



SSAT Journal 06

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ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Contents

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1 | Welcome
<i>Sue Williamson, SSAT</i> | 24 | How a school's ambitious science week has developed to make 'the case for space'
<i>Julie Durkin, St Richard's Catholic College</i> |
| 2 | Introduction
<i>Tom Middlehurst, SSAT</i> | 27 | Using coaching to embed formative assessment
<i>Joanne Mackreth-Aylett, Kingsford Community School</i> |
| 3 | An 'excellent futures' curriculum
<i>Jacquie Thomas, Stanley Park High School</i> | 29 | How we aim to value the whole child and every child
<i>David Priestley, Greenfield School</i> |
| 6 | Fighting against the tide – grammar schools and social mobility
<i>Gary Hickey, Adams' Grammar School</i> | 31 | Pathway to employment – developing a careers education programme for young people with additional needs
<i>Brandon Mills, Brookfields School</i> |
| 9 | Nurturing Slovak Roma pupils: university-academy project identifies challenges and strategies
<i>Emma Hammond, Firth Park Academy & Mark Payne, University of Sheffield</i> | 34 | How a singer/songwriter programme motivates young people
<i>John Bowman, Notivate</i> |
| 12 | Visible Classrooms
<i>Jo Corrigan, SSAT</i> | 38 | Getting student leadership working effectively in your school
<i>Tom Middlehurst, SSAT</i> |
| 15 | Coaching programme to support staff, improve student progress
<i>Paul Collin, St Augustine Academy</i> | | |
| 19 | Keeping leadership fit for purpose
<i>Tina Harvey, Perseid Special School</i> | | |
| 21 | Can home visits to FSM students help to narrow the gap?
<i>Lauren Sharpe & Jon Wilson, Duffryn High School</i> | | |

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.

We are very grateful to Grebot Donnelly for their sponsorship of this Journal.



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 Dewey¹

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 education² 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 Conference³

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.

¹Dewey, J (1938) *Experience and Education* ²www.hse.org.uk

³SPLCs are held twice yearly in Y7 and Y8. These replace parent evenings and are led by students. See more at www.stanleyparkhigh.org.uk



Fighting against the tide – grammar schools and social mobility

*Gary Hickey,
Adams' Grammar School*

A quiet revolution in rural Shropshire has attracted national attention. Why? Adams' Grammar School has a long history, which we like to think is built on both traditional and forward-looking values.

It is very low on the social deprivation index and most of our pupils come from outside the area of Newport. Demand for school places is very strong, based on a number of factors, not least the focus on educating the whole person. This means not just the combination of academic results and range of extra-curricular activities. It also refers to our aspiration for our alumni to be morally and spiritually defined as people who understand right from wrong and who are aware of their strengths and areas for development.

Academic standards have risen continually over the last 15 years, and the school now competes favourably with local independent schools and regional grammar schools that have similar, or better, ratios of high-achieving applicants. Adams' is one of the best



performing state boarding schools in the country for attainment; it was judged outstanding by Ofsted in 2013.

We think Adams' provides very good educational opportunities, and when I was appointed headmaster in 2014 I wanted to increase the number of pupils in the school, at all key stages, who could benefit from such an education. A key factor is the return to the original grammar school principles of providing a means of social mobility for the more disadvantaged children. I felt we needed to recognise and reach out to the families who do not necessarily see Adams' as a viable option. This meant targeting the pupils, parents and teachers in primary and junior schools, to publicise what we

have to offer, and to encourage greater interest. Going against the grain of many grammar schools, we needed a catchment area.

Changing admissions policy

There has always been local pressure to increase the number of pupils from Newport and the surrounding areas. There is (and always has been) objection to local boys of grammar school quality being passed over in favour of large numbers arriving from outside the Newport area. Changing the admissions policy was now an imperative on the basic principle that we should return to William Adams' values when he opened the school in 1656 as a free grammar school for boys in Newport.



The main purpose of the work that needed to be done here was not just to create more of a local feel to the school, but to address the wider issues of social mobility so as to provide opportunities for children from more deprived areas. Creating a local catchment area would also have benefits for our extensive extra-curricular activities, as the numbers able to access the activities will increase (because local children have less problem with the journey home than those tied to bus journeys).

My first task then was to change our admissions policy to establish a local catchment area and include increased provision for pupil premium children. Many grammar schools currently fail to attract

significant numbers of pupils who live in socially deprived areas and so fail in their purpose of social re-engineering and improving social mobility. Our catchment needed to include more pupils on free school meals, to give them the opportunity for receiving an outstanding education. This will also broaden the socio-economic background of our intake. The new admissions policy prioritises then in the following order:

- » looked after children
- » boys in receipt of pupil premium, including children of service families, on the day of their entrance test
- » boys who live within the Newport attendance area

- » rank order according to the result of the entrance test (assuming the applicant has reached the required academic standard).

Once this had been approved by the governors and the local authority admissions team, we started to implement it. Then came the forceful complaints from parents who lived further afield than Newport. I was accused by one parent of “stealing” their child’s future from them. Some parents resorted to cheating, making applications from false addresses in the area or from houses they didn’t own. When caught, they were more annoyed than embarrassed. But perhaps they didn’t think that morally it was so different from buying into the



expensive catchment area of an outstanding comprehensive, or suddenly finding religion before applying to a church school, or any of the other classic middle-class dodges.

Outreach role

Another vital strand in this plan was to give significance to the outreach role that the school was trying to create in the local community. We knew we had to win the hearts and minds of a community that had for some time believed (with possibly good reason) that the school had become distant and somewhat isolated. So we changed the SLT structure, and introduced a new assistant head post – specifically in charge of outreach, in order to increase and strengthen the links with the local community and promote greater awareness of Adams’ local activities in education.

Since the post-holder started in September 2015 she has:

- » held open days
- » visited all the primary schools in our catchment area
- » instigated mentoring sessions delivered by our sixth formers in literacy and numeracy for year 5s and 6s
- » set up a choir in one of the schools
- » developed a rolling programme for local primaries to do their science lessons in our labs.

She has also investigated funding for primary/secondary collaboration through the Ogden Trust. So far this development seems positive, though it does depend on us having, or leading, a cluster of schools (which can be secondary and/or primary).



She has also become the STEM subjects lead for the local area.

National interest in grammar school’s catchment area

Since announcing these plans things have moved on with great speed. As social mobility, and the part that education plays in it, have become a mantra for most political parties recently, our changes attracted a lot of interest. Following the publication of our changes we were the subject of a feature in the Guardian newspaper focusing on the implications of the new admissions policy and the formation of a catchment area. The article drew responses from around the world.

In October I was invited to a Friends of Grammar Schools dinner at the House of Commons, hosted by Graham Bradley MP. It was an interesting moment indeed when the secretary of state for education, Nicky Morgan, asked to speak to me regarding our new catchment area and the admissions changes I had brought in to Adams’. She said that these moves towards greater social mobility for disadvantaged children were exactly what schools such as ours should be doing, and was very supportive of our efforts.

The fact that the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, is an old boy of Adams’ and is famously passionately against grammar schools, was purely coincidental I’m sure.

With last year’s celebration of 750 years of Parliament, the House of Lords and St. James’ House commissioned a book to chronicle the history of Parliament, and also to celebrate what they decided were significant events in the country. Because Adams’ was a grammar school and had created a catchment area they deemed this of educational significance (in terms of aiding social mobility) and included a double page feature on the school. We were delighted to attend the formal launch of the book in Westminster Abbey. We were also invited to join the 100 Group of leading schools in the UK connected with the push for social mobility, led by Brighton College, the Independent School of the Year.

I had no idea that our quiet revolution at Adams’ would ever excite such national interest.



Nurturing Slovak Roma pupils: university-academy project identifies challenges and strategies

*Emma Hammond, Firth Park Academy &
Mark Payne, University of Sheffield*

Home to some 50% of pupils with EAL and 39 home languages, Firth Park Academy's deprivation index of 0.43 ranks it in the bottom 20% of secondary schools nationally. While students at the academy face a number of challenges, Firth Park is committed to raising standards and improving life chances for all its pupils. Having secured an Ofsted rating of 'good' in 2015, and with next year's Y7 cohort set to be the biggest yet, the academy's local and regional reputation is on the rise and it is aiming for an 'outstanding' at the next inspection.

