SSAT
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Contents

Welcome

Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT

Welcome to the sixth edition of the termly SSAT Journal, celebrating innovative practice, practitioners' research, and student outcomes across the network. I appreciate the time that all of the contributors give to sharing their work with SSAT colleagues.

In this post-exams period, with students up and down the country awaiting results, it is good to remind ourselves that a young person's education is far more than a handful of grades. Articles in this term's edition include TES Secondary School of the Year 2016 Stanley Park High School's focus on an 'excellent futures curriculum' in which students work on cross-curricular projects to build key learning competencies, St Richard's Catholic College's development of an ambitious STEM week, changes to the pastoral curriculum to support the whole child at Greenfield School, and a songwriting project to develop students' character with Notivate.

These examples remind us that the true purposes of education are broad and complex. This is the theme of this year's SSAT Annual Lecture on 21 September, to which I am pleased to invite you all.

There is also a strong theme of social inclusion, social mobility and social justice running throughout this Journal. Adams' Grammar School attracted national attention when it changed its admissions policy and outreach work to reach different groups of students. At Duffryn High School, staff have used home visits to help narrow the aspiration and attainment gaps of FSM students, while Firth Park Academy reflect on their experience of a five-year research project with Sheffield University on Slovak Roma students.

Teacher-led research is at the heart of SSAT's programmes. In addition to Firth Park, Kingsford Community School discuss how they use coaching to embed formative assessment using the SSAT TEEP methodology. St Augustine Academy describe how they have developed a new coaching programme focused on use of video technology and observation. Jo Corrigan reports on the exciting new Visible Classrooms project, being led by Professor John Hattie.

All of this work underpins ever-improving student outcomes. Brookfields School explain how they ensure all of their students are supported on their pathway to future employment. Tom Middlehurst offers five top tips for ensuring that you get the most out of your student leaders this coming year.

The Perseid Special School reminds us that for schools to be truly exceptional, we need exceptional leaders, and need to strive to keep leadership fit for purpose.

At a recent SSAT roundtable on the so-called 'rigour revolution', attendees were quick to point out that rigour occurs in different places, in different subjects, and in different ways across our education system. The work displayed by these schools is undeniably rigorous, ensuring better outcomes for young people. I do not believe that we should allow one definition of rigour to dominate; we should allow for plurality.

Please do continue to share your work, ideas and research with us, by emailing **content@ssatuk.co.uk**.

This is the last journal of this academic year – everyone at SSAT wishes you a well-deserved summer holiday. We are living and working in fast-changing times, and this will present many challenges to the profession. Schools are often the oasis of calm for their students, and I know that you will continue to strive to give every young person the support and care they need. Thank you for this and all the superb work you do – this journal is just a small example.

Introduction

Tom Middlehurst,
SSAT

They say a week is a long time in politics, and a term in a school can feel like a lifetime. Since the publication of the last Journal in Spring 2016, we have seen the Chancellor use his Budget statement to announce new educational policies, the publication of a new educational white paper, a supposed U-turn, a decision to leave the EU, economic uncertainty, and a leadership contest for the next prime minister.

Educational Excellence Everywhere set out the government's agenda for education over the next four years. Most controversial was the announcement that all schools would become academies by 2022. Despite a widely-reported U-turn later that week, the secretary of state still enjoys many powers to speed up academisation. The Education and Adoption Bill allowed regional school commissioners to require 'failing' schools to become academies or to reallocate them a sponsor, with the same powers extended to 'coasting' schools, unless they can show a strong plan for improvement. And Nicky Morgan suggested she would seek powers to turn schools into academies in local authorities that either can't support school improvement, or aren't sustainable because of the number of academies already converted. So, to what extent do we have a U-turn? Debatable.

SSAT has always advocated the right for school leaders and governors to make decisions about how to drive school improvement themselves, working within a highly collaborative system. We maintain our belief that schools themselves should be empowered to make their own decisions. Schools should lead their own destinies, and decide which route they want to go down, even as we move towards a fully academised system.

