

Case study – Sheffield Park Academy

<http://www.sheffieldpark-academy.org/>

Context

Sheffield Park Academy is a larger than average 11 - 18 school with a roll of 1046 pupil serving a diverse community in South East Sheffield. The Academy roll is mainly comprised of students from the White British (44%), Asian heritage, mainly Pakistani and Bangladeshi (27%) communities with a growing number (9%) of Roma/Eastern European origin. The remaining 20% of students are drawn from a wide range of different countries, including Somalia, Yemen and Malaysia.

56% of students qualify for pupil premium funding under the 'Ever 6' model and 37% currently claim Free School Meals, a level that is twice the national average.

As a result of improved teaching and significant outreach work, attendance has risen significantly; in 2009-10 attendance at the Academy was reported as being the 5th worst of all schools in England at 82.3%. Attendance for academic year 2015-16 was 95% and persistent absenteeism has been reduced from over 33% (20% measure) at its worst to 3.2% (15% measure).

The Local Governing Body is a dynamic and committed group that provides support and challenge to the Senior Leadership Team in equal measure. Each member of the LGB has specialist skills or experience which supports the Academy in key areas such as safeguarding, finance, HR, developing careers information and guidance and providing enterprise learning opportunities for students. Strong links have been built with the Hallam Teaching Schools Alliance, Learners First and Sheffield South East Learning Partnership (SSELP) in order to develop Teaching and Learning and to provide local solutions to our development needs. This complements the work that we undertake with our sister Academies within the United Learning group.

A robust approach to accountability is maintained, which is evidenced through termly reports and Key Performance Indicator meetings, which test and challenge the progress being made.

There is a clearly articulated vision for the Academy - students' attendance, engagement and behaviour have improved because of this and outcomes have risen strongly and steadily as a result.

6 key aspects:

- **Early Risers**

The 'Early Risers' programme was launched at the end of June 2015, where Sheffield Park Academy and Sheffield Springs Academy invited their new cohort of Year 6 students to move up into Year 7 for the last three weeks of the summer term. Transition can be a worrying time for many young people and their parents/carers, and the programme is designed to enable students to settle into their respective Academy prior to breaking up for the summer holidays. This allows them to familiarise themselves with our expectations and helps them to acclimatise to their new environment, make new friends and dispel any worries about moving up to secondary school. This has helped remove some of the anxiety that students were telling us they were experiencing prior to the programme starting. Both secondary Academies work in collaboration with their Primary colleagues to ensure that students have the best possible experience of transition from the primary to secondary phase. This includes reciprocal visits by secondary and primary staff to meet and greet students and offer support to them in an unfamiliar setting.

The project has been a great success, not just in reducing anxieties, but also supporting improvements in pupils' grades. An evaluation of the project by Sheffield Hallam University found that the secondary schools involved recorded a significantly higher percentage (66%) of children

making expected or better progress in all subjects, compared with 40% the prior to the programme starting.

- **Mental health & wellbeing**

Following a successful pilot, Sheffield Park Academy operates an Emotional Wellbeing service using a stepped care model; lower intensity cases are signposted to the school's own full-time Emotional Wellbeing Worker or Interchange Counsellors, who are on-site two days per week, with the scope for direct referral or escalating to the Clinical Psychologist that is onsite one day per week and can signpost in to the CAMHS team if more complex needs arise.

Currently, there is a lengthy wait for CAMHS support for most children due to pressures on services locally.

The waiting list is only 3- 4 weeks within the Academy's provision, with room for any crisis intervention/emergency cases to be discussed on a weekly basis.

