PiXL
INSIGHTS

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO

empower learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

PiXL
INSIGHTS

"The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other."

ROBERT JOHN MEEHAN

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WELCOME

Welcome to our first PiXL Insights publication on empowering learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is also the fourth and final instalment in our first full series of Insights publications, having previously released 1. Raising boys' achievement, 2. Stretching and challenging more able learners, and 3. Improving inclusion for learners with SEND.

PiXL Insights is much more than a publication, however. Condensed in these pages are the professional insights gleaned from colleagues in schools across the PiXL network, who have been working with us over the course of academic year 2023/24 to improve the learning, outcomes, and ultimately life chances, of learners from less
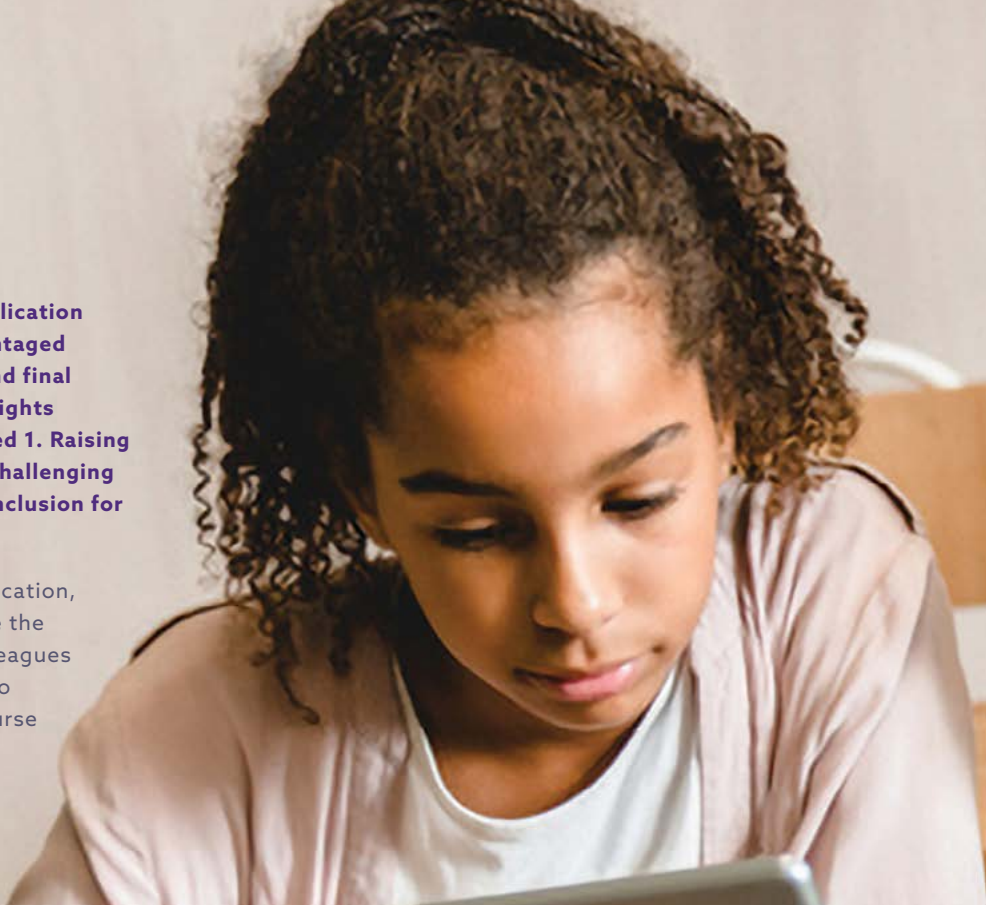
MEET THE PROJECT TEAM

HANNAH COSTANZO
PROJECT MANAGER

I've had the privilege of working at PiXL for over a decade. In that time, I have worked on a number of areas of project development, from the conception and launch of PiXL's character provision to the development of our PiXL TV platform. In my current role as Head of Cross-Phase Projects, I get to work on the development and delivery of strategies that support across our entire membership network from EYFS up to Post 16. All of my work with PiXL has been fuelled by my desire to solve problems and support the brilliant work that teachers and school leaders do every day. PiXL Insights remains one of my favourite projects to work on. I'm humbled every year by the innovation and creativity of our schools.

HANNAH GRUNWERG
PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

I am delighted to be going into my second year of working at PiXL having thoroughly enjoyed the variety of opportunities in my first year to support schools and colleges. In my role as Operations Co-ordinator for Secondary and Post 16, I work closely with the 11-18 team to help co-ordinate communications and projects, including PiXL Insights, as well as providing customer care for schools. The direct interaction I have with teachers and school leaders is really valuable to me, as it allows me to appreciate the impactful work they do and the dedication they bring to their profession.

advantaged backgrounds. There are many adaptations that can be made to our schools and classrooms to make education more equitable for these young people. We won't be able to capture every single possibility in these pages, but we hope that the insights shared in the following pages will give you ideas that can be adapted for your own context and community.

We want to take this opportunity to thank the schools and colleagues who have volunteered to participate in the projects that make up this issue. Schools are busy places, and we appreciate the time that staff have made to engage with us on this project. Please do share any feedback with us on **insights@pixl.org.uk**.

HEATHER SAGAR
PROJECT DESIGNER

I started working for PiXL as a part-time proof-reader. With a background in graphic design, I couldn't let anything go without at least 'tidying it up' a little first! I have now had the honour of working as a design consultant for ten years, working on everything from company-wide branding, conference materials, cross-phase packages like PiXL Reading and of course PiXL Insights. I also train our design placement students, helping them develop their design skills and nurture their creative identity. My aim is to make the aesthetic of everything that comes my way, whether it's a one-page or a 100-page publication, match the quality of the content written. I believe PiXL's offering is special and I want people to be able to access that in the most beautiful way possible.

TASHA ROBERTSON
PROJECT PROOF-READER

I have been working as a proof-reader for PiXL for five years. My background is in secondary English teaching, and I also have experience in primary and EYFS settings. I am a final set of eyes on a variety of PiXL materials, ranging from classroom provision packages and teacher guidance to conference items, network publications and company policy documents. I especially enjoy working on resources for the classroom as it allows me to put my previous experience to good use, viewing content through the lens of a teacher as well as a proof-reader. I am proud to contribute to the work of PiXL and to call myself part of the team.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

AT PRIMARY

The gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children at EYFS had been narrowing in the 2010s and began to widen again pre-pandemic. The trend continued to 2023 when 51.6% of FSM eligible children achieved Good Level of Development (GLD) compared to 71.5% of non-FSM eligible children (The Sutton Trust Report, February 2024). At **Key Stage 2**, attainment in reading fell in 2023 compared to 2022 for both disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. Attainment had increased from 2019 to 2022 for non-disadvantaged pupils and decreased back to 2019 levels in 2023. For the disadvantaged group, attainment had remained the same between 2019 and 2022, and had fallen in 2023. Attainment in writing and maths has increased for both groups since 2022.

In 2023, 20% of pupils with SEN met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined), compared with 18% of pupils with SEN in 2022. Of those pupils on SEN support, 24% met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined), up from 21% in 2022, whilst 8% of those pupils with an Education, Health and Care plan met the standard, up from 7% in 2022.

Pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) at end of KS2 by disadvantage status – %

	2018/19	2021/22	2022/23
Disadvantaged	51	43	44
Not known to be disadvantaged	71	66	66
Gap	20	23	22

In 2023, 3% of disadvantaged pupils met the higher standard in reading, writing and maths (combined), unchanged from 2022. Among other pupils, 10% met the higher standard, up from 9% in 2022. This means that the attainment gap at the higher standard has slightly increased, from 6 percentage points in 2022 to 7 percentage points in 2023.

AT SECONDARY

The KS4 disadvantage gap index widened in 2023 compared to 2022, from 3.84 to 3.94, the highest level since 2011. Before the pandemic, the gap index had widened from 3.66 to 3.70 between 2017 and 2019, before narrowing slightly in 2020 to 3.66 when Centre Assessed Grades were used. The average Attainment 8 gap widened from 13.6 points in 2019 and 15.2 points in 2022 to 15.3 points in 2023. The widening between 2022 and 2023 was caused by the disadvantaged group having a larger decrease than the non-disadvantaged group. The gap widened slightly for the EBacc APS from 1.35 points in 2019 to 1.47 points in 2022 and remained unchanged in 2023. Non-disadvantaged pupils had a slightly larger decrease between 2022 and 2023 than the disadvantaged group.

The gender gap closed to its smallest level in 2023 since at least 2016. 25.3% of the entries taken by girls were graded 7 or above, similar to the 25.1% seen before the pandemic. 19.5% of boys' entries received a top grade this year – 0.9 points higher than in 2019. The gender gap at grade four in 2023 was also similar to that in 2022 – but marks a big decline compared with pre-pandemic. The narrowing gender gap is mainly the result of boys having achieved higher grades than girls in subjects such as maths, in which 22.1% of boys achieved grades 7-9, compared with 20.2% of girls – the largest gap since 2016. 2023 was also the first year since 2016 in which more boys achieved a grade 4 or above (72.6%) in maths than girls (71.9%) (DfE).

Attainment by disadvantage status, pupils in state-funded schools in England, 2019 – 2023

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Disadvantaged	Total number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4	143,816	146,214	151,973	154,849	159,363
	Percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate	27.5%	27.8%	27.0%	26.9%	27.7%
	Percentage of pupils achieving grades 5 or above in English and mathematics GCSEs	24.7%	30.4%	31.7%	29.6%	25.2%
	Average Attainment 8 score of all pupils	36.7	40.2	40.3	37.6	35.0
	Average EBacc APS score per pupil	3.08	3.39	3.40	3.19	2.97

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Not known to be disadvantaged	Total number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4	398,805	415,780	423,890	432,811	447,552
	Percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate	44.5%	44.0%	42.9%	43.0%	43.4%
	Percentage of pupils achieving grades 5 or above in English and mathematics GCSEs	49.9%	56.8%	59.2%	57.0%	52.4%
	Average Attainment 8 score of all pupils	50.3	53.7	54.7	52.8	50.3
	Average EBacc APS score per pupil	4.43	4.73	4.82	4.66	4.44

AT POST 16

- Average A Level Result: B-, an increase from C- in 2019.
- Average applied general result: Merit+, this is the same as in 2019.
- Average tech level result: Merit+, also the same as in 2019.
- Retention: A level 93.6%, Applied General 87.2%, Tech level 88.3%. Across all exam cohorts, non-disadvantaged students and students with higher prior attainment were more likely to be retained and assessed than disadvantaged students or students with lower prior attainment (Gov.uk, April 2024).

Gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students decreased between 22-23; the widest gap is seen for the A level cohort. Female students performed better than male students for all level 3 cohorts, but gender gaps have decreased between 22-23. For A level and applied general cohorts, average point scores (APS) were slightly higher in 2023 than in 2019. There was a decrease in APS between 22-23. There was an overall rise in the number of below level 3 entries across both English and maths compared with 2022. This follows the return of the summer exam series in 2022 and a drop in the proportion of pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and maths GCSE during Key Stage 4.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS ELIGIBILITY
(HEADLINE FACTS AND FIGURES, GOV.UK)

In 2023, 24.6% of pupils were eligible for free school meals, up from 23.8% in 2022. This represents 2.1 million pupils. 1.6 million infant pupils were recorded as taking a free school meal on census day. Of those, almost 1.3 million are not normally eligible for FSM through the criteria above and received them under the Universal Infant FSM policy. This is a similar pattern to previous years. (Headline facts and figures .gov)

ABSENCE

Figures published by the Department for Education in May 2024 showed that the overall absence rate for the spring term had increased to 7.3%, slightly above the 7% recorded for the same term in 2023. The overall absence rate for disadvantaged pupils was almost double the rate of their peers, with 11.3% of pupils on free school meals (FSM) missing school last term compared with 5.9% for non-disadvantaged pupils. More than a third (34.8%) of pupils who were eligible for FSM were persistently absent in the spring term, compared with 17.3% of pupils who were not eligible. The overall absence rate for pupils with an Education, Health and Care plan was 13.6% in the spring term, compared with 11.2% for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support and 6.6% with no identified SEND.

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS (DFE, 13 JUNE 2024)

The number of children and young people with EHC plans increased to 576,000, as at census day in January 2024, up by 11.4% from 2023. The number of EHC plans has increased each year since their introduction in 2014. 84,400 new EHC plans were made during the 2023 calendar year. The number of new EHC plans made during the calendar year has increased each year since their introduction in 2014. There were 138,200 initial requests for an EHC plan during 2023, up from 114,500 in 2022. Apart from a decrease in 2020, an atypical year when the pandemic was disrupting both education and local authority services, initial requests have increased each year since EHC plans were introduced. In 2023, 50.3% of new EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks. This is an increase compared to 2022 when the figure was 49.2%.

FURTHER INSIGHT FROM THE SUTTON TRUST

THE SUTTON TRUST

THE SUTTON TRUST

Since 1997, the Sutton Trust has worked to address the low social mobility in Britain through programmes, research and policy influence. We fight for social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life.

OUR RESEARCH

Our research and policy work identifies the root causes of low social mobility. Our evidenced-based recommendations give practical advice for schools and for government – looking at how the attainment gap between poorer and richer students can be narrowed, and ultimately closed for good.

KEY FACTS

In 2023, 25% of disadvantaged pupils achieved grades of 5 or above in English and maths GCSEs (a strong pass). This is less than half of the proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils (52%). *Closing the attainment gap (2024)*

There are substantial socio-economic gaps in access to extra-curricular activities, with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds less likely to take up activities than their better-off peers (46% compared to 66%). *Life Lessons (2017)*

44% of young people (aged 17 to 18) report experiencing high psychological distress. Those in the most deprived parts of the country were 11 percentage points more likely to say they are still waiting or have not received the mental health support they applied for, at 39%, compared to 28% of those in the most affluent areas. Looking at CAMHS and other specialist services specifically, those in the most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to have not received support as the most affluent. *The Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities Study: Mental and Physical Health (2023)*

Small group tutoring can help pupils make up to 4 months of additional progress *(EEF)***, but there are large gaps in access to private tutoring by socio-economic background. 39% of pupils in the best-off homes had ever received private tutoring, compared to just 22% in the worst-off homes.** *Closing the attainment gap (2024)*

Around a third (36%) of secondary school students do not feel confident in their next steps in education and training, and more pupils in state secondary schools report not being confident in their next steps than in private schools (39% vs 29%). *Paving the way (2022)*

Our annual polling shows an increasing number of senior school leaders are using the pupil premium to plug gaps in their budget. There are also increasing numbers of schools reporting cuts to teachers, teaching assistants, IT equipment, sports and extra-curricular activities. *School Funding and the Pupil Premium (2024)*

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO HELP?

- **Support low-income students with tutoring.** Tutoring is an evidence-backed intervention to narrow the attainment gap. It's most effective in small groups of no more than 6 to 7 pupils. Content should be linked to the wider curriculum, with a course ideally made up of frequent sessions up to an hour, over a period of 6 to 12 weeks. *Tutoring, the new landscape (2023).*

- **Encourage the development of non-academic 'life-skills' in your school** by embedding these skills throughout your curriculum and ensuring extra-curricular activities are accessible to all students. *Life Lessons (2017).*

- **Embed careers education throughout your school.** There should be clear responsibility for careers guidance within your school's senior leadership team and on your board of governors. The member of SLT responsible for careers should work closely with your school's Pupil Premium Lead. *Paving the way (2022).*

- **Ensure you identify highly able pupils from all socio-economic backgrounds.** All methods have limitations, but testing is likely to have fewer issues than identification by teachers. Due to the difficulties in identifying highly able students, interventions should be available to all students wherever possible. This should include stretch activities in classes and extra-curricular activities. *Social Mobility: The Next Generation (2023).*

FAIR SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

The Sutton Trust report 'Selective Comprehensives 2024' shows that the top performing schools in the country have a lower average proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals compared to the national average, and in many cases lower than the average in their local areas. You can explore this data on our interactive map: **https://www.suttontrust.com/school-admissions-dashboard/**.

This needs to be addressed. All children fundamentally deserve access to the best education possible as we know how influential outcomes are on long-term social mobility. It secures a fairer, equal playing field for schools to secure the best outcomes and recruit and retain staff. It creates diverse and inclusive communities within school, as well as improving parental engagement. Moreover, it is a cost-effective strategy for a community to use to tackle the attainment gap.

In response to this, the Fair School Admissions Pledge is a two-month programme which supports school leaders in reviewing the socio-economic diversity of their school and whether their admissions processes promote or reduce this diversity. We have cohorts starting in Autumn, Spring and Summer. Find out more at **https://www.suttontrust.com/fair-school-admissions/.**

OUR PROGRAMMES

We support young people from less advantaged backgrounds to access leading universities and careers. In partnership with universities and employers, we run engaging programmes that give students practical advice and leave them feeling inspired and more confident about their future.

Our programmes are completely free to attend. All costs – including travel, accommodation, food and activities – are paid for by the Trust and our partners. Find out more about our Programme offer at **https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Sutton-Trust-Teachers-Guide-for-the-website-V2-compressed.pdf**.

OUR REPORTS

All reports mentioned in this article can be found on the Sutton Trust website. Find out more here **https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/**

WHAT IS PiXL INSIGHTS?

PiXL Insights was first developed in 2020. We wanted to find a way of supporting our members with stubborn national achievement gaps. The first area we wanted to tackle was the issue of boys' underachievement. However, we knew that there were no silver bullets: no single strategy or technique that all schools could employ in order to eradicate the gender gap in their settings. Instead, we knew that context was going to be key – our students are all individuals, after all.

So we began to think: what if instead of sharing one idea, we deliberately sought out to share many?

What if we worked with individual schools across the network, for whom boys' achievement was a significant focus that year, and developed projects with them to specifically meet the needs of **their boys in their context**? And that's when Insights was born. In that first year, we worked with dozens of schools on different projects at KS3, KS4 and KS5, and we published the professional insights of the colleagues who ran those projects in our first PiXL Insights publication. **We then started to think that there were other cohorts of students that may benefit from the 'Insights treatment'.** We agreed that we would look at four key groups in rotation, and this publication that you are reading represents the conclusion of our first cycle of Insights projects.
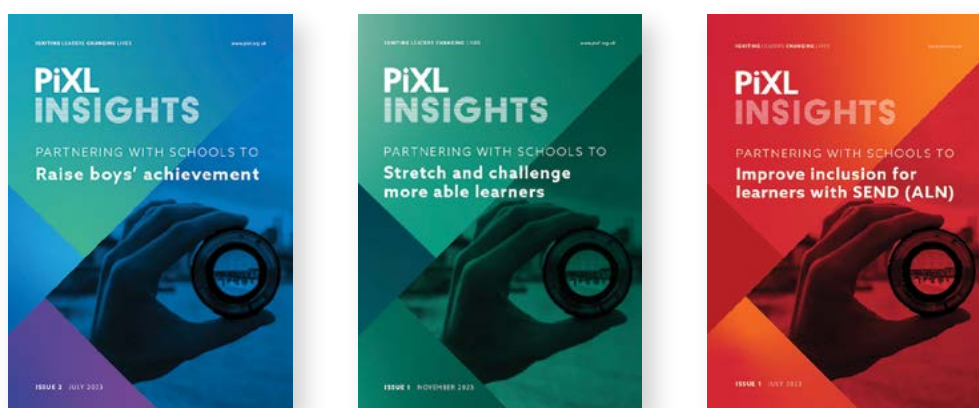
In academic year 2023/24, we published our Insights on stretch and challenge for more able learners and improving inclusion for learners with SEND. We also worked with schools on projects aimed at empowering learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and raising boys' achievement.

In academic year 2024/25, we are publishing the insights from those projects, as well as undertaking a new round of projects on more able learners and learners with SEND.

In academic year 2025/26, we will publish our insights on more able learners and learners with SEND and will once again begin projects on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and boys.

And that's our plan for the future: to continue this cycle of investigation, innovation and support until those national gaps close.

Each project run as part of PiXL Insights is developed and designed by the participant school, however colleagues at PiXL are available to coach, mentor and support their thinking (you can meet our project mentors on pages 8 and 9 of this publication). We are also on hand throughout the process to help troubleshoot issues, overcome barriers and celebrate successes.

PiXL Insights is **not** action research, nor does it pretend to be. Projects run as part of PiXL Insights are just that: projects. The teachers share their professional insights (an underappreciated resource, in our opinion) and offer their perspectives on what worked well and what they would change next time.

If you are interested in participating in future projects with us, do get in touch with the team on **insights@pixl.org.uk**.

USING THIS PUBLICATION IN YOUR OWN CONTEXT

As you read through the projects, we hope that you gain an insight from each project into:

- why it was conceived
- how it was implemented
- what changes (if any) the project leads made throughout the process
- what the impact or outcome of the project was
- how that project might be continued, scaled up or moved forward.

Each project is, by design, bound up in the context of that school and all the other important work that they do. Getting the most out of the ideas shared in these pages will mean thinking carefully about how those ideas can be translated into your own setting. School project write-ups have a couple of features that will help you do this:

- Each project includes some headline data about the school to help provide some context.
- We have included some ideas for how each project could be taken further or adapted for different key stages at the end of each article.

This last section is really important – don't skip over projects just because, for example, they are targeting younger/older students than you support: there is so much that can be adapted and shared across different sectors.

The following reflection questions may help you get the most out of what is contained in these pages.

SHARING THIS PUBLICATION WITH COLLEAGUES

- Who in your school should read/use this publication? Who are the key staff/SLT? Don't assume that the only person in your school who would benefit from reading this publication is your PP co-ordinator, for example.
- How will you disseminate the project and its ideas to others? Remember that some of the project ideas could be adapted and implemented with different groups and at different scales.
- Make use of the index at the back of this publication to help colleagues with particular interests or responsibilities find the most relevant articles to them.

FOCUSING ON YOUR SCHOOL

- What in this publication might help you improve the achievement and empowerment of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in your school, college or provision? Are there common themes that emerge when you reflect e.g. independence, communication and language, resilience, access to resources, engagement in super curriculum?
- How can you identify the areas you want to focus on? What is your data telling you? How does your data compare to national headlines?
- Drawing on your professional knowledge and expertise, which projects will have the most impact in your context? What is already established? What mechanisms already work?

REFLECTING ON YOUR 'NOW'

- Are you aware, now, of where your biggest barriers are in terms of empowering your learners from disadvantaged backgrounds? This will probably look different depending on what proportion of your student population come from these backgrounds.
- Are there particular year groups, curriculum areas, or skills that come to mind? Have that in mind as you approach the projects in these pages.
- Be careful of where advantage and gender intersect: is your gender gap masking an advantage gap in your girls from disadvantaged backgrounds? Many of our colleagues in this publication have understandably focused on boys from disadvantaged backgrounds, but don't forget about the girls.
- How aware are your staff of the issues relating to the progress of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds? How do you know?
- What is the culture of belonging and aspiration like in your school? Are you explicit about how this culture relates to **all** learners?