We recognise that the next five years will see a huge amount of change in the education sector, and we will help members to keep on top of these changes, while exploring the innovative ways schools are meeting their challenges and using their opportunities.

In order to help schools make their own decisions, SSAT advocates a principled approach to collaboration, even if we are moving to full academisation. The following questions may help school leaders, governors and other stakeholders to reach a decision that is the best interests of the school:

» What are our underlying principles and values?

» What type of school are we? What defines us as unique?

» What schools / MATs do we know that share our values and principles? How can we find new schools / MATs that might share our values and principles?

» What benefits would we want from working in a supportive MAT?

» What are our practical concerns about becoming an academy, and how can we mitigate these?

This journal reflects the wonderful work that schools of all types and in all settings are doing across the country.

An 'excellent futures' curriculum

Jacquie Thomas,
Stanley Park High School

The challenge of human life is to determine how to live well with the processes of change, not somehow to transcend them

John Dewey[1]

Joe walks confidently to the front of the stage. Olivier-esque in his stature and poise he bellows the opening lines, "When shall we all meet again? In the classroom, the atrium or the headteacher's den?"

Joe is the hero of a modern tragedy which his Y7 class has written, managed, marketed, directed and performed, albeit with clever orchestration from the teachers. Everything including script, scenery, costumes, makeup and parent invites has been lovingly organised by the students in this class of no less than 70 keen individuals with a myriad personalities and abilities.

Everyone has a role
Parents leave the 50-minute show delighted, as everyone in the class has had a crucial part in making this 'school play' work. It has not been staged for the thespians alone, but for everyone. All students have played their part and feel proud to have done so.

This is the nature of Stanley Park's 'excellent futures curriculum' (EFC). Personalised and democratic learning is at the very core of all that the students do. And what they 'do' matters. All units of work end with a product towards which each student has contributed. Be it a dramatic tragedy; a book about their life at school; an exhibition that showcases their artwork or a performance poetry evening, students work together on producing projects that

have a significant outcome. Learning has a purpose. Students are heard and, even if they are not in the spotlight this term, at some point in this two-year programme they will have the chance to shine.

Building competencies for learning and life
The EFC is, fundamentally, a competence-based curriculum through which the students study the combined subjects of history, geography, ICT, RS, citizenship, business, art, DT and drama for twelve 50-minute periods in Y7 and seven in Y8 (where art and DT are taught separately on a rolling programme). English, mathematics, science, MFL, music and PE are additional subjects taken by the students in bespoke classrooms within their mini-school.

Stanley Park High has an ethos based on the principles of human-scale education[2] where relationships, class sizes and small teacher-student ratios are paramount. The provision of a curriculum that is essentially child-centred is part of this. We aim to ensure that what we do is in the best interest of our students, and not necessarily in accordance with the seemingly restrictive stipulations of policymakers who have never met Joe or any of his peers.

Flexible learning space

Three mixed-ability tutor groups of 24 students, working alongside three teachers, are taught in a large studio: a flexible learning space that opens out on the school's central atrium. This is the heart of the school, where students can often be found sitting in comfortable clusters planning the next steps to complete their project; peer-assessing a piece of work; or sitting alone, thoughtfully engaged in designing a set or sketching an idea. The use of such spaces enhances the requirement for the students to work independently; to choose where they wish to study and to collaborate with others.

Such habits of being don't necessarily come easy. We are a comprehensive school and our students arrive with a multitude of learning needs. But on day one of Y7, students begin a journey which guides them through the competencies of teamwork, independence, presenting, creativity, risk taking, showing empathy and developing intellectual curiosity. Students learn how to work together in an eclectic community of 70 individuals. They break off into smaller tutor groups when needed; the aim is to develop the personal attributes that will enable them to confidently tackle the learning demands of KS4 and also give them the skills that they will need for their future.

