



## Abercromby Primary School

Shortlisted for Innovation in Family Learning

**Abercromby Primary is a primary school serving South Tullibody, Scotland, with a variety of family learning programmes and initiatives. Since 2019, Emma Craig, Principal Teacher and Lindsay Patterson, Family Support Worker, have been running a family room called The Link.**

**The provision focuses on different family groups and curriculum areas, with a range of initiatives including a whole school family programme to support learning and development, family cooking, family fun, and parental groups designed to support family learning at home.**

**Abercromby Primary's place in this shortlist relates to the Paternal Play project (formerly, 'Dads and Lads'). Judges from Campaign for Learning and CACHE Alumni shortlisted the project due to the "positive and proactive" responsiveness of this work as well as the "wonderful variety" of activities and feedback.**

### Family learning provision

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, staff at Abercromby Primary noticed a significant drop in male family members attending events, family groups and learning conversations, finding that mums and grandmas had become the most represented groups. Following training and discussion with Family Network Scotland, the school developed the Paternal Play initiative. Students and male family members were invited, resulting in a mix of dads and granddads. To accommodate busy lives and understanding that not everyone can attend a demanding schedule, sessions were opened up to allow a mix of family members to attend – one learner would have different granddads attending each week to share the experience with both!

A diverse and fun range of activities both in and out of the classroom were developed to encourage one-to-one quality time and break down the social barrier for adult members who had negative memories of their own time at school. Boxing, archery, a STEM challenge, coding, orienteering, pizza making and use of the immersive classroom all took place, with time scheduled for drinks and a chat to support organic community and relationship building. A free end-of-term trip out took 24 people to Gartmorn Dam to make dens, build fires, pond dip, and have lots of exercise, resulting in a lovely day out in the sun.



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### Impact and next steps

More male carers, dads and family members are now attending school events and other family sessions as well as engaging with staff. One father has created a video about the importance of school attendance for the local authority. Children are getting more and more opportunities to show their male family members their achievements at school and are visibly enjoying this. New skills have been learned, existing skills have been shared, and members were supportive of each other throughout, helping and showing leadership with each other.

Not only has this had a positive impact on male family members, but parents who attended the previous programme are now eager to share their own skills, and the next sessions will be co-created with attendees. Feedback from staff and families included:

“The sessions were good as they enabled us to communicate and work together as a family.”

“My favourite part so far was seeing the dads giving each other fist bumps and exchanging contact details after our trip.”

“It was amazing spending some extra time with my grandson in the school setting, sharing different activities.”

Throughout the programme, attendees filled out evaluation forms, which made it very clear that a great sense of comradery developed, with parents forming their own friendships and social connections outside of time at the school.