



Lornshill Academy

Commended – Family Learning Innovation Award

[Lornshill Academy](#) is a comprehensive secondary school in Clackmannanshire, Scotland. The school supports approximately 1,200 children and families each year, working across communities that include some of the most financially deprived areas in Scotland, alongside more affluent neighbourhoods. Recognising longstanding inequalities in family engagement, the school developed its 'Fresh Approach to Family Engagement' (FAFE) programme to ensure that all families felt welcomed, represented, and empowered within the school community.

Identifying the need to support more effective family learning, the school worked within the community to identify priorities and barriers to engagement. This has informed a programme of activities and collaborative opportunities that celebrate cultural diversity and strengthen relationships between home and school. Its work is closely aligned with national priorities around family engagement and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Family Learning Innovation: Fresh Approach to Family Engagement (FAFE)

Lornshill Academy developed the Fresh Approach to Family Engagement (FAFE) in response to a widening participation gap in school activities. Although overall engagement figures appeared stable, an audit of attendance registers revealed that families living in SIMD Deciles 1 and 2, fathers, and families from ethnic minority backgrounds were consistently underrepresented.

Traditional engagement activities, such as literacy workshops and supported study evenings inadvertently favoured families with flexible working hours and high English proficiency. The rationale for innovation was rooted in the 'Inverse Care Law' of education: those who most require support are often the least likely to access it because systems are rarely designed for their lived realities.

FAFE was created to challenge this imbalance through a new approach centred on inclusivity, agency, and co-creation. Instead of expecting families to engage on institutional terms, the school redesigned opportunities around the lived realities of families and actively consulted parents and carers from underrepresented groups.

The programme replaced formal information sessions with relaxed, collaborative, and creative activities that met the parental desire for side-by-side learning. Family Quiz Nights were introduced to increase participation among fathers and male carers, while Digital Drop-In Sessions empowered families to manage educational logistics and access vital financial support.

"The relaxed activities helped me spend quality time learning alongside my child without feeling judged."



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Accessibility was central to the programme's design. Sessions were delivered at flexible times to accommodate varied work patterns, with all materials and catering provided to remove financial barriers. The school also co-delivered culturally focused celebrations, including Burns' Night events with the Rotary Club and Eid celebrations in partnership with local faith groups.

As the 'home-school gap' closed, students saw their cultural identities celebrated and observed their parents collaborating actively with staff. This atmosphere of mutual trust has laid the foundation for sustained educational engagement, ensuring that every family feels they have a rightful place within the school community.

"For the first time, I felt like the school genuinely wanted us there and valued what we could bring."

Impact and next steps

Around 700 adults and children participated in FAFE activities, with measurable improvements across key target groups. Engagement among families living in SIMD Deciles 1 and 2 increased from 12% to 58% over twelve months, while participation by fathers and male carers rose by 140% from the previous year. Engagement among EAL families reached 75% in digital co-creation projects.

The programme also demonstrated a direct impact on learners. Students from SIMD 1 and 2 backgrounds whose families engaged with FAFE showed a 15% improvement rate in readiness-to-learn and effort measures compared with non-participating peers.

Qualitative feedback highlighted significant increases in parental confidence and belonging, with many families reporting that they felt seen and valued by the school for the first time. The initiative has strengthened trust between families and staff, created more representative partnerships, and established the school as a welcoming hub for the wider community.

"FAFE has changed the relationship between families and the school – parents are now partners, not visitors."