Groups of students publish about their school

To give a flavour of the learning process, and how it is assessed, let's begin with the aptly titled *Being a Stanley Parker*, a slickly produced A-Z book about the school within which all of the students have an input. The key competencies highlighted during this half-termly unit are teamwork and perseverance. Working in small groups, students are responsible for producing one page of text, and a cartoon illustration, about an aspect of their new school. They are tasked to research the area from relevant members of the school community and to decide on relevant content, which is drafted and peer-assessed several times before the copy is finalised.

The pride the students demonstrate when seeing their published page in the book is palpable. They now understand that the effort of painstakingly rereading and rewriting (often six times or more) is worth it in the end.

This process sets up expectations for the rest of the course. To produce their very best is always a challenge – and nothing less is good enough. Rigour is embedded in the demands set, not only in the assessment criteria (high standards of digital and written literacy with a detailed specification about presentation), but also in the effort required to produce an innovative product and to impress an authentic audience.

As students move on they may:

» create paintings for an exhibition in a local gallery

» produce a pitch for a local catering company

» prepare a presentation of their learning for their Stanley Park Student Conference[3]

These experiences make them increasingly critical of their abilities, so they set themselves increasingly higher standards. When students persistently

self-monitor the impact of their work and set themselves new challenges in this way, what more could one ask for?

Remembrance: deep enquiry

In year 8 the learning challenges are increased in preparation for KS4. In the first term students take part in a history project entitled Remembrance. Culminating in a two-day trip to the battlefields at Ypres, this project is dedicated to a deep enquiry into the causes and effects of the First World War. Part of the enquiry is an evaluative essay which requires the higher order thinking skills of evaluation and analysis, as students investigate sources to determine a balanced view on the historical period.

The skills required for KS4 history are explicitly taught to prepare the students for Y9, as the competencies of empathy and intellectual curiosity are made explicit. The final outcome is a multi-sensory story told through a galleried exhibition of work presented to students with multiple disabilities in a nearby school. This engaging experience is imprinted on the students' minds as they demonstrate their learning to their audience – and subsequently view the battlefields at first hand. Admittedly, the students may not have covered all aspects of the KS3 history curriculum by the end of this project, but they have certainly learnt something about what it is like to be an academic historian.

Creating a future of excellence

Through the Stanley Park Innovation and Research Academy (SPIRA), we constantly seek ways of evaluating what we do. A number of our teachers are involved in researching facets of the pedagogy for the excellent futures curriculum, and how we can make it better. Of equal value is the feedback that we gain from our regular visitors to SPIRA (many of whom have a specific interest in the EFC or in developing a human scale educational model).

For the first time this year we also have a group of KS3 student researchers. Their aim is to investigate more nuanced approaches to homework and how best we may deliver useful, independent home learning that has value to everyone: teachers, parents and students. One of these students is Raafiq; Joe's friend in fact. Sitting in a seminar last week we got drawn into a conversation about their future aspirations. When Raafiq spoke his response was stoical and wise in its simplicity; "well miss, the fact is that we will never be able to predict what is going to happen to us. I suppose whatever comes up, we just deal with it don't we?" Who knows what this young man's future has in store for him. Yet it seems to me that his confidence, tenacity and scrupulousness – attributes that have bloomed as the year has passed – will give him just that little bit more of a chance to excel; to have that 'excellent future' in which he lives well, whatever his chosen path may be.

> **Warmest congratulations to Stanley Park for winning the Secondary School of the Year at the TES Awards announced on 24 June 2016.**

[1]Dewey, J (1938) Experience and Education [2]www.hse.org.uk
[3]SPLCs are held twice yearly in Y7 and Y8. These replace parent evenings and are led by students. See more at www.stanleyparkhigh.org.uk

Coaching programme to support staff, improve student progress

Paul Collin,
St Augustine Academy

Building and embedding any kind of culture change within a school or academic environment can be tricky. Especially if it involves you telling staff that it will focus on the use of video technology and observation.