Yet the arrival of a new cohort of students three years ago has not made the journey an easy one. From 2013, a large Slovak Roma population (now numbering about 3,000) arrived in Sheffield in search of a better life. But this growing community soon led to the Page Hall area of Sheffield being described by the Guardian as 'a boiling pot waiting to explode' (Pidd, 2013). Already a diverse area of the city and part of the academy's catchment, Page Hall is one of the most deprived political wards in Sheffield (Rae, 2011). The arrival of people from a different culture was not wholly welcomed by local residents at first; they saw increases in noise, litter and large groups of youths on the streets as a direct result of the Roma population.

The changing demography of Sheffield was mirrored at Firth Park Academy, with the percentage of EAL students increasing quicker than the national figure for three years. The rapid increase in Slovak Roma students led to their currently accounting for some 10% of the academy population of 1000.



Slovak Roma background

Most of the Slovak Roma people in Sheffield originate from villages in eastern Slovakia, some of which are quite under-developed. On the margins of society and usually unemployed, the Roma suffer from economic deprivation and often hostile racism (Scheffel, 2013). Added to this, the Roma pupil cohort brought with it a number of challenges. Not only did the majority arrive with limited if any English, but many had little experience of reading or writing and few had cultural awareness of so-called 'British values'. Combine this with community tensions resulting in some less positive behaviour and the academy had to face various challenges. It has to be pointed out that the first language of the new children is a non-standardised mainly oral version of Romani, which partly explains the lack of literacy (Hancock, 2002).

Extreme deprivation led to many children having truncated educational experiences in Slovakia, so they are often less than 'school-ready'. (Amnesty International, (2007). And where children have





attended school, this has been through the medium of Slovak, essentially a second-language environment, which means the children often lag academically behind their Slovak peers.

Three years on and Firth Park is considered a safe place for our Roma pupils, so the academy has been chosen to work with Sheffield University on a five-year research project to identify the best practice in the integration and educational provision for Slovak Roma children.

The new arrivals

When the first Roma family arrived at Firth Park Academy mid academic year, their parents' lack of English and cultural and social awareness meant they expected their children to begin classes that day. While the academy was no stranger to in-year arrivals and had an admissions officer accustomed to different cultures, it became evident that we needed to find an effective route of communication with the new Roma community. Translating letters into Slovak often proved ineffective.

More seriously, as we were trying to communicate with a community that generally had negative experiences of authority figures, our early attempts to make links proved futile. When one family returned the following month with a self-appointed translator, the school admitted the family and also offered him a job as a community link! Having Roma-speaking staff at the school has been key to the success of Roma students at the academy.

From having one member of staff with no previous experience, the school now employs four Roma speaking staff. One is a TLA 3 who teaches and supports within the language department; two act as home-school liaison responsible for behaviour, progress and attendance; and one has recently been appointed as a year group student support leader.

Their impact on student attendance and behaviour has been invaluable. Roma attendance has increased from some 40% in 2013 to the highest in the school on more than one occasion in 2016. Our Roma-speaking staff have enabled the academy to reduce any anxiety parents previously had about the English education system, and encouraged increased engagement in their children's education. Firth Park holds regular Roma coffee mornings in which parents are invited in to ask any questions they have, in an informal setting. We have also found these sessions a good opportunity to remind parents of the expectations about uniform, (which differ to Slovakia where, in common with the rest of Europe, there is no school uniform). Attendance at these mornings is much improved due to our Roma staff phoning home and being present to translate.

The school invites parents in for a careers event in which local colleges deliver presentations on appropriate courses for both parents and children. These events have raised aspirations.

EAL developments

The relatively sudden arrival of the Roma community in the school challenged our then EAL

department. This had historically managed small-group withdrawal for students who were often already literate as a result of previous schooling in their home countries.

In order to support the new arrivals appropriately, the EAL and MFL departments joined forces to create an appropriate induction and curriculum programme. The current model is a three-tiered approach called 'New to English' (NTE). The level of support is tailored according to a baseline test, which sees pupils initially allocated to NTE1, NTE2 or NTE3 and progressing through the steps.

Students in NTE1 spend most of their time in the languages faculty and also enjoy lessons in dance and art. These pupils have very limited English and often come to us not able to read or write. Their diet of phonics, basic numeracy, English language, reading and handwriting is designed to be a short-term intervention to prepare them for the next stage.

NTE2 students communicate well orally but are not as strong at reading or writing, a very common characteristic of EAL pupils (Cummins, 2000). These students attend a variety of mainstream lessons but still receive 12 lessons of EAL support per week in the languages department.

By the time students graduate to NTE3, they are confident communicators who can read and write well; but they still have six lessons a week of EAL support to accelerate their progress with literacy. On graduation of NTE3 pupils to 'mainstream' curriculum lessons, the languages faculty shares a profile on the pupils that includes an exemplary piece of work, background information on their home life and their current understanding of classroom expectations.

Our current approach has proven successful in preparing Roma pupils for mainstream lessons and it is often commented that they are some of the most polite students in the school, partly due to the high expectations maintained by the languages staff.

However, a system that relies on students to achieve certain levels before progressing has meant that pupils often stay in the New to English system for too long and do not access the same variety of lessons as their non-Roma peers. The languages department has tried to address this in-year by adapting the current curriculum to include aspects of (particularly the language of) science, geography and history. But Firth Park will now integrate students more rapidly in order to

accelerate progress. From September 2016, new arrivals will join a six-week induction programme that introduces them to school expectations and routines, assesses their English and focuses on their literacy to prepare them for mainstream lessons. They will then graduate and attend mainstream lessons sooner than is currently the case, with tailored withdrawal groups for students based on their level of need.

Conclusion

Since the arrival of the Roma community in 2013, Firth Park has adapted quickly and made huge progress in providing for their needs and, among local families, is now seen as a school that Roma pupils want to attend. By employing Romani speaking staff, regularly engaging parents in school events and always monitoring and adapting their curriculum, we have seen improvements in the attendance, behaviour and progress of students. With a new programme being introduced next year to further increase curriculum integration, we are confident the provision for our Roma pupils will continue to improve. We are also aware that other groups will migrate to Sheffield in the future and lessons learnt now will enable us to welcome those new pupils to what we are sure will be recognised as our outstanding school.

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Visible Classrooms

Jo Corrigan,
SSAT

The Visible Classroom approach has the potential for a strong positive impact on the quality of teaching and improved outcomes for pupils. Applications are now open to primary schools in England to join this funded research project. Jo Corrigan, head of SSAT's primary network, explains.

It is crucial that we focus teachers' professional development on those aspects of their practice that will have the highest impact on pupil learning.

So which are those all-important aspects? Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, knows better than most. He has completed extensive research over 20 years, collating studies that relate to what makes a difference to pupil learning.

He developed a way of ranking various influences in different meta-analyses related to learning and achievement according to their effect sizes. In his ground-breaking study *Visible Learning*, he ranked 138 influences related to learning outcomes, from very positive to very negative effects. Hattie found the average effect size of all the interventions he studied and judged the success of influences according to this in order to establish what works best in education.

Teachers account for about 30% of the variance in student achievement and [represent] the largest influence outside of individual student effort.

Professor John Hattie

Hattie studied six areas that contribute to learning: the student, the home, the school, the curriculum, the teacher, and teaching and learning approaches. In addition to listing the relative effects of different influences on pupil outcomes, he also explained the process underpinning the data. He found that the key to making a difference was making teaching and learning visible. As a result of his research, based on nearly 1200 meta-analyses, he concluded that two of the most influential factors which make a difference were teachers and feedback.

Teachers need to have a clear understanding of what they mean by "impact" for their series of lessons; a sense of the desired magnitude of their impact; and how many kids they are going to have that impact on.

Feedback: The important part is not how much feedback the teacher gives a student, but how much feedback a teacher receives about the impact of their practice on student learning. And so part of the work he does is summed up by his phrase, "know thy impact".

How does this translate to the Visible Classrooms project?