TAKING YOUR NEXT STEPS

- **Reflect on what you have read** – are you inspired to run your own project, or implement any changes based on the insights shared in these pages?
- **Speak to your PiXL Specialist** – they are well-placed to support your thinking and to help identify target groups and areas.
- **Make a plan** – identify your why. Reflect on what and how the project can be developed, including any necessary adaptations for your context.
- **Contact us** – if you have any questions or wish to speak to us about future participation, please email us on **insights@pixl.org.uk**.

OUR PiXL PROJECT MENTORS

CATHERINE CONNAUGHTON

I am an educational consultant with over 20 years' experience in secondary and post-16 leadership and an active member of PiXL since 2010. During my 11 years as Deputy Headteacher and Head of Sixth Form in a large mixed comprehensive school in South Manchester, I implemented and embedded key PiXL strategies which were an integral part of our hugely successful Sixth Form. Central to my work has always been an unwavering drive to improve the life chances of young people which is synonymous with everything PiXL believes in and underpins the premise of Insights. Working alongside colleagues to support their Insights project has been a real privilege this year and the students they have worked with have already started reaping the rewards of this initiative.

JENNY GAYLOR

I have had over 20 years of senior leadership experience and am currently Co-Principal of a large 11-19 academy in South West London, having worked previously in inner city boys' schools in Liverpool and London. I have a keen interest in understanding how to improve boys' achievement, particularly in the context of social disadvantage. My work with PiXL over the last decade has centred around curriculum, achievement and ensuring that partner schools are kept well informed of the latest educational changes. As a practitioner, I fully understand the challenges that we face in the current climate, and so it has been a privilege to work with some amazing leaders across a range of PiXL schools on the Insights project looking at ways to raise achievement and improve engagement in learning. I know the other PiXL schools will benefit greatly from hearing their stories and perhaps thinking about ways that they might replicate some ideas in their own situations.

EVE HEDLEY

I am an education consultant who works with schools and colleges across the country, supporting them with school improvement and raising the quality of education across the curriculum. I have 23 years of teaching experience in the MFL classroom, across all phases, and am passionate about languages, raising achievement, and improving the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. I am a former Deputy Headteacher, a skilled coach, Advanced Skills Teacher and Specialist Leader in Education. I have worked with over 50 PiXL schools, and have also supported PiXL with MFL, Teaching & Learning and ECT strategies and resources.

Every school that undertakes a PiXL Insights project is assigned a project mentor. Our mentors are all current or former senior leaders in schools. Their role is to offer high support and high challenge to colleagues undertaking projects in schools. They meet with schools three times over the course of the project and are on hand throughout to support via email.

GARY LOBBETT

My career in education began as Head of Music in Devon and progressed to Deputy Headship with secondment to the International Learning and Research Centre in Bristol. My experience has been with schools in areas of low aspiration and where social deprivation is high. As Headteacher and NLE we built the capacity to provide qualifications and training provision to support primary and secondary schools across the West Country. As CEO for an all-through, inner-London Academy Trust for children aged 3-19 we extended the Trust's provision to include degree level adult education programmes. My involvement with PiXL schools extends over 15 years. I have worked for many years supporting primary and secondary schools and Academy Trusts to embed high expectations, improve quality of teaching and learning and develop talent and leadership at all levels and I am privileged to support schools involved in shaping and implementing such innovative PiXL Insights projects across the primary, secondary and post-16 sectors.

NICOLA MANSFIELD

I work full time at PiXL as a Primary Curriculum Manager, where I'm privileged to work with educators who are equally committed to improving the outcomes and enriching the education experience of young people. Before joining PiXL, I was part of a large senior leadership team leading on curriculum development. I'm fervently passionate about the incredible work that schools do to support and challenge all learners, especially those from less privileged backgrounds. What fuels me is the belief that sharing practices between schools can unlock untapped potential and improve outcomes for pupils. It's an exciting journey, and I'm delighted to have contributed to this Insights project.

SARAH MURRELL

I am an educational consultant who has worked in education for over 30 years. I taught in West London schools for over 20 years, the last 14 of which were spent in a boys' school with a mixed sixth form. As a Deputy Head, my key focus was on the curriculum, assessment, data, teaching & learning and staff CPD. It has always been important to me to reflect upon how and why students reach their highest possible outcomes, with a special focus on the learning and teaching they experience. I currently collaborate with PiXL on a number of projects, and with many schools in England and Northern Ireland. It has been an honour to work with so many schools on the Insights project. They have been inspirational in the way they have developed, implemented and reflected upon their projects which are focused on boys' achievement and their attitudes to learning within their varied contexts.

TARGETING KEY COHORTS

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO **EMPOWER LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS**

MATRAVERS SCHOOL   TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

High expectations in action – strategies to engage the disengaged from one feeder primary school

INTENT

The necessity of this project arose from an analysis of exam data, which indicated that students from a particular feeder primary school were significantly underachieving in Progress 8 scores post-Covid compared to students from other feeder schools. Each feeder primary school, except for one, achieved a collective positive Progress 8 score. However, the underperforming school had recorded a collective Progress 8 score of -1.0 or worse over the last two years. This specific feeder school also contributed a significant proportion of the secondary school's disadvantaged pupil cohort. Additionally, the students from this primary school reside in an area that ranks in the bottom 5% nationally for education and employment skills according to census data. Therefore, targeting these students to improve their academic outcomes was essential.

The primary aim of the project was to boost the academic achievement of students from the underperforming feeder primary school. Specifically, the goal was to improve their collective Progress 8 score to -0.5 by the summer of 2023/24, representing an improvement of over half a grade in one year.

The project focused on Year 11 students but included strategies applied across all year groups to support future achievement. Notably, 25% of the Year 11 cohort were from the target primary school, and within this group, 32% were disadvantaged, making them a key focus area. Additionally, 73% of this year's cohort from the target primary school were boys, which led to a targeted focus on this demographic. Data analysis indicated that EBacc subjects were a particular area of weakness for these students.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project employed a multi-layered approach. The primary focus was on classroom pedagogy to support the achievement of these students, particularly in Year 11, but also addressing underachievement in Key Stage 3 and Year 10. Teaching staff were encouraged to adapt their pedagogy to accelerate the progress of these identified students, not just in Year 11 but across all year groups. An intervention layer was created outside regular lessons for underachieving Year 11 pupils and a specific revision programme was introduced into Key Stage 3 to develop effective revision habits in pupils. Stronger ties with the target primary school were also fostered to support transitions and help primary school leaders understand the challenges their students faced.

Key decision-making involved the leadership team reviewing data from teaching and learning observations and previous out-of-class interventions to understand necessary improvements. Having a Raising Standards Lead who is the Deputy Headteacher responsible for the Quality of Education Team (HOS) and line manager of KS4 Progress Leaders, alongside line managing the Assistant Headteacher responsible for disadvantaged pupils, facilitated the targeting of the correct pupils for intervention as well as 'Focus 5' pupils. It also facilitated key leadership discussions to support the CPD programme for teachers linked to this project and ensured a constant dialogue with EBacc HOS.

The 'Focus 5' strategy was implemented, where teachers identified up to five key underachieving students in their classes for priority in-class intervention. There was a rank order in how staff had to choose which pupils to work with; staff initially identified pupils who were Red in their class data area (this indicates -2 grades or more from national progress in the subject). From these pupils they then selected those previously from the identified primary school and identified any of these pupils who were disadvantaged and male. Bespoke training sessions were held to help teachers adapt their pedagogy to support these students, and teachers were required to incorporate 'Focus 5' pupils into their seating plans which were then visible to any observer entering the classroom. A new data platform was invested in, to support all staff with reviewing data and generating seating plans as well as supporting leaders with reviewing the impact of strategies through internal lesson observation data.

Out-of-lesson interventions included withdrawing EBacc Heads of Subject from tutor roles to lead small group interventions with Year 11 students identified through Raising Standards Meetings. Additionally, significantly underachieving students were assigned mentors from the Year 11 Pastoral Team, who monitored their in-class learning behaviours and maintained communication with parents.

Data was pivotal in identifying key students for intervention, establishing baselines, and tracking developments and impact. End-of-Year 10 Progress 8 scores helped identify students for mentoring, and mock exam results were used to adjust intervention groups and strategies. The focus on using data ensured targeted and effective intervention. The criteria for identifying students for targeted intervention included those with a Progress 8 score below -1.5 and those two grades or more below national progress standards in EBacc subjects at the end of Year 10.

Pupil voice following assessment weeks in Key Stage 3 highlighted that pupils were not confident with how to revise: their feedback shaped the 'effective revision habits' strategy. Up to 6 weeks prior to assessment weeks, all pupils received an exam timetable and exam information booklet containing topics for assessments and directing them to revision resources. In addition, subject specialists utilised assemblies, tutor time and lesson time to train pupils on how to use revisit revision sheets to effectively revise. Exemplars of subject-specific revisit revision sheets were then shared with pupils and parents in the run up to assessment weeks, along with further pastoral support relating to revision habits.

Ensuring each year group was supported by an additional tutor also allowed smaller tutor groups of pupils to be created across the year. The importance of this in the run up to assessment/exam weeks was to provide targeted support with revision, additional pastoral support and motivational sessions to keep high levels of engagement.

Challenges faced included engaging the most underachieving students, many of whom had poor attendance and lacked motivation, and engaging their parents. To counteract resistance to morning intervention sessions, these sessions were incorporated into student timetables, and intervention leaders collected students from morning line-ups to ensure attendance. Ensuring consistent use of updated seating plans and data evaluation for 'Focus 5' students was another challenge. To counteract this, departmental time was allocated for specifically this task, following on from key assessment points as part of the data review cycle.

IMPACT

The impact of the project will ultimately be measured by the summer 2024 outcomes, but interim data shows promising signs. Predicted Progress 8 scores when benchmarked against 2023 suggest a positive impact, with a score of -0.37 predicted for students from the identified feeder primary school, not only a significant improvement from previous years, but exceeding the target set. In particular, the pupils who were targeted for mentoring have demonstrated significant improvements in their Progress 8 scores, with the number of pupils at risk of having a P8 score worse than -1.5 being reduced by over half and only 4 pupils falling into this category.

Internal monitoring using our new data platform has showed a high level of compliance with the 'Focus 5' strategy and effective in-class interventions by teachers. The most common types of effective in-class intervention were:

- **focused targeted questioning that supported pupil learning and engagement;**
- **'live marking' of 'Focus 5' pupil work during the lesson to support understanding and learning;**
- **priority distance marking of 'Focus 5' pupils with appropriate Closing The Gap/Purple Pen work to support learning;**
- **and checking in first on 'Focus 5' pupils once tasks are set to ensure these pupils understand what is expected of them.**

"I feel very supported because the teachers provide feedback to help you get better at things you need more improvement on."

YEAR 9 PUPIL FROM IDENTIFIED FEEDER PRIMARY SCHOOL

An external evaluation by a school improvement partner confirmed the positive implementation of the 'Focus 5' strategy: *"The 'Focus 5' strategy is a characteristic of all lessons and is working well. Teachers annotate plans and then target those pupils identified for a range of reasons. They also annotate for other students and take their needs into account. The 'Focus 5' and the use of annotated seating plans ensure that teachers plan support for pupils with SEND. The small English group exemplified support and challenge at its best, resulting in gains in learning for those pupils."*

Further pupil voice following the implementation of the 'effective revision habits' strategy was extremely positive, with Year 8 and 9 pupils from the identified feeder primary school saying they feel more confident with how to effectively prepare for assessments.

"The provision of the exam timetables assisted greatly with the scheduling of the revision and allowed me to split up my time effectively."

"I feel more confident, and I know what to do next time and also how vital it is to revise."

"I understand what the conditions are and how to prepare myself effectively."

In conclusion, the project not only improved potential Progress 8 outcomes for targeted students but also enhanced overall teaching quality and raised the profile of underachieving students across the school. Future steps include continuing to focus on improving outcomes, particularly in English and maths, enhancing transition support, and refining teacher pedagogy through ongoing CPD.

Recommendations for others running similar projects include clearly identifying underachieving student groups, ensuring leadership structure supports project aims, making the target group a whole-school priority, and utilising CPD to improve in-class interventions.

Gavin Solomons
DEPUTY HEADTEACHER
MATRAVERS SCHOOL

Michelle Drewitt
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER
MATRAVERS SCHOOL

> "This project... also enhanced overall teaching quality and raised the profile of underachieving students across the school"

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Gavin and Michelle have described the process that was implemented for pupils who would receive the support of adult mentors. Are there specific pupils who would benefit from one-to-one or small group mentoring in your school? Could there be benefits for mentors to liaise with parents and develop a robust triangulated approach?

- Data gathered from lesson observations has informed key decision making for Matravers School. You may already have lesson observation processes in place in your setting - is there potential to refine these strategies to prioritise the improvement of specific aspects of teaching and learning in your setting?

- Pupil voice influenced the development of an 'effective revision habits' strategy at Matravers School. Are pupils confident in how to revise and prepare for assessments in your setting? PiXL Leadership Thinking Guide for Memory and Revisiting may be helpful as a guide to support the implementation of strategies across KS3, KS4 and KS5.

MATRAVERS SCHOOL

904

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND	HPA
Wiltshire		Years 7-13	50%	23%	11%	23%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION We are a Foundation School. Our largest intake of pupils comes from a feeder primary school serving the most deprived area in the town.

GRAYS CONVENT HIGH SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

To improve progress of pupils at the margins of lower and medium ability on entry in all years

ONE OF OUR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS POST-2023 GCSE RESULTS WAS

To raise the rates of strong passes (grade 5+) in all subjects from an average of 64% to 75% by August 2024, and to improve progress of pupils at the margins of lower ability/medium ability on entry (95 - 105) in all years.

The focus group we created consisted of 20 Year 11 students who achieved Key Stage 2 results between 95 and 105. We named this group 'Marges,' referring to students who are on the margin between a 4 and a 5 and are underachieving.

- To first establish the areas of need for these students, members of SLT and Middle Leadership conducted interviews weekly with 5 students from the focus group. The discussion established subjects they were struggling in, areas for improvement, specific topics and subjects students need support in and their most effective learning strategies. This feedback was included in weekly staff briefing and we included photos of these students as a visual reminder for staff to be aware of who our 'Marges' were.

- As we began the November mock exams we had clearer picture of the gaps and where students needed specific support. The 1:1 discussions were ongoing to check in with this focus group post November mocks. A reoccurring request from these students was for revision techniques and support. Fortnightly revision lunchtime sessions were then implemented and the Marges students were targeted to attend via parent email and letter home.

- Post PPEs we met with the students to establish any final gaps and focus on what they needed in the final build up to the GCSEs – the response from the students was that they felt "more confident post November mock exams and were using the revision skills and interventions offered."

- The August results will give us a true picture as to whether this has been as effective as we hoped but the headlines from the data projected at the last progress check are shown on the next page.

HEADLINES FROM LAST PROGRESS CHECK

55% of girls have positive progress post PC2 data drop	**60% of girls are on average achieving a pass or above**	**65% of girls are on or above target in 4 or more subjects**	**35% of girls are above target in 4 or more subjects**

- This is excellent progress for these students and, if achieved, will have a positive impact on our results.

- Throughout the year the Marges students were on the radar of all staff. Discussed at Teaching & Learning sessions, Staff Briefing and Department Meetings.

- The support for these students was in line with the provision we give all our students but the positive impact we had with this group was that as they were a smaller group and as we were able to give our staff bitesize chunks of information about these students, only 5 students at a time, it meant it was manageable and it was more likely that the information will be used and actioned in classrooms.

- Momentum has been an issue and post PPE's we have limited time to be able to offer another push to close the gap. Potentially there could be a future discussion around the timing of the PPE exams but we plan to filter this down through all year groups to establish a focus group at both KS3 and KS4 level.

- We have established a year 10 group of Marges. Due to no KS2 data we have created a list of students who have a low average grade (4 or below) and who are achieving below 10 total grades. We have begun our 1:1 conversations with these students post walking talking mocks which has supported our journey of closing the gap for these students. As we have begun our journey with this group of Marges earlier we can assess whether the PPE's taking place in March will still support our project or if it would be of benefit to move the date.

- Of course, the true picture will be analysed after the August results.

Laura O'Donoghue
ASSISTAND HEADTEACHER AND HEAD OF DRAMA
GRAYS CONVENT HIGH SCHOOL

Daniella Desgoutte
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER AND ASSISTANT HEAD OF KEY STAGE 3
GRAYS CONVENT HIGH SCHOOL

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- How do levels of progress for pupils of lower prior attainment compare with progress for pupils of higher prior attainment in your school? Are strategies for identifying your priority pupils effective? Are these pupils on the radar of all members of staff?

- Some of the challenges of sustaining post-assessment momentum are captured in this project. Is the timing of your assessments effective? Do assessments influence learning and enable teachers to make adjustments that meet the needs of pupils across the curriculum?

- Laura and Daniella have described the strategy that was implemented to raise attainment for key groups of underachieving pupils. If you identify similar priorities in your school, PiXL Y6 Post-assessment strategy (primary) and PiXL Post Mock Strategy (secondary) provide further ideas and guidance that may be helpful in your setting.

GRAYS CONVENT HIGH SCHOOL

REGION
Essex

682
NUMBER ON ROLL

YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11
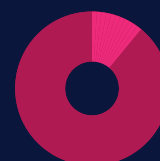
PP
19%
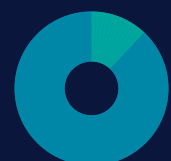
SEND
11.3%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION We are an all-girls Catholic Secondary Comprehensive School. 37.4% of our students speak English as an additional language.

SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL   TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 9 & 10

Problem solving in maths for disadvantaged, more able boys

INTENT

Our aim for this project was to increase both performance and attitudes towards learning for some of our most able boys, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. We had a group of students who are high prior attainers and who were underachieving with lower attitudes towards learning. We selected a small group of six students who fit the criteria of: Year 9 or 10, male, more able, and eligible for PP funding.

Our project was run during the Spring and Summer terms and focused on inclusion of curriculum-adjacent problem solving along with targeted questioning to improve attitudes towards learning, as well as achievement in maths.

IMPLEMENTATION

This academic year, we have started a plan to improve whole-school more able provision. This has included CPD delivered to all staff, dissemination of reading material regarding questioning more able students, visibility of students on the more able register in all staff workrooms, etc. Springboarding off of this, we liaised with key classroom maths teachers to support the implementation of our project. The information delivered to all teaching staff focused on five different strategies to support provision for more able students:

- **Metacognition & self-regulation**
- **Scaffolding**
- **Questioning**
- **Development of higher order thinking skills**
- **Feedback**

Our project focused on development of high order thinking skills in the mathematics classroom. Teachers of the selected students modified their curriculum plans to embed regular inclusion of extra activities which included, but were not limited to, student-led learning, exposure to content beyond GCSE maths, practice of exam-style questions outside of our chosen exam board, and extracurricular problem solving.

As our project began its implementation, some of our key students seemed to perk up when they noticed that our typical lesson structure had been changed. In the beginning, the implementation had to be very teacher-led: for example, lessons had to be prepared with problem solving puzzles in place of 'Do Now' activities which are typically four or five questions based on targeted retrieval questions selected based on class data. As the project continued, students would come to class with mathematical problems or puzzles that they had sought out or found in their own time that they wanted to share with the class. The teachers ended up taking submissions of these puzzles via email from students to manage the quantity and allow printing time in advance.

Often in maths, students ask "why are we doing this?" or "what does this even relate to?". With this project, teachers were allocated the time to explore these questions with the class which ended up straying into content outside the GCSE curriculum. Sometimes this was content found in the Level 2 Further Maths and/or A Level courses such as calculus, but other times it was just interesting maths, such as fractals or the Golden Ratio. Classroom teachers facilitated discussions around these topics that interested students through open-ended questioning and setting optional research tasks for students to explore concepts in their own time and report back to the class later.

IMPACT

While our project was a smaller scale than initially intended, we were able to engage students, who should be making significant progress in maths and who had previously been underachieving, by making higher level maths both tangible and exciting. Allowing students to explore maths outside of textbook- and exam-style questions helped reluctant learners to find an enjoyment that had previously been missing.

One result of this was increased attitudes towards learning in maths. Attitudes towards learning are ranked on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best and a 7 being meeting expectations. Below a 7 would mean regular disengagement, failure to complete home learning, lack of effort, etc. Reviewing the attitudes towards learning for our selected students, most made improvements with some staying the same.

In Year 9 and 10, end-of-year maths exams are based on past GCSE papers, but modified to only include content that has been taught. The difficulty is maintained to ensure the full range of challenge. This means that often, pupil grades seem to remain fairly consistent as their understanding of taught content is typically around the same level, but the exams become broader in content as the spectrum of the curriculum taught expands. We also use three sublevels of progress to track achievement within a specific grade. The students targeted by our project made an average of 3 sublevels of progress in under 2 terms which is higher than their class average. Reviewing the attitudes towards learning for our selected pupils, we concluded that 70% made improvements with 30% maintaining their already high level of engagement.

> **"Pupils targeted by our project made an average of 3 sublevels of progress... higher than their class average progress"**

NEXT STEPS

Building on the implementation of this project, we intend to embed the curriculum for Edexcel's new Extended Maths Certificate into the SOL for the most able class in Year 11. This will allow us to continue similar activities next year to continue engagement of our disadvantaged, more able boys. We will also be expanding our project to include more subjects and their provision for more able students as we identify staff as more able champions who are interested in the work we are doing to increase visibility and challenge for these students. In efforts to support more able students' curiosity, we will be also beginning a programme to run Masterclasses – short, one-off workshops on topics, careers, concepts and/or ideas that are of interest to our more able students.

Danielle Gustafson
SUBJECT LEAD FOR MATHS
& CO-LEAD ON MORE ABLE PROVISION
SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL

Simon Tester
SUBJECT LEAD FOR SCIENCE
& CO-LEAD ON MORE ABLE PROVISION
SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL

RECOMMENDED READING

Busch, B., Watson, E., and Bogatchek, L. (2023) *Teaching and Learning Illuminated: The Big Ideas Illustrated*. Routledge.
Mansworth, M. (2021) *Teach to the Top: Aiming High for Every Learner*. John Catt Publishing.
Prinkett, M. and Roberts, M. (2019) *Boys Don't Try: Rethinking Masculinity in School*. Routledge.
Stephen, M. and Warwick, I. (2015) *Educating the More Able Student: What Works and Why*. Sage Publications Ltd.