In 2011 St Augustine Academy, part of Woodard Academy Trust, started to develop a coaching programme that would look to overcome these hurdles. Over a period of three years, selected staff within the academy worked alongside colleagues to support and develop teaching and learning practice within the classroom. Improvements were seen from the support given and over time a model for coaching was developed, alongside the introduction of IRIS Connect in 2013.

Inspire2teach was born out of our use of IRIS Connect, we'd had it for about two years, but were concerned about it falling by the wayside if the colleague who was its main driver in the school was to leave. So we decided to develop a self-sustaining system that would prevent that happening.

Our shared vision for the development of our programme was:

» to create a quality centre of excellence for teacher training and support across the Woodard family and beyond

» to develop teachers' professional capacity, in order to increase student progress

» to become a recognised centre for teacher training, initially within Kent, with the aim of becoming a national centre of excellence

» to develop strong professional relationships with link partners, to support the programme and future developments.

The FACE framework

The framework for mentoring and coaching is called FACE (feedback, amend, challenge, embed). It draws together good practice and theory from education and beyond. This common framework helps teachers form information into meaningful patterns, fitting into what they already know and do within the classroom. Here we are focusing primarily on coaching.

Through the use of informed feedback, amendments, purposeful challenge and embedding teaching practice into a single, simple process, the coaching framework challenges the staff member to reflect on each individual student's progress and make those changes needed to achieve greater progress.

The model specifically references transactional analysis, a solution-focused approach, and Carl Rogers' client-centred framework and neurolinguistics programming (NLP).

It is based on the core principles shared by mentoring and coaching:

» a coaching relationship is based on equality and on openness, truth and respect

» a focus on solutions rather than problems helps to create change

» given the right conditions, people are inherently capable of learning and growth

» the client has the ability to achieve better results than they are currently generating.

Mentoring and coaching

Mentoring and coaching are not the same thing, and many authors have explored the different uses and processes involved. Simply, coaching is generally regarded as being about helping someone acquire or develop a particular skill or expertise and is typically conducted by an 'expert', in some cases the coachee's line manager. Mentoring is seen as working with someone over a period to help them develop broader aspects of their career or life. This, it is usually considered, should be conducted by someone without line management responsibility for the mentee. See UCL's explanation: *http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/od/coaching/index.php.*

There are overlaps and similarities, but this work focuses mainly on coaching.

The inspire2teach FACE framework has four key stages, which apply both within a session and across a number of sessions.

At the heart of the framework, and of effective coaching, is self-awareness.

Strong mentors and coaches understand their own strengths and are able to recognise and push aside their own agenda in order to focus on the needs of their client.

"It is safe to say that, as a group, coaches place a high value on learning and growth, their own as well as those of their clients… consequently, coaches often have a highly developed habit of self-analysis." (Kinsey-House, 2011, p99)

Nicola Stevens, in *Learning to coach* (2008, p18), describes the following attributes of a strong mentor or coach:

» a people person: at ease with people and enjoying interaction

» empathetic and respectful: interested in and sensitive to all aspects of people's lives

» collaborative – able to build rapport and sustain relationships

» willing – to help others in ways that are supportive to their needs

» self-managed – open-minded, responsible and able to manage their own lives.

Effective mentoring and coaching is therefore heavily dependent on learning and practice but is influenced by the personal attitudes and motivation of the mentor or coach. A strong mentor or coach focuses on the needs of the client; it is "an alliance between two equals", according to Kinsey-House in *Co-active coaching* (p3).

Feedback
Working agreements; building the basis of constructive feedback
It is important to position the coaching relationship as work and to place boundaries around it.

This is likely to be a key consideration when you are working peer to peer, as a line manager or with a team member, when existing managerial or work relationships are already established.

This may also be relevant in other contexts, such as support provided by a teaching school to a different institution. Transparency and clarity are key.

Another key consideration is the client's willingness to engage in conversation. Is it appropriate for the coach/mentor and client to work together or are there challenges, for example resolving performance issues that might make this difficult?

In such a situation, it may be more useful for the client to be coached or mentored outside of the management hierarchy.