With 85% of schools receiving a judgement of 'good' or 'outstanding' during Ofsted inspections this academic year, it is important to share the high quality teaching practice that leads to positive outcomes for pupils as widely as possible. In his *Visible Learning* series of books, Professor Hattie states that we need tools and research to make visible how the best teachers teach in order to enable all teachers to have the most positive impact possible on children's learning.

Research behind the project

In 2011, the Victorian Deaf Education Institute in Australia conducted an evaluated trial into the use of ‘real-time captioning’ in classrooms, with the aim of improving access to learning materials for secondary deaf students. The trial demonstrated that real-time captioning could be a valuable tool in supporting the curricular and social inclusion of deaf/hard of hearing students within mainstream education.

Crucially for the Visible Classrooms project, the trial also demonstrated that teachers changed the way they taught as a result of personal reflections on the individual transcripts of their lessons.

In 2013-2014 the EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) and Nominet Trust funded a further project focusing on the use of digital technology. The University of Melbourne and Ai-Media UK jointly developed Visible Classrooms which used ‘real-time captioning’ technology to generate a live transcript of teachers’ speech in lessons. The programme was piloted across 10 mainstream primary schools, involving 35 teachers, in the United Kingdom. In addition to individual transcripts of lessons, the teachers had access to an online dashboard which provided visual information about their teaching and comparison against a rubric developed from the evidence base on effective teaching practice.

The evaluation had three aims:

- » To assess the feasibility of the technology and overall approach
- » To provide recommendations that could be used to improve the approach in the future
- » To assess the promise of the approach, and its components, to inform any future trial.

Key conclusions from the project were:

- » Overall, teachers were positive about the Visible Classroom approach, and believed that it had the potential to benefit both themselves and their pupils.
- » Most teachers were adept at using the technology in the classroom, even if they had not done so before this trial. There were some technical problems related to hardware, software, and internet connections, but after an initial bedding-in period most were overcome.
- » Though few teachers spent time reviewing the verbatim transcripts, the online dashboard and more detailed feedback reports based on

the transcripts were seen as valuable tools to support teacher development. To maximise the impact of the feedback, teachers would benefit from being given greater opportunity to review and discuss their practice with peers and managers.

- » Pupils did not seem to use live transcripts of teacher dialogue regularly, consistently, or in a way that would suggest an obvious benefit in learning. Teachers had mixed views on whether the live transcripts might have additional benefit for disadvantaged pupils or their peers.
- » Further research would be required to assess the level of impact the approach has on academic attainment. Prior to considering a full trial it would be valuable to undertake some additional development work to refine the approach.

(The Visible Classroom: Evaluation Report and Executive Summary, February 2015)

Why is SSAT involved in this?

Benefits of Visible Classroom

Visible Classroom provides feedback on whether teachers:

- » Facilitate classroom engagement and participation
- » Promote critical understanding and thinking
- » Engage in deep teaching with their pupils
- » Encourage free speech and risk taking
- » Provide meaningful and corrective feedback
- » Articulate learning goals and lesson objectives
- » Ask open and closed questions
- » Speak too quickly or too slowly
- » Support learning progression

Beginning in September 2016, The University of Melbourne, Ai-Media UK and SSAT are working in partnership to trial the Visible Classrooms project in schools across England. This trial is an efficacy study, funded by the EEF, to look at the potential effectiveness of the approach. One hundred and forty primary schools are being recruited to be part of the trial. Of these schools, 70 will be randomly





selected for an intervention group: they will use the Visible Classroom technology and receive training, feedback and support. The other 70 schools will be in a control group and will not be using the technology (apart from a baseline test at the beginning of the project). At the selected schools, all year 5 and year 6 teachers will be expected to participate.

The purpose of the project is to test whether providing feedback to teachers on their audio-recorded lessons has an impact on pupil outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics.

The primary research question this evaluation seeks to answer:

- » Does the Visible Classroom approach increase the educational attainment of year 5 and year 6 pupils (ages 9-11) in combined key stage 2 English and mathematics results?

Secondary research questions will consider whether the intervention has an impact on:

- » The English and mathematics results for each year group independently
- » The English and mathematics results of free school meal (FSM) students as a group
- » The impact on students whose teachers score in the bottom third of the Visible Classrooms rubric, as measured at baseline.

Using evaluation to improve teaching practices: the project process

Visible Classroom allows teachers to use mobile technology, encouraging them to reflect on lessons to evaluate what they have done and what their pupils have learned.

The process has seven steps:

1. **Lesson recording** The process starts once the teacher has uploaded an audio recording from their lesson.
2. **Transcription** Trained captioners listen to the recording, produce a transcript and add time codes to each word (see below).
3. **Receive your transcript** Teachers receive the transcript so they have an accurate record of their 'talk' in the lesson.
4. **Dashboard** Teachers receive feedback of their teaching generated from the time-coded data of their lesson. (Did you allow enough time for your students to participate in their own learning? Did you speak too quickly? How many questions did you ask?)
5. **Complete five hours** After uploading five hours of lesson recordings, the transcripts are sent to the University of Melbourne.
6. **Analysis** World-leading education experts from the University of Melbourne review the transcripts and analyse the lessons using a specifically developed rubric drawing on a range of research and quality teaching materials from Professor John Hattie.
7. **Personal feedback** Once the University of Melbourne has completed their analysis of lessons, they create and send the teacher a personalised feedback report with a summary of their observations and recommendations on teaching strategies designed to improve learning outcomes for students.



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." (Kinsey-House, 2011, p63)

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



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

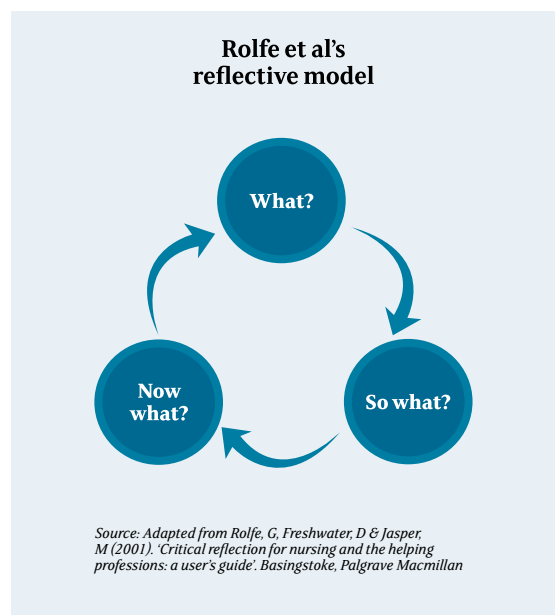
Intuition: the ability of the mentor or coach to challenge and to use intuition is key to deepening the conversation

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:



Transactional analysis ego states



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

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.

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.

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Keeping leadership fit for purpose

*Tina Harvey,
Perseid Special School*

There is little doubt that a school is only as good as its leaders and that leadership capacity – or lack of it – is one of the key aspects that can lead to schools getting into difficulty.

Perseid School is an all age (3-19) day school for learners age 3-19 with severe and profound learning difficulties, including autism and/or physical and/or sensory disabilities. Pupils come from the London Borough of Merton and surrounding boroughs. Staff work as part of an inter-disciplinary team, which includes health authority staff.

Our most recent Ofsted inspection in December 2015 led to our third 'outstanding' inspection rating, with a particular emphasis on the quality of leadership throughout the school. This is no small achievement in a school where over 50% of teachers have no more than three years' experience and where the school's roll has increased by 31% since the previous inspection less than four years earlier.

Responding to the challenge

However, the inspectors' feedback included the action point to "further opportunities to share outstanding practice beyond existing local area partnerships". Our thoughts turned to leadership style and what it was that had really helped the school to build and sustain capacity. As a senior leadership team we identified five areas of particular significance:

1. Recruitment
2. Continuing professional development
3. Coaching to strengthen leadership capacity
4. Clarity of vision and purpose
5. Outward facing; having strong partnerships.

Recruitment

It is vital for us to acknowledge that the staff team are the backbone of the school, as this helps us acknowledge that getting appointments 'right' enables a school to unlock potential and is a rich resource for further development. In the context of noticeable teacher shortages, we have tried to develop a school response to



actively encourage newly qualified teachers to apply to work with us, and seek to retain them through a bespoke programme of CPD (see below).

