

Central Foundation Girl's School, London

SSAT Student Leadership Ambassador School case study

How is the SSAT Student Leadership Accreditation (SLA) implemented in your school?

We offer all students in year 8 (240) the opportunity to go through the SSAT Student Leadership Accreditation award at bronze level. Every student regardless of ability is provided with the resources to access the accreditation and achieve this. Students are given the opportunity to resubmit if they do not meet the standard. We are currently running this for the 2nd year with a new cohort and will be running the silver award for the whole year 10 cohort (of whom 180 students have been accredited with the Bronze award) from September. The programme runs using one tutor period a fortnight.

One member of the senior leadership team plans and has oversight of all student leadership programmes. The head of year 8 works closely with a team of 16 tutors to ensure that the SLA programme is rolled out properly. Both the senior leadership team and the head of year work together to ensure successful implementation. There are two tutors assigned to each year group and they focus on the completion of each strand by focusing on one at a time. We have also recruited 16 SLA Ambassadors from the accredited cohort to lead and support students. Every Thursday after school there is an SLA surgery which students can opt into if they have any issues. The staff have also had CPD and know about the programme so support in faculties – it is an all-inclusive programme.

As soon as students start their year 8 experience, they automatically start programme. The programme is advertised across the school, all staff know students are doing this and have been provided with INSET on how they can support. Any new opportunities in terms of leadership programmes are advertised and promoted with a view to participation counting towards achieving the accreditation. Teachers are asked if students partaking in the leadership programmes want to go through the accreditation, they can also ask.

In year 9 currently 75% of the cohort has been accredited (180 students) and all students in year 8 are enrolled on the programme.

Why did you decide to undertake the SLA and what were your aspirations?

The current demographic of the students means that our students come from predominantly low aspirational and disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to build our students confidence, challenge cultural barriers to their achievements and progress into a multitude of careers making informed decisions, we felt that a leadership programme needed to be developed. We have lots of students with untapped potential and this programme allows those students to start to move towards seeing what they are able to do, beyond the glass ceilings they impose on themselves. We also wanted to increase engagement in the extra-curricular clubs and events that would improve the cultural capital of our students who didn't all have aspirational role models in their everyday life.

The purpose of our leadership programmes were to:

- create opportunities for our students by embedding leadership into the culture of the school, helping students recognise leadership skills and embed them
- enable our students to be confident, articulate girls who are part of the decision-making process at CFGS and feel ownership of the school community
- empower and motivate our students to bring about change and know how to do this
- encourage our students to be confident in articulating the language of leadership and to work in partnership with the staff to achieve shared goals.

We felt that the SLA would provide an excellent basis to do this and would allow greater involvement of the students in the school community, leading eventually to them being the drivers of change.

What was the immediate impact of undertaking the SLA on your students?

Students became more independent. Due to a growing demand from the students for leadership opportunities we went from running six whole-school leadership programmes to 26. Each faculty also now runs a leadership programme that they have self-facilitated. Students asked for this as they wanted the evidence. There was a peak in year 8 going into year 9, of students who were aware of student leadership and the skills associated with this and wanted to do more with their time. Student voice showed that the students felt they had something to aspire to and as such, our recruitment and retention numbers for the Duke of Edinburgh award went to 78 in year 9, the highest it has ever been.

What changes have you already seen since your students started to use the SLA within school/academy, with reference to the core themes of developing myself, contributing to my community and working with others?

Developing myself – students will actively seek opportunities to demonstrate progress in attendance and punctuality. The students who are demotivated and have poor attendance have shown an increase and have used this to count towards the commitment strand. The amount of 'no homework' recorded in the year 8 cohort has reduced, as students are more motivated to show that they are using their planners and there has been a push on this from the head of year and tutors. Attendance to an extra-curricular club from the year group has also increased so much that the school has had to put extra strategies and programmes in place to meet the demand.