The need for congruency, empathy and a non-judgemental approach may be at odds with a line manager-employee relationship.

Amend
Encouraging dialogue and good questions
"Put simply, coaching is a conversation, or series of conversations or questions, one person has with another."(Julie Starr, *The coaching manual*, 2011, p4) What differentiates a coaching or mentoring conversation from any other is:

» It is generative: it creates new options and results in new actions.

» The client's thinking, actions and learning benefited from the conversation.

» These benefits are unlikely to have happened without that conversation.

» The conversation is deeper than what is being said; it is about being truly heard and understood.

"Curiosity starts with a question… Simply posing the question shifts the focus of the conversation." (Kimsey-House, 2011, p63)

Exploration requires curiosity. Being curious and asking skilful questions are at the core of mentoring

COACHING FRAMEWORK
'Developing a Language for Change'

FEEDBACK **AMEND** **CHALLENGE** **EMBED**

inspire2teach FACE framework

and coaching. Good questions have impact. They can unlock information and bring it to the surface, which allows the client to move forward. Julie Starr, in *The coaching manual* (2011, p89), defines a great question as follows:

» It's simple.

» It has a purpose.

» It will be influencing without controlling.

Keep it short and simple

Unhelpful questions are those that confuse people, lack focus, close down thinking, or lead the client along the mentor's or coach's agenda – not their own.

» Multiple or complex questions ask the client to process, analyse and then conclude in one thought. This pressure can make the conversation unproductive. Remember: keep it short and simple.

» Closed questions, which ask for a 'yes' or a 'no' answer, or offer a limited choice, can be used to crystallise someone's thinking and move them on. In general, however, closed questions limit response and exploration.

» Leading questions that express what the mentor or coach wants, such as 'wouldn't x work?', generally close down options.

» 'Why' questions can be unhelpful. 'Why' tends to provoke a rational and sometimes defensive response. It often suggests a reflection on the past and asks for justification rather than looking forward to what could be achieved.

» Casual questions lack focus, for example 'so what's that all about?' They invite a flippant response and can imply a negative. As a mentor or coach, reflect on who the question is for: you or the client.

» Is it to disguise your own discomfort?

» Will the question help the client move forward and expand or clarify their thinking?

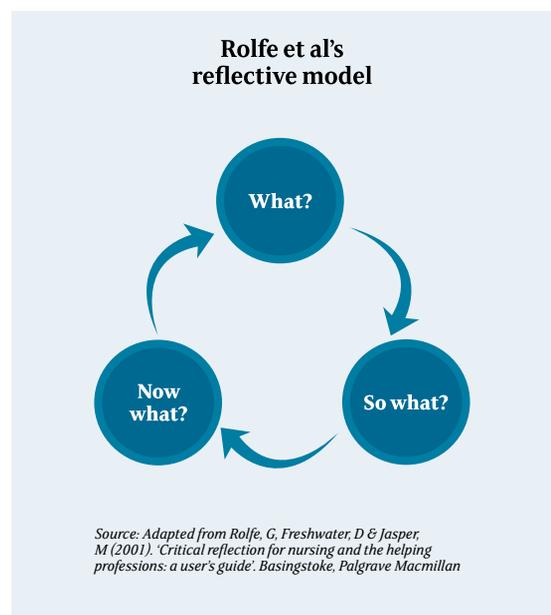Silence can be a powerful way of asking for reflection.

Challenge
Intuition: the ability of the mentor or coach to challenge and to use intuition is key to deepening the conversation

As a mentor or coach, you may feel that the client is resisting discussing an issue, skirting over something important, or that they are saying something that is at odds with what they've previously said or what you know of them.

In essence, you feel that there is a block that is holding back the conversation or preventing the client from taking action. They may be exhibiting this, for example, by committing to actions that have arisen from your sessions but not completing them.

Two models are useful here to help the mentor or coach move the conversation on, to address the deeper issues that are creating a block to progress.

The first of these is Rolfe's reflective model, below:

Rolfe et al's reflective model

What?

So what?