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

• Saracens High School identified specific strategies for improving the progress and attainment of more able, disadvantaged boys in maths. How could this approach be translated to your school setting? Do specific groups of pupils consistently underachieve in specific subject areas? Could, for example, EEF guidance reports be used to provide actionable recommendations for practice on aspects of teaching and learning?

• How are attitudes to learning affecting a barrier for some pupils in your school? How might pupils' attitudes to learning or their levels of engagement be quantified across the curriculum?

• Danielle and Simon talk about exposing students to 'interesting maths' even if it isn't in the planned curriculum. Are staff in your setting encouraged to do this? How might it impact on student engagement if they were?

• If you are in a 11-18 setting, could strategies similar to those identified in this project be adapted to impact on improving attainment or retention for key groups of post-16 students?

SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND
North London	989	Years 7-13	56.8%	54%	15%

"**Allowing students to explore maths outside of textbook- and exam-style questions helped reluctant learners to find an enjoyment that had previously been missing**"

THOMAS TALLIS SCHOOL   TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

Can we win them over with kindness? Building a culture of belonging with parents of children eligible for PP funding

INTENT

At the PiXL National Conference in October 2023, Jean Gross spoke on the main stage about the widening achievement gap of students eligible for Pupil Premium funding (PP). Inspired by her words, we began to discuss the impact of the lack of engagement with parents and carers within our school, and its role in the disconnect between students and the school, contributing to the -0.7 achievement gap at GCSE. At the same time, we have also been exploring the influence of psychosocial factors on student achievement. A collaboration with the University of Sussex has led to a concerted effort to ensure Thomas Tallis mitigates the impact of stereotype threat[1], identity incompatibility[2] and other phenomena that we know disproportionately impact less advantaged students. This has involved carefully considering how we can foster a sense of belonging in all students.

Jean Gross encouraged schools to 'kill parents and carers with kindness' and to humanize schools so that parents and carers feel less alienated. One idea Gross suggested was inviting parents and carers into school for an informal evening with food. This prompted us to explore how we could implement a similar project to enhance engagement at our parents' evenings. Currently, our average parents' evening attendance is 80%, with a notable portion of non-attendees being families of students eligible for PP funding. PP students constitute about 33% of each year group of 270 students. Building on our central value of kindness and incorporating Gross's ideas, we aimed to increase attendance at parents' evenings from an average of 50% to over 90% for parents and carers of PP students. We planned to invite parents and carers of Year 9 PP students, particularly those with siblings in the school, to an informal evening featuring good food and conversations with teachers, senior leaders, and support staff. The goal was to break down barriers between school and home, and to help parents and carers feel more comfortable and confident attending future parents' evenings. To evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, we planned to use data from parents' evenings and conduct a follow-up event in the summer term.

[1] Situational threat: a situational predicament in which people are, or feel themselves to be, at risk of conforming to stereotypes about their social group.
[2] Identity incompatibility: within education, this refers to the perception of a compatibility or conflict between one's social identities or background and the stereotype of a successful student.

IMPLEMENTATION

The first step was to consult with the Senior Leadership Team to help shape the idea and discuss the logistics of implementation. Based on concerns about attendance in Year 10, we opted to widen the group. However, with both Year 9 and Year 10 averaging 33% PP students, this would mean inviting around 180 parents and carers! This was not feasible – therefore, in consultation with our Deputy Head of Inclusion, we decided to focus on the 40 lowest achievers across both year groups, which included those with attendance concerns. With the group of parents and carers identified, the next stage was timing. As Thomas Tallis is a PFI school, we must coordinate evening events carefully to not incur extra costs. It was already the end of November 2023 and we had Year 9 Parents' Evening alongside curriculum option events scheduled for February and March. In order to collect attendance data for parents' evenings, we agreed a provisional date for a 'Pie and Mash' event for parents and carers just after the February half-term. The next hurdle was funding. Our school cook provided a rough estimate of £3000 for the cost of catering for 40 people and staffing for setting up and clean up. With staff attending and potentially younger children, this cost would of course increase. We then began to look at where we could fund this cost. Our Pupil Premium budget was already allocated for the 2023-24 year, so our Business Manager suggested we approach the PTFA. Similarly, the PTFA had projects already allocated for the year ahead. Now in March with no access to funding, it became apparent that the project could not go ahead this academic year. With advice from our project mentor, the project was scaled back to just Year 10 families. Here we considered options such as a picnic in the summer term, however, the school calendar was already full with various visits, DofE, exam season and changing job roles in SLT. Timing and scale of the project was proving too much to fit in to this academic year.

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

Although we have been unable to fully implement our strategy this year, we remain passionate about improving engagement with PP students and their families and believe that this project could have a significant impact. Working alongside the Assistant Head for Co-Curriculum and with funding from the PTFA, we will start the new academic year with dates set in the calendar to host our first 'Pie and Mash' evening in November, with a follow-up in May. We will start with Year 10 Parents and Carers (30 maximum), to keep the costs down and really work at getting them in and improving the relationships to increase the sense of belonging. Over the past year we have learnt that starting small and building on successful strategies can be the key to success. Sometimes you have to scale your project down in order to have maximum impact and improve outcomes.

Heather Odd
ASSOCIATE ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER
THOMAS TALLIS SCHOOL

Daniel Talbot
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER
THOMAS TALLIS SCHOOL

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Heather and Daniel have described the aim to foster a stronger sense of belonging for specific groups of pupils. Are there cultural differences that influence how pupils feel and engage with their education or any similar priorities for building relationships with families in your school? What are the factors that reinforce culture and consolidate a sense of belonging within your school's community?
- The SLT at Thomas Tallis School planned this as a strategy to support pupils and families across specific year groups. If you wanted to do something similar, how would you decide which pupils of families to target?
- If you want to hear more from Jean Gross, do check out our PiXL in Conversation episode with her, titled 'Reaching the unseen children'.

THOMAS TALLIS SCHOOL

2077

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND	HPA
Greater London		**Years 7-13**	**54%**	**34%**	E **6.4%** K **23.01%**	**28%**

AN ARTICLE BY UNIFROG   TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEARS 7–13

Tackling the disadvantage gap after school

INTENT

THE ISSUE WE'RE FACING

As the universal careers and destinations platform for schools and colleges, we at Unifrog put our mission of levelling the destinations playing field at the heart of everything we do. With 57% of UK state schools and colleges and 1.9 million active students using Unifrog, we're in a unique position to analyse the platform behaviour and intentions of young people all over the country and measure the impact of our intervention programmes designed to close the disadvantage gap. There is a significant gap in outcomes between young people from disadvantaged[1] backgrounds and their more advantaged peers when it comes to accessing leading universities, the best apprenticeships, and the most competitive careers. This persistent and growing disparity in destinations means that there's still some way to go before we see the positive impact education can have on social mobility.

THE DISADVANTAGE GAP: LOGINS AND SHORTLISTINGS

The login gap is the difference between the percentage of disadvantaged students who log in to Unifrog compared to their more advantaged peers. This gap widens the most during Year 10 to 11, which emphasises the importance of earlier targeted intervention for Key Stage 3 and 4 students. On the Unifrog platform, students are encouraged to make shortlists of destinations including university courses, apprenticeships, colleges, sixth forms, and other special opportunities. This is a crucial step in a student's Unifrog journey of exploring opportunities and making informed decisions to plan for their next steps.

We define the disadvantage shortlisting gap as the difference between the percentage of disadvantaged students who complete a destinations shortlist compared to their more advantaged peers. The disadvantage shortlisting gap is evident early in the application cycle, from the September of Year 12. As soon as students enter sixth form, those from more advantaged backgrounds start to pull ahead. In addition, the probability of a student completing a shortlist decreases the later in the year their Unifrog account is created. This highlights the importance of rolling out Unifrog to younger year groups, to drastically increase their chances of creating a shortlist in Key Stage 5.

[1] Disadvantaged refers to young people living in Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) postcodes 1–3.

IMPLEMENTATION

To address both the disadvantage shortlisting gap and login gap, we're running a three-part intervention approach with target schools and colleges across the UK, in areas with high proportions of students in IMD deciles 1–3.

INTERVENTION 1: STUDENT LAUNCHES

This academic year, we've delivered Unifrog launches to 84 schools and colleges across the country to engage 5,000 students with the aim of boosting whole-school login rates, particularly for partners with a high proportion of disadvantaged students. This was accompanied by tailored staff training to help support schools and colleges with utilising the Unifrog platform both within careers lessons and curriculum subjects.

INTERVENTION 2: HE WORKSHOPS

One of our objectives this year was to roll out more HE shortlisting workshops to target schools and colleges. In total, we facilitated 30 in-person workshops in collaboration with our HE partner universities for Year 12 students from more disadvantaged areas. These workshops allow students to learn about courses, the application process, student life, bursaries, scholarships, and other forms of support available. **"Students found the session extremely useful, especially more disorganised students. The extra support walking them through is invaluable and having this delivered by an expert is extremely effective. I feel it has assisted students in focusing their aspirations."** Luke Stevens, Deputy Head of Sixth, The Phoenix Collegiate

INTERVENTION 3: ONBOARDING NEW SCHOOLS THROUGH SPONSORSHIPS

In October we launched a sponsorship programme to build meaningful relationships between employers, universities, and schools and colleges in more disadvantaged areas of the UK. So far we have matched nine partner schools and colleges with a sponsor, with the aim of demystifying post-school options and helping disadvantaged young people raise aspirations, gain employability skills, have meaningful encounters, and make informed decisions. Employer and university sponsors run targeted workshops, training sessions, networking breakfasts, and other opportunities tailored specifically for their partner school or college's CEIAG objectives. The newly-onboarded schools and colleges are located in the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, London, and the South West – specifically in areas identified as having the largest disadvantage shortlisting and login gaps prior to intervention.

IMPACT

EXISTING PARTNERS

Thanks to our intervention campaigns for targeted existing partner schools and colleges, we have improved their average whole-school login rate significantly. One academy has seen the login rate for Year 12s increase from 0% to 92% following their student launch, and a further increase to 93.4% one month after the visit. There are approximately 3,400 more Year 12 students from disadvantaged backgrounds logging in and using Unifrog's careers and destinations guidance than this time last year. The 30 HE workshops resulted in 501 students logging into Unifrog, with 59% of them completing a shortlist of at least one UK university course.

NEW PARTNER SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Though our sponsorship programme is still in its infancy, we can already see a positive impact. 45% of disadvantaged students in Years 10 to 12 at sponsored schools and colleges are logging in to the platform, which is notably higher than the average for disadvantaged students at non-sponsored schools. Within these sponsorships, disadvantaged students are logging in to access careers and university guidance at the same rate as their more advantaged peers. This is compared to an average 12% login gap between classmates at non-sponsored schools.

LOOKING AHEAD

Despite milestones and achievements to celebrate, both the general shortlisting gap and login gap are still slightly higher than our targets for the 23/24 academic year – at 8% and 12% respectively. In a challenging wider environment for equity in education, we still have a long way to go to eliminate the disadvantage gap, and will continue to work closely with experts and our fantastic community of Unifrog schools and colleges to achieve our mission of levelling the playing field for all students. If you would like advice on how to engage disadvantaged or underrepresented students from a younger age, or on accessing widening participation opportunities from universities, employers, and apprenticeship providers, reach out to **info@unifrog.org** and we'd be happy to chat.

Charlotte Hu
UNIFROG

Raising aspirations for a career in the construction sector (Northern Ireland)

INTENT

Despite overall rises in GCSE attainment rates in NI , the attainment gap (measured by the proportion of young people obtaining at least five GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and maths) between pupils who are and are not entitled to a free school meal has remained largely unchanged since 2005/2006.

In 2023, one in three businesses in NI reported having job vacancies and 76% can't fill these roles. Yet, the Social Mobility Commission reported that those from professional or more privileged backgrounds in NI are 80% more likely to be in jobs than those from working-class backgrounds.

Skills to Succeed, the NI Careers Education and Careers Strategy, makes it clear that work experience has a key role to play in ensuring that individuals are well connected to the labour market and in helping employers to communicate their skills needs to young people. Work experience is crucial in broadening awareness and knowledge of alternative career opportunities and can often motivate young people to succeed.

Yet, we know that in Northern Ireland, socio-economic status significantly affects access to careers and enrichment opportunities: more affluent children tend to engage more frequently in out-of-school activities, whereas disadvantaged children are more likely to participate in screen-based activities.

With new industry analysis forecasting that the NI construction sector will grow at a faster pace than the UK in coming years, with over 5000 new employees needed by 2028, this project was designed as a collaboration between **Speakers for Schools** and GRAHAM Construction to showcase the variety of careers on offer in the construction industry (skilled trades, IT, marketing, project management, design and so much more) to young people who might not otherwise consider a career in the industry due to lack of knowledge of a pathway into those roles or negative stereotypes of the industry.

GRAHAM has robust social value policies in place for key construction projects nationally, focusing on areas such as employment, training, education, diversity, inclusion, health, wellbeing and the environment. In December 2022, **GRAHAM** began working on a two-year construction programme on the regeneration of Yorkgate train station in North Belfast. The project offered the opportunity for three post-primary schools in North Belfast (an area identified as the third highest area for multiple deprivation in Northern Ireland) to explore the array of vocational training, apprenticeships, FE and HE routes and career opportunities available in the construction industry in general and GRAHAM Construction in particular.

IMPLEMENTATION

We offered Year 11 & 12* students at Belfast Boys' Model School, Belfast Model School for Girls and Blessed Trinity College the opportunity to join engaging and interactive sessions with GRAHAM staff over the academic year. The schools were selected based on their high levels of socio-economic need, indicated by having over half of their pupils in receipt of Free School Meals, as well as their religious background and/or school type. Finally we also prioritised offering gender balance for what would be traditionally seen as a male-dominated industry.

In October 2023, we kicked off with a Careers Insight Day which focused on skills development workshops with the team from GRAHAM. It included a 'Meet the Team' session where students were able to hear from a range of GRAHAM employees who had joined the organisation via different pathways, a group construction challenge where young people could put their construction skills to the test, a skills workshop focusing on workplace readiness, and a Q&A session hosted by the GRAHAM HR Lead including top tips on job applications, CV building and employability skills for the world of work. A site visit to the Yorkgate Train Station Project was then organised for the winning groups of the construction challenge to observe the practical application of design principles, understand the coordination between various departments in a construction project and provide valuable insight into various careers discussed in the October Careers Insight Day.

Finally, multi-day work experience placement opportunities were provided in June 2024 to engage in workplace learning through job shadowing at a live construction site and completion of construction site-related projects. Students selected for this experience either had participated in both the previous tasks or else had specified an interest in working in the construction sector and were studying Construction/Technology. They were provided with up-to-date information directly from GRAHAM about what they are looking for in their future talent, helping students gain more knowledge of the technical and employability skills they require to thrive in the industry and to understand the connection between their current schoolwork and their future career goals.

The average age of participants across the project was 15 years. 52% of participants were male and 48% were female. 80% of participants in the final stage of the project were in receipt of FSM.

Whilst all three schools provide a wide range of high-quality career support interventions throughout the school year, this particular project commenced at the start of the school year and was intentionally targeted at younger year groups (Years 11 & 12) where over two-thirds of students who were participating in the project reported they had not yet attended a virtual or in-person work experience (71%). This would be commonplace for this age group and this percentage decreases greatly post-16 as there are more opportunities available and all pupils are expected to take part in at least one face-to-face work experience placement.

Additionally, just under half of participants reported not having a lot of support outside of school to help them make informed education and career choices (47%) with only one-third saying they felt well-informed about the routes into employment in the construction industry specifically, and this information came from schools. This could also be due to the fact that the participants do not have family or friends employed in the construction industry, and therefore, they are not well-informed about these roles.

Year groups in Northern Ireland are slightly different to the rest of the UK. Where this article refers to Year 11 & 12, this is equivalent to Year 10 & 11 in England and Wales.

IMPACT

The programme was designed to ensure that these students learnt about the variety of opportunities and the pathways that led to those careers. As one young person remarked, *"I thought that my placement was with quite an amazing company with people working there without the need for an A-level".* Following the project, there was a significant increase from 36% to 70% in students feeling informed or well-informed about employment routes within GRAHAM Construction and the construction industry, highlighting the effectiveness of aligning educational experiences with tangible career opportunities and imparting crucial career-related knowledge.

The project led to a modest change in participants' confidence in their employment prospects. The percentage of young people who said they were confident about their ability to thrive in the world of work increased from 45% before the programme to 52% after joining the programme. As one young boy put it, *"This placement has helped because it showed the job opportunities GRAHAM has to offer for everyone even if they currently have no idea what to do for the future."* Despite the fact that females had higher GCSE attainment than their male peers, they were less likely to feel they have a good understanding of the world of work (53%) compared to boys (71%). We were pleased to see that most felt the placement was informative and addressed stereotypes within the industry, with a young girl remarking, *"It has helped me realise that women can work in the construction industry."*

When asked how the placement helped them understand which jobs align with their interests and skills, one of the responses was, *"by telling me how to get accepted for an apprenticeship."* This feedback perfectly encapsulates the primary goal of our project.

WHAT WE LEARNT

We believe in continuous improvement, and through the delivery of this complex year-long project involving multiple schools, we have learned the following lessons:

- **Facilitating Collaborative Planning:** Creating opportunities for joint planning among the three schools from the beginning is essential. This approach ensures that their schedules and needs align with the employer's project goals, making management easier for everyone involved.
- **Condensing Activity Schedules:** To maintain momentum and ensure effective learning for students, all activities should be scheduled over a more condensed period. While employers value work experience for enhancing their talent pipeline and community engagement, strict project deadlines often mean that careers outreach teams need to move on to new areas, limiting their ability to develop long-term relationships with educational stakeholders.
- **Expanding Reach Through Virtual Models:** Although this opportunity was limited to three schools with all activities delivered in person, there is potential to use the Speakers for Schools portal and a virtual delivery model. This approach would enable us to reach a broader cohort of disadvantaged young people, particularly those in rural areas.

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Socio-economic factors provided indications of the development priorities relating to careers education and enrichment for the pupils and schools involved in this project. Are there similar priorities for your school? Is there a need to extend the range of opportunities provided for pupils to interact with organisations and professions from outside school? How would you decide which pupils to involve?
- Consider checking out PiXL Futures programmes for primary and secondary schools. PiXL Futures Primary sessions are available for each Character and Culture unit at Key Stages 1 and 2 to support pupils in identifying how and why certain characteristics will be important for their future learning and careers. PiXL Futures Secondary includes leadership materials to support Careers and Higher Education leads in their roles with resources that include bulletins, lesson plans and personalised learning checklists (PLCs).
- If you want to reach out to Speakers for Schools, you can simply complete the short form on the 'educator page' of their website: **https://www.speakersforschools.org/** and click submit to receive a call or email from our team. Students can also register their interest by visiting our **www.speakersforschools.org/young-persons/** where they can learn more and take a careers quiz.

QUOTATIONS FROM EDUCATORS

"By having the opportunity to participate in this initiative, our pupils have benefitted from first-hand experience of the dynamics of a construction site and have been made aware of the wide range of jobs and career opportunities within the construction industry. This visit to the York Street station not only enhanced our pupils' academic learning, but also raised their interest in the construction sector, allowing them to make informed career choices aligned to their interests and strengths. By bridging education with industry, these initiatives cultivate a skilled workforce ready to tackle the future challenges of the built environment."

BELFAST BOYS' MODEL SCHOOL

"This truly was an amazing experience for our students. To have face-to-face conversations with a wonderful range of experienced workers was particularly rewarding for them. It really helped give our students the ability to envision a range of career choices and possibilities that they may not have even thought of beforehand. The opportunity to visit the train station itself during its building phase was especially enlightening for them. To see a vision become a reality in such an impressive way was inspiring, and it was a real fun day out that was enjoyed by all. We would highly recommend this experience for other students – it was a privilege for our school to be involved."

BLESSED TRINITY SCHOOL

"The project this year has been invaluable in allowing us to get our students out of the classroom and link with GRAHAM Construction, a major employer in the construction sector. This project has allowed and encouraged our girls to see the many facets of the construction landscape and how they could have a rewarding career in this traditionally male-dominated sector. Working with Speakers for Schools has been a delight and the visits and talks arranged by them have been enlightening and incredibly enjoyable. The time and care given to our students has been most appreciated not only by the school but, more importantly, by the students themselves who have talked regularly about their experiences. Some are now actively looking into careers in construction because of the work done by Speakers for Schools and GRAHAM Construction."

BELFAST MODEL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

GRAHAM (EMPLOYER)

"GRAHAM invests in the communities in which we work through representation, involvement, and investment. We define social value as the activities we do to enhance people's lives, in the spirit of support and voluntary work, to improve inclusion, prospects and wellbeing for all.

We recognise the importance of engaging with young people and schools in North Belfast to inspire the next generation of construction professionals, building lasting relationships that foster mutual growth and development.

Our partnership with Speakers for Schools has played a vital role in this engagement as we focus on educating key influencers such as teachers and parents, along with young people themselves, about the wide variety of careers within the industry, whilst providing opportunities for access to experience and entry level roles."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved in this project from both GRAHAM and the three participating schools – Blessed Trinity College Belfast, Belfast Model School for Girls and Belfast Boys' Model School. Special recognition goes to Nuala Ryan and Rachel O'Neill (Belfast Boys' Model School), Neil Adams (Belfast Model School for Girls), Olivia Hickey (Blessed Trinity College Belfast) and Attracta Matthews (GRAHAM) for their continued support and commitment to the successful delivery of this project.

COACHING AND MENTORING

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO **EMPOWER LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BAC**.

RUSHEY GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 4 & 5

Sense of belonging, sense of responsibility

> **"Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group."**
>
> BAUMEISTER AND LEARY 1995

As a multicultural school with many children, diversity, inclusion and acceptance is at the heart of our culture. A number of our families are facing challenges within their lives due to current socio-economic factors, which have had an effect on pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Our school is thus seen as a safe place that offers consistency, support and security for our children and families. We identified that some pupils were struggling to build lasting relationships with peers, leading to demotivation in the classroom and lack of participation in settings across the school. Our aim was to provide a nurturing environment for children in which to participate and work collaboratively, and to alleviate social constraints, to form stronger peer-to-peer relationships.

Our Headteacher carefully considers the desired culture of the school while working with staff to develop its ethos. We knew our staff were committed to the school, as it was evident in their daily practice and relationships with each other. We then began to review whether staff felt they belonged to the school. A sense of belonging is integral to deepening our school culture; but had we assumed that staff were on board with this? And, if we assumed that staff belonged to the school, what about the children? We often sought pupils' opinions during regular pupil voice meetings around the curriculum, but not specifically around 'belonging'. What would our pupils say about their feelings of belonging to our school?