As a special school, we also have a need for a large number of teaching assistants – we currently employ over 85 – but we often have difficulty recruiting enough of them. We formed a link with the national apprenticeship programme, and now employ about 10 apprentice teaching assistants each year. The combined benefits of helping the local employment market, especially school leavers, and budget savings are motivating, but the real benefit is in building a stable team.

CPD

Of course neither of the above strategies would enable a school to build leadership capacity if they didn't include a substantial investment in CPD. In our





setting, post-graduate study is a non-negotiable part of the contract for any newly appointed teacher. All NQT+1 teachers are funded for an MA in early educational practice, delivered through a local university. Importantly, this is delivered on an outreach basis, at our school or at a neighbouring partnership school.

For our financial investment, we see a real return in practice in the classroom; we see teachers who stay with us and we see teachers who are (largely) happy and fulfilled and not talking of leaving the profession. After the MA is completed (usually two years for PGCE holders) teachers take on a substantial subject or leadership role and begin professional development as middle leaders via the SSAT's National Award for Middle Leaders programme, for which the school is a licence holder.

All TLR holders study for NPQSL, requiring in-depth coaching and supervision from within the school. This provides essential 1:1 opportunities for professional discussion and development.

Within our support staff team, we have developed a four-tier structure, from apprenticeships through Level 1 teaching assistants and Level 3 TAs to a small number of HLTAs. This structure has evolved over time in response to changing external and internal priorities.

Coaching to strengthen leadership capacity

As our structures have become embedded, we have observed staff relishing the opportunity of taking on new and exciting roles, and have come to understand the absolute importance of ensuring that we support our leaders to build emotional resilience. Several years ago we put in place monthly 1:1 'supervision' meetings for all our senior leaders, to support and develop them in managing issues in a way that is different to that achieved through attendance at courses. The supervision model has been very successful and has helped all our relatively young assistant heads to be able to make exceptional contributions through a deeper understanding of their role.

More recently we have extended individual coaching opportunities on a needs-led basis to teachers who for a variety of reasons may benefit from a defined period (usually six sessions) of input. Thinking more widely about leadership development at every level, we have further extended the coaching model to include small group coaching, e.g. for staff new to the TA3 role.

Clarity of vision and purpose

We are working in a period of rapid change in the education sector. It can seem that initiatives are rolled out so fast that there is no time to embed or consolidate and there is a real danger that a school can lose its way as a result of 'initiative overload'. We have seen this at first hand in schools in the 'RI' category that we have supported.

We have come to understand that the school must decide what it stands for, which initiatives it wishes to adopt and which it isn't going to run with, and then

must ensure it communicates that clearly. As inspirational leadership consultant John Yates says, 'do what you do well and be clear why you don't do what you don't do'. This has helped us to be very clear about our own school non-negotiables, ensuring that all activity is directed towards achieving our vision. Within this we include having the confidence, determination and capacity to take calculated risks, and we note that the outcomes of risk-taking contribute to the development of the school's unique ethos.

Being an outward facing school with strong partnerships

Partnerships with others help to keep your own institution fresh through the exchange of ideas and the sharing of mutually beneficial experiences. Looking outwards and developing partnerships brings opportunities. For example, the establishment of our teaching school (Merton Special Teaching Alliance), in partnership with a neighbouring special school, was an opportunity (also a potential risk of course) to make a difference beyond our school gates. The process of establishing the teaching school brought CPD and leadership development opportunities for our wider staff team that we could not have anticipated at the outset.

To conclude, just as no two outstanding schools are ever the same, so there is no blueprint for building and sustaining leadership capacity and resilience. But what a gift that is – to be able to develop your school in a way that best serves your pupils and your community.



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.

How a school's ambitious science week has developed to make 'the case for space'

*Julie Durkin,
St. Richard's Catholic College*

St Richard's is an 11-16 science specialist college. For the last decade the college has embraced the annual British Science Association science week in March. Since its early beginnings as a half day of laboratory practicals focused on a classic 'whodunnit?' type mystery, science week has matured into a much broader affair, with a STEM rather than science focus.

Science week at St Richard's was originally conceived as an opportunity to promote science in a 'stealth learning' context to gifted year 6 pupils from a small number of feeder primary schools, who would be making the transition to secondary school a few months later. The original 'Sherlock Holmes' day was a huge success, being enormously popular with both visiting staff and pupils, and became a much anticipated event in the school year.

Science week's evolution

From simple origins, the annual week's activities have evolved significantly. The day now extends to a fortnight or more of science enrichment; our

activities are shared with more schools as new networks and affiliations have developed and an increasing number of St Richard's pupils become involved. Year 8 pupils enthusiastically earn 'science ambassador' awards, which play an integral part in the department's outreach programme in support of primary school partners applying for both PSQM (Primary Science Quality Mark) and SEQM (Space Education Quality Mark).

Science week themes have stemmed from, for example, the latest Hollywood blockbusters or popular TV shows. Over time, our dedicated year 6 visiting scientists have solved mysteries posed by Dr Who, James Bond and both Star Trek and Star Wars.

Lower school pupil engagement in space-based science has been further enriched with whole year group day visits to the Royal Observatory in Greenwich and residential space camps in Belgium. In 2011, GCSE



Astronomy for year 9 MAD (more able & determined) scientists was successfully introduced and a year 11 team of St Richard's pupils won the National Science & Engineering Competition regional finals for the South East of England, with their StRATOS project (St Richard's adventure to observe space). The team designed, launched and successfully recorded experimental images of the curvature of the Earth. Their success set a benchmark for lower school pupils and our 'race for space' was definitely on.

MAD pupils were inspired by their peers' success, and we saw increased pupil engagement with science beyond the curriculum. Having been

awarded a responsibility point for curriculum enhancement in science, I successfully applied for an ENTHUSE award (which is funded by DfE, Wellcome Trust, and a large number of major science-based organisations), which allowed me to engage in high quality CPD related to space as a context for teaching science and to train as a 'space ambassador' for the European Space Education Office's Tim Peake primary project.

Pupils have benefited enormously from the increased STEM profile, which was ably supported by STEMSussex at the University of Brighton. Pupil participation in STEM across all year groups has increased, with many projects now pupil-led.

We have enjoyed continued science success, winning many prizes and commendations.

Prizes and commendations for St Richard's' STEM developments

- » Big Bang: South East competitions
- » STFC School Science Prize
- » National Schools' Observatory
- » Institute of Physics Prize for GCSE Astronomy Controlled Assessment
- » Doosan sponsored prize for STEM Kite Club
- » 2015 Intermediate Science & Maths prizewinners for NSEC South East

A conscious effort to maintain a gender balance in selection of competition teams has led to our



girls' teams emerging victorious more often than not. Our female STEM scientists have marched from strength to strength.

More pupils than ever are engaged in STEM enrichment projects (12% of pupils across all year groups gained a CREST Award – Creativity in Science & Technology – in 2014/15). As the MAD designation extends to those with resolve and determination, as well as the naturally gifted and talented, pupils have been able to develop valuable team-working skills in addition to design prowess beyond normal curriculum requirements. This has been particularly evident in cross-curricular work with maths and technology, as one might expect. More surprisingly, perhaps, CREST project work has strengthened links with art, classics (crossover astronomy lessons and trips), English (science communication competitions and residential trips) and RE (ethics and science in society and trips). The latter is important as contemporary science must address the apparent divergence between science and religion in the public's perception, and the moral issues presented by such diverse topics as STEM cells, cloning and human fertilisation.

STEM beyond school

CREST awards and competitions have been instrumental in promoting STEM subjects beyond study at secondary level. As pupils make the transition from a secondary school's broad and balanced curriculum towards the specific academic rigour of the new 16+ profile, the uptake of STEM subjects continues to increase, reaping the rewards of the curriculum enhancement focus. The STEM transition focus has been complemented with joint trips to 'big science' experiments, such as CERN, with pupils from the local tertiary college – another result of ENTHUSE-funded CPD. Science pupils at St Richard's regularly undertake science-based trips, from evening public lectures at universities including Sussex, Brighton and Greenwich to residential stays in the UK and abroad, and cross-curricular trips promoting the need for science literacy in society.