Now what?

Source: Adapted from Rolfe, G, Freshwater, D & Jasper, M (2001). 'Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: a user's guide'. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan

Transactional analysis ego states

Parent

Adult

Child

Source: Based on 'Games people play'
Berne, E (1964)

Embed
Achieving change/embedding practice

"Clients want change; they want to see results. They want to move forward." (Kimsey-House, 2011, p78)

Mentoring or coaching is about achieving change. That change can mean different things: it can be action and it can be learning. Awareness informs choices and, ultimately therefore can help to build competence. A key benefit of mentoring and coaching is that the coach/mentor and client work together on the learning journey. The mentor or coach supports the client in reflecting on learning and deepening their insights from it. The role of the mentor or coach is therefore to help the client "forward and deepen". (Ibid)

We have seen very positive results with the introduction of our coaching framework and the use of IRIS Connect within our academy. We are now working regionally with other schools and academies to share, develop and collaborate on good practice and to build a network of teaching excellence.

It has its foundations in the discipline of experiential learning. Dewey, cited in Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001), claimed that we learn by doing, and realising what came of what we did.

Using this questioning structure allows the coach to support their client in deepening their understanding of their habitual behaviours and patterns and move them forward into action.

The other useful model is the transactional analysis ego states model, as illustrated above.

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Can home visits to FSM students help to narrow the gap?

Lauren Sharpe & Jon Wilson,
Duffryn High School

Duffryn High School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive in the south east of Newport, South Wales, with 1,200 students on roll. A third of students are eligible for FSM and half live in the 20% most deprived area in Wales. Over a third of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and over 30 languages are spoken at home.

Over the summer holidays last year, a team of our staff organised home visits to the free school meals (FSM) cohort going from year 10 into year 11. Pairs of staff made half-hour visits to discuss the coming year, any barriers to students' achievement and ways in which students could be supported in this crucial school year.

The success of FSM students is a key priority for all schools in Wales in light of the country's new key performance indicators. Narrowing the gap between FSM and non-FSM attainment is a continual challenge, particularly in areas with high levels of social deprivation.

Our school has high levels of FSM (33.3%) and we have a staff committed to meeting the challenge of ensuring the best outcomes for all our students. The headteacher, Jon Wilson, had recently visited school leaders in Washington, USA, who had been involved in a home visits project that was associated with improving attendance and reading scores for some of their poorest students.

US schools' experience

The school leaders also stated that one of the main benefits of the project was intervening with parents before any problems arose with their child in school. If a positive home visit was made early, it avoided the first time the parents were contacted being on negative terms and damaging relationships.

We decided to trial this intervention to see what kind of impact it could have for Duffryn High School.

This personal touch had made a positive difference to students' attitudes towards school, staff engagement with parents and students' relationships with staff

The original idea was developed over several conversations with Mr Wilson. He described the kind of impact he thought that going to students' homes and engaging with them and parents in a positive way could have. He had met with staff in Washington who had spoken very positively about the experience and about the difference that this personal touch had made to students' attitudes towards school, staff engagement with parents and students' relationships with staff.

At the start of the holidays, I phoned the parents of our 55 Y11 FSM cohort, over two days. I then sent a letter to parents, confirming the times and dates of the visits, all of which had been arranged for the last two weeks of August.

Starting with just Mr Wilson and myself, we visited over 25 parents in just the first week. GCSE results day fell in the middle of that week, with an SLT meeting in the afternoon. During this meeting, we discussed the visits so far and the impact that we felt we had already had on our students with such enthusiasm that several other members of the leadership team volunteered to carry out visits in the second week.

We then discussed strategies, questions we had asked and things we had encountered during the visits, to prepare the other volunteer staff and to ensure a consistent approach in the remaining visits.

By the end of the project, a team of eight staff had completed 54 visits, gaining valuable information on the students we had visited: their aspirations, their perceived barriers to learning and ways in which we could get the best out of them. These were then discussed with department heads and other relevant teaching staff. We monitored the initial impact on attendance and on standards. Further visits, with a revision focus, were carried out in January and February this year.

