



CASHBACK
2025/26



CASE STUDY

School Culture & Behaviour

**The Importance of Relationships, Consistency
and Positive Environments**

SCHOOL CULTURE & BEHAVIOUR

The Importance of Relationships, Consistency and Positive Environments

In several schools, staff described rugby environments as places where some young people responded differently than they did within traditional classroom settings. Expectations were often clearer, peer interaction more positive and communication more natural, particularly for pupils who sometimes struggled to engage consistently within wider school life.

Across Phase 6, one of the strongest areas of feedback from schools was the role the programme played in supporting wider school culture, engagement and positive relationships. While rugby itself remained the vehicle for participation, staff consistently reflected that the programme was most effective when it complemented and strengthened the wider work already taking place around wellbeing, inclusion, behaviour and pupil support.

Across multiple schools, staff observed that young people often responded positively to the structure, routines and consistency created through rugby activity. Clear expectations, teamwork and supportive peer environments helped many pupils engage more positively both within sessions and across wider school life.

At Northfield Academy, staff described how some pupils who initially struggled with behaviour, confidence or emotional regulation began responding positively to the consistency created through School of Rugby activity. One member of staff reflected that pupils who often sought attention through negative behaviour gradually became more engaged, communicative and receptive to support over time.

This was particularly evident where young people experienced continuity across different parts of school life. In several schools, Development Officers became familiar figures within the wider school community — supporting not only rugby delivery, but also conversations around attendance, wellbeing, behaviour and wider engagement with school.

One stakeholder at Leith Academy explained:

“Relationships are the biggest factor. Pupils engage because they trust the staff delivering the programme.”
Stakeholder, Leith Academy

Similarly, staff at Alness Academy described School of Rugby as:

“The one real positive association they have with school.”
Stakeholder, Alness Academy

Importantly, schools did not view the programme as replacing existing pastoral or educational support structures. Instead, the strongest partnerships emerged where rugby activity complemented the wider work already being carried out by teachers, pastoral staff and support teams. In many cases, rugby created an additional environment where communication, accountability and encouragement could develop in ways that felt less formal than traditional classroom settings.

Across Wester Hailes High School and Ross High School, staff reflected positively on the way some pupils who struggled within classrooms appeared more settled and engaged during rugby activity. Expectations around teamwork, communication and accountability often felt clearer and more immediate within sport, while the physical and social nature of sessions created opportunities for positive interaction and peer support.

One stakeholder at Wester Hailes explained:

“Some young people who struggle most in classrooms thrive in rugby environments because expectations and support are clearer.”
Staff Member, Wester Hailes High School

At Ross High School, stakeholders similarly highlighted the importance of structure and routine within the programme:

“The programme provides structure and discipline for pupils who otherwise struggle to engage positively in school.”

Staff Member, Ross High School

Across several schools, staff also reflected positively on the impact of responsibility and leadership opportunities within rugby environments. Through ambassador roles, coaching opportunities and regular participation, many pupils developed greater confidence, stronger communication skills and improved engagement with peers and staff.

At St Paul’s RC High School, one teacher reflected on the progress of a pupil involved in the programme:

“Pupil F has been much more focused in school and able to regulate his behaviour and emotions in a more mature way.”

Pastoral Care Teacher, St Paul’s RC High School

Importantly, schools consistently described progress as gradual rather than transformational overnight. In many cases, changes first appeared through small but meaningful improvements — increased attendance at sessions, greater willingness to engage positively with staff, improved emotional regulation or stronger communication with peers.

Reflection and Learning

Across Phase 6, one of the clearest lessons was that positive school culture was rarely shaped through isolated interventions alone. The strongest impact emerged where rugby activity became part of a wider network of consistent expectations, routines and supportive school practice over time.

For many schools, the value of the programme was not simply that young people played rugby, but that rugby created another environment within school where communication, accountability, confidence and positive engagement could develop more naturally over time.