In terms of the *Contributing to the community* strand, this has been linked to the school behaviour and rewards programmes and a greater proportion of the year group are achieving the bronze central and silver central points award compared to other year groups. Students are more willing to become mentors to other students or being helpful in some way to the school community- this is shown as staff surveys show that it is easier to recruit students from this year group to attend events as ambassadors. This year group has developed in confidence and students who would otherwise not be involved within the wider world of the school community or even take the initiative are now started to become involved. For example, the current year 9 cohort represent the largest

number of students who will present in assemblies, be involved in school shows and even assist in leadership programmes.

Who in your school undertakes the SLA? And who do you think this is most appropriate for?

The programme is open to everyone in year 8. We are hoping to open the Silver award to year 10. This is to ensure inclusivity and allow students to have something to aspire to. It also ensures that all students know that they will feel supported and can make a difference and lead, not necessarily in an extroverted way, but in small ways that can lead to large changes. It also allows students who would normally be demotivated to become self-reflective and look at how they can change their behaviours and attitudes to move forward. This has been seen a lot within this cohort and we have many success stories.

What impact on your students do you hope to see in the future following the completion of the SLA?

We hope to develop leadership skills in our students that they would need for 21st Century skills as well as cultivating a culture of leading change confidently and wanting to be part of that change.

What have you done in school to implement the SLA and how do you intend to sustain this?

One member of the senior leadership team plans and has oversight of student leadership and line manages the year 8 cohort. As such, they will work with the head of year to implement the programme.

Two booklets have been produced based on the 10 criteria for the SLA (please see attached) and the school priorities and programmes feed into this. All students have been given folders too to support with their evidence collection. The first booklet provides an overview of the programme and what students need to do in order to collect evidence and meet each of the strands. The second booklet is to support with the evidence collection so students can have all their evidence in one place, this is also organised by strand and linked to all aspects of the school life and the programmes we offer.

All tutors are provided with CPD and the programme explained and their roles in supporting students to become independent and collect evidence.

We also run an SLA surgery every Thursday after school where the head of year, a senior leadership team member and SLA Ambassadors are available to students to answer peer queries about the SLA evidence.

We have selected a team of 16 SLA Ambassadors from the first cohort who have first-hand experience of the SLA. These ambassadors have been given training on how to mentor and support students through the programme. They have provided training and CPD to the year 8 tutor team (having been through the programme), introduced the SLA through assemblies and monitor student completion of the strands using a spreadsheet during tutor time. The SLA team meet the

lead teacher once a fortnight and the SLA team plan and deliver the sessions to students every fortnight. The SLA team also provide student voice on how to improve and what works for the student body. They are the driving force of the SLA and they moderate the folders and provide feedback. They will train the next cohort of SLA Ambassadors in September and will lead the programme, so in its true sense the programme will be run for the students by the students.

Has the SLA helped promote student voice in your school?

Our year 8 and 9 cohort have become our most outspoken. They are happy to attend student council meetings and share their feelings and insights. The student voice surveys at the beginning and end of each year show an increased understanding of leadership and wanting to be involved in something that can create change and impact the world of the school. They requested a diversity ambassadors scheme, a communication team and a skills ambassador team to name a few, and the staff have responded by starting these teams.

The students in the 2018/2019 accredited cohort provided feedback on their experience and helped develop resources to ensure that the current year 8 cohort are fully supported and can meet the demands of the accreditation.

What is the greatest success/impact/achievement you have seen since introducing the SLA?

Our largest success is that 180 of our students have been accredited.

There has been a huge recorded spike in student engagement in extra-curricular and leadership committees and staff have opened more leadership programmes across the school. In year 9 we have 78 students on the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. The current year 8 group have been identified as the year group which attend the highest number of extra-curricular events.

Students have really enjoyed having the opportunity for the experience, especially the SLA Ambassador team who have been involved in running assemblies, meeting delegates from other schools and our school governors to share good practice, training the tutors in year 8, presenting to the senior leadership team of the school and planning, leading and running the tutor time sessions- in their own words 'more than they have ever done before'.

Many parents have commented that their daughters were previously shy or hated to present (and some still do) in front of audiences and they can't believe that their daughters are becoming involved in presenting to their peers and even staff. One parent said she was in 'disbelief' and 'astounded' by the confidence her daughter now displayed.

Some students have said that the programme has helped them to become more independent and reflective and think about how they can contribute to their community and develop more.