It is difficult to quantify the impact made on students by the home visit project, when its initial intention was pastoral. However, we set out to discover whether this intervention could make any difference to the performance of our FSM students. There are already some positive signs.

In the autumn term, for the first time in the school's history, the attendance gap between FSM and non-FSM students in year 11 (at 0.5%) was the smallest of all year groups by a considerable margin. This trend continued for the whole of the autumn term, and this was the first time that year 11's attendance was the highest in the school.

Attainment gap closing
In terms of attainment, based on this year's predicted grades, this year's Y11 will close the FSM/non FSM attainment gap by 16% in the Level 2+ measure. While each cohort presents different challenges and the improvements made in the attainment of this year's year 11 cannot be attributed solely to the success of the home visits, there is other anecdotal evidence to suggest that they have contributed to this.

Spotting a better alternative
One particular student in year 11, who was a very poor attender in year 10, confided in us that his dislike of a particular subject caused him to choose to truant all day when he knew that he would have to attend that lesson. We were able to arrange for him to study an alternative qualification when he would otherwise have been attending this lesson. His attendance went from 74% in year 10 to 97% in year 11.

Opening up discussion
Another student, who had great concerns about her progress in a particular subject, told us that she didn't know how to approach her teacher. In September, a meeting was set up between the student and the teacher. Within a few months, that student's predicted grade went up from a D to a C.

These examples highlight one of the benefits of this intervention: it enables a proactive discussion about learning before a serious problem occurs. Would those students have had the confidence to share these barriers to learning with us, had we not been sitting in their front room, having a cup of tea with their parents? We, as a team, felt that going to students' homes, talking to them about school in a positive way and developing relationships with parents and families had a significant impact on individuals, and that was our real aim.

There are several perceived barriers to the success of this strategy, which could prevent schools from considering it as an option for their students. However, it is important to note that none of these were issues that prevented the successful implementation of our home visits project.

Would those students have had the confidence to share these barriers to learning with us, had we not been sitting in their front room, having a cup of tea with their parents?

Allaying concerns

Firstly, a project of this scale and nature would go nowhere without the support of the leadership team and a dedicated team of staff willing to support their students. We are fortunate that the culture of enthusiasm and 'going the extra mile' for our students is widespread. The project could certainly succeed with a very small team of staff willing to participate, as long as they had the full support and participation of the leadership team.

Other obvious concerns are child protection and safeguarding issues. Any leader considering running a project like this must ensure that staff are protected. We completed risk assessments, arranged visits with parents beforehand (by phone and letter), kept the school up to date with who was being visited and when, produced a carefully scripted set of questions for staff to use, and travelled exclusively in pairs with another staff member. Obviously, if you are visiting students' homes, you may come into contact with some safeguarding issues that need to be passed on: in the same manner as if an issue of this type arises in the school setting, it needs to be dealt with by the appropriate person.

An issue that some leaders may fear is a negative response from parents, or reluctance from families to engage. While attendance at parents' evenings at school is normally around 60% for year 11, the response rate for the home visits was 98%. We found that parents were welcoming and accommodating, both when arranging visits and when we attended. If organised well, engaging parents in this way should not cause any issues and we did not encounter any, even with families that had previously been challenging to engage in other ways.

Home visits with a revision focus were then carried out for Y11 students on our target list in January, with a larger team of staff. Again, these were very successful and year 11 students have reported feeling valued and supported by staff.

We can foresee this approach being used as part of transition and to support FSM students in other year groups

Now that a team of staff are experienced in visiting students' homes in order to discuss and support attainment, we envisage this becoming an embedded strategy at Duffryn. Two members of staff are currently studying the impact of the visits on this year's year 11s for leadership qualifications, and so we will soon have detailed data by which to measure the project's success.

This summer, we will begin visiting our current year 10 cohort before they start year 11, and we can foresee this approach being used as part of transition and to support FSM students in other year groups.