INTENT

We began to examine and discuss what it meant to belong to different groups as members of staff. How did we perceive ourselves as individuals within social groups, families, staff bodies and the wider community? More importantly, how did these various social structures/groups impact our children, particularly our disadvantaged boys? Our intent was to engage the boys within the school community to ensure:

- **Pupils have a sense of belonging**
- **Pupils are suitably challenged and engaged**
- **Improved attendance**
- **Improved attainment in Reading, Writing and Maths**

- **Robust tracking for disadvantaged pupils**
- **Increased praise/recognition for disadvantaged pupils and their achievements in class**
- **High expectations for all pupils**

In addition, to ensure:

- **Regular check-ins with key staff (weekly or daily)**
- **Shared understanding amongst staff – measured accountability**

Our first step was to create a robust and shared system to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school, reviewing at various assessment points during the year. Tracking needed to be rigorous, using school-based evidence and data, to provide an accurate, clear picture of the needs of individual children. In this way, key members of staff would be able to identify any interventions that would benefit the pupils during the year.

A significant number of boys from the school cohort met the criteria in terms of disadvantage. Our main focus would be Year 4 and 5 boys, as their social interactions and relationships with each other often encountered some difficulties, impacting on their level of engagement within lessons. Therefore, we set the following intentions:

- **Ensure punctuality and attendance improves for each child.**
- **Help pupils maintain positive interactions with key staff members, with regular check-ins, either daily or periodically throughout the day, with members of SLT, phase leaders, the pastoral lead, class teachers and/or learning mentor.**
- **Provide trusted adults to support pupils in having a positive start to the day, enabling pupils to discuss any concerns or issues they may have that morning whilst supporting their emotional wellbeing.**
- **Address any SEMH behaviour presented whilst in school in the context of socio-economic factors.**
- **Ascertain the children's feelings of belonging and assess the long-term impact on their life outcomes.**

Wellbeing is a core value of the school and a key priority of our school development plan. We recognised the impact Covid had on our pupils' mental health and wellbeing, and consequently implemented strategies to support our pupils. It was clear from the outset that the pastoral care of all our pupils is a strength of our school. Providing pupils with regular check-ins with staff would further strengthen these relationships and, it was hoped, foster a sense of belonging.

IMPLEMENTATION

Initial discussions took place during an INSET meeting at the beginning of the year, delivered by the Deputy Head. It involved staff completing the Jean Gross-authored survey The Belonging Scale (2023), based on Carol Goodenow's Psychological Sense of School Membership (1993). Staff were given the option to discuss their responses in a triad or with a partner. This provided an opportunity for staff to reflect collaboratively on their sense of belonging. Teachers were then asked to replicate this survey with their classes. A list of disadvantaged boys from Years 1 to 6 was shared with all teaching staff. An online version of the Belonging Scale survey was generated for these disadvantaged boys, posted in each phase's Google Classrooms, and completed in year groups with a teaching assistant. This enabled us to gather data from their responses. A board with the boys' individual profile pictures was created in an SLT office as a point of reference for members of staff in their current year groups.

Drawing on our conversations in SLT meetings, evidence from attainment data and findings from the survey, it was clear that Year 4 and 5 disadvantaged boys would benefit from different aspects of the project. Initially, we began with regular daily check-ins with boys in those year groups. Identifying the type of check-in that would benefit each individual was a collaborative leadership and inclusion team decision, in which knowing the boys well was undoubtedly the deciding factor. All pupils have a 'soft start' to school, from 8.45 to 9am, so some check-ins happened at this time in class, whilst pupils had breakfast. For other students, a member of SLT checked in just after morning registration. A small number of pupils began their morning with the inclusion team in the SEMH resource base, The Cloud, where this 'soft start' would be extended to enable them to fully explore their feelings and have a

positive start to the day. This proved successful. Over two terms, we observed an immediate impact in the classroom, as pupils began to self-regulate more frequently, including asking for 'time out' of class to speak to a trusted adult. However, in discussions with the Headteacher, it was felt that the boys needed something more to cement their relationships with their peers and foster a sense of responsibility. Building on previous initiatives on mental health and wellbeing, we incorporated another strategy to combine our project with our memorial garden.

During the previous summer term, the school officially opened our Sabina Nessa Memorial Garden, honouring a young talented teacher who was tragically murdered in September 2021. The memorial garden encourages children to participate in outdoor learning and access outdoor space that they do not currently have at home, and offers a place of safety and reflection. The garden also enables children to learn about nature, growing produce and cooking food, topics that Sabina was passionate about. It was hoped that tending and planting the garden would provide the boys with a sense of belonging, whilst developing their relationships with their peers in an informal setting free from academic pressures.

IMPACT

Through our strategic initiatives we were confident that pupils were developing a strong sense of belonging as we were **seeing a number of small improvements, and we could see a shift** in the culture. We monitored the impact through a range of qualitative and quantitative measures. Pupils in Year 4 and 5 now had fewer recorded behaviour incidents, and peer-on-peer relationships were becoming stronger, with pupils developing even more lasting friendships. Pupils' attendance improved significantly in Year 5, with a decreased percentage of **persistent** absence rates from 15.7% to 9.3%.

Autumn 2023

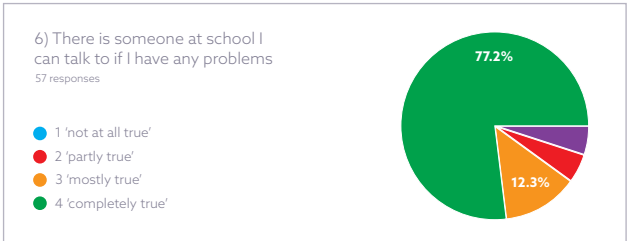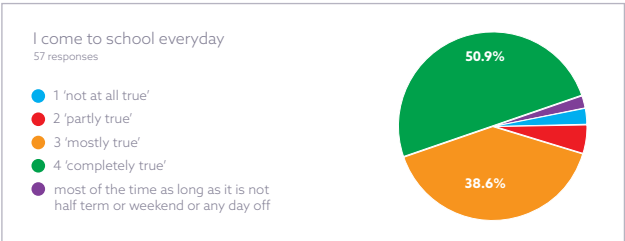|	Pupils	Boys	Girls	EAL	Summer born	Ever 6 FSM	SEN Support	EHC Plan	Absense Rate
Year 4	13	13	0	6	5	13	4	0	5.2%
Year 5	9	9	0	4	4	9	4	0	15.7%

Year 4 cohort increased by 4 pupils over the academic year, ultimately affecting the absence data.

June 2024

	Pupils	Boys	Girls	EAL	Summer born	Ever 6 FSM	SEN Support	EHC Plan	Absense Rate
Year 4	16	16	0	6	7	14	6	0	8.1%
Year 5	12	12	0	4	5	11	6	0	9.3%

Pupils' survey responses and the evidence of improved relationships, with pupils proactively seeking out adults to speak to, were indeed the biggest indicators that our initiatives were working.

June 2024

I come to school everyday
57 responses
- 1 'not at all true'
- 2 'partly true'
- 3 'mostly true'
- 4 'completely true'
- most of the time as long as it is not half term or weekend or any day off

50.9%
38.6%

June 2024

6) There is someone at school I can talk to if I have any problems
57 responses
- 1 'not at all true'
- 2 'partly true'
- 3 'mostly true'
- 4 'completely true'

77.2%
12.3%

Moreover, by bonding through a shared purpose and with new responsibilities, the boys now discovered common ground on which they could converse whilst sharing their new-found skills and expertise. Paramount to the success that is unquantifiable is the improved wellbeing and mental health of the boys. Year 4 and 5 boys were able to reflect about their growth during the academic year, sharing a sense of real belonging and responsibility. Pupils felt fully embedded into the school community, and had a sense of pride about acquiring a new skill. This was reinforced when they were able to observe the produce they grew being eaten daily as part of their school lunch, as well as being sold locally to parents, carers and the local community.

WE ALSO MEASURED IMPACT THROUGH STUDENT VOICE

- 'This school belongs to me, all the teachers like me.'
- 'If you don't have good mental wellbeing you can't learn.'
- 'I'm a bit like a seed, I didn't want to talk to you. I understand now that I didn't know people very well.'
- 'Someone at school will help you get up, just like how we care for the plants.'
- 'My check-ins help me feel happy and calm.'
- 'I look forward to my check-ins. It makes me feel good inside.'

- 'I felt scared at first planting, I care for it at home. Being responsible to take care of things makes me feel I belong here.'
- 'Before, I used to get into a lot of fights, I was easily tormented. Gardening has helped me; I've grown just like the plants.'
- "I do need some support as a plant sprouts; I am getting stronger by myself.'
- 'The plants grow like me. If the plant fails it needs help to grow back - it needs love and care.'

NEXT STEPS

Our aim is to develop pupils' financial literacy by enabling pupils to sell their organic vegetables and fruit at Borough Market and across the community and for links with the school focus on globalisation, innovation, and community to be continually strengthened. Regular check-ins for pupils will be continued, and we are also keen for the garden to be accessed fully as a safe space for pupils to show tenderness and care for one another. Impact will be quantified in relation to pupils' wellbeing, their attainment across the curriculum and acquisition of skills that promote life-long learning.

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Loxane Wallace
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER & KEY STAGE 2
RUSHEY GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Loxane describes the need to personalise strategies for building relationships and engaging individual pupils. Could it be beneficial to establish specific adult-pupil check-ins and/or to utilise the use of outdoor learning areas in similar ways? What and where are the most effective approaches for engaging the more disengaged pupils in your setting?

- Rushey Green School identified the importance of a sense of belonging and raised the question 'what would pupils say about their feelings of belonging to our school'? Could there be any correlation between lower levels of 'belonging' with rates of absenteeism or levels of engagement and attainment across the curriculum for some pupils at your school?

- Loxane mentions that their next steps are to include more financial literacy. For more on why financial education is so important for all learners, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, please read our article on page 106 - 107.

RUSHEY GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

600

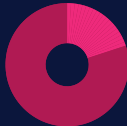| **REGION**	**NUMBER ON ROLL**	**YEAR GROUPS**	**BOYS**	**PP**	**SEND**
South London		EYFS - Year 6	49%	33%	20%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION Our school is committed to supporting pupils' wellbeing and pupils with SEND. The school has a new open resources base provision for pupils with SEMH called The Cloud. We have a satellite classroom (BEAM) for children working 2 academic years behind their peers.

HARWICH & DOVERCOURT HIGH SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Raising attainment of disadvantaged high prior attaining boys through coaching

INTENT

Our Context

During July 2023, it became apparent that we had a problem with our High Prior Attaining (HPA) boys. Not only were there more of them than in a normal cohort at Harwich and Dovercourt High School, they were underperforming compared to their peers, and having a detrimental impact on the school's predicted Progress 8 (P8) data. Serving a heavily disadvantaged catchment area, achieving a positive P8 can be an uphill struggle, and whilst there is evidence in the national data that HPAs from disadvantaged backgrounds fall behind their more affluent peers in their GCSE outcomes (Jerrim and Palma 2024), the question arose of what more could we do with these boys to help them engage better with the great offer at HDHS and how can we help them to succeed? Shane Parrish's mantra of *"This is not our fault, but it is our responsibility"* really resonates in situations such as this in our context (Parrish, 2024). By October, HPA boys' predicted data suggested this group was performing worse than the cohort average by -0.75. *Disadvantaged* HPA boys were faring even worse than this, with a gap of -1.24 compared to the cohort average. We know from historic data that students who engage with their lessons and attend above 90% generally achieve significantly better outcomes than this, so set about planning a strategy to help this group of boys engage better with the school and thereby improve their outcomes.

We initially planned to ask three male staff – myself as Deputy Headteacher, an Assistant Headteacher and a Lead Practitioner – to use PiXL's Level Best resources to identify strategies with 12 HPA boys, with the ultimate aim of improving their attitude to learning, engagement and therefore their predicted outcomes, which would be assessed by staff during each half term through the school's planned data drops.

IMPLEMENTATION

Initially the Assistant Headteacher (Head of KS4) identified a cohort of 12 HPA boys who were underperforming compared to the rest of the year group but were felt to be reachable in terms of improving their attitudes to learning and both their working at and predicted grades. I began meeting with these students individually during tutor time to start to identify targets as per the Level Best guidance. Several common barriers to academic success outside of lessons began to emerge – socialising with friends, online gaming (often collaborative with friends), sport and late-night use of mobile devices were all more enticing than homework and revision. Some were sharing an internet access device, making it more difficult to access their homework. Most declared that we shouldn't worry too much about data based on Year 10 as they hadn't tried very hard in those exams as they didn't count, and they were definitely going to try harder now it was Year 11.

Whilst the initial meetings seemed to be producing useful insights into why these students were underperforming, it quickly became evident that the amount of time to set and monitor targets through Level Best with 12 students was going to be prohibitive compared to the time available during a term where cover started to ramp up as we saw what appeared to be Covid sweep through the staff body. Whilst we had hoped to set individual targets for each of the 12 key students, who would be divided into three groups, each with a different male mentor from the staff, in the end I decided to meet with the students as a group instead, switching to meetings at lunchtime instead of tutor time, and reducing the need for three staff to be free to meet with them as smaller groups or individually. A key draw for the students was a complimentary two-course meal which they routinely wolfed down. Much of what I discussed with them was based around James Clear's *Atomic Habits*, in terms of building better study habits outside of school and making the most of the opportunities available to them inside of school (Clear, 2018). I sent them a podcast of Clear talking about building better habits and asked them to discuss ideas they found useful in it during the next meeting. I sent them a Google Form to complete which picked up what their career aspirations were, and what football team they supported (if any – not all of them cared about football), to give me topics to talk to them about and link in to the benefits of doing well in school.

Concurrently, the school offered attitude to learning rewards for the whole cohort, including earning the right to attend the prom. Two students from the HPA boys cohort were selected as part of a small group identified by the school's Reading Lead to receive the Lexonik Advance reading intervention training, which I personally led with them having completed the training to deliver it as part of this intervention (Forsyth, n.d.). Five students were taught GCSE History by me, four of whom had previously been taught by me further down the school. This was based on our belief that a positive starting relationship would be crucial to students' engagement with the intervention and our offer in school. Students who had either been previously taught by me, or were currently being taught by me, were much more engaged with the programme. We used a data drop from October 2023 as the baseline for the project, as this captured working at, attitude to learning and predicted end of year grades.

IMPACT

Impact was measured both through predicted end of year grades (we have carried out a lot of work with subject leaders and Year 11 teachers on standardisation and accuracy of predictions this year), and attitude to learning grades. At HDHS students' AtL is updated half termly by subject staff and measures effort and engagement in both classwork and homework on a 4-point scale, where students working at a 3 are completing classwork and homework in line with their ability level, for a 4 they are doing more than is expected by their teacher, with grade 2 students generally completing work with less than top effort or completing work in school but not at home. Grade 1 is rarely awarded but can be for students who do not engage with their learning or act in a way which is detrimental to the learning of themselves or others. Students receive an average grade across all of their subjects, requiring an average of 2.8 to access termly rewards sessions which include a trip to a local cinema and summer inflatables. To access the prom automatically, students required an AtL score of 2.8 – those falling below were issued prom contracts which allowed them to attend if they showed improvement in their engagement. Concurrently, students were given a £1 discount for each week they achieved 100% attendance up to 50% off their tickets, incentivising all students who wanted to attend the prom to improve their engagement with school.

During Year 11, we saw the following impact from the project:

Attitude to learning – 9/12 students (75%) improved their attitude to learning grades between the end of Year 10 and Easter of Year 11, with a further two maintaining AtL 3, so 11/12 either maintained good engagement or improved.

Reading – the two students selected for the Lexonik Advance reading intervention improved their confidence in reading and tackling exam questions. As HPAs, their reading scores were high before the intervention, but both increased during the six-week programme. As a group, the average improvement in reading score was 40 months over six weeks, with two students gaining over 50 months, one of whom remarked "I can answer all the questions now!", and observational data from their GCSE English lessons suggesting they were all significantly more confident than before the intervention ran.

PREDICTED OUTCOMES DATA

11/12 students made significant progress from their starting points during the interventions, with an average improvement in overall P8 from their October Year 11 working at grades to their March Year 11 predicted grades of +0.87. Students reported improvements in their work ethic and study habits, with some identifying less falling asleep in lessons due to healthier sleep habits, improved homework and revision completion due to better organisational habits. Students were keen to let me know how they were improving as the year went on, often emailing me pictures of their revision notes and waiting at the end of the lesson to let me know how they'd got on. This matched improvements in their AtL data over the same time period.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this intervention worked well in terms of supporting these boys in connecting better with school systems, building a better sense of belonging in them and helping them to see how they could unlock more opportunities for their futures by developing better habits now. A critical factor was a pre-existing working relationship between me and the students. Those who hadn't been taught by me before were the hardest to get to come to the lunch meetings. Teaching five of them, gathering regular feedback from their English teacher, and working with two of them on reading interventions all contributed to those students who were seen to make the greatest improvements. When planning next year's cohort, this relationship will be critical. As with all school interventions, planning out the meetings in advance will help to ensure they actually happen, as the whirlwind of the urgent can take over, and certainly interfered with our plans in the autumn term as a suspected Covid outbreak saw capacity for running extra interventions greatly reduced as key staff were either ill or losing significant amounts of time to covering for those who were off. A clear plan for the year based on what we accomplished this year will allow the intervention to be scaled up so that multiple groups can be run, and co-ordinated by me rather than me being the sole group leader. Finally, smaller groups working with a wider range of staff would enable more precise target setting, such as through Level Best, and better personalised tracking.

Martin Higgon
DEPUTY HEADTEACHER
HARWICH AND DOVERCOURT HIGH SCHOOL

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

• Martin talks about how important a pre-existing relationship with the boys was to their engagement with the programme. If you have a similar challenge in your setting, what relationships already exist with your target cohort that could be leveraged for impact?

• Critical factors for the future success of this project relate to quality of relationships between staff and students and allocation of small groups of pupils to teams of adult mentors. Could there be benefits and capacity for connecting target groups of pupils with key members of staff in your school?

• Martin has described the purpose of collecting data for this development project. Is there a clear rationale for the approach to data collection in your school? Are assessment strategies used to provide a high-level 'monitoring' overview, or to inform specific classroom decisions?

• Could PiXL Level Best and other strategies for developing pupils' motivation or approaches to learning be helpful in your school? For example, at Primary we have Character Units for Independence, Motivation, Organisation and Resilience. To support at Secondary-age students, we have the Memory and Revisit strategies or PiXL Build Up for supporting students in building confidence, motivation and engagement.

"This intervention worked well in terms of supporting these boys in connecting better with school systems, building a better sense of belonging in them and helping them to see how they could unlock more opportunities for their futures by developing better habits now."
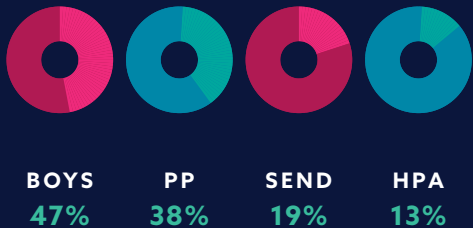
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HARWICH & DOVERCOURT HIGH SCHOOL

1100

REGION
North East Essex

NUMBER ON ROLL

YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13

BOYS
47%

PP
38%

SEND
19%

HPA
13%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION We are an isolated coastal school, the next nearest schools being 45 minutes to an hour away by public transport. Our catchment area includes some of the most deprived postcodes in England.

TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

The use of action research and coaching in developing strategies to support disadvantaged children

INTENT

This project evolved from two ideas. Firstly, the middle leaders had participated in some training on coaching and didn't feel they had had the opportunities to implement this coaching approach. Secondly, there was a desire to close the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children employing a new strategy, as despite having this on our SDP previously, gaps were still sporadic across the school.

SHAPING THE APPROACH

Being in the process of completing my NPQH, I had found the educational research an invaluable tool in sculpting my thinking and strategies. Therefore, I wanted to implement an approach to raising the attainment of disadvantaged children by teams of people conducting action research within their classrooms – an approach which had not been trialled before.

The project was launched to all staff on a September inset day with some CPD on using a coaching approach from an external advisor. He then did a further follow-on session with the middle leaders, who were going to be the team leaders of these action research groups. It was launched with inset time allocated for staff to read **Why don't students like school?**[1] by Daniel T. Willingham and groups were asked to think of an area of improvement or a strategy to raise attainment they wished to focus on. The format of the subsequent meetings consisted of some educational readings to supplement their aim and action plans to be written for each group with a specific outcome, strategies they were going to implement and considerations of how these outcomes would be measured. Groups were given time each half term to meet together to discuss the impact their actions were having, what it looked like in their classrooms, what was working and what needed adapting. I had ideally aimed for teachers to visit one another to see this in practice in each other's classroom, but unfortunately time and cover implications did not allow for this.

IMPACT: FINDINGS, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

Measuring the impact of this project proved difficult. One group was looking at parental engagement and sent out questionnaires to ask the parents of disadvantaged children their feelings and views on the school and what they may want help on. All the questionnaires came back overwhelmingly positive.

Another group were looking to increase growth mindset for these children, but the questionnaires from the children themselves on their self-perception also came back very positive. Three groups had a focus on writing: two of them looking at vocabulary and sentence structure and increasing the use of widgets and communication in print to support this, and the other group looking at using "hooks" and real-life opportunities to stimulate writing. Although children made progress within their writing, there was no dramatic shift in summative writing results. Staff have said they hope the impact of this will be seen later as strategies need time to embed.

Halfway through the process, I was feeling slightly despondent about the project. I hadn't seen much evidence of the actions within the classroom, and I had optimistically hoped someone may be inspired by the readings and wish to take a lead on a similar project in the future: they hadn't. However, in Summer 2 we had a "fair-style" inset session where all the teams set up tables with evidence of their projects and photos of the impact, and it was evident that the staff had put in an awful lot of work during the year. There was evidence of widgets being used in many of the classes and this was clear in planning, resources and children's work. There were photos of "hooks" in writing such as making potions and visiting the park before writing a setting description.
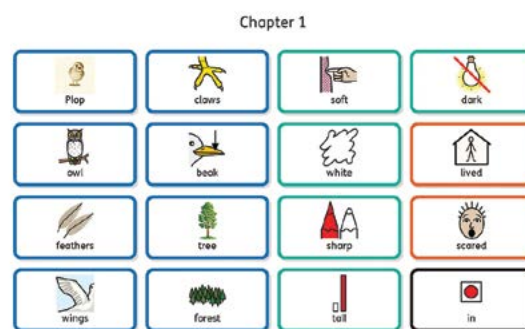
[1] Willingham, D. T. (2021) *Why Don't Students Like School?: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom.* Second Edition. New Jersey: Jossey-Bass.

