of an individual plan that has been discussed with school staff. Trained staff will offer support in line with the terms of the plan agreed with parents/carers.

Emergency Situations

In the case of an individual emergency, school staff will contact parents/carers or emergency contacts immediately. In the case of an emergency that impacts the campus, East Ayrshire Council follow protocols which can be accessed [here](#).

Information

If you would like further information on any of the content covered within this handbook, please contact us using the on our website

You may also find the undernoted links useful. [East Ayrshire Council](#)

[Education Scotland SQA](#)

[Data Protection](#)

Appendix 1**Associated Primary Schools**

Auchinleck Primary	Catrine Primary	Drongan Primary
Dalsalloch Road	Fourfields	Millmannoch Avenue
Auchinleck	Catrine	Drongan
KA18 2BU	KA5 6PS	KA6 7BY
Hillside Primary	Lochnorris Primary	Logan Primary
Barony Campus	Barony Campus	Logan Avenue
Cumnock	Cumnock	Logan
KA18 1RS	KA18 1RS	KA18 3HA
Mauchline Primary	Muirkirk Primary	Netherthird Primary
The Loan	Burns Avenue	Craigens Road
Mauchline	Muirkirk	Cumnock
KA5 6AN	KA18 3RH	KA18 3AN
New Cumnock Primary	Ochiltree Primary	Sorn Primary
Castle	Main Street	14 Main Street
New Cumnock	Ochiltree	Sorn
KA18 4AH	KA18 2PE	KA5 6HU

Appendix 3