The culmination of our enrichment programme so far has been our success in the ARISS competition (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station). In preparation for this we celebrated Space Week in November with University of Sussex's Physics & Astronomy Outreach team and their visiting





inflatable planetarium, and planned our first Space Camp UK for Easter. In spring we were confirmed as an ARISS contact school and began preparations to host a STEM space conference and speak directly with British astronaut Tim Peake, on board the International Space Station.

A chat with Tim Peake on the International Space Station

Having been short-listed, from over 300 entries, as one of only 10 schools across the UK to host an amateur radio contact with Major Peake, we were 'over the

Moon'. On April 18, 2016, this truly 'out of this world' experience was enjoyed by thousands of pupils from across 19 schools, colleges and universities and by pupils ranging from key stages 1–5 and beyond. St Richard's Amateur Radio (StAR) club was established in September 2015 to encourage MAD science upper school pupils – in addition to two teaching staff – to attain their amateur radio foundation licences. The science department secured a Magdalene Lasher grant to support set-up and running costs for StAR Club and the Radio Society of Great Britain has supported activities and helped establish a legacy of practical STEM applications.

The ARISS contact was widely reported across all media, with nearly 40,000 views on the BBC South East Facebook Live page

alone. Our ARISS celebration provided a perfect platform from which to share the science department's passion for our subject, and the whole school community celebrated with us.

As the whole of the UK anticipated Tim's safe return from Space on Monday 6 June, St Richard's was planning our future programme for space related activities.

Forthcoming CPD will relate 'the case for space' in teaching forces to KS3, and an anticipated cluster of more primary schools in our Thrive teaching school alliance is seeking to apply for support from the Tim Peake primary project (TPPP2). We will be submitting our application for the space education quality mark, SEQM. I believe we have made a strong case – the case for space!





Using coaching to embed formative assessment

*Joanne Mackreth-Aylett,
Kingsford Community School*

Kingsford Community School is a secondary school with 1,476 students on roll. Ofsted have recognised the outstanding leadership that has already moved the school from satisfactory to good, and the school has been awarded TEEP (Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme) ambassador status. A much higher than average proportion of the students are eligible for pupil premium and well over half speak English as an additional language.

The school's leadership team knew of the strong evidence for developing teaching and learning through coaching linked with peer observation. So they set about integrating these practices into their professional development plans. The aim was to use coaching to further embed and deepen colleagues' understanding of TEEP and continually promote excellent pupil progress.

Developing coaching

While many staff had been introduced to coaching through TEEP, as assistant headteacher for learning and teaching, I wanted to make sure that all staff fully developed their skills and understanding of the coaching process. Assistant headteacher Sen Galagedera and I worked on a plan to embed coaching into the school's work on the Effective Formative Assessment (EFA) Project*. We commissioned the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) to run an interactive workshop with 12 'coaching champions'. The workshop focused on exploring evidence about why, as well as how, coaching works, and providing the practical tools and strategies that the champions would use.

The teachers responded well, as Sen recalls: "Teachers are more open to evaluating their own practice. I now have colleagues telling me what they think their next teaching and learning development targets should be."

The plan then was to develop peer coaching and observation with all staff, as a focus for the EFA project. Coaching would help to structure teachers' contributions to the teaching and learning communities (TLCs) and develop key aspects of assessment.

We:

- » developed a coaching booklet for all teachers that included key CUREE tools
- » commissioned CUREE to run a launch for whole-school coaching
- » ran sessions with the TLC leaders to plan how to use coaching within their meetings.

Using coaching

TLC leaders are now facilitating nine sessions over the year, each of which involves colleagues exploring an aspect of formative assessment, such as questioning or marking and feedback.

At each session teachers plan a specific way of developing their practice and organise for their coaching partner to observe them. This may be a 10-minute slot, where for example they are



*Effective Formative Assessment is a two year professional development project sponsored by the Education Endowment Fund. Learning community leaders deliver 18 workshops on effective formative assessment over the two years, and use the coaching model to support colleagues with the peer observations in the teaching and learning communities.



using 'exit tickets' (strategies to gauge learners' understanding at the end of lessons). At the next TLC meeting the partners take it in turns to coach each other to reflect on the impact of the strategy and to plan next steps.

- » Person A has 3 minutes to reflect on the assessment strategy used during the lesson.
- » Person B then asks coaching questions to help person A further develop and use their reflections.
- » It is then Person B's chance to reflect.

TLC leaders provide ongoing support through the communities, to get the most from the paired coaching.

Key challenges

Of course any such development will encounter challenges. Colleagues highlighted that the initial challenge was in explaining to all colleagues the rationale for the structured approach to coaching and observation. While this degree of structure seemed challenging at first, colleagues have come to appreciate it. Careful planning of activities and ongoing support for the TLCs has been crucial.

The school found it valuable to include a live coaching session with a member of the leadership team at the launch and to show a video of an assistant head's lesson. This enabled the leaders to model and demonstrate how to use the coaching approach and to work as fellow learners.

It has also sometimes been challenging to ensure that partners always use a coaching approach in their conversations, rather than being more judgemental. Again the tools and the ongoing support of the TLC leaders have been vital.

Teachers feel braver to try things they wouldn't have tried in the past

Sarah Monsell,

Teaching and Learning Community Leader

The impact so far

Colleagues have noted positive impacts from the coaching process:

- » more interesting lessons and improved outcomes for pupils
- » staff have recognised that observation can be used for learning rather than solely being used as an accountability measure
- » a changing culture, in which colleagues understand and are keen to further develop effective formative assessment strategies to improve pupil progress
- » evidence of colleagues being increasingly reflective on the underpinning rationale to ensure that the TEEP framework has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps

The school is always keen to move forwards, and next steps involve:

- » build more opportunities for coaches to work in triads rather than pairs, so that one person can observe and help develop the coaching skills
- » further develop the tools for evaluating the impact of coaching on pupil progress over time.



How we aim to value the whole child and every child

*David Priestley,
Greenfield School*

Time 4 Success (T4S) replaced our registration periods, which we had found were ineffective, instead providing an additional daily lesson focused on family groupings around the house system. This daily lesson covers much of the PSHE and SMSC focused agenda and on the surface is about what our children experience. Mentoring both key teachers and peers helps release potential.

For this we use enquiry-based learning, to promote valuable questioning, using a different enquiry approach each term, eg: charity research and subsequent campaigning; global understanding to support the wider context of every individual; student voice, within our house system and whole-school.

We also have a student leadership programme and interventions to support academic, personal, social and emotional resilience.

Reading underpins all that we do with daily silent reading as part of our flexible framework.



Beneath the surface, T4S also gives our staff valuable opportunities for experimentation and to develop their professional skills in a range of contexts. Collaboration is encouraged, promoting a sense of belonging and contribution to our school as a learning community.

The T4S programme helps to promote independence, interdependence, creativity, resilience, perseverance, determination and the ability to build on success or failure. We believe strength of character plus academic knowledge is the combination that allows young people to flourish.

Timetabling T4S

The daily T4S lesson is based on a vertical tutoring system, built up of 45 groups in total: five groups in each of our nine houses. The groups consist of all five years (7-11). Groupings were organised based on ability, gender, PP and individual need via houses. Sibling links are taken into account. Each group has one member of staff with additional part-time staff as co-tutors to support the delivery of the programme and allow some staff to be released for intervention. The leadership team support reading and mentoring and take just as active a role as everyone else in T4S.



The programme embeds the importance of reading, mentoring, student voice, enquiry challenges, self-esteem and leadership qualities – through sport (whole school and house competitions), quizzes and maths challenges, and charity support. It also allows work with local colleges and outside speakers.

Students responsible for their own learning

The programme was developed to improve the focus and engagement in tutor periods: before, students very often spent most of their time chatting and tutors were just giving out messages or dealing with one or two individuals. Now our young people take responsibility for their own learning and development, but more importantly collaborate to support everyone's development and success.

All groups for T4S move with the students so that houses are all together in zones within the school. Each house has a computer zone, which tutors can take turns in using. The movement from a normal teaching room also puts a bigger focus on the importance of planning for the 40-minute sessions each day and remembering the resources that will be needed. Teachers in turn are less tempted to continue with 'normal' duties in the classroom.