One of the biggest successes, I feel, is the fact that staff have reflected on the successful strategies and there are elements from the projects which they want to be part of everyday practice next year. The two most notable are the use of widgets (this is also particularly useful in a school with such a high EAL proportion) and the increase in parental engagement through increased timetabled workshops, stay and learn sessions and information-sharing opportunities. Another great success has been the opportunity to work with colleagues one wouldn't normally have. In such a large school, teams often stay close knit and can make the school feel quite collegiate, so mixed teams from all year groups, as well as the specialist provision base, provided cross-team collaboration.

Having had conversations with the team leaders/coaches, they found the juxtaposition of being named as a coach and yet the expectation to hold team members to account too challenging and have suggested next year to drop the coaching aspect. They also discussed that as this was the first year of trialling such an approach, the brief was too broad. Where I had wanted to keep it really open to allow for autocracy, they had found this too overwhelming and would have preferred clearer/more regimented direction.

Moving forward, this is a method we wish to continue. However, I think next year all teams will have team leaders (as opposed to coaches) whom they select – I am hoping this will give staff who are not in current leadership roles the opportunity to take on additional responsibility if they so wish. The project will also focus on one of the objectives from the SDP, giving a sharper focus from the beginning. My recommendation to others before starting this project would be to fully involve the team leaders in the thought process of what your vision is for the project and the how. Don't always assume you are doing what is best for them as they may not want what you are suggesting.

I would like to thank all of the team leaders/coaches for really making these projects happen, alongside the rest of SLT for supporting both this new approach and the potential risk element of any new method!

Lorna Bruce
DEPUTY HEADTEACHER
HOUNSLOW TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL
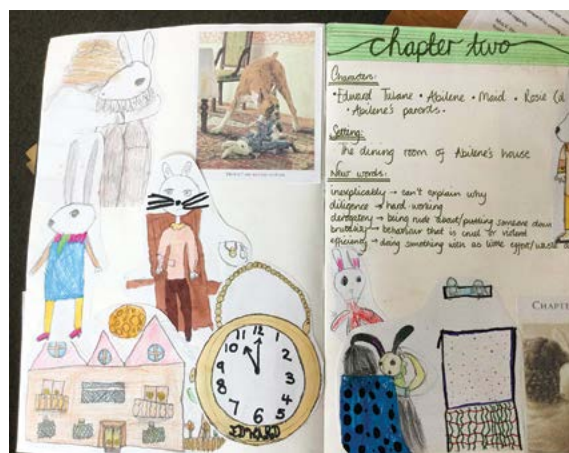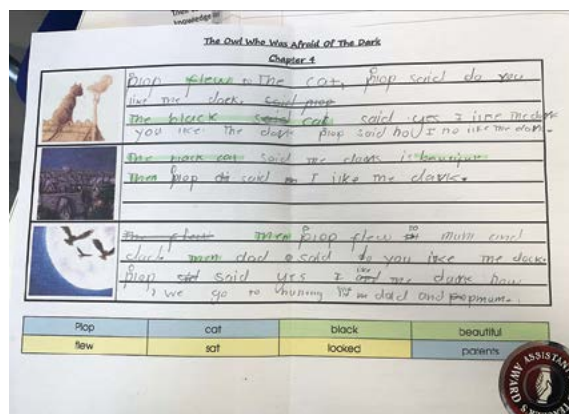
ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Lorna has described the value of professional reflection in the process of evaluating the success of strategies that had been implemented. Could there be benefits for allocating time for self and peer reflection in the CPD programme for your school? For thinking about and analysing what has been done, experienced and learned?

- The use of Widgets has been highly beneficial for Hounslow Town Primary. Could this be a strategy of interest for developing classroom pedagogy and practice in your setting? Which pupils might benefit most from this approach?

- Evidence shows that coaching can be a key tool in improving educational outcomes. Could coaching strategies that provide staff with space and time to think and/or feedback linked to performance be beneficial in your setting?

> *"Don't always assume you are doing what is best for them, as they may not want what you are suggesting."*

HOUNSLOW TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

1109

REGION
West London

NUMBER ON ROLL

YEAR GROUPS
EYFS - Year 6

BOYS
51%

PP
21%

SEND
20%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION Extremely large primary school with a diverse cohort, with 83% EAL and high mobility (with only 50% of current Year 6 joining the school from Reception).

TARGET YEAR GROUP: KEY STAGE 3 & 4

Building equity through tutoring at The City of Leicester College

INTENT

The City of Leicester College first began working with MyTutor in 2020. After suffering multiple city-wide lockdowns due to the pandemic, the school hit pause and investigated the provisions they had for their disadvantaged pupils, leading them to invest in online tutoring.

The school is the largest in Leicester, with 1600 pupils on roll. 24% of pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds and on top of that, 55% speak English as an Additional Language with 55 different first languages spoken. It's an incredibly vibrant and multi-cultural school that aims to provide equity to all its students.

Through online tutoring, the school wanted to tackle the barriers to attainment for those disadvantaged pupils. With latest research showing that the attainment gap now puts disadvantaged pupils 19.2 months behind their peers, it is vital to have interventions in place. Their aim was to ensure that all students could be as successful as possible, regardless of their background, and in the last four years, tuition has become a core part of their intervention strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION

The school has run many programmes with MyTutor over the years, particularly targeting KS4 pupils in core subjects, English and Maths, with 1:1 and small group (3:1) tutoring. As the lessons are available online, they can be delivered flexibly both in school and at home. With MyTutor, all the tutors are close in age to pupils and studying at top UK universities, so students feel comfortable engaging in tuition and can tackle tricky topics in an environment where there's no fear of getting it wrong. The pupils quickly saw the benefits of working with their tutors and have given positive feedback throughout the programmes. From boosted grades to more confidence speaking up in lessons, online tutoring is a high-impact intervention for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"What I really love about MyTutor is that tutors are really passionate about the subject and they transmit that passion towards me."

MyTutor

"The main thing that encouraged me to attend my sessions was to open my exam results and to see that I'd got the grades I wanted to achieve."

EVALUATION

Despite many set-backs during the pandemic, the school managed to improve its Progress 8 score from -0.18 in 2019 to 0.31 in 2023, above the national average. This is in part due to using online tuition to support their disadvantaged students. Assistant Headteacher, Nimah Abdulla, told us, *"Tutoring is brilliant as it gives our students an extra boost with softer skills like confidence, as well as supporting what we do in the classroom. On average, our students made **2-3 grades worth of progress** from their target grades, and in particular, **our disadvantaged students made at least half a grade's worth of progress**."*

One pupil in particular took the opportunity and ran with it. Joining the school after moving to the UK, they went from predicted grades in English, Maths and Science of 4s and 5s to achieving 7s and 8s with the help of online tutoring. They now advocate for the programme, encouraging younger students to join and commit to attending their lessons after seeing such positive results themselves. Overall, the impact of tutoring on the school has been hugely positive, with tuition becoming a real culture in the college. Pupil attendance is on the rise each year and sessions have helped pupils feel more confident in core subjects.

"We ran a Student Voice survey and found 92% would recommend tutoring to the next year, and 95% would recommend their specific tutor."

DEPUTY HEADTEACHER, THE CITY OF LEICESTER COLLEGE

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- 92% of pupils involved in the MyTutor programme at City of Leicester College recommended that tutoring should also be provided to support the next year group. Are there specific cohorts of pupils who might benefit from similar support at your school? Would MyTutor support be particularly helpful for specific subject areas?

- The MyTutor team are here to help you explore funding options (after the National Tutoring Programme) and share how schools near you are supporting their pupils with tutoring. They're available on **partnerships@mytutor.co.uk**.

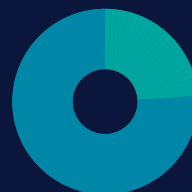# THE CITY OF LEICESTER COLLEGE

1600

REGION
Midlands

NUMBER ON ROLL

YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11

PP
24%

DEVELOPING SKILLS IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

AN ARTICLE BY GARY LOBBETT   TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

Time to think about the essential role that arts and creativity can play in empowering disadvantaged children

Gary Lobbett is one of our Insights project mentors. He's also a former school and Trust leader, and music teacher. We asked him to condense some of the current thinking about the arts and how it can be engaged with to support some of our most vulnerable children.

ARTS EDUCATION
THE ESSENCE AND EXPRESSION OF OUR HUMANITY

It is broadly accepted within the plethora of writings on the subject that participation in 'The Arts' brings with it a range of benefits to those who participate, most particularly for the young and, perhaps even more particularly, the disadvantaged young.

It has been possible for some time to observe, and in some cases, measure, the benefits that go with participation in the arts. What is not clear are the reasons why. Is it collaboration with others that is the key element? Is it the simple joy of creating something? Is it the validation received when others enjoy what a child has created? There is perhaps a paradox which is that more time, money and effort appears to have been invested in trying to turn what it is to be creative into a formulaic science, than in the provision of opportunity. Surely the arts provide a vehicle through which we can, if given the chance, explore and express our humanity?

The economic benefits of arts education are immense. Creative industries in the UK have seen significant growth – their value increased by 5% between 2019 and 2022 compared to a 2% growth in the overall economy. 1 in every 14 people are employed in creative industries that highly value the skills, attitudes, and capacities developed through the arts. Conversely, 30% of jobs in the creative sector remain vacant due to specialist skills shortages. The next generation of artists, musicians, actors, directors, and writers are in our schools today. We must identify and nurture their creative skills and talents.

Longitudinal studies have shown how young people at-risk or with low socioeconomic backgrounds and high levels of arts engagement achieved higher academic outcomes compared to their peers and expressed a stronger motivation to pursue their education than those with lower rates of arts engagement[1]. Too many children and young people are currently denied the opportunity to participate in the arts. The relegation of arts education to the fringes of the 'core curriculum' coupled with educational and regional inequities are surely contributing factors.

CREATIVITY

Research has also illustrated the importance and power of creativity and how creative learning environments help pupils to develop essential skills for personal fulfilment, academic success, and future employment. Standardisation processes in schools have been shown to stifle the development of creativity for many children. Art disciplines include discrete bodies of knowledge and skills that underpin the creative process. Creativity can and should be taught – children do not hone these skills spontaneously as they get older .

Successful creative processes flourish in educational environments in which pupils feel safe to take risks and learn from their failures. Across the arts, when children create alongside their peers, they engage in rich learning experiences that require them to make choices and connections, develop communication skills and solve problems. The Arts are vital for children's intellectual and personal development and provide multidimensional contexts for children to develop as creative individuals in our schools. We need to tend creative gardens with care: seeding, feeding, watering and reaping when the time is right.

IMPACT ON SELF ESTEEM

Through processes of artistic creation and participation, children learn and develop their skills and experience a sense of accomplishment. Successfully creating art and receiving positive feedback helps to build self-esteem and resilience, equipping pupils with the emotional and social tools they need to navigate challenges both in school and in life.

Low levels of self-esteem cause young people to doubt their abilities, which can lead to reduced motivation, the avoidance of challenging tasks and to lower grades and academic achievement. They have been shown to be more likely to disengage from school, leading to higher absenteeism, and are less likely to participate in collaborative and extracurricular activities, missing out on opportunities for learning and personal growth. Solutions are found in schools that have developed robust arts education programmes . These schools report lower rates of absenteeism and higher levels of engagement and attainment across the curriculum – achievements that are often accompanied by positive self-esteem and an increased sense of belonging and purpose.

[1] The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth and National Endowment for the Arts.

BUILDING CULTURAL CAPITAL

There is a general acceptance that learning exceeds that which takes place within the classroom, and it is therefore clear to see that a paucity in the opportunity to gain learning that 'goes beyond' presents further disadvantage. Strategies for scaffolding opportunities to develop and enhance cultural capital can be found in schools that, for example, collaborate with local artists and performers to create murals or public art installations that reflect a community's history, values, and stories or programmes that incorporate indigenous arts, music or storytelling that help pupils to understand and respect rich cultural traditions. Projects focused on promoting social justice, such as racial equality, environmental sustainability, or human rights, use the arts as a medium to explore and advocate for these causes. These projects build awareness and empathy, encouraging young people to become active and informed citizens.

Creativity and the arts are pivotal to human progress and innovation. Arts educators – whether in music, art, dance, or drama – foster emotionally secure and supportive environments that empower children and young people with creativity. When taught effectively, the arts help young people discover their unique voices, gaining skills and confidence that enable them to connect their learning and ideas within the contexts of our cultures and communities, thereby unlocking the potential for continuous progress and the expression and betterment of the human condition.

AIMS FOR MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION:

- Provide rich and broad curriculum that includes creative and expressive subjects that are the visual and performing arts. Ensure that access to the arts is equitable.
- Encourage participation in extracurricular arts activities. Provide opportunities for all children to participate in group projects and work towards common goals with their peers – developing a sense of status within social groupings and feelings of being part of wider communities.
- Teach creative problem-solving that engages children in tackling real-world problems in creative ways. Encourage children to empathise, define problems, create and develop their ideas and prototypes and test solutions.
- Seek opportunities to integrate Arts with core subjects that help learners to make connections across different areas of study. Equip teachers with the skills to integrate arts into their teaching practices effectively.
- Inspire young people by involving professional artists and performers in coaching young people where this is possible. For example, include artist-in-residence programmes that bring professional artists into schools for workshops or residencies and provide pupils with hands-on experience and mentorship.

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"The arts help young people discover their unique voices, gaining skills and confidence that enable them to connect their learning […] unlocking the potential for continuous progress and the expression and betterment of the human condition"

WOOLASTON SCHOOL   TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 2

Enhancing the learning of disadvantaged students through a focus on feedback

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of the Wollaston PiXL Insights project for the 2023-2024 academic year was to utilise 'feedback' strategies to enhance learning outcomes for disadvantaged children. Following the pandemic, we observed a significant decline in students' ability to meet year group expectations, particularly in writing. In our Trust, which encompasses 11 schools, only 54% of Year 6 students met the writing standard in 2022, and 61% in Year 2. Notable gaps were identified in students' grammar and punctuation skills.

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Our project was inspired by extensive research on the impact of feedback on learning, particularly for disadvantaged students. Key influences included the Education Endowment Fund, John Hattie, and Marc Rowland. The research highlighted two crucial elements:

1. **The importance of daily classroom teaching with clear identification of knowledge gaps.**
2. **The significant role of feedback processes in driving student progress.**

PROJECT TEAM AND FOCUS

The project team comprised the School Improvement Lead, four Year 2 teachers at Wollaston Primary, and our PiXL Insights project mentor. Our primary focus was on nine Year 2 students across two classes, some of whom also belonged to an SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) group. We employed feedback methods recommended by the Education Endowment Fund: Task, Subject, and Self-Regulation feedback. As a Trust we had been working on a 'Feedback policy' with our Deputy Headteachers and so this gave us an opportunity to test it out.

IMPLEMENTATION

Initially we split the group of children into two groups because of their differing needs. One group had a specific focus on **TASK** feedback and the second group had a focus on **SELF-REGULATION** feedback.

TASK FEEDBACK GROUP

We initially started the focused feedback in maths lessons. For the Task feedback group, we started by identifying how students preferred to receive feedback to foster a sense of ownership. Initially focusing on maths lessons, feedback was meticulously planned and consistently delivered with the help of Teacher Assistants. This group received very focused feedback on the work that they were doing. It essentially focused on what the child had got right and what they had got wrong.

In November, we introduced a "spotlight system" for immediate verbal feedback and direct commentary on students' work, coupled with end-of-unit assessments. This method incorporated John Hattie's FEEDFORWARD (how well have you done?) and FEED UP (where are you going?) principles.

By December, we shifted to a strategy that emphasised self-correction, encouraging self-regulation among students. The teachers used their professional knowledge to decide how often, when and with whom this strategy would be used.

In January, we extended our approach to writing lessons, focusing feedback on specific success criteria (e.g. using a verb in a sentence). This strategy was maintained over three months, with teachers consistently emphasising these criteria during lessons. Inspired by insights from the PiXL Curriculum Festival, we differentiated between careless mistakes and those relevant to the lesson's focus.

The model looked like this:

*   In maths, 'correct', for example, focused on correct digits or the correct mathematical operation and 'perfect' focused on the answer or method used.
*   In writing, 'correct' would focus on capital letters or full stops and 'perfect' on, say, the use of an adjective or correct verb phrase.

SELF-REGULATION GROUP

This group concentrated on enhancing self-regulation skills through feedback. This group's feedback approach aimed to foster a collective sense of achievement. Feedback focused on how long the group focused on a task or the amount of work that they attempted over a given time. This started off with very small amounts of time and the time was increased over the project duration. Brain breaks were introduced to prevent cognitive overload, initially managed by teachers and later by students using timers. Group feedback was consistently provided to reinforce focus and task commitment. The 'feedback' was given verbally and to the whole group, emphasising the children's ability to stay on task. Later in the year, the focus also moved on to 'task' feedback as well.

IMPACT

EARLY GAINS

One significant early gain was the rapid improvement in students' ability to self-correct mistakes. For instance, students began recognising and vocalising their errors independently. This shift led to increased confidence and independence, with students becoming more accepting of feedback and viewing mistakes as learning opportunities.

Marginal gains were also made with the SEMH group with increased levels of concentration seen between September and December and then from January onwards greater improvements were seen in the children's academic outcomes.

ONE TEACHER COMMENTED THAT…

"this has helped move the children from dependency to independence…"

IMPROVEMENTS SEEN

Maths gains were substantial, with 71% of the target group at least doubling their test scores by June 2024 compared to November 2023. The average maths test score increased from 5 to 14. Students demonstrated improved knowledge in areas such as single-digit subtraction, multiplication, fractions, and division by 10. Additionally, more students attempted questions even if their answers were incorrect, indicating increased engagement and confidence.

The teachers observed significant improvements in the children's writing abilities, characterised by an increased willingness to attempt writing with progressively less need for external mediation. There were also notable improvements in the correct application of punctuation, specifically the use of capital letters and full stops.

Additionally, the children demonstrated enhanced proficiency in the correct use of verbs and noun phrases. These linguistic improvements contributed to better sentence cohesion, as the children became more adept at grouping ideas effectively. The impact on spelling was less evident over time in comparison to the positive impact seen to the right.
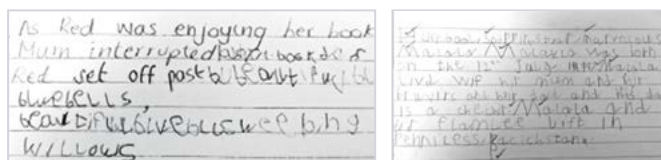
Child's writing progress from scaffolded support to independent writing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Simplicity and Consistency:** Focus on a clearly identified group and maintain consistent feedback throughout the week.
2. **Correct and Perfect Strategy:** This approach was effective and should be maintained to ensure focus on key learning objectives and previous learning.
3. **Teacher Knowledge:** Essential for differentiating feedback based on individual needs.
4. **Psychological Safety:** A safe classroom environment is crucial for providing constructive feedback.

This document outlines the significant steps and outcomes of the Wollaston PiXL Insights project, emphasising the power of feedback in improving learning outcomes for disadvantaged students. The combination of research-based strategies and consistent implementation has shown promising results, with measurable gains in students' academic performance and self-regulation skills.

NEXT STEPS

We plan to encourage self-marking, allowing teachers to focus on the target group while providing feedback to the rest of the class. This approach aims to foster greater independence and self-regulation among students.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Willoughby
YEAR 2 TEACHER

Trisha Koates
YEAR 2 TEACHER

Simon Blight
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEAD

Katie Green
YEAR 2 TEACHER

David Clements
YEAR 2 TEACHER

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> "One significant early gain was the rapid improvement in students' ability to self-correct mistakes."

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Woolaston School has described how the PiXL Correct and Perfect strategy has been helpful in their context. If there are similar priorities in your school, consider exploring this and other 'feedback not marking' strategies.

- This project demonstrates the importance of developing a team approach to planning to ensure consistency in the delivery of key teaching and learning strategies. Are there opportunities to develop collaborative planning strategies in your setting? For which age groups or subject areas might this approach be particularly beneficial?

- Woolaston School has highlighted the impact of their project on developing skills for independent learning. If there are similar priorities for you in a secondary education setting, consider PiXL Independence strategy for supporting students with the development of their independent study skills across the curriculum.

WOOLASTON SCHOOL

REGION	**NUMBER ON ROLL**	**YEAR GROUPS**	**BOYS**	**PP**	**SEND**
Northamptonshire	283	Reception - Year 6	55%	18%	18%

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 10

Improving engagement and attainment for disadvantaged pupils: an investigation

CONTEXT

Gateway Academy is a comprehensive school in Tilbury where 43% of the intake are classed as 'Disadvantaged'. Most of the students come from the local area of Tilbury, which has the highest level of deprivation in Thurrock.

Deprivation	According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Tilbury contains the majority of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which have the highest IMD scores in Thurrock, Tilbury also has some of the most deprived LSOAs in the country, and 3 of its LSOAs are amongst the 10% most deprived in England. • **Highest quintile [IDACI index highlights Tilbury wards in the top 5% for deprivation].** • **Tilbury is the most deprived area in Thurrock with a deprivation score of 1.** • **56.4% of children in Tilbury live in poverty.** • **64% of households claim housing benefit.** • **44.8% of households claim Employment Health Allowance for a mental health condition.**
Crime	Tilbury is a high crime area. 21% of all recorded crime is for antisocial behaviour (2021). The most common crimes in Tilbury are violence and sexual offences.
% of adults with higher education qualifications	28% of residents have no formal qualifications.
Over-crowded housing	The average number of persons per household for both Tilbury wards is 2.65, which is higher than the national average of 2.36 and the Thurrock average of 2.52.
Life expectancy/ Health	On average, 10 years less than the Thurrock average, in part due to poor diet and lifestyle. Obesity and dental hygiene are major issues.

INTENT

Gateway Academy is acutely aware of the role it plays in supporting the transformation of the local area and is clear of its mission 'to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'. Gateway Academy is proud to serve the local community and be part of the transformation of Tilbury.

Our aim for the project was to improve engagement and Average Expected Difference Progress Score on SISRA of 10 key students. The 10 students were all disadvantaged and had the lowest current data in the year group from the most recent summative assessment. We focused specifically on confidence, self-belief, careers, revision strategies and preparation for summative assessments. The project ran for an entire term (Jan – March 24).

The following statements were shared with the students about the project's aims:
- To support you with engagement in learning within and outside of the classroom
- To improve your attitude to learning and understanding the value of achieving the best grades possible
- To develop resilience and belief that you can face challenges and succeed
- To develop independence
- To develop confidence and self-belief
- To gain knowledge and skills on how to revise
- To be supported in effective preparation for Easter Summative Assessments.