Whilst our EWB provision (in terms of the clinical psychologist) has not bought us 'a queue jump' it does have many benefits:

- Brings CAMHS expertise in to school on a consultation basis with no waiting list
- Parents are able to meet with the clinical psychologist without travelling far – removes accessibility obstacles
- Reduces stigma of accessing a 'taboo' service
- Families often mistrustful of services, even GPs – removes trust obstacles to accessing services
- Trust built with CAMHS clinician in familiar school environment which bridges gap to attending CAMHS (frequently, pupils have been under CAMHS previously but discharged due to non-engagement)
- CAMHS receive better quality referrals and far more information from a team member whose judgment they trust (referrals more likely to be accepted)
- Provides a direct pathway for CAMHS to liaise with school (less telephone tennis!)
- Screening work up done in school so CAMHS assessment is quicker
- Psychologist can pick up bits of assessment within CAMHS for pupils who are reluctant to engage with new workers
- Post diagnostic aftercare and recommendations are easier to implement and staff are more confident that they are 'doing the right thing' by the pupils they support

A Clinical Psychologist in a school setting can also offer:

- Classroom observations
 - ASD screening
 - ADHD screening
 - Cognitive assessments
 - Attachment observations
 - Consultation to staff
 - Attending parental meetings & professionals meetings
 - 1:1 therapy in a range of models
 - CBT, IPT-A, CAT, mindfulness, BSFT
 - And crucially, referrals in to CAMHS and Child Development Services
- **'STEPS' model and bespoke interventions** to address learning deficits from Y7 half term one, every half term rather than relying on intervention at Year 11.

We have an expectation that every pupil makes outstanding progress regardless of background,

inhibiting factors or starting point.

The Academy's curriculum has been developed following extensive consultation and development work with curriculum experts from examination boards and subject leaders from a wide range of schools and Academies from across the country. It is based on the new National Curriculum but also contains content that is localised to suit the needs, aspirations and interests of our children.

Subject and assessment overviews are available on the Academy's website for all parents to access. The subject overviews are broken down into half termly overviews in order that parents can easily gain an overview of what their child is learning in school at any given time.

The assessment overviews are designed to show exactly what pupils have achieved and enables parents to compare this against the age related expectations for an 'average' child in that subject. When parents receive their child's report they will see that they have been assessed as being on a 'step' for each subject. By hovering over that 'step' in the assessment overview spreadsheet, a box will open up showing exactly what the pupil has 'done' to achieve this step.

'Mastery'

The 'mastery' line is denoted in blue and a child who is assessed as working at this level in a subject has demonstrated, in their recent assessment, that they have a sound understanding of the knowledge and skills they have been learning and can apply these in a variety of different ways. A child who has achieved 'mastery' is making good progress and is achieving well.

'Steps toward mastery'

It would be wrong and unreasonable to expect every child to instantly master knowledge, skills or new concepts in every subject. Consequently, they may not yet be working at a level at which they have secure understanding. The steps below the mastery line are designed to show you what your child has learned and what they must do next in order to move closer to mastery. Children who are assessed as 'working towards mastery' will be provided with a bespoke action / intervention plan in order to accelerate their learning and 'catch up'. By hovering over that 'step' in the assessment overview spreadsheet, a box will open up showing exactly what the child has 'done' to achieve this step – parents can also hover over the subsequent 'steps' leading to the mastery line to show what additional learning their child needs to undertake in order to achieve the mastery level. It is this that will be the focus of the action / intervention plan.

'Steps towards excellence'

In subject areas or in discreet topics where children are very confident or possess a particular aptitude, they may find that they achieve the 'mastery' level quickly. It is therefore important that we provide both stretch and challenge in order that these children can meet their fullest potential. For this reason there are steps above the mastery line which are designed to enable students to learn more about a subject, apply their knowledge or skills in more complex ways or to extend their learning into other areas.

'Progress and Attainment Expectations'

It is the Academy's expectation that any child who consistently performs at 'mastery' level should achieve at least a Grade 5 in the new GCSE qualifications should they continue on that trajectory throughout Key Stage 4. This grade is roughly equivalent to the 'top end' of a current C grade. Children working consistently above the 'mastery line' will be expected to achieve grades 6-8, which are roughly equivalent to the current Grades A*-B. A number of the most able children may ultimately achieve the new GCSE grade 9, which is restricted to the top 2-3% of entries nationally.