Student voice

A crucial element to T4S is allowing students to have a voice and share their opinions on school events and how things are run internally. We are a rights-respecting school, and feel every child should be valued and have the right to a voice.

Under Voice 4 Success, as it is called, each tutor has a weekly session in which the student leadership team asks for responses on certain topics. Recently students have filled out surveys on the school canteen and meal choices and ways to improve bland walls around the school by creating subject-specific murals. The student team meets to discuss the results and think of ways to improve current systems. Minutes are fed back to the student body during T4S or assemblies.

Other Voice 4 Success activities could include how to support charities, both local and national. The process would allow students to understand the values of the charity work and importance of it, but not necessarily raising money for them. We would also try to get ambassadors from each house's chosen charity into school to discuss and answer questions about the work they do. We have shared this with our parent focus group as well as regularly at parents' evenings, and provide a range of supporting literature for parents.

A successful part of T4S is the enquiry challenges we set students. For example:

- » How can I get my voice heard?
- » Can I live for ever?
- » What's the point in working?
- » Who wants to be a millionaire?

This allows the students to understand their personal role in contributing to a community and the range of character attributes they need to be able to apply to ensure everyone's success.

Two T4S sessions a week are based around enquiry and getting students to explore a big question, a topical quote or a link to current affairs. For each enquiry students are encouraged to produce outcomes in a range of media, to present in assemblies to showcase their work. Assemblies may be set up as carousals rather than the usual format.

Teamwork encourages challenge

Staff are more willing to allow team challenges in subject areas across the curriculum as students have developed the skills needed to work as part of a team in T4S. It is less scary dealing with a group of four challenging boys if you are suggesting that they get together to produce an outcome, or peer support one another.

From a staff point of view it is definitely a more constructive use of time and allows a focused session for students to learn, as well as for staff to build relationships with tutees.

The Voice for Success and mentoring strands give students opportunities to feel they are valued, and we as a small community within Greenfield take their thoughts seriously. When change happens in school as a result of this process, it gives them a sense of achievement.

Time 4 Success enables us to underpin our values with a daily session that can develop skills, improve confidence and promote a love of learning. In this way we believe we are developing a creative learning environment where young people can be independent learners who understand the strength of collaboration. And, as a learning community, achieve increasing levels of success.

Pathway to employment – developing a careers education programme for young people with additional needs

*Brandon Mills,
Brookfields School*

Brookfields School is a special school near Reading which has been judged outstanding by Ofsted on three consecutive occasions. It supports 234 pupils aged age 3-19, all of whom have learning difficulties. Some pupils have additional needs such as autism spectrum disorder, a sensory impairment or a physical impairment.

The school's person-centred approach has led to pupils giving a very clear message that when older, their aspiration is to work and have a job. The school's vision is to increase the probability and possibility of paid employment for pupils. So it aims to enable them to gain work-related skills for independent living.

Brookfields has worked in partnership with a local independent career development company, Talentino!, developing a careers education programme (Careers at Every Level) for special schools and young people with learning difficulties.

The school's pathway to employment team works with the company and current and former students to offer training and support to other special schools across England. That support is also offered to local authorities, virtual schools, national organisations and businesses. A number of former students are now in full-time paid employment. The programme has gained a strong reputation and support from families, local authorities, MPs, councillors, careers organisations and employers.

Pathway to employment starts in Y9

The pathway to employment extends across the school with the emphasis being placed from Y9 upwards.



The school's pathway to employment has six key elements:

- » careers at every level
- » 'life after school' for pupils with more severe learning difficulties
- » work-based placements
- » work-related learning
- » business enterprise
- » supported internships, including the DfE-supported Project SEARCH.

From year 9, students are prepared for work through timetabled classroom-based career coaching. They take part in school-based business enterprise, job coaching, work-based placements and supported internships. These are arranged through the school's extensive business network of over 50 large



and small employers. Other important partners include Maidenhead-based supported employment provider Ways into Work and the local FE college (Reading College).

Lessons and activities are delivered by the pathway to employment team, teachers, support staff and volunteers. Staff have been trained as early career development coaches (European Mentoring and Coaching Council), and some have been trained in TSI (Training in Systematic Instruction) or as job coaches by BASE (British Association for Supported Employment).

People with disabilities want to work

Research shows 65% of people with a learning disability want to work and that, with the right support, they make highly valued employees. However, only 1 in 10 people with a learning disability known to social services is currently in paid work, and even then it is often for part-time hours and low pay. People with a learning difficulty are excluded from the workforce more than any other group of disabled people.

Only 1 in 10 people with a learning disability is currently in paid work

People with a learning difficulty have the same right to work as everyone else, but they find it much harder to get a job.

The school has a proven track record of working with businesses and getting young people with learning difficulties into employment. Businesses that have supported the students on work-based placements, or have employed them in their workforce, have said that the students make highly valued employees with the skills and attitudes they are looking for.

Programme boosts aspiration

The school's own research shows that the aspirations of pupils, their families and staff have increased since the programme was implemented. Warwick University have been working with Talentino! to measure the impact of Careers at Every Level across all the special schools and organisations the company works with.

Initially, many businesses were reluctant to engage with the school, let alone consider employing someone with a learning difficulty. However, the school's employer engagement strategy, which includes training and ongoing support for employers, has changed their aspirations and perceptions.

More than three-quarters (77%) of the public think more highly of companies that make an extra effort to employ people with a learning difficulty, according to research. Many potential customers of businesses may



have a learning difficulty themselves or have a family member who has a learning difficulty. By employing someone with a learning difficulty, companies will be more representative of their local community.

The school's training and support has helped the businesses to overcome their misconceptions about people with learning difficulties. Staff respond positively to a more diverse team, particularly if they are given a chance to 'buddy' or line manage a person with a learning difficulty. As a result of the work the school has done with two of the largest employers in Reading, they now actively seek to recruit people with learning difficulties and additional needs. The school's approach to engage business with the programme is business led, working in partnership with businesses to understand their needs. This includes their business plans, their products, what they are looking for in their employees, as well as their bottom line. Through this analysis of need, the school's job coach helps the business identify the jobs that are hard to recruit to or have a high turnover, the tasks existing employees might struggle to fit into their workload, and how the costs of recruiting to high turnover positions could be reduced.

These employees are reliable

There is much evidence that employees with a learning difficulty stay with one employer for longer than most employees, and take less time off work. Businesses have seen that by working in partnership with the school, they can access a workforce that they are unlikely to have reached before. With the school's help and support, businesses have been able to recruit the right person for the right job.

Brookfields' person-centred approach for vocational profiling and career development planning enables the students, and those supporting them, to identify their skills and abilities and match these with the skills businesses need.



When students are on work based placements or supported internships, the school provides the business with a dedicated job coach who will:

- » be their support and contact
- » carry out all risk assessments
- » match the skills and talents of the young person to real jobs
- » introduce the young person before the work placement starts
- » prepare the business and employees for the placement by offering bespoke training and support
- » work in partnership with the business to learn the job that the student will do so that the job coach can train the student in that task
- » discuss and agree objectives and expectations with the business
- » plan and deliver a bespoke induction programme that includes health, safety and conditions of work
- » identify a supervisor and mentor
- » review progress during the work placement
- » involve the business in review and feedback.

Businesses involved in the programme have the opportunity to help shape the future workforce and demonstrate that the business is committed to helping the community.

Comments from local businesses

“Sarah has been a pleasure to have in store. She has shown ability to work on her own and has become part of the department team”
Manager, Sainsbury’s

“Simon worked in the stores workshop, office and the shop floor and proved himself to be a very willing and able assistant. He is a fantastic ambassador for Brookfields School”
Manager, Reading Buses

“As a result of Philip coming in to work with us I have noticed an increase staff morale and the motivation of our employees”
Fielders Farm Shop

“Providing a work placement for a young person requires hard work and commitment from an employer, but can be rewarding and good fun!”
Manager, Pets at Home

“Sebastian has been an absolute pleasure to work with. He was always eager to start work and when given jobs he would finish them quickly and to a good standard. He got on really well with the team and was great at conversation; however this could sometimes distract him from the task at hand. But with a subtle reminder he would get back to his task and when finished always ask what else he could do”
Owner, FoodKick

“Joseph has been a perfect part of our team, willing to help where he can, and he followed instructions well”
Manager, Age UK



How a singer/songwriter programme motivates young people

John Bowman,
Notivate

The Notivate Singer/Songwriter Programme is a creative music course for children aged 9-13, in which they write, rehearse, perform and record their own songs. The programme, introduced by Northamptonshire charitable trust Notivate, enables children to express themselves, explore their feelings, and perhaps try something for the first time. It offers children the chance to feel better about themselves and is about music, but is more about “me”. Music educationalist and author Paul Harris describes it as “very imaginative and interesting”.