Every Tuesday morning, I would hold an intervention tutor group between myself and the ten students. The aim is that these will have a very different feel to a regular tutor session (with music played as they entered, for example.)

IMPLEMENTATION

WEEK 1
- Confirm arrangements with Progress Leader (Head of Year), Year Group Line Manager, SLT.
- Individual meetings with 10 key disadvantaged students, discussing barriers to learning, launching this trial project and discussion of buy-in: aim to elicit excitement and incentive.
- Launch with parents following the meeting and buy-in with students. Emphasise that this is about academic progress and not behaviour – Tally Card will be used, not a report.
- Launch with teachers of 10 students – Trial Strategy – Plan something specifically for these 10 students every lesson, e.g. 3 questions. Consider how they are accessing the lesson and plan accordingly to ensure progress.
- Set up a Google Classroom to include all 10 students and Progress Leader.
- Drop in on the 10 key students in a range of lessons and begin to identify barriers that may present other than those from the data.

WEEK 2: PROJECT STARTS FOR THE STUDENTS

The first meeting with the students. First we explain the Insights project with a PowerPoint, explaining why the students had been chosen, displaying individual data to ensure an open and honest approach.

We discuss 'how will we know we are winning?' and students issued with a personalised Tally Card according to barriers identified. Each week, they need to collect points that will then be turned into a league table as a group. If they achieve a certain number of points, they will earn a reward that they requested. We are based near Lakeside shopping centre and the students wanted an afternoon out so that they could go to Lakeside and we would reward them with a £10 Lakeside voucher – if they could get to 250 points by the end of the project. We make it clear to students that there will be relegations from this project if they do not achieve enough points each week.

Finally, we issue a printed, colour version of this term's Knowledge Organiser and set this week's revision challenge. We do the egg drop challenge – in mini teams, prepare to keep an egg intact when dropped from a height) and the winning team receive additional points.

Insights Project 2024 Tally Card

Name:

Week Beginning: Monday 11th March 2024

(Tutor/Teacher to Initial)	Attend School	On-Time	Target 1 Use connective words e.g. whilst	Target 2 Be confident	Target 3 Maximum effort, scholarly approach	Revision Activity complete	Stick Tally Card to KKU whiteboard in 2-401 on Fri after School	Attend Tue Project Session with KKU	Total Daily Points
Mon									/6
Tues									/7
Wed									/6
Thurs									/6
Fri									/7
								Total Weekly Points	/32

WEEK 3

Tutor Time Session – share leader board; explain our new Google Classroom and expectations; motivational video on Doubt by Jaz Ampaw-Farr, taken from the PiXL Celebrity Video links; Confidence challenge – mini teams: create the tallest free-standing tower using spaghetti and blue tac, winning team receives additional points.

WEEK 4

Tutor Time Session – share leader board; attendance was noted as a key barrier for a number of the key students so we highlighted the importance of this and issued double points for attendance next week; Mr Beezy clip shared; revision challenge set with additional points if they can produce key resources next week; revision calendar, Pomodoro, interleaving.

WEEK 5

Tutor Time Session – careers focus with our Careers Advisor leading the session and giving specific guidance to each student; two more inspirational clips; keeping active and flashcards discussed with additional points issued for completing their own set of flashcards; additional points also issued for full week of attendance and punctuality.

WEEK 6

Tutor Time Session – reflection on where we are at so far with a detailed look at leader board; explanation of why two relegations have occurred; motivational clip – *Unlocking Your Mind* by Gemma Oaten as well as *Failure can be your Friend* by Matthew Syed; explored the importance of keeping active during revision and flashcards – revision challenge set.

WEEK 7

Tutor Time Session – DOUBLE POINTS WEEK; update on leader board; Load-bearing bridge challenge; looking at clip on *Habits of Highly Successful People – How to Become a Millionaire…at just 19*; chunking technique – discussion on revision over Easter and the foreseeable impact.

WEEK 8: SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT WEEK

Tutor Time Session – DOUBLE POINTS WEEK continues; update on leader board; discussion on current learning points from assessments; motivational clip – *How to Find the Superhero within You*.

WEEK 9: POST-ASSESSMENT DEBRIEF

Tutor Time Session – post assessment debrief; explained *The Curve of Forgetting* by Hermann Ebbinghaus; shared the next summative assessment timetable; clips included *Top Tips on Success* as well as *Cameron Parker*.

WEEK 10: THE RESULTS

Sharing of detailed information and data comparing Term 1 (no Insights project) to Term 2. The data included the Average Expected Difference Progress Score, % attendance and punctuality, attitude to learning score, home learning score, oracy score, focus subject scores and reward points.

IMPACT: FINDINGS, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

IMPACT

- 5 of the 10 students improved their Average Expected Difference Score from Term 1 to Term 2. 3 stayed the same, 2 went further down (the 2 who were relegated).
- One student in particular improved from -2.9 to -1.6, a huge overall improvement.
- Attitude to learning scores were either the same or better for 8/10 students.
- The oracy score was the same or better for all 10 students.
- The project made staff focus much more and plan for improvement in the students.
- The project created a positive relationship between home and school and it was clear to the families that we were investing heavily with time and attention in their child.
- Most girls were regularly attending tutor time and punctuality improved for 8/10.

STUDENT RESPONSE

80% enjoyed being part of the project.
80% said the project helped them engage better when learning.
60% said their confidence improved during the project.
80% strongly agreed that their understanding of revision strategies improved during the project.

When asked what the best thing was about the project, a few responses were:
Learning about different revision techniques
My grades got better
The reward so we have something to work for

Parent response: Thank you so much for helping my child with the extra tuition which we feel will be an immense benefit. Should you need any help from us, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Staff response: This is fantastic.

EVALUATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

- The reward of the students' own choice was imperative as it inspired them to try a little harder on the right things.
- It was clear early on that attendance was a vital factor to this project having an impact.
- For the three students who stayed the same, we classed this as a win as without the project, we feared they would have achieved lower.
- Confidence was identified as a barrier to learning early on and motivational clips and other activities supported in addressing this.
- Oracy and articulation of learning were clear barriers that we addressed as the project was going.
- The tutor challenges in mini teams – such as the egg drop challenge and the tallest tower challenge – really motivated students and were a factor in them attending the additional tutor intervention.
- By week 4, it was clear that students were losing additional points as they were finding the additional revision tasks tricky – I decided to incorporate an active element of revision on the Tuesday morning so the students fully understood what was required and then could complete the tasks at home.

MOVING FORWARD

We will run the project each term with the following additional improvements:

- Bigger cohort of 20 students.
- Focus on different year groups, depending on where we feel there is most need.
- Lead one joint project with a Progress Leader who then can run an additional group throughout the year.
- Students will need to apply to be part of the project, and this will include a forensic checklist to ensure we get an exact 'picture' of each child and identify the biggest barriers to support our planning of how to mitigate and remove any barriers.
- Additional activity on 'how you want people to see you' – the outside, inside and what you don't want people to see.
- Additional activity on aspirations and careers.

Kate Kitsiou
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
GATEWAY ACADEMY

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Kate has explained how a pilot project implemented during one school term provided the school with evidence of impact that demonstrated the benefits for extending the scope of the project in future terms and years. If you wanted to take a similar approach, how would you decide the criteria by which pupils should be identified and included?

- Gateway Academy identified oracy and articulation of learning as priorities for some pupils. How are barriers that relate to oracy diagnosed in your setting? Could it be helpful to complete a pre-mortem to identify barriers that pupils face and develop oracy provision in your school? For more ideas and planning recommendations do check out the PiXL Leadership Thinking Guide – Oracy.

GATEWAY ACADEMY

1071

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND	HPA
Tilbury		**Years 7-11**	**49%**	**43%** (38% FSM)	**15%** (3% EHCP)	**15%**

Improving pupil effort – a holistic approach

INTENT

Any visitors to Haughton Academy always seem to say very similar things: "when you walk around the building and visit different classrooms, you see all pupils equipped for learning, very high standards of uniform, pupils are settled and are listening to their teachers. The school has a very calm and relaxed feel to it. So why are KS4 outcomes sat at -0.28 ?". The answer I give to this question not only gets the heads nodding of the colleagues in my school, but those of teachers from different schools: "lack of effort, apathy towards learning, and pupils not demonstrating resilience with set tasks". Pupils see passivity as 'being good'. The aim of this project was to put improving pupil effort at the forefront of everything we do as a school and to approach it from all angles. Given the need for a whole-school culture shift, the size and roll out of this project was school wide and therefore, every staff member in school was a crucial vehicle in driving positive change. Regarding the implementation of this project, there was much to consider and embed.

DEFINING EFFORT

The starting point of this project was to identify what we as staff deemed to be 'outstanding effort' – how could pupils demonstrate this and how would we make constant reference to it?

The following 'outstanding effort' criteria was decided:

- **All work is presented to your highest standard.**
- **Always demonstrate a positive attitude to learning.**
- **Manage and direct your own learning.**
- **Respond positively to any form of teacher feedback.**

MAXIMISING EXPOSURE

To give each criterion maximum coverage, an 'outstanding effort' slide was added to all lesson PowerPoints and at the beginning of each lesson, they were discussed. More than this, teachers would make specific reference to what that might look like in that lesson. For example, in consolidation lessons where pupils would be making 'green pen improvements', teachers would refer specifically to the importance of taking on board teacher feedback, displaying outstanding effort in order to improve the quality of their work.

Additionally, as the school and all departments use a bespoke exercise book, the outstanding effort criteria was published in the inside front cover and further to this, each writing page had the word 'effort' printed at the top. The idea behind this was to expose pupils to these criteria 25 times per week and to show that hard work and effort are important in all subjects and to, literally, put it right in front of them! To further drive the importance of outstanding effort with pupils and to keep it as a constant theme, assembly and tutorial time sessions throughout the year were also dedicated to this. These were tailored to the needs of the year group but above all else, the message of what outstanding effort looks like and what we as teachers want to see was clear to all learners.

Engaging Pupils

To create buy-in from the pupils, it was very important that we celebrated success wherever possible and created opportunities for pupils to demonstrate outstanding effort. Therefore, themed weeks were introduced into the calendar at various points throughout the year. During these weeks, a particular focus would be identified on the back of learning walks and discussions with staff the week prior to the themed week. For example, one of the learning walks conducted gave findings that resilience levels were low amongst pupils, and they were giving up too quickly or asking for support without fully engaging in tasks.

The criteria for 'Resilience Week' was shared through assemblies. Throughout the week, pupils were given tokens in lessons for displaying outstanding resilience. These tokens were then placed into a prize draw by the pupils and were drawn at the end of every school day and the winners were awarded with small prizes. The following morning, in tutorial time, the summary information was shared with the whole school (e.g. "250 resilience tokens were given out yesterday. The winners of the prize draw were...") and then the challenge was set to all year groups to try and beat the total number of tokens given out in the previous day. This information was also shared through the school's social media platforms.

The school collects data for attainment and pupil effort. As a result of this project, we have reviewed the ways in which pupil effort data is collected throughout the year. For example, where effort data was showing as 'requiring improvement' this information is now added to the 'hot spot rota' to enable members of SLT to drop into lessons and support members of staff to ensure that pupils are on task. The data is now also used to celebrate the successes of whole year groups or specific groups of pupils and individuals where effort levels are high.

LEARNING WALKS

As mentioned above, learning walks were crucial in ascertaining levels of effort in the classroom. More specifically, pupil-focused learning walks. All the T&L data we had gleaned from previous years provided us with the confidence that lesson delivery and the subject knowledge of staff were a real strength across the academy. The aim was to create a system that purely focused on the habits of the pupils and not the quality of the lesson being delivered. To make this a real focal point, we made it very clear to both pupils and staff that when members of the SLT were in lessons, they were looking at pupils and how they were approaching the lesson.

Again, in the assembly time leading up to the week of the learning walk, pupils were informed that over the course of the next week, SLT were coming into lessons and would be looking at things such as: entry into the classroom and pupils beginning work immediately, how they were responding to the challenging work which was being set, as well as how they were applying themselves during 'practice time'. On completion of the learning walk, the data was collated and discussed in SLT meetings, and this then led to next steps being created. Not only was this discussed with staff, but it was also fed back to pupils in the follow-up assembly slot.

Year group specific feedback was given in terms of the positive elements of effort in lessons as well as next steps. For example, the findings of our first pupil-focused learning walk found that generally, standards of presentation in books were rather high, pupils were entering the classroom and starting work immediately, and many pupils engaged well in questioning episodes and classroom discussions. However, it was also noted that there was a distinct lack of resilience amongst pupils and this manifested in two ways: pupils would either not engage with the work and when challenged by the teacher would often admit to being "stuck", or pupils were often too quick to raise their hand and ask for teacher support.

Strategies for Promoting Resilience

At this point, this became a whole-school focal point. This meant that staff CPD time was used to discuss pupil resilience and the best ways to encourage higher levels of resilience. This led to the emergence of 'resilience-based conversations'. All staff were encouraged to resist the temptation to dive straight in and offer support to pupils who were struggling with the task and were prompted to initiate a resilience-based conversation. These conversations would generally begin by the teacher saying to the pupil: "what have you tried to get yourself un-stuck?" From here, different worked examples may be given, however the main aim was to get pupils thinking for themselves and understanding that if they are "stuck", the answer will not simply be given to them. To balance this, similar 'CPD' was given to pupils and assembly time was used to model to pupils what they should do if they were struggling with their work and why challenging work is set in the first instance. This led to the creation and use of the 3 P's: Pause (think about the task at hand – what are you being asked to do, what are the key words, what is the command word? etc.); Prior learning (what is it that you already know that links to this topic, is there a worked example/modelled answer that you can look over from earlier in the lesson?); Partner (ask your partner what they understand of what is being asked of them, how have they started the task, what key words have they included?). If the pupil was still "stuck" at this time, they should then raise their hand to ask for teacher support and this is where the resilience-based conversation could begin as the pupil could now respond to the staff member with the methods/approach they had already tried to get "un-stuck".

Shared Professional Development

As the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Teaching & Learning, a lot of the above implementation wasn't wholly T&L-specific and therefore, time and research went into considering how this project could be made successful in the classroom and what the focus areas should be. When returning to school in September, the project was launched and 5 areas of improving pupil effort through T&L were given.

1. Pupils are better **informed** on what is being taught and what is being assessed.
2. All lessons begin with a **purposeful start** activity which is checked by the teacher for understanding.
3. High-quality **teacher modelling**/demonstrations occur.
4. **Practice time** built into lessons will be the norm – scaffolded as necessary.
5. Pupils apply themselves thoroughly when completing **improvement work** and time is given to this.

The two main areas with this were modelling and practice time. As a staff body there was a lot of time spent discussing the different approaches to modelling high-quality work to pupils and the rationale behind this. At the start of the year, I created a modelling booklet which contained different strategies for effective modelling, and this was gradually updated as the year progressed on the back of research and discussions with classroom teachers. The strategies in the booklet were also delivered in CPD time to allow staff to become familiar with them. It was important in the classroom that this quality teacher input should then be followed up by pupil practice time – an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their understanding, practise content and showcase their effort. This would generally be a larger task and might require pupil application for an extended amount of time, however it should be chunked and timed appropriately. This was the one area of the project which I deemed crucial in making the project successful and improving pupil effort.

To quality assure and to build in reflection time, subject teams were asked at different points throughout the academic year to complete an effort audit, indicating what progress they had made towards embedding the five T&L areas to improve pupil effort as well as creating some actionable next steps. The results of these departmental audits also allowed me to plan CPD accordingly and share ideas of best practice amongst the Subject Leaders. For example, during the Spring term, the Subject Leader of Maths was able to share a 'goal free' problem solving approach that is used by the department to increase pupil buy-in and effort. This then led to other departments trying a similar approach in their own subject which helped to develop some consistency with the experiences pupils were receiving across the curriculum.

IMPACT

Above all else, this project has further solidified to me that as a school, we are on the right lines with our approach and are well on our way to tackling a nationwide problem. We now have a very stable foundation to build upon and, in some cases, tighten our approach or tweak it to further create a learning environment where outstanding effort is evident throughout. Another generalised finding of the project, for me, was the level of staff buy-in that was apparent throughout. Working from a position of true transparency and trying to eradicate an issue which is a major problem for teachers led to higher efforts on their part. Launching the project from a position where ultimately the changes

needed to come from the pupils, and not creating a greater staff workload, really helped to create positivity amongst teachers. Simply put, they were told to continue to do what they are already doing, which is upholding their end of the T&L bargain.

One of the real strengths of the project, in my opinion, was how prominent it was throughout the whole school: having the constant exposure to the outstanding effort criteria in each lesson and celebrating success wherever possible meant that pupils ended the school year being very informed of our expectations that in each lesson around school, outstanding effort is required. Pupil voice activities show that pupils across all year groups know what outstanding effort looks like (criteria set) and can give examples of how to demonstrate this. Pupils are also able to talk about the importance of being resilient towards tasks and understand why work needs to be challenging, however it would be fair to say that more work is needed to be done in this area as a lot of pupils admit that applying the 3 P's is sometimes difficult. There is also a mindset shift which needs to happen here as pupil voice also indicates that pupils sometimes said they weren't supported by their teachers. Delving deeper into this, pupils actually meant that teachers didn't help them when they were "stuck" and such was their belief that if they were "stuck" the answer should be simply given to them. Work has already been done in assembly time, tutorial time sessions and with staff to begin conversations around what teacher support looks like and the process surrounding this. The basic line which teachers are employing is that the role of the teacher is to get pupils "stuck" and for them to have to think hard in order to be successful. Alongside this, subject effort audits also indicate that there is more development work to be done on behalf of the teachers with regards to the resilience-based conversations and what this type of support looks like. This is an area which will be revisited in September.

In terms of the quantitative data collected, pupil effort data from the different data drops showed a positive picture that overall, effort across all year groups had improved. The most recent summer data capture indicated that more pupils were awarded with good to outstanding effort when compared to autumn data. Similarly, less classrooms were targeted 'hot spots' for SLT during school days, indicating that staff were raising fewer behavioural concerns. Again, the pupil-focused learning walks which were conducted to get a sense of typicality across the school showed that over time, pupil effort was improving and there were far more positives that were taken away from the process than there were areas that require improvement/attention. Upon reflection, there are many successes to take away from this project and if I were to advise colleagues from other schools on how to tackle the growing concerns around pupil effort levels, my advice would be to put it at the centre of everything you do and don't deviate from it. Like any project in a school, the pupils are the major stakeholders – involve them in the process as much as possible, communicate with them effectively and regularly, and celebrate their successes at every given opportunity.

Liam Taylor
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER: TEACHING & LEARNING
HAUGHTON ACADEMY

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Are low levels of resilience a barrier for some pupils in your school? How might these pupils be identified?
- Liam has described how 'outstanding effort criteria' became consistently applied. Could a similar strategy be helpful for motivating pupils in your school?
- How are effective strategies for celebrating pupils' successes shared across your school? Are there specific approaches for engaging, motivating, and rewarding disadvantaged pupils?
- Liam makes an interesting point about learning walks: that the team at Haughton were very explicit about the fact that it was the students being observed. When observations, drop-ins or learning walks are taking place in your school, do students know why they are happening?

HAUGHTON ACADEMY

REGION	**NUMBER ON ROLL**	**YEAR GROUPS**	**BOYS**	**PP**	**SEND**
County Durham	891	Years 7-11	51%	48%	26%

TARGET YEAR GROUP: KEY STAGE 3

To monitor the impact PREP has on the outcomes of our students with a particular focus on pupil premium students

INTENT

WHAT IS PREP?

PREP is short for preparation and focuses on each of our pupils developing the independent skills and qualities needed to be successful when they start their GCSE courses and for life in general. In the last few years our exam analyses have all showed that there were a group of pupils who, when faced with the demands and rigour of their GCSE course, did not have specific attributes they needed in order to succeed:

- **tenacity & work ethic**
- **revision skills**
- **ability to plan their own work or time**
- **organisation**

- **time management**
- **an understanding of some of the requirements (particularly written) in more 'vocational' options.**

The other key issue that came through was that it was not possible for departments to take an isolated approach to solving these problems. Many departments only teach pupils one lesson a week and currently a lot of time is spent working with pupils in KS4 trying to 'back fill' the deficit in these attributes or skills. This begins as soon as pupils start in Year 7 so that they all know what is expected of them and experience the culture of success at our school. PREP is about pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and is captured in our motto, **"Try your best, be nice and you will do well"**.

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of this project is to change our school culture and have buy-in from all staff and pupils so that there is an understanding that by completing your PREP, you will be GCSE-ready and equipped for future life. The seed for the idea came from a PiXL conference Time to Think session where one school had a large focus on homework. This, combined with our virtual learning experiences and enhanced online parental communication through Covid, resulted in the idea of PREP. Using our Virtual Learning Platform (FROG), all pupils in KS3 are able to access their weekly allocation of PREP. Each activity lasts for 30 minutes and covers a range of subject areas that are set in an annual timetable so all pupils know the requirements of PREP. Pupils are set a variety of activities including:

- **knowledge recall, quizzes, tests**
- **writing development, essay-based activities, answering questions**
- **reading, researching, learning key phrases, improving SPaG**
- **revision techniques, mind maps, Cornell notes, flash cards.**

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Initially we allocated the project to an experienced pastoral middle leader but quickly realised that this project had so many facets to it (e.g. student engagement, parental marketing, staff buy-in, IT logistics, analysis logistics etc.) that we developed a PREP team and also created an admin position to support the role. The PREP team, which consists of four senior leaders, one middle leader and one administrator, meet fortnightly. The purpose of these meetings is to:

- **discuss how PREP is progressing**
- **ensure PREP remains high profile on everyone's agenda**
- **go through the PREP completion stats**
- **agree further areas for development.**

It is vital that any key messages from this meeting are shared with all staff in our bulletin, as well as any positive stories or anecdotes.

IMPLEMENTATION

This project is multifaceted and this article will include a few of those initiatives. One of the first ideas we had was to ensure all pupils knew how to plan their time to guarantee they could complete their PREP by the deadline on Sunday evening. We initially created a video to be shown during form time which modelled how best to plan your time using the school planner. This developed further into becoming a routine and now every Monday during tutor time pupils use their planners to plan their PREP timetable for that week and this is supported by their form tutor.

MENTORING

After a staff consultation, we introduced the concept that every single available staff member would mentor on a Tuesday morning. Our PREP data from the previous two weeks is sent out to all staff that morning in preparation for the mentoring sessions and every available member of staff carries out a mentoring session during form time with a specific pupil or group of pupils. Pupil premium pupils who were not completing their PREP were allocated a mentor first and this was then further rolled out to other pupils. This whole-school approach to mentoring has reaped dividends including staff and pupils forming relationships that wouldn't otherwise have happened, for example our Business Manager mentors a small group of pupils and this has seen their completion rates significantly improve. Having someone who meets with those pupils every Tuesday, and is their advocate, is vital in engaging all individuals, including those who are hard to reach. One key aspect of the mentoring sessions was to break down any barriers the student has, develop relationships around their PREP work, and follow our no sanction approach to non-PREP completion. This was because we could be punishing pupils who do not have the facilities, abilities or parental support to do PREP and therefore having a mentor would support that student to become independent, resilient and see the worth of completing their PREP work for their future.

