

January 2026

## New Year New Look New Energy for building our EPIC Young People!

We begin this year with a new name "EPIC Young People" to reflect the breadth of work that we actually do with our young people, which goes far beyond piping and drumming. We kicked off the new year with an open night where students, parents and carers were treated to a performance by our senior players, talks from our trustees and parents, and our project leader discussed our prospectus and the pathway from Access to Excellence for every

student. Two parents spoke about what their children have gained from being part of the programme, in particular the skills and benefits they have gained that are not specific to piping and drumming. Dawn spoke of the confidence her daughter has gained, how her son has learned to prioritise what is important and plan how to use his time wisely, and Yvonne spoke of how it has given her daughter the confidence to participate in other activities outside of EPIC, and how her son has learned the resilience of working at something until he improves rather than get frustrated if he can't master something straight away - not to mention having something that he loves that keeps him off the phone/social media/computer! The evening was a huge success and we would like to thank everyone for coming along, and particularly to all of those who participated in the evening's line up - thank you! Last term got our academic year off to a flying start, from our youngest to our oldest students. Eve is our first ever p7 student to make it all the way onto bagpipes in a single term! From one amazing young woman to another - Angel earned an incredible 5th place in the World Solo Tenor Drumming Championships! And our most senior student Jai completed his SCQF Level 6 exam at the National Piping Centre in Glasgow as part of our excellence programme, and will now go on to sit the PDQB Tutor Certificate, meaning he will graduate the EPIC programme with a formal teaching qualification. At every level in between we've had successes with students forging their way through our syllabus, gaining entry to the next level of the programme, and four young people have made it up into our senior band and performed at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Family Support Trust St Andrews Ball at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.

We also conducted a survey of our young people and their parents last term which gave the following results:

**"EPIC encourages me and pushes me to be better than I thought I could be"** - 100% students agreed

**"EPIC encourages me to focus on positive outcomes and a sense of purpose"** - 95% students agreed

**"EPIC encourages my child to be more confident"** - 100% parents agreed

**"EPIC encourages my child to be more resilient"** - 100% parents agreed

**"Being part of EPIC is good for my child's mental, emotional and social wellbeing"** - 100% parents agreed



# EPIC End of Year Awards

## "Special Recognition Award"

There are two recipients of the "Special Recognition Award". Each of these people have just astounded us all with the speed of their development – remember, the speed of their development really only tells us how hard they work at home. They're in school at 8am practicing their pipes, and practicing again at interval, lunch and the end of the day, and we have loved hearing and seeing their passion and enthusiasm growing this year. They have brought with them a brilliant energy, huge dedication, and bravery beyond measure. Congratulations to Reece and Stefan.



**Stefan Ferguson**



**Reece Bennie**

## "The Shine Award"

In Memory of Our Beloved Chairman Jim Butler

The "Shine Award" is very special to us - Jim Butler was chairman of EPIC from 2019 until he passed away unexpectedly in 2022. He was one of life's special people, his warmth radiating through everyone in his presence, therefore, this award focusses mostly on character and the impact we have on those around us.

This winner is a character and a half. It is through him that we have such a positive, vibrant (and often crazy) energy in our programme. He has inspired everyone around him to want to be better, and to work hard to achieve all that we want to achieve. He constantly helps all those around him on their way up through our programme, as he pushes himself to learn more and play better. This character has had a huge impact on our whole programme and we genuinely thank him for his positivity and exuberance. Congratulations Blake, keep on shining.



**Blake Wilson**

## "The Alex Duncan Memorial Award"

For Character, Commitment and Performance

Our biggest award is the "Alex Duncan Memorial Award for displaying the EPIC values of character, commitment and performance. Aim not only to be the best player you can be, but the best person you can be."

It will be no surprise that this award was presented to the person who works the hardest. Without any fuss, quietly in the background, this person has pushed themselves to excel in solo competition, completed performance and theory to SCQF Level 6, writes his own music, has taken on leadership responsibilities, is always there to help the youngest to the advanced students, gives up his lunch times and evenings to help others, has been relied upon to be in charge at gigs and assist others tuning up for solo competitions and exams, and has had to speak into the mic to compere gigs... I'm sure there is probably more missed out! He is a huge inspiration to all of those around him, and it is our utmost pleasure to name Jai Blackhurst as our Alex Duncan Memorial Award winner - well done Jai - a great player and most importantly, a great person.



**Jai Blackhurst**



**East Ayrshire Council**  
Comhairle Siorrhachd Àir an Ear



**Foundation Scotland**

**The Gannochy Trust**

**Gordon Fraser  
Charitable Trust**



**THE HUGH FRASER  
FOUNDATION**



**THE WILLIAM SYSON  
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