There are six practical but fun sessions, designed to encourage children to realise their creative potential and expand their emotional awareness. Based on over 10 years’ experience of working with more than 3,000 children, the Notivate programme helps to increase self-esteem, willingness to take creative risks and confidence to learn.

Children who take part in the programme are commissioned to write, rehearse, perform and record their own songs. All participants receive a workbook, rehearse with a specially prepared backing track CD, and spend a day at a professional studio to record their voices. The programme ends with a celebration of the children’s achievements, with everyone receiving a certificate and CD of their work.

Case study: three primary school girls

The following was written by a youth leader working in a primary school and concerns three girls in year 5 who had participated in the Notivate programme.

“The three girls in the group were possibly the quietest, most shy I have worked with – and they completely amazed me, their school, and themselves with their Notivate success. Two of the three girls were well known to me, as I had worked with them on and off over the previous 18 months, in both assertiveness and self-esteem groups. The girls in the group had been picked on for being quiet, had very quiet speaking voices and rarely spoke

in class. I was genuinely wary about them being in Notivate, feeling they would find the pressure too much and would not enjoy it, but the girls warmed to the idea of participating in the project and were encouraged by their parents and teachers to try something different.”

Week One: Themes

The first week of Notivate came round and the girls were extremely quiet, even when they clearly knew answers to questions that the Notivate leader was asking them, they didn’t put their hands up to offer answers. But when they were asked a direct question, they answered it and didn’t seem intimidated. They seemed very pleased to be part of a special project.

Week Two: Lyrics

During the second week of Notivate, the groups started writing their songs and the girls’ booklets were absolutely bursting with lyrics. They had so much to say that they had kept pent up. They wrote very honest lyrics, about how they feel about their friendships and how their peers treated them at school. Some of the lyrics were: “Scared and alone all on your own” and



“So frustrating, are we friends or are we not?” but also: “We sing our song out loud and feel so proud and thanks for the crowd.”

Week Three: Melody

On the third week the groups had to work out the melody to their song and the girls could not stop giggling. They were very nervous and couldn't get their words out. One of the girls refused to sing and said she wasn't going to sing at all on the track because she felt too nervous. But they had written this incredible song together and worked really well as a team, bonding over shared feelings about being bullied and feeling shy. The Notivate leader struggled to get a tune from the group and we were running out of time, but they had a second attempt to record their tune and really pulled it together when they realised their voice was important.

Week Four: Rehearsal

When it came to the fourth week of Notivate, I was absolutely gobsmacked! The girls came to find me at break and said that they had performed their song “live” to the year3 class and did a special little concert to practice, before going to the recording studio. This boost of confidence in the girls was clear to see and

staff commented how well they were responding to the project. They became more vocal in our big Notivate group of 12, were clearly really enjoying themselves and felt proud of their achievement. They worked out a harmony as part of their song and had told some of their classmates about the Notivate project.

Week Five: Recording

At the recording studio the girls had a brilliant day. They sounded amazing on their track, sang the harmonies and even felt confident enough to let their song go on the internet. They reflected so positively about the Notivate project. It had allowed them to express how they feel, gain confidence, make new friends and develop skills that will really equip them in the future, such as speaking/performing in front of other people, working as a team and having increased self-esteem. They are even going to perform their song in assembly in front of 500 children and their teachers. One of the girls told me the lyrics of their song made them feel, “proud and happy”.

Headteacher feedback

The following was written by Mark Currell, headteacher

at Roade Primary School, Northampton, who has introduced Notivate into four schools:

“I have had the pleasure of working with Notivate for over 10 years in several schools. Each time, the project has had an incredible impact on the children and challenged the adults' views of what can be achieved with children of all backgrounds and abilities.

“Notivate is a songwriting programme for young people of all ages. Initially we used it to develop teamwork and collaboration in groups of children who often found it difficult to communicate. The Notivate leader came into school and worked with the groups on their songs and over a few weeks the children, who had very little in common, suddenly had common ground and developed a creative bond. What came out of the songwriting process is way more than a fabulous track on a CD!

Not just music

“The Notivate leader spends time discussing the issues that are important to the young people. They discuss choices and feelings, often getting to the root cause of some very



tricky emotions. They wrap up these issues in song and express themselves creatively, working together to fit their thoughts into verses, choruses and bridges. The Notivate team develops a backing track for the group to rehearse to, playing all the instruments to provide a professional standard recording. The wow factor for the students comes from when the group record their song at the recording studio. The young people spend the day at the studio, seeing how the recording process works and recording their songs. They get the wow of the day at the studio and again at their songs being mixed and produced.

“At school we soon realised that this was having a huge impact on the creativity, the communication skills, the writing and more importantly the wellbeing of our pupils.

“We started to use Notivate across whole year groups, ensuring that all our children in their time at school had an opportunity to work with the programme. The results have been staggering. The school’s emotional literacy is at a high. The children understand themselves better and how they can work best with others. Confidence has rocketed and students are happy to share their thoughts and feelings more readily. Songwriting is now a real feature of the school and performance is at the heart of everything we do. I am proud to say that we are a creative and musical school that develops confidence, resilience and understanding.

“Standards in writing have developed as part of these initiatives. Language used in literacy books is emotive and passionate. We now have pupils keen to write and keen to share their thoughts and songs with

us. Playtimes and lunchtimes see young people gathered together writing songs, performing to staff and working together creatively. Students across the school are excited about when it will be their turn to work with Notivate; and older children speak with such enthusiasm about their experience that it perpetuates the excitement. We play the songs our students have written together in assembly. As a school we proudly sing the songs we have written as anthems to inspire the others (check out Shoot for the moon song on the Notivate website).

“I have seen Notivate’s magic in many schools and the impact on young people from all backgrounds. I cannot recommend their work highly enough for pupil engagement and outcomes. It is now a permanent fixture in our school calendar and all children will benefit from their time developing their songs, building confidence and learning to express themselves creatively.

“The impact of this programme cannot be underestimated for our students and the staff and I look forward to working with Notivate each year.”

Participant evaluations

The following are two evaluations by Notivate participants, boys aged 10.

“Notivate has helped me to collaborate with others I wouldn’t expect to work with. Also it has given me courage to be passionate about songwriting. This wonderful project has pushed me forth to reach my full potential and it has also given me the self-belief that can help me to be more enthusiastic in my writing and reading, despite the fact it’s creating songs. Notivate has inspired me to always have that little bit of time

for performing arts throughout my whole life. This project takes my mind off the bad things and makes me feel more relaxed and in the zone. Also it has helped me mentally, because when I’m feeling low I can think about Notivate and it brightens my day. Notivate is me! It has shown me that even the most pointless-sounding ideas can be the best ones. This programme has changed me as a whole.” (Ashtun)

“Throughout this creative journey I have improved on the area of music. Not only that, but also learning things about others I didn’t know before. One of the best impacts Notivate has had on me is my development of emotional understanding for songs, as well as helping me with writing descriptions, stories and much more. Notivate, being a great social experience, has helped me to socialise with people I don’t normally work with. It has also helped me with a number of things, such as cooperation. Without it I wouldn’t be where I am today.” (Sahib)

Teaching assistant feedback

The following was written by Anna Little, teaching assistant at Victoria Primary Academy, Wellingborough:

“I just wanted to thank you for all your hard work with our year 6s. Through Notivate, you have helped them to believe in themselves, that they can achieve something. For some children, their confidence has gone from 0 to 70 in six weeks! For those that were confident, it gave them a platform to share their talents with their peers. Incredible.

