



CASHBACK
2025/26



CASE STUDY

Wester Hailes High School & Leith Academy
Building Resilience, Relationships & Belonging

WESTER HAILES HIGH SCHOOL & LEITH ACADEMY

Building Resilience, Relationships & Belonging

Across Wester Hailes High School and Leith Academy, CashBack Rugby has helped create supportive environments where young people build confidence, relationships and stronger connections to both school and community life. While some pupils entered the programme with previous rugby experience, many engaged for the first time through transition festivals, lunchtime sessions and wider School of Rugby activity delivered within familiar school environments.

For several young people, participation came during periods where they were struggling with confidence, engagement with school, social connections and feeling more engaged within school life. Staff across both schools reflected on the importance of creating environments where expectations, encouragement and positive connections remained consistent over time.

Building Positive Relationships Through Rugby

Throughout their involvement in the programme, many young people began developing stronger relationships with peers, staff and coaches through consistent engagement in rugby activity. Staff from both schools highlighted that the programme created environments where young people felt safe to participate, challenge themselves and support others.

At Wester Hailes, several pupils who initially struggled with behaviour, confidence or emotional regulation began demonstrating leadership, teamwork and resilience during rugby activity. Stakeholders noted that young people who were often withdrawn or confrontational elsewhere in school became more engaged, communicative and positive within rugby environments.

At Leith Academy, staff also reflected positively on the way rugby activity strengthened friendships and helped several young people feel more connected to both school and the wider local community.

A key turning point for many participants was feeling comfortable and supported by staff and coaches over time. One stakeholder reflected that “relationships are the biggest factor” in why young people continue engaging with the programme, while another highlighted the importance of “a positive male role model who isn’t a teacher.”

At Leith Academy, young people increasingly took ownership within the programme through ambassador roles, transition events and supporting younger pupils. These opportunities helped develop confidence, communication skills and a stronger sense of identity within the school community.

Across both schools, participation gradually shifted from simply attending sessions to actively contributing within the environment. Young people became more willing to support others, engage positively within school life and take pride in their involvement.

Impact Across School Communities

Participation in the CashBack programme helped many young people across both schools develop stronger support networks, improved confidence and a greater sense of belonging within school and community environments.

Staff consistently reported improvements in communication, behaviour, engagement and resilience. Several stakeholders noted that pupils who previously struggled to engage positively in school began forming stronger connections with peers and adults through rugby activity.

One stakeholder at Wester Hailes reflected:

“Some young people who struggle most in classrooms thrive in rugby environments because expectations and support are clearer.”

Another explained:

“Participation in CashBack rugby has helped young people gain a sense of purpose and belonging, keeping them away from negative influences.”

Young people themselves also highlighted the importance of feeling included and connected through the programme. One pupil described the experience simply:

“You feel part of something bigger than just your year group.”

Across both schools, the programme strengthened young people’s confidence to participate positively within school and community life. Many pupils became more resilient, more willing to challenge themselves socially and emotionally, and more likely to engage positively with opportunities around them.

Ultimately, the CashBack programme helped create environments where young people felt valued, supported and connected — developing not only through rugby itself, but through the relationships, routines and sense of belonging built around the programme.

Reflection and Learning

Across both schools, the strongest impact emerged where rugby activity became part of a wider network of routines, encouragement and positive support around young people. While rugby provided the initial opportunity for engagement, long-term progress was most evident where pupils experienced consistency, encouragement and positive peer connection over time.

The experiences at Wester Hailes and Leith reinforced that safe and supportive environments are rarely created through isolated interventions alone. Instead, they develop gradually through regular social interactions, shared experiences and environments where young people feel welcomed, valued and connected within their wider school community.