



Cardiff and Vale College

Highly Commended – Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing Award

Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) is one of the largest colleges in the UK, supporting more than 30,000 learners each year through further and higher education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), apprenticeships and employer training. The College is committed to widening participation and lifelong learning, with Family Learning at the heart of its mission to change lives through learning.

CAVC works closely with a wide range of partners including primary schools, community groups, the youth service, police, and third sector organisations. Its Family Learning programmes support parents, carers and children to develop skills, confidence and wellbeing together.

Delivery is targeted in some of the most vibrant and diverse communities in Wales across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan region in South Wales, particularly in areas facing higher levels of deprivation, where families may experience barriers to education, wellbeing support and community engagement.

Family Learning to Support Health and Wellbeing: Understanding Emotions

Cardiff and Vale College developed the Understanding Emotions course in response to growing concerns from schools about children's emotional resilience and parents' confidence in supporting wellbeing. Following disruption to early education following Covid-19, schools reported increased anxiety, reduced attendance and challenges with behaviour and communication, particularly in disadvantaged communities where access to support was more limited.

The programme brought parents and children together in school to explore emotions, strengthen communication and develop practical strategies for managing stress. Through shared, hands-on activities, families built emotional awareness in engaging and accessible ways.

Using stories such as 'The Colour Monster' and 'Grumpy Monkey', families explored emotions in a simple and relatable way, before creating tools such as emotion wheels, calming boxes, breathing bracelets and reward charts. Sessions also included mindfulness art, movement activities and 'volcano emotions' experiments, helping families understand emotional regulation through experience.

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A key strength of the programme was its inclusive, co-created approach. Tutors worked closely with schools and families to shape each course around lived experiences, adapting sessions in response to learner feedback. Barriers to engagement were addressed through informal, relationship-based recruitment, reaching families less likely to engage through traditional channels.

The programme combined creative learning, relational delivery and practical application. Learning together strengthened relationships, built trust and created a safe space for families. Digital elements, including online safety and simple activities, also helped parents feel more confident supporting their children in a digital world. Learning extended beyond the classroom through access to wellbeing resources and progression pathways, including visits to the College.

Specialist provision ensured the programme reached underrepresented groups, including families new to English, home-educating families and parents of children with additional learning needs. Communication materials were accessible, visual and inclusive, helping all families feel welcome, supported and represented.



"The course has had a positive impact on parent and child relationships. Parents have been very positive about the course when they have spoken with school staff. Parents have valued the 1-1 time with their child and realise how important it is."

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Impact and next steps

As part of the regional programme, the Understanding Emotions programme supported 486 families and 992 individuals across more than 50 schools, with a 94% completion rate. Delivery was strategically targeted in areas of high deprivation, ensuring that those most in need were able to benefit.

Evidence showed significant improvements in parent confidence, emotional wellbeing and engagement with education. Families reported stronger relationships, better communication and greater confidence in managing emotions at home. Schools observed improved behaviour, increased attendance and more engagement in the classroom. The programme also helped to reduce isolation by fostering supportive peer networks, particularly for families new to the community.

Looking ahead, the College will expand delivery to additional schools and develop new courses for families with older children. Shorter, more flexible programmes are also being developed to support working parents, helping to widen access to learning.

"This course helped to build my confidence and my child's confidence. We loved working together and I feel so much closer to my child. She is so much better at being able to tell me how she feels. I also found the wellbeing app very helpful, and I use it for breathing exercises."

