



Lydiard Park Academy
Potential into Performance

Lydiard Park – Breaking the cycle

Achieving more with Pupil Premium pupils, even when tradition is against you.

*This is an extract from a full article which will be included in the SSAT journal
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Swindon has never had much of a tradition when it comes to education. It's not a university town and, with an employment base more in skilled and semi-skilled manual work than professional occupations, many families place a relatively low value on education. As with many similar areas up and down the country, the main issue facing our school at the point of academy conversion was the underperformance of white British pupils, many of whom qualified for Pupil Premium payments. Yet three years later, Lydiard Park Academy (LPA) has made huge strides and, according to the DfE, is one of the 90 most improved secondary schools in



the country. 'All pupils', 'White British' and 'FSM' groups now have green 'Sig+' indicators in our Raiseonline report, the school has the highest GCSE results in the area and has opened a sixth form, and, in 2015, our GCSE Pupil Premium pupils made more progress than their 'non-disadvantaged' peers nationally.

Our experience mirrors the conclusions of a recent NFER research paper that highlights the idea that many of the most effective approaches you can take for disadvantaged pupils are actually whole school initiatives. 'Build a better school for everyone and disadvantaged pupils' results will improve on a rising tide of achievement and higher expectations' is the essence of what we have done.

In this article, we describe the steps we have taken towards each of the seven key building blocks identified in that recent NFER paper.

- Whole-school ethos of attainment for all
- Addressing behaviour and attendance
- High-quality teaching for all

Three years ago most pupils were experiencing a fairly formulaic diet of lessons. In getting to a consistent 'good' we'd driven out some of the innovation and fun. The SSAT's Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) provided an exciting opportunity to reinvigorate staff, put lessons back onto a more pupil-centred footing and provide staff and pupils with a common language for learning that would allow us to develop more rapidly as a learning community. All staff completed the level 1 training in the summer of 2013 and since then our TEEP journey has continued with cross-faculty TEEP teams (our TEEP Learning Communities), fresh approaches to teaching and learning, a greater staff sharing of good practice, and lessons that are now more engaging and varied for pupils. As a TEEP Ambassador School we continually push to move our practice to the next level and our Teaching and Learning Communities meet twice a term

to debate and consider a key teaching strategy from marking and feedback to independent learning. Yes, these are topics that will have been discussed many times before, but the beauty of TEEP is that it reminds you of the best practice that you've possibly met but forgotten and challenges you to bring it into your teaching as your new standard. Within our teaching model we also launched our 'Session 6' programme. With a shorter lunch time and formal lessons ending at 3pm, students are encouraged to stay for session 6 to take part in enrichment, revision and specific intervention sessions all tailored to a student's educational needs. Along with all of this we have also embraced technology – working with 'It'sLearning' to develop an interactive learning platform for students to use in and out of the classroom as they complete tasks, homework, extra research and prepare for their final exams.

- Meeting individual learning needs
- Deploying staff effectively

Results have risen sharply at LPA in the last five years yet the majority of staff remain the same. So developing staff has been a significant success. Our Teep Learning Communities meet to discuss TEEP-based strategies, government initiatives and Ofsted updates, making sure all staff are kept involved and informed. We have a rigorous quality assurance programme (linked to Performance Management) which includes a mentoring and coaching system that kicks in whenever practice is uncovered that 'requires improvement'. In the same way that we work with students we work with staff to allow them to reflect, improve and trial new ideas to be more effective in the classroom. Each department has a TEEP leader who supports this process, with additional input from the Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning) who is trained to TEEP level 3 and oversees the staff coaching programme.

- Data-driven and responding to evidence
- Clear, responsive leadership

So where next in terms of closing gaps and doing our bit for social mobility? Although our Pupil Premium pupils are doing well in national terms, their progress score is still some 13 points behind the 1028 Value Added score notched up by 'non-disadvantaged' pupils. So, about two improved GCSE grades, which probably points to where this could be made up - by identifying and intervening earlier in individual subjects.

What would be our advice to schools looking to make inroads into their Pupil Premium Gap? Well, probably not to focus just on the disadvantaged pupils, especially if their shortcomings are symptomatic of the wider school population. Start with the big stuff and go 'whole school'; the teaching, the behaviour. As at LPA, you might not close the gap quickly, but that will be because everyone's doing better.

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