“Thank you for helping those children to find a way to fly.”

Participant feedback

The following is a collection of comments received from Notivate participants at a primary school in the most deprived area of Northampton, where 55% of the pupils receive free school meals.

At the beginning I was really shy and I didn't like doing things. Now I like to be more creative and let loose a bit and just relax and not care what people think. It should never stop.

Notivate has put lots of confidence in me. It's helped me to embrace my feelings.

It has helped my English and what words I use and how I use them.

It's helped me respect people and their ideas more.

Notivate inspires you to get a career to do with music in the future.

Notivate has also affected my social life. I am now friends with people I never thought I would be friends with.

Pastoral staff feedback

The following was written by Andrea Gee, family and pastoral officer at Oakway Junior School, also in Wellingborough:

"The Notivate project is a great self-esteem builder. This year, more than ever I have seen children grow in confidence, climb the self-esteem ladder and develop new friendships. The children in this most recent group displayed excellent camaraderie and peer support.

"I also wanted to give you a little bit of background information on the last group of 10 children that you worked with.

"Firstly we had an ethnic mix of white British, black/white Caribbean, black Caribbean and Indian children. (Four of the ten have free school meals.) We had children with low self-esteem, friendship problems

and from large and/or broken/single-parent families. Many of the group rarely or never see one or both of their birth parents. (Just two children out of the ten live with their birth mother and father.) We had a child who self-harms and a child who recently started a fire at the family home.

"One child currently has a Child In Need plan and another has just stepped down from one. One child and his family have a common assessment framework (CAF) plan. One child is a looked after child. At the meetings that I attend to support these children and families I have been able to inform various agencies and professionals of the support I am offering the children through the Notivate project and the specific needs that are being addressed.

"Being able to put these children together in a group and work alongside you with the Notivate project has meant that I can see them regularly and observe their resilience and group dynamics. The children feel relaxed and are able to confide in us issues that they may not otherwise divulge. I now have more work to do with some of the children as a direct result of information presented to us over the last six weeks, however for some it means that they are ready to move on and manage without the support I was previously offering them. For both these reasons I see Notivate as more than a project that teaches children how to write a song... which is in itself an amazing skill they will always have, but more of a feel-good therapy intervention that works on many, many levels."

Getting student leadership working effectively in your school

*Tom Middlehurst,
SSAT*

In many schools that we work with, new student voice or student leadership teams are elected or appointed towards the end of the summer term, or early in September. Here are five tips, drawn from our work on student leadership with member schools, to help you make sure that your student leaders are the most effective they can be.

1. Develop a cohesive model

In most schools, opportunities for student leadership and development extend beyond the formal school council or prefect team. However, often the different roles and opportunities that promote leadership skills are ad hoc, and fail to come together as a cohesive system of student leadership.

The first step for a new student leadership team, working with the designated staff member, may be to map out all the roles currently offered, applying a broad and comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a leadership role. Common roles we see in schools include:

- » Head girls and boys
- » Student councils – to represent the voice of the student body to senior staff
- » Prefect teams – to support good behaviour for learning and act as role models
- » Anti-bullying ambassadors
- » Associate student governors
- » Peer listeners or coaches – to support the pastoral needs of other students
- » Peer mentors – to support the academic learning of other students



- » Sports captains
- » Student events and charities teams
- » Student journalists and web editors
- » Student learning partners – to support the development of teaching and learning
- » Student librarians
- » Student researchers
- » Subject reps – to provide formative feedback to subject departments on learning.

Once mapped out, think about how each of these roles is advertised, when recruitment is open (whether fixed or rolling), who can apply, and whether positions are elected or appointed (or a combination).

The more challenging task can then be working out how the different groups (should) work together and feed into one another. For example, does each different group have a representative feed into the school council? Is there an executive group, usually the oldest cohort or head boy and girl, who have oversight over the whole system? Are there clear pathways of progression year-on-year for students?



Very often, schools have a mixed system, where they may have an integrated school council and head boy/girl team; but with sports leaders and student librarians outside this, for instance. There is nothing wrong with such a system; schools are inevitably messy places and often it's impossible to strive for a fully cohesive system. The important thing is being aware of the different roles, and acknowledging whether/how they feed into each other.

2. Consider the resourcing and training

How much budget do (different) student leadership groups have, and what are the reporting mechanisms they are required to use to justify their activities? Where schools give students more autonomy over how they spend their budgets, there is usually an expectation that they formally report on the impact of their expenditure to the senior leadership team and/or governing body once a year.

In some schools, students are given a great degree of flexibility in delegating their own budget to different projects. For example, a senior student leadership team consisting of the head boy, head girl and their deputies may allocate budgets to different groups, including a charities committee, prom committee and teaching and learning committee. In other schools, these different groups are allocated their own budgets to manage by the governing body.

It is also common to find student leadership teams with their own room, where they can hold meetings and store papers. This may be shared by all leadership groups, or be solely for the school council or head boy/girl team. Some schools are very creative in finding space for a student leadership room – using old storage cupboards, seminar rooms or areas of the library.

It is important to offer training for students, depending on the role they are doing. For some roles, training is essential, including peer listeners and associate governors, which are potentially sensitive activities. With other roles, such as school councillors, training may not be essential, but other experience suggests that all student leadership groups perform better when given rigorous training. In many schools, an off-site training day for all new student leaders is built into the school calendar each year.

3. Manage expectations

At different times in the year, and for different roles, students will inevitably have different levels of responsibility and involvement in projects. For example, a student events team may organise an event from inception to completion themselves, whereas a student research group may produce a report which makes recommendations about the use of personal electronic devices in lessons.

It is appropriate in schools for students not always to be leading on a project; instead in some cases





they may be valuable stakeholders in a wider consultation. Roger Hart suggests the following levels of positive participation in student leadership activities:

- » Informed: student leaders are being told something meaningful as key stakeholders, and perhaps to report back through their student voice systems.
- » Consulted: students are being asked their view, as part of a wider decision-making process.
- » Directed and leading: students are asked by staff to lead on a project, with clear guidance.
- » Directing and leading: students see a project through to completion autonomously.

It does not necessarily matter which level of participation students are working at. What's important is that staff are very clear with students before a project starts about the level of participation being asked for. In that way, students don't think they are redesigning the school uniform, if they are only being consulted with the decision being ultimately made by the governing body. Students' expectations are successfully managed, and disappointment and disillusionment avoided.

4. Respect issues that matter to young people

It is common for schools to complain that the student council only ever discusses the state of the toilets or the food in the canteen, rather than matters of teaching, learning and the curriculum. However, it is important to value all the issues that matter to young people. (In some cases it may be that the students are in fact responding to what they see as staff expectations.)

Thinking about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we cannot expect young people to comment on, for

example, the quality of homework, if they don't have safe, clean and accessible toilets. We cannot expect students to become subject lead learners, if they don't feel protected and secure walking between lessons.

There can also be some 'quick-wins', showing students that staff care about their views and value their opinions, which can lead to deeper and more exciting student-led projects. For example, the school council asking for more outdoor seating, new paint in the toilets, or more bins can often be quickly implemented. Students then feel empowered to take on more challenging tasks, such as teaching and learning reviews, curriculum surveys and feeding into the school development plan. Many schools use a 'you said, we did' noticeboard or webpage to show how students' views are being acted on.

5. Celebrate success

When students carry out their roles successfully, it is important to celebrate their successes. At the end of the school year, some schools put on tea parties or barbeques for all of the different student leadership roles throughout the year.

Many schools celebrate student leadership throughout the year, by having regular updates from different student groups in staff and parent communications. Furthermore, many student groups represent their work regularly to the senior leadership team or governing body.

There are also ways of tracking the personal leadership development of individual students. One way is the SSAT student leadership accreditation, which is free to all SSAT member schools. The framework was written by students, for students, and is fully flexible to allow schools to make it work for their existing roles and systems. Students collect evidence to show their developing leadership skills, before peer-moderating each other's portfolios, which they then submit for formal accreditation from SSAT.

We are also keen to share your students' work nationally, across the SSAT network. We love to hear the impact that students are having in your school; so please do email studentimpact@ssatuk.co.uk to share your students' experiences and achievements.

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