- **Building pupils' levels of ambition and self-belief – Aspirations Day and 'Champions Project'**
Students from all backgrounds at Sheffield Park Academy are offered various opportunities throughout their school life to raise their cultural capital and aspirations. Now in its third year Aspiration Day has been a focal point of this work. Run in a similar fashion to a careers fair, the Academy, working in conjunction with local and national partner businesses and business associates, Russell Group Universities including Oxford, Cambridge, The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University and the local Chamber of Commerce, spend the day in the Academy engaging with students, answering questions about the different roles that are on offer within their organisations.

Numerous sectors are catered for including, legal, financial, medical, universities and other educational institutions, engineering and the voluntary sector. School Governors are especially supportive and seek to provide whatever relationships, opportunities and experiences our students need to further enhance their aspirations and ambitions. We have accessed many opportunities through the links that they broker.

Aspiration Day is part of the 'Champions Project'. The Champions project has been implemented to impact upon identified groups of students from micro-populations that have underperformed in comparison to their peers across schools from the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

The students are, in the main, from White British backgrounds and low income families. The Champions project focuses on a wide range of interventions incorporating all year groups that focus on improving resilience and self-reliance, improving attendance and behaviour and in turn, raising attainment.

The aim is to develop their confidence in social and vocational situations, provide opportunities that they could not normally access which will enrich them culturally and support their learning whilst, at all times, broadening their horizons and introducing them to opportunities through engagement with employers and higher education providers.

- **United Teaching – attracting young, aspirant and committed teachers who serve as role models**
We are proud to be a member of United Teaching, an initial teacher training scheme setting the standard for excellence in education for United Learning's schools, of which there are 39. In 2016 we became a lead school for the North and we are hosting 10 trainees in our first year.

Our aim is to train outstanding teachers who will teach and have a significant impact on pupil progress and achievement within the group. The training we offer enables trainees to get straight into the classroom by having responsibility for their own classes. We ensure they are well supported and prepared for this by initially attending an intensive Summer Institute which is delivered by us and the university partner IOE UCL followed by weekly high quality training every Friday afternoon. We aim to deliver a personalised approach to each trainee, ensuring each is well equipped for the journey as a trainee teacher. Each trainee is also given the opportunity to visit a contrasting school via a second placement, for a total of four weeks.

Pupil ambassadors fulfil a variety of important roles within United Teaching, from attending recruitment fairs across the city to formally interviewing applicants as part of the 'student interview' during the rigorous assessment days we hold monthly.

We aim to recruit and train the very best trainees and keep them in the group as teachers and leaders. United Teaching trainees are providing energy, enthusiasm and fresh ideas. In addition, the capacity they are creating is being used to provide outreach support for our partner schools.

- **CPD for teachers that is focussed on maximising learning and progress**

As a member of the United Learning family of schools and academies, we share the objective of bringing out 'the best in everyone', enabling each pupil to become a balanced, happy and articulate person with the intellectual freedom to be creative; confidence to initiate; flexibility to respond to challenge, change and adversity; compassion to serve others; spirit to enjoy life; integrity to be trustworthy; and motivation to have a lifelong love of learning.

We are committed to enabling and supporting all teachers to develop their pedagogy in order to ensure that these objectives can be met and that every young person in our care can meet their full potential both academically and socially.

To enable us to achieve these goals, we have developed a comprehensive programme of CPD opportunities that will utilise the significant talents, skills and experience already present in the Academy to share best practice internally, research best practice elsewhere and introduce new pedagogy into the Academy.

Our approach to CPD provides each teacher with a bespoke training pathway supported by an individual development plan which is agreed in a termly 1:1 CPD meeting with an Assistant Principal. Training is carried out internally and externally with the focus being on that teacher's pedagogical development.

Our CPD provision has been highlighted as an exemplar of best practice across United Learning and in Sheffield. We have proven that we have the potential to accelerate our progress as an academy even further. This can only be achieved 'in the classroom' and by harnessing and developing the skills, commitment and enthusiasm of those teachers already in place at the Academy and providing the support, means and environment in which each and every teacher and pupil can flourish.