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Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)

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Preparation for adulthood and the curriculum pledge

Professional Development Group

School: Secondary

Summary

The School has its motto of 'Aspiring and Achieving Together' firmly at its core. This shared vision ensures leaders at all levels communicate high expectations to all students whilst ensuring a close, family ethos permeates through all aspects of school life. Children can clearly articulate this ethos through the mantra 'ready, respectful and safe.'

The school is a smaller-than-average 11-16 mixed comprehensive institution. It became part of a large Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in August 2018. The current Executive Headteacher has led the school since September 2015. Staff remain committed to dismantling the barriers faced by students, particularly in a context of high deprivation and complex needs.

The school currently has 967 students on roll and serves an area of high deprivation (quintile 4 IDSR 2022). The proportion of disadvantaged students is well-above the national average (42.5% of the school cohort). The student base is in quintile 5 (most deprived) of all schools. 63% of the school population is classed as living in the top 20% most deprived areas of the country, with 31% in the top 10%. (IDACI 2022)

Furthermore, 23% of the student population has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with 4.8% having an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) - double the national average. The school also supports 14 Children Looked After (CLA) and three students on Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) plans.

The Challenge

The school faces substantial challenges, including high deprivation, significant SEND needs, and safeguarding concerns. Post-COVID-19, mental health issues have intensified, particularly in a locality with elevated Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These factors have contributed to increased behaviour incidents, suspensions, and absenteeism.

Despite a previously successful curriculum pledge offering extensive cultural and character-building experiences, participation declined following the pandemic, especially for Key Stage 3 students. This limited exposure negatively impacted school culture, student morale, and engagement. The diminished participation of SEND students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, was a key concern.

 Increased attendance of learners with SEND

 Improved mental health and wellbeing of learners with SEND

 Increased engagement of learners with SEND

The Challenge (continued)

The hypothesis was that the disparity in extracurricular opportunities between Key Stages 3 and 4 hindered student motivation. Without equitable access to enrichment activities, students entered Key Stage 4 with reduced aspirations and engagement, requiring greater support to achieve academic and personal growth.

What They Did

To address these concerns, the school undertook a comprehensive audit using the Whole School SEND Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) tool. The findings confirmed notable gaps in Key Stage 3 provision and a lack of consistent cultural enrichment.

Collaborating with the careers and enrichment coordinator, the school mapped current extracurricular offerings using the four PFA strands. Subsequently, a session was held with faculty leaders to reintroduce the curriculum pledge, emphasising the significance of PFA experiences, particularly for SEND and vulnerable students. Faculty leads developed PFA quadrants outlining current and proposed activities aligned with the four strands.

Senior leadership endorsed the commitment for each faculty to establish at least one extracurricular club aligned with PFA guidance, along with one enrichment or cultural event annually. To promote student ownership, the school plans to use the Showbie app, enabling students to document their PFA journey over their five years. This approach fosters student agency and ensures equitable participation across all demographic groups.

Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

Early outcomes indicate a 50% increase in extracurricular opportunities for Key Stage 3 students, with a noticeable rise in events and activities. Staff engagement and motivation have improved, reflecting a renewed commitment to enhancing the broader curriculum.

Behavioural improvements are evident, with an 80% reduction in suspensions between the first and third half-terms. Attendance has shown a positive trajectory, approaching the national average. Student feedback highlights increased satisfaction, with many acknowledging the broader range of experiences now available.

A recent mock interview day for Year 11 received positive employer feedback, particularly for SEND students. One employer remarked, "I would hire him today if I could." Additionally, all SEND students now have clear post-16 pathways, supported by bespoke college transition plans.

Ongoing audits each term will ensure continuous evaluation and adaptation of the PFA offer. This iterative process will maintain the focus on providing a rich, inclusive curriculum, equipping all students with the skills and experiences necessary for successful adulthood.



Increased attendance of learners with SEND



Improved mental health and wellbeing of learners with SEND



Increased engagement of learners with SEND