Another initiative we introduced was for pupils to register their attendance at mentoring via a QR code. This gave the team visibility of who was attending across the school, and allowed us to tackle any issues with engagement efficiently. There is also a mentoring spreadsheet where mentors can comment and share feedback from their sessions. This spreadsheet is analysed frequently to check it is being used effectively and thoroughly. This information is incredibly useful and a great way to share best practice or steal one another's ideas where mentoring is having the most impact.

COMMUNICATING WITH HOME

This year we have improved our communication with home in regards to PREP, and have sent home a termly PREP report which focuses on completion rates and effort grades along with what these mean for the student's GCSE preparation.

These reports have enabled further conversations to occur and our Pupil Equity Advocates (PEAs) have had individual conversations with certain pupils to ensure these key conversations have happened. We also send home weekly text messages which update parents on grades and any missing PREP. This weekly text has been so popular that parents have asked for this to continue into KS4. We are also very lucky to have a dedicated PREP administrator who sets the KS3 PREP for the whole school, chases any outstanding grades, sends home all communication and attends all PREP meetings. This has been a game changer in ensuring all PREP admin is completed effectively and efficiently.

SUPPORTING PUPIL PREMIUM STUDENTS

We have developed the role of our PEAs, and one of their main foci is leading on PREP completion rates for our pupil premium pupils. They have opened a PREP club every lunchtime and pupils are offered this provision to support them being able to complete their PREP. The staff offer a friendly listening ear and support, incentives to attend, and help break down any barriers pupils have in completing their PREP work. These three members of staff have created a very positive learning environment where pupils feel safe, supported and have a desire to achieve their PREP. Currently we need to open another room as the current two rooms are full.

REPORTING

This year we have changed our whole-school reports slightly to define independent skills (a large proportion of which relates to PREP) and then gather information via a grade on pupils' independence as well as their effort. We have used the Horsforth Quadrant to compare the two, which has enabled pastoral teams to send postcards home praising the development of some, have individual conversations with others where necessary about the value of PREP, and direct resources where appropriate to address any concerns. This data has focused the PEAs as they are also concentrating on working with the pupils who have high effort in the classroom but low independence to support them being able to access and complete their PREP. This is monitored and updated after every data point so pupils moving between the quadrants can be followed up.

Following a student voice it was noted that some pupils were completing their PREP by hand and would sometimes forget to hand it in. This led to some guerilla marketing and every Friday the Headteacher of staff dresses up as a frog (PREP is located on our Virtual Learning Platform, FROG) with a placard that says, 'have you handed in your PREP?'. The impact of this was instant as every child was talking about seeing the frog and more importantly handing in their PREP work.

PREP IN THE FUTURE

This project is changing the culture of our school and its true impact will only be measured in the next two years when our first cohort of pupils complete their GCSEs. Every fortnight the PREP team meet and analyse the PREP data by year group, department and grades achieved. This conversation forms the basis of our plans for the future in terms of driving PREP forward and pupils being exam ready and ready for life in general.

Moving forward, Tuesday mentoring sessions will continue all around the school and positive stories continuously shared in the school weekly bulletin so we can all learn from one another. A 'how to revise' drop down afternoon is now calendared for every year group so these key skills are consistently taught to our pupils so they have the tools to become independent learners that know how best they revise in conjunction with their PREP tasks. We have also decided to ask our pupils to share their experiences with PREP, its value and how it has supported them through their end of year examinations. Each year group will be shown these videos in assemblies so pupils can see how vital it was to the year above them. As stated, PREP is a long-term project. The ultimate aim is for our pupils to become much more independent in their learning, have tenacity and resilience, be able to revise, plan their own time effectively and be ready for life in general.

Tizzie Silvester
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER
FREDERICK GOUGH SCHOOL

Neil Pascoe
LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR
FREDERICK GOUGH SCHOOL

- The team at Frederick Gough planned this as a whole-key stage project for all students. But if you wanted to do something similar on a smaller scale, how would you decide which students to target?

- What opportunities are there for analysing students' completion of independent work across the curriculum in your school? How might information be shared better in your school, to ensure that the right conversations are happening about student engagement in independent work?

- This article demonstrates that students do not need to be mentored by a teaching member of staff in order for mentoring to have impact. Who are the non-teaching members of staff in your school who might be able to support a mentoring scheme in your school?

- If you are in an 11-18 setting, how might you include Sixth Form student leaders in the implementation of a similar project?

- This project from the team at Frederick Gough is a brilliant example of upstream thinking. Whatever phase you are in, what are some of the issues that present in older students in your school that could be tackled lower down the school with the right intervention?

HAVE YOU HANDED IN YOUR PREP ?

"This project is changing the culture of our school."

FREDERICK GOUGH SCHOOL

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REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND	HPA
North Lincolnshire		Years 7-11	51%	26%	21%	25%

AN ARTICLE FROM TASSOMAI TARGET YEAR GROUP: KEY STAGE 3 & 4

Pupil Premium Boost

When I built Tassomai over 10 years ago, I hoped it would be a tool to help close the attainment gap, using technology to benefit as many students as possible, not just those that have access to expensive interventions like private tuition. I'm very proud of what we have achieved to raise standards of student attainment, and we've shown from data over the years that our method can have a stronger impact for students with initially lower attainment. While that feels like a big step towards closing the attainment gap, I'm very much aware that this is only one step of many.

In a research roundtable that we set up to learn more about the growing attainment gap post-Covid, we were struck by a few vitally important ideas. Chief among them is that students in relative deprivation are not only less likely to have regular access to devices on which they can use edtech, but also less likely to have the support and encouragement at home around completing their homework assignments. This is understandable especially in circumstances where, for example, parents are working late shifts or where a student's attention is divided between schoolwork and caring for other family members. Meanwhile their more fortunate counterparts are able to take a tool like Tassomai and make great strides in attainment - an idea known as The Matthew Effect, where those with the best circumstances are best able to benefit from a shared resource.

We became aware that, despite our advantages over other edtechs - in that we are uniquely adaptive to support every student's educational needs in every aspect of our provision - we, like all the rest, didn't have any special products that were specifically designed to mitigate for the tougher circumstances of disadvantaged students. **If we could find a way to do that, we would be able to make a huge difference in the lives of the students for their outcomes, and for their schools who set such high importance in helping these students.**

As educators are well aware, interventions that make a real difference specifically for the most disadvantaged students are very hard to come by. **A tech product differentiated for Pupil Premium feels like a new chapter not only for us, but for the schools that seek to buy edtech.** That's why I was particularly excited to undertake a randomised control trial with some of our schools to trial an intervention specifically designed to support Pupil Premium students and measure the impact of these interventions on learning outcomes.

Students in our "Pupil Premium Boost" trial all received a weekly personalised catch-up intervention in the form of a **Tassomai Leapfrog Session**, along with enhanced access to **Mai, Tassomai's AI-powered tutor**.

Mai currently has two features accessible to all students: the first - **'Mai Helps'** - is a chat screen where students can ask for help, elaboration and clues to answer a question; the second - **'Mai Explains'** - gives detailed feedback and explanation if a student makes an error. These features, due to cost, are limited for most students to a few sessions per week; for Pupil Premium students we removed that limit to allow as much access as students might need.

Leapfrog Sessions work by identifying a cohesive topic within the syllabus where the student ranks relatively poorly against their year group peers in the national cohort. On this identified topic, a hyper-focused session is then built, beginning with a short teaching video or bitesize article to read, and then followed by a special summative quiz that reinforces the knowledge and gives instant feedback and the chance to revisit errors as they come up.

In our early testing of Leapfrog, we were able to see students, through one session, **jump from the bottom 20% nationally to the top 20% in that topic**. The beauty of the feature, however, is beyond the initial instant hit – that same material then blends seamlessly into the ongoing daily practice students undertake in the weeks that follow, so that the gains are maintained.

A further vital aspect of our design for Pupil Premium interventions was that they should not present as 'extra work' or 'special treatment'; to that end, the Leapfrog Session and the extra Mai access appear as normal features of the app across each of their subjects and contribute to their regular homework on Tassomai.

The study was conducted across some 40 schools, 20 of whom were randomly allocated to receive the boost features. Our 'test group' contained 12,385 student users of Tassomai, of whom 3,832 are identified as Pupil Premium. The control group of schools likewise had a similar makeup of students in terms of number and PP percentage.

In order to assess an impact, we used what we term "Tassogress" - that being the rate of course completion for students, and we controlled for variation in levels of engagement by normalising Tassogress per 100 questions answered. Tassogress has been shown in countless trials to be an exceedingly good predictor of progress and outcomes. Our measure could then reasonably demonstrate the relative 'educational value' of an hour's work on Tassomai through the week with or without the Boost features.

Our data for Years 7 to 10, and in science in particular, yielded strong trends that exceeded the thresholds of statistical significance; trends for Year 11 students, due to the engagement variance in the early part of the summer term, were too noisy to be included (though the trends appeared to be the same as observed elsewhere). Likewise, though we reported results anecdotally to schools in history, English and other subjects, our trial data focused solely on science interventions.

We observed in initial conditions that Pupil Premium students had on average 18% less course progress than their peers, and that they had generally lower engagement in terms of daily goals completed. Our hope therefore was this intervention could remedy a deficit and could mitigate the effects of lower weekly use of the platform.

The results of this differentiated intervention for Pupil Premium showed a profound impact on attainment, with Pupil Premium students on the trial making around **35% more progress than their non-PP peers and 45% more progress than their PP counterparts in the control group**.

We observed that across the board, PP students were behind their peers and this additional Boost intervention was closing that gap across cohorts, subjects and schools. The effect appears greater in KS3 than KS4, but this is largely down to the relative size and scope of the Tassomai courses; in reality the effect appears quite consistent.
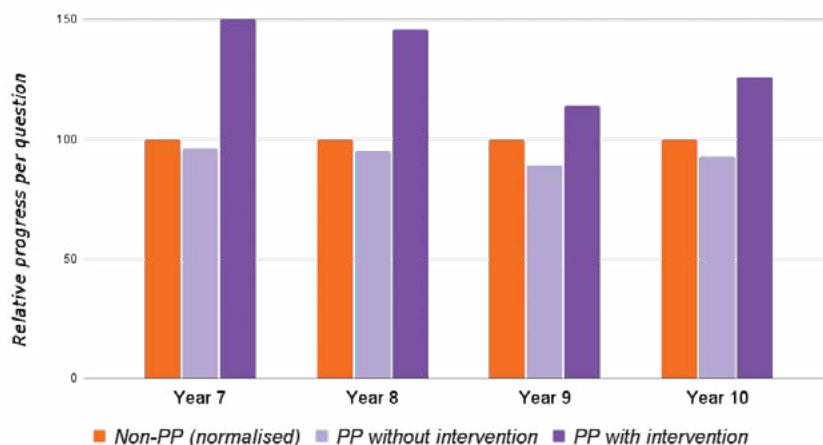
Tassomai hopes that in the future, using Pupil Premium Boost, schools will:

- **Accelerate the academic progress of disadvantaged students, effectively closing the attainment gap between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium learners.**

- **Provide personalised, data-driven interventions tailored to the specific needs of each Pupil Premium student, ensuring no one falls behind or gets left behind.**

- **Leverage the power of adaptive learning and AI technologies to deliver targeted support and individualised learning experiences, maximising the potential of every student, regardless of their socioeconomic background.**

We at Tassomai look forward with excitement to seeing the continued impact of Pupil Premium Boost in our schools in the coming year.

Learn more at **www.tassomai.com/news**

Murray Morrison
FOUNDER / CEO TASSOMAI

'THE MATTHEW EFFECT' REFERENCES

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ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- The data from Tassomai shows that providing richer opportunities for our most disadvantaged students can help close achievement gaps with their better-off peers. Are there approaches, resources or strategies used in your school that are only used with your most disadvantaged students?

- How are you being intentional about maximising resource and tech subscriptions to make sure the most disadvantaged students are benefiting?

- How do specific strategies impact parent/carer and child engagement and improve outcomes across gender and different socioeconomic backgrounds in your school? Could there be opportunities to further explore the benefits of ed-tech for strengthening parental engagement for disadvantaged pupils in your setting?

"We were able to see students, through one session, jump from the bottom 20% nationally to the top 20% in that topic."

AN ARTICLE BY EVE HEDLEY   TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

The importance of developing self-efficacy in our disadvantaged students

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't - you're right." HENRY FORD

If I were to ask you to describe the qualities of a successful learner you would be able to come up with a list very quickly, probably including things such as resilience, tenacity, self-belief and the ability to self-motivate. You might also bring to mind those students who can work independently and who are willing to take risks and are up for new challenges. All of these positive learning traits are possessed by people who have something known as **high self-efficacy**. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to complete a task or achieve a goal and psychologists argue that our sense of self-efficacy can have a big influence on whether we actually succeed at a task or in exams. Self-efficacy is a term that was first coined by Albert Bandura, a Canadian-American psychologist, and today is something which research shows is an important factor in ensuring attainment.

"Research has shown it to be almost as predictive of achieving good educational qualifications by the age of 26 as cognitive skills." JEAN GROSS [1]

People with high self-efficacy see challenges as things they can overcome, and they develop an interest in the activities they participate in. They are persistent and resilient in overcoming difficulties and recover quickly from setbacks.

"People's beliefs about their abilities have a profound effect on those abilities. Ability is not a fixed property; there is a huge variability in how you perform. People who have a sense of self-efficacy bounce back from failure; they approach things in terms of how to handle them rather than worrying about what can go wrong." ALBERT BANDURA [2]

However, people with low self-efficacy are the exact opposite. They avoid challenging tasks as they believe that these are beyond their capabilities. They lose confidence quickly if they have setbacks, and not getting things right quickly further cements their belief that they won't succeed. Unfortunately, we all know too well the students in our classes who fit the latter description and no matter how hard we try to encourage them, their defeatist attitudes are so deeply entrenched it is almost impossible for us to convince them that they can do it. What is really concerning is that it is our disadvantaged students who are more at risk of having poor self-efficacy, adding to the list of the barriers and inequalities they already have to deal with. Jean Gross, bestselling author and a leading advocate for disadvantaged children and those with special needs, works hard to highlight the need to develop self-efficacy in our children but especially in those who come from poorer backgrounds. In her blog she advises schools to teach students about self-efficacy so that they are aware that it is something that can be developed.

"Disadvantaged children are more at risk of low self-efficacy than their peers. Often, many see their families powerless in the face of events. Your dad is in a low-skilled job that gives him little autonomy, your mum loses her job, then the gas gets cut off, then you get evicted. Your life is driven by other people's decisions." JEAN GROSS [3]

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF LOW SELF-EFFICACY

The causes of poor self-efficacy are not limited to disadvantaged children, but if we look at the list below, we can see why there **may** be correlation.

- **Children who grow up in a family where adults did not do well at school are likely to view education less favourably and lack the belief in their ability to make progress through their own efforts.**
- **Children who have limited role models of people who have overcome challenges and been successful are less likely to be able to imagine this for themselves.**
- **Children who have experienced negative life events or stress beyond their control (e.g. harsh parenting, criticism, divorce, trauma, abuse, emotionally distant parents et cetera) can struggle to feel they have control over their lives.**
- **Children who have struggled academically or felt less capable than others, or who have had negative feedback or criticism, may be less likely to 'put themselves out there' for fear of being criticised.**
- **Children's self-perception can be negatively impacted by ableist narratives surrounding their physical, learning or mental disability.**
- **Children who have experienced repeated failures and had other people having low-expectations of them can be more likely to have low expectations of themselves.**
- **Children who set impossibly high standards for themselves (and this can be exacerbated by social media that can encourage young people to compare themselves to unrealistic or impossible ideals) can be scared of making mistakes.**

Jean Gross also contends that: "Schools, too, play their part in cementing low self-efficacy. We often inadvertently strip lower-achieving disadvantaged children of their sense of independence and capability through grouping practices and offering too much 'help'. I have never forgotten the boy who told me: 'I'm in the bottom table group and we can't do anything by ourselves, so we always have to have an adult working with us'." JEAN GROSS [3]

GOOD NEWS

The good news is that there are practical things we can start doing in our everyday practice to help develop self-efficacy. Bandura noted four sources which affect the development of self-efficacy beliefs:

MASTERY EXPERIENCE   VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE   SOCIAL PERSUASION   PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES

MASTERY EXPERIENCE

The first source of self-efficacy is through mastery experiences. When students see themselves as successful, this can significantly improve their self-efficacy. When students master a task and overcome challenges through perseverance and effort, they build their self-belief. Most of us start our lessons revisiting prior learning which can be a great way of building self-efficacy as we are giving students tasks or activities that they will have a good chance of success with. Not for the entire lesson though – once they've succeeded, up the challenge!

"Performance accomplishment is a key factor for developing self-efficacy. Learners who have repeated experiences of success have higher self-efficacy than those who experience repeated failure. Teachers should give learners some tasks that they can perform (Dörnyei, 2001), hence learners can build successful experiences."

It is important to point out here that mastery is not about making tasks so easy that students succeed but we do need to give students the time to learn, embed and practise new knowledge so that when they do effortful tasks, they have a chance of success.

"If individuals only experience easy successes, they may develop unrealistic expectations and become easily discouraged by failure. To develop a resilient sense of self-efficacy, individuals need to experience setbacks and overcome obstacles through persistent effort. These challenges can teach individuals that success often requires sustained effort. Once individuals are confident in their abilities to succeed, they can persevere through adversity and quickly recover from setbacks. By persevering through tough times, individuals can emerge even stronger than before." [4]

Engage students regularly in tasks that require thinking hard. Reframe obstacles as positive learning opportunities and create a culture where challenge is a good thing. Warn students that tasks will take sustained effort and there may be setbacks. Celebrate when students overcome obstacles. For students with particularly low self-belief, get them to do activities and exercises repeatedly and give them tasks they will succeed in at the start of a lesson. Allow students frequent attempts and encourage them to redraft work. It can build confidence when they re-do a task they have encountered before or sit a past paper multiple times.

VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE

Self-efficacy can also be developed through vicarious experience. Vicarious experience is when students see their friends and classmates do tasks successfully. These opportunities help learners to foster positive beliefs about themselves. Seeing their peers successfully engaging in the following can help students believe that they can be successful learners too.

- **Question and answer sessions**
- **Show and tell**
- **Pair-work activities (role plays, working on tasks together)**
- **Getting students to demonstrate, model, perform activities or present their work**
- **Students teaching their peers and even delivering part of the lesson**
- **Classroom critique – sharing the thought process and metacognitive thinking (How did you work that out? What is the process for? What helped you to memorise ?)**
- **Games**
- **Students coming out to the front**

SOCIAL PERSUASION

Social persuasion is another one of Bandura's four sources for building self-efficacy. Positive feedback and encouragement can really help build self-efficacy in our students. We have always known this, but can we do better? It is so important that we communicate our belief in our students. We do this by having high expectations of them and the level of challenge we give them. We can promote independence by giving students less help. Giving too much support can make students over reliant and reinforce their belief that they can't accomplish things on their own. When we give students the responsibility of helping other students, we are again communicating our belief in them, and this helps them to see that they are capable. Praise is powerful when done right! Praising students when they show resilience and effort rather than just praising the outcome helps show students that how they approach learning

and the tenacity they show is an important factor in success. Draw students' attention to when they have overcome difficulties through perseverance. Encourage them to explain how they managed to succeed so that they can see that effort yields positive results. This has the additional benefit of developing their awareness of how they learn. Creating this kind of culture means we need to normalise error and show students that not getting it right first time is part of learning. Embrace uncertainty to encourage contributions to demonstrate that getting things right first time doesn't usually happen.

PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES

Good teachers understand the need to consider what physiological states our students are in. Changing our lessons to ensure we get the best out of our students depending on their physiological state is so important if we are going to have an effective lesson. If an unusual or unexpected situation has caused students to have a heightened state of emotion, we might adapt our lesson to include a 'settler' – a task that will be calming, quiet and focused. Equally, if we sense that students are feeling sluggish, bored and unmotivated, we might inject some fun by doing a more active task involving movement or discussion, for example. These tasks are known as 'stirrers'. Let's also not forget the power of praise or social persuasion to encourage and inspire our students to engage in learning, especially those with low self-efficacy.

IMAGINAL EXPERIENCES

Psychologist James Maddux suggests a fifth route to self-efficacy through "imaginal experiences" which is the art of visualising yourself behaving effectively or successfully in a given situation. This reminds me of David Beckham, who in an interview talked about how he uses visualisation before a football match and even just before he is about to shoot. He visualises himself being successful and then he is. This can easily be incorporated into our lessons by engaging students in metacognitive discussion before they do a task. Ask questions like:

- **What will an excellent answer to this question include?**
- **How are you going to make a really good job of this task?**
- **What prior knowledge do we need to draw on?**
- **What resources might you need?**
- **How might you overcome difficulties?**

FURTHER READING

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ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Review your school/department/classroom practice and how well self-efficacy is developed across the curriculum and through pastoral systems. Identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Consider training some key staff on self-efficacy and then trialling some of the strategies suggested before rolling out a whole-school strategy.
- Give careful thought and planning to how you will monitor the impact of your interventions. What evidence will help you measure success? For example: improved work completion, reward points, improved attitude to learning or using The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) which was developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer to measure a person's self-efficacy. Read more here **https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html#How-is-Self-Efficacy-Measured** Self-Efficacy: Bandura's Theory Of Motivation In Psychology (**simplypsychology.org**)
- You may wish to get involved in our next Insights projects to formalise your implementation strategy.

LITERACY

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO **EMPOWER LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS**

BARNWELL SCHOOL   TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 10

Literacy interventions to improve the reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary of underachieving disadvantaged students

INTENT

At Barnwell we work on the principle that there is no such thing as a 'typical' student eligible for Pupil Premium funding and therefore our strategy is centred around meeting individual needs. Within our school, just some of our aims include:

- **Utilising targeted interventions and support, in all subjects, facilitating high-quality education provision for disadvantaged students.**
- **To improve the progress and outcomes of disadvantaged students and eliminate the gaps between their progress and outcomes and that of their more affluent peers.**
- **To improve the reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary of disadvantaged students.**

Research indicates a significant connection between early literacy struggles and subsequent challenges in life for Pupil Premium students. There is a notable pattern where limited oral language skills lead to disengagement from students at an early age (Education Policy Institute, 2021).

- **Children from high-income backgrounds who show signs of low academic ability at age 5 are 35% more likely to be high earners as adults than children from poorer families who show early signs of high ability.**
- **28% of children start primary school in England without the early language and literacy skills they need.**
- **The most disadvantaged children start school 19 months behind their more well-off peers in language and communication development, putting them at an educational disadvantage from the start.**
- **Spoken vocabulary at age 13 strongly predicts GCSE grades.**
- **A child in the lowest 20% in vocabulary knowledge at age 5 would have to learn 20 new words a day, every day, to move into the average range after 3 years.**

WHY LITERACY INTERVENTION?

More than 90% of teachers consider literacy essential for narrowing the attainment gap. According to Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), students need to learn over 3,000 new words annually to handle the demands of complex academic texts. In secondary school, only 25% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve a Grade 5 in English and Maths GCSE. Without appropriate intervention, these students are more likely to leave school with fewer qualifications, face difficulties in securing long-term employment, and encounter mental health challenges.

WHY WE CHOSE BEDROCK

Research indicates that learners who engage in two or more Bedrock lessons per week experience an average improvement of over 25% in their literacy skills, as verified by independent studies. Eight Year 10 students with target grades ranging from 4 to 7 participated in the programme. This selection allowed for an evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness in supporting lower achievers and challenging higher achievers.

It was crucial to ensure that students did not perceive the programme as an additional English lesson or as a punitive measure for their abilities. Instead, the programme aimed to build upon their existing literacy skills and provide optimal support to help them excel. Student feedback was a critical component of the programme. Before starting their sessions, students completed a survey that included questions about their reading abilities, recreational reading habits, confidence in speaking, and honest feedback on the challenges they face when answering questions or reading aloud in class.

OUT OF 8 STUDENTS:

- **6 stated they rarely engage in recreational reading with 2 stating they do occasionally.**
- **8 students expressed some level of confidence in reading.**
- **7 students expressed feeling less confident in reading aloud.**
- **1 student stated they feel extremely confident reading aloud.**

When asked for feedback on their reasons behind not wanting to read aloud, some comments included:
'I might get the answer wrong and feel embarrassed'
'I feel uncomfortable as I might mispronounce words when reading'
'It is a lot of pressure; I don't want to be made fun of for stuttering'

To me, this highlighted a direct correlation between self-esteem and language skills. **'When individuals have low self-esteem, they may doubt their abilities to understand and use language effectively. This self-doubt can hinder their language comprehension, vocabulary development, and sentence structure.'**[1] Even students who had an already high proficiency of grammar and vocabulary expressed a lot of self-doubt and reluctancy to read aloud or even speak in front of a group.

IMPLEMENTATION

An intervention programme needs to be conducted over an extended period in order to observe and assess development and attainment in depth. This trial was conducted over a five-week period to assess our findings and ensure the correct intervention was being utilised for students. To do this, students completed a pre-test based on vocabulary and grammar along with a post-test to assess their improvements. I engaged with students throughout the course of this programme by sending weekly email reminders, contacting form tutors to ensure students were directed to the library where their sessions took place and by meeting weekly with students to follow up on the data being generated, as well as having meaningful conversations about the level of enjoyment and engagement they were deriving from the sessions.

Students were encouraged to take autonomy and ownership of their lessons as I believe it is imperative that students, especially as they head towards their GCSE exams, are driven by intrinsic motivation and not solely by the expectations set for them by both teacher and parent. After a brief teething period where students familiarised themselves with their new timetables, the group began taking their sessions seriously and achieved some great results.

[1] Everyday Speech (no date) *Exploring the Connection: How Self-Esteem Affects Speech and Language Skills.* Available from: https://everydayspeech.com/sel-implementation/exploring-the-connection-how-self-esteem-affects-speech-and-language-skills/#:~:text=The%20Link%20 [Accessed 5 September 2024]

Student	Target Grade	% Of Time Spent Over 5 Weeks	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Improvement	Insights
Student A	7	72.49%	44	88	100%	Student A's remarkable improvement with only 72.49% of the time indicates high efficiency in their study methods or an intrinsic motivation to excel.
Student B	6	82.57%	86	93	8%	The 8% improvement, while modest, indicates that incremental improvements may be harder to achieve through Bedrock as students approach higher proficiency levels.
Student C	5	100%	83	92	11%	Utilising 100% of the time shows strong dedication and discipline. The 11% improvement suggests that while the strategies used were effective, there may be more efficient methods to explore.

NEXT STEPS

ORACY

Improving students' self-confidence when reading and speaking in front of a class or a group of people is a key area of my teaching. The first step I undertook after the Bedrock programme had come to an end was providing students with scaffolded opportunities for purposeful talk. My groups were beginning to plan and prepare their speeches for their speaking and listening exam, which provided me with a great opportunity to showcase how well they could embed their learned vocabulary into their own writing and speech. The students who took part in the programme were given a copy of the words they had learned over the 5 weeks and encouraged to embed them into their speech. I also took on board the students' suggestions of allocating time for them to read amongst themselves and have their friends listen to them read. During our lessons I allowed students to separate into groups, reading and listening to one another deliver their speeches and encouraging a kind and supportive atmosphere of positive praise and constructive feedback. The result of this was amazing. Students who previously stated they were worried about reading out loud due to mispronouncing words or feeling uncomfortable grew in confidence in only a matter of lessons and have even delivered their speeches to the class.

CUSTOMISED STUDY PLANS

Student A's 100% improvement with 72.49%-time usage highlights the importance of efficient study practices over sheer time investment. This contrasts with Student C, who spent 100% time but achieved only 11% improvement.

For High Performers: Students like B, who are near proficiency ceilings, may benefit from advanced and enrichment activities, used in conjunction with Bedrock to keep them engaged and challenged.

For Lower Performers: Students will benefit from continued use of Bedrock but can be set specific revision tasks and activities as such students need more targeted, structured monitoring and encouragement.

EFFICIENCY AND RE-CALL FOCUS

Full utilisation of time doesn't always correlate with the highest improvement, as seen with Student C. This implies that the quality of study time is crucial. Although we saw improvements in the students' scores, some students are utilising their time more effectively. In an extended use of the Bedrock programme, students' data and diagnostics can help identify specific areas where gaps have formed. Such data can be used within teachers' own planning of lessons to ensure weak areas are being addressed either within lessons or to set valuable homework.

Bronagh Faulkner
ENGLISH TEACHER
BARNWELL SCHOOL

STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY FINDINGS

When asked if they enjoyed the Bedrock sessions, 6 out of 8 stated that they did. Some comments included:
'Because it is supporting my education'
'I learned new words that I didn't know the meaning of'
'I felt that I learned a lot more vocabulary'
'The lessons were quite fun and enjoyable'

When asked about how we could improve the intervention sessions, students gave the following feedback:
'I would like to learn some more advanced language and structural techniques'
'I would like to improve my writing skills using my learned vocabulary and grammar'

When asked how we can support students who lack confidence reading aloud, students stated:
'Set times during the week for students to read amongst themselves'
'Students can have their trusted friends help them read if they struggle, or take it in turns to read out loud'

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ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Bronagh has observed a correlation between pupils' levels of self-esteem and their development of language and communication skills. Are low levels of self-esteem a barrier for some pupils in your school? What opportunities are there for identifying these and other barriers to curriculum access for key groups of pupils? Are there effective strategies already in place that could be more widely shared?

- Next steps in the school's aim to improve reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary for disadvantaged pupils include the development of oracy skills. The value of allocating time for pupils to read amongst themselves and with friends was specifically identified. Could there be benefits in auditing the current position of oracy in your school? Are there strategies in place to gather evidence and opinions from across the pupil body?

- In academic year 2024/25, PiXL are having a big focus on improving spoken communication and oracy across all age groups. Look out for more information at our National Conferences and in our RSL Headlines emails.
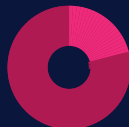
BARNWELL SCHOOL

1323

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND
Hertfordshire		Years 7-13	51%	26%	21%

UPLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 3

Supporting lower attaining boys in Year 3

INTENT

Our current Year 3 cohort had displayed significant challenges as they have moved through the school. Specifically, they displayed a lack of the learning behaviours, usually developed in Reception and Year 1, as this portion of their education was significantly impacted by Covid closures. The closures also impacted on their phonetic knowledge development and application which was negatively affecting their reading outcomes and their ability to access the wider curriculum independently.

While in Year 1, we implemented the catchup programme of our Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme but 16.7% did not pass the Phonics Screening Check (PSC) at the end of Year 1. It was also noted that there was a larger group of additional pupils (approximately 30%) who had passed the PSC but who were not confident enough in its application to be fluent readers.

While in Year 2, we continued with the class teacher delivering phonics lessons to help those children secure their Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences (GPC) knowledge and application to reading. The results in our Key Stage 1 SATS did not show the improvement we were aspiring for:

71.8% ARE in reading in KS1 (32% of all boys, 25% of all girls were WTS).
75% of SEN children were WTS in reading. 75% of PP children were WTS in reading.
64.4% combined ARE.

Additionally, there was also a rise in the number of behavioural incidents. Over the course of the year, there were 163 behavioural incidents logged for the year group. These were often involving larger groups of children (4 or more) and how they were reacting to situations on the playground during unstructured times. Often, these incidents required multiple members of staff, including SLT, to unpick and address what had happened and actions to be taken moving forward. This would result in a large portion of learning time being lost.

Prior to the cohort moving into Year 3 in 2023-2024, senior leaders decided that more radical action was needed to support this cohort, both academically and socially. There were multiple elements to the project which would need addressing with various members of staff.

These included:

- **Redeploying existing support staff and ensuring that they had the training and support to deliver phonics teaching effectively.**
- **Adapting the curriculum delivery to match the needs of the cohort in Key Stage 2.**
- **We also aimed to reduce the behavioural needs and incidents by providing structured activities during lunchtimes for targeted individuals.**

The aims of these changes were to ensure the children had secured their phonics knowledge so that it could be applied automatically to read more fluently and access the curriculum with greater independence. This would likely result in a reduction in the percentage of children who were WTS in reading.

To inform our approach to addressing behaviour in the playground, SLT also undertook research to update and implement a new behaviour and relationships policy. This involved participating in an EEF behaviour project across multiple schools around our local area.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project needed careful planning to ensure that staff had the knowledge and resources to deliver the changes to the curriculum effectively for September.

This started in July 2023 with the new Year 3 teachers and support staff visiting phonics lessons in KS1 and working alongside the phonics leader to ensure their practice would have fidelity to the SSP. While this was happening, Key Stage 2 had to have timetables written for each year group to ensure the interventions were given the prominence they required and so that wider gaps in learning were not created by children missing key information while attending an intervention. This also helped all staff be clear about what needed to happen and when.

In the September, the Year 3 cohort were assessed on their phonics knowledge, and this was used to identify the children who needed further phonic learning, those who had secured their phonics knowledge but who were developing their fluency in reading, and those children who were fluent readers. It also served as a baseline for measuring impact of the intervention for those children who would be continuing their phonics learning as this would be reassessed every three weeks and, as more children secured their GPC knowledge and were becoming more proficient with blending these to read, they would then move to the fluency reading group to help practise and embed these skills further. In RSL meetings, teachers noted that GPC knowledge steadily improved in the class being led by the class teacher. Wider curriculum subjects were also adapted to be more phonetically accessible for the children.

The new behaviour and relationships policy was shared with staff and implemented. This was based on the work of Paul Dix and aimed at developing restorative conversations around behaviour incidents. All staff had CPD in September to launch this and were given the resources to help them have restorative conversations. This was particularly beneficial for our playground and lunchtime supervisors as it enabled them to have consistency in the manner that behavioural incidents were dealt with. After the launch of this approach to the staff and pupils, it was then carefully monitored and monthly lunchtime supervisor meetings were also introduced to allow regular feedback about how it was being implemented and identify any further training that may have been needed.

In spring term, the majority of the children were ready to move from phonics teaching to developing their reading fluency and the remainder of those who still needed phonics provision would continue to receive this as a phonics intervention but delivered by a HLTA. The timetable would remain the same, so that the two classes which were building their reading fluency through guided reading would continue to do so at the same time as the phonics intervention to ensure no other curriculum learning was missed. Fortnightly meetings continued to be held with class teachers and a member of SLT to check in on progress, any issues that had arisen and to offer support with aspects which staff, particularly the HLTA who was now leading the phonics group, felt they required.

Feedback around behaviour incidents, especially at lunchtime, was continually gathered and where individual children had a 'spike' in incidents over a short time, swift action was taken to help understand and resolve the behaviours. We sought parental insight to try and better understand the child's change in behaviour and worked with them to find solutions which would best support their child. This approach was taken in collaboration with class teachers so that everyone knew what had been agreed and the expectations moving forward and was particularly effective for several children who would have multiple behavioural incidents per week.

In the summer term, most strategies were in place and had been well embedded and modelled. This allowed SLT to focus on sustaining the change that had been made through our established, regular meetings with class teachers and support staff.

IMPACT

Coming to the end of the project this year we evaluated the impact on reading attainment and behaviour, especially during lunchtimes. Teacher voice was also gathered regarding children's behaviour for learning.

Reading attainment was being tracked termly and gap analysis was collated to identify the progress being made. Phonics assessment data was also collected every three weeks and was crucial in monitoring the progress of the learners and informing senior leaders as to when phonics provision would need to move from class teacher delivery to the majority of children, to an intervention for the minority of children which would be led by a HLTA. Over the course of the year, the number of children who needed phonics provision decreased from 25 children to 3. Reading attainment also improved from 71% ARE to 80% ARE at the end of the year and combined attainment increased to 68.3%.

When looking at the behaviour incidents for the year group over the course of the year it was surprising to note that incidents at lunchtimes increased (183) compared to the previous year (163). However, further analysis revealed that although the number of incidents increased, the severity and complexity of problems were more low level, and that lunchtime supervisors or class teachers could address these using our behaviour and relationships policy more effectively and resolve them without SLT support. Due to this, the outcome of reducing lost learning time due to behavioural incidents has been achieved, despite having an increase in volume of incidents.

In discussions with class teachers at the end of the year, all noted the change in behaviour at playtimes and how behaviour for learning in class had improved. The support put into this year group was deployed effectively and the constant dialogue about children's progress and next steps between class teachers, support staff and SLT helped to build the cohesive drive for improvements. Supporting children's needs and making adaptations to ensure all children could access the learning, such as using voice-to-text software or structuring work into small chunks to reduce cognitive overload, were crucial and adopted into teachers' practice. From pupil feedback, they felt that these changes meant that they were less likely to become frustrated by their learning and felt more empowered to access their learning and be successful.

At the conclusion of this project, it was decided that to maintain the improvements that have been made this year, we would continue to prioritise the support which was put in place during this academic year to help the cohort continue to close the attainment gap on the other year groups within the school. The use of forensic data analysis will inform which children will be targeted for support and what the intended outcomes will be.

On reflection, it may have been more informative to gather pupil voice and teacher voice at more regular intervals, as we did with academic and behavioural data. This would help to triangulate all information to see when these changes within the year group occurred or to ascertain if one area was in need of more intensive work to better support the year group.

Steve Castle
DEPUTY HEADTEACHER
UPLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Roy Howard
INCLUSION MANAGER
UPLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

> **"Over the course of the year, the number of children who needed phonics provision decreased from 25 children to 3."**

UPLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

474

REGION	NUMBER ON ROLL	YEAR GROUPS	BOYS	PP	SEND
London		EYFS - Year 6	53%	8%	8%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION A mainstream primary school with a nursery, which is part of a Multi Academy Trust. The borough has grammar schools and administers tests for pupils at the beginning of Year 6.

CASE STUDIES   TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

Developing whole-school reading strategies

INTRODUCTION TO PiXL READING
BY SHORNY MALCOLMSON

As the EEF highlighted last September, around three quarters of schools in England have shared that poor attendance and low reading levels are the *'biggest challenges affecting their socio-economically disadvantaged pupils' academic achievement'* [1]. Over recent years, much has been written and shared about how reading influences opportunities for success, as well as the barriers students face in accessing reading and high-quality support in this area.

In 2021, we launched PiXL Reading to support staff and students in this vital area for young people's life chances and outcomes. There is a vast range of support available within the 'Whole-school Approach' package, including leadership thinking, CPD, parent materials, author talks and career-related 'Why Read?' videos . In addition, we also have a 'Reading Fluency' package to support schools in this area too.

The EEF's **Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools report** [2] highlighted disciplinary literacy as its first recommendation and so, running alongside PiXL Reading, sits our Disciplinary Literacy package, with support for whole-school leaders, as well as subject staff. If you'd like more information, please do email **shorny@pixl.org.uk**.

A READING STRATEGY IS BEST SERVED THREE WAYS
BY BEV BRINING, ROUNDHAY SCHOOL

When Roundhay School put reading on the menu, we decided a simple strategy would be approached in three ways to ensure maximum impact.

Roundhay is an outstanding all-through school (4-18) in North Leeds with 2,500 pupils, 53 languages, a large Inclusion department and a disadvantaged cohort of around 23%. It is a large, stand-alone comprehensive which is proud of the rich diversity of its community. This context is important. What works at Roundhay may or may not work in your school. However, our approach maximised opportunities for staff to develop their expertise in reading in three ways: through targeted CPD; through the delivery of a bespoke form-time reading programme and by giving time to embed the strategy across both the curriculum and key stages.

Before, During and After (BDA) is a well-known reading strategy which works well in our school because of its simplicity. There are three phases which support both staff and pupils. Initially, pre-reading activities, which always include the explicit instruction of vocabulary, prepare pupils for the task ahead. Next, the active engagement of pupils while reading provides them with opportunities to think about the text and allows teachers to check comprehension. After-reading activities allow readers to apply knowledge in new ways or to consider similar problems in a different context.

HOW DID WE DO IT?

1. **Targeted CPD:** Before, During and After was piloted at Roundhay by a working party of mathematicians, geographers, scientists, DT teachers and included representatives from Key Stage 3, 4 and 5. In short, we wanted buy-in from everyone who wasn't an English teacher and those teachers who wouldn't necessarily identify as a teacher of reading. The staff created resources which they trialled in their area of specialism and the feedback was positive. Next, we launched BDA as a whole-school priority to all staff on our first day back in September and then delivered six calendared twilight sessions over the academic year 22/23. With many regular 'show and tells', including one session on A Level Chemistry delivered by our Deputy Headteacher, we showed that this strategy could and would work for everyone.

2. **Form-Time Reading Programme:** Having trained the staff on how to deliver BDA, we wanted to make sure that we provided regular opportunities for them to do it. This develops their confidence as teachers of reading, but also allows us to check in with staff and provide support and guidance where required. Each week, form tutors read an extract to their form and then deliver a BDA task. It works well! SLT regularly drop in and lead a session, which supports staff and models best practice. The programme was created in-house and includes carefully chosen extracts from texts which we actively promote in the library. Three years on, our most borrowed books are always those included in the programme. The programme develops teachers, but it also introduces 1,500 pupils to our favourite reads. It's a win-win!

3. **Embed into the curriculum:** To minimise workload, departments tweak existing resources in SoW and home learning activities so that a clear emphasis is placed on reading tasks and the delivery of BDA within the curriculum. Careful consideration is made to disciplinary literacy, recognising how texts and language vary across our broad and balanced curriculum. Difference is good and the simplicity of the strategy works for everyone.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

We forensically track reading through a range of data sets (KS2, NGRT, GL Literacy, teacher assessment, internal data collections) but improved reading age is not our end goal, as we seek improvement across the curriculum and across key stages. For me, success is evident when you walk the corridors, hear the teachers reading aloud and watch pupils engrossed in reading and associated tasks. In December, Ofsted agreed. They stated that: "Extensive staff development ensures teachers know how to 'get the most out of each piece of text' that pupils read in their subjects. Students in the sixth form read a range of texts covering contemporary issues in society, along with academic journals and papers". Reading remains a priority at Roundhay School and the job isn't done – but we are on our way.

[1] Education Endowment Fund. (2023) **EEF publish updated resources to support pupil premium spending.** Education Endowment Fund [online]. 28 September 2023. Available from: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/attendance-and-reading-key-barriers-to-disadvantaged-pupils-progress-say-three-in-four-schools#:~:text=Three%20quarters%20of%20schools%20in,economically%20disadvantaged%20pupils%27%20academic%20achievement. [Accessed 5 September 2024].

[2] Quigley, A. and Coleman, R. (2021) **Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools** [online]. [PDF]. Education Endowment Fund. Available from: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/literacy-ks3-ks4?utm_source=/education-evidence/guidance-reports/literacy-ks3-ks4&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=IMPROVING%20LITER [Accessed 5 September 2024].

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE SCHOOL READING CULTURE BY INCREASING MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT, BUILDING HABITS, AND REMOVING BARRIERS TO READING?

BY JOE KELLY, CARSHALTON BOYS' SPORTS COLLEGE

RATIONALE

In 2022, a Sutton Alliance School Review found that opportunities were being missed to engage students in reading across our school setting – something echoed by a subsequent English Departmental Review, reaffirming the need to revisit reading strategies aimed at fostering a love of reading. Reading for Pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success (OECD, 2002), whilst children who are the most engaged with reading are three times more likely to have higher levels of mental wellbeing than their least engaged peers (NLT, 2018). It's also worth noting that students who read regularly can expect to perform significantly better across the curriculum – including 9.9% better in maths – than students who don't read (IoE, 2013). In line with the DfE's updated Reading Framework (July 2023), this project was born out of a desire to prioritise, foster and develop a love of reading; in turn, improving both the academic excellence and aspiration of our pupils.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Located in the London Borough of Sutton, Carshalton Boys' Sports College is a non-selective all-boys secondary school situated among the 50% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Whilst the majority of its 1,500 pupils come from typically working-class families, 27% of students are eligible for free school meals. On average, 94% of CBSC pupils stay in education or enter employment post-16, with 42% achieving Grade 5 or above in English and Maths at GCSE.

INTENT

- **Build reading habits.**
- **Foster and develop a love of reading.**
- **Improve pupils' empathy and wellbeing.**
- **Encourage positive relationships with reading.**
- **Remove barriers for pupils with limited motivation, engagement or access to books.**
- **In turn, improve academic excellence.**

IMPLEMENTATION

Reading logs are great in principle, but for pupils with empty bookshelves and negative attitudes to reading, they're often just another way to make some feel like outsiders. Step forward, Sparx Reader: a dedicated online platform designed to make reading visible. By enabling us to track reading volume and accuracy (through the awarding of points) Sparx Reader helps us to monitor independent reading, removing barriers for pupils with limited motivation, engagement, and/or access to books.

How does it work?

Students start by completing a Reading Test, giving them a broad reading age corresponding to the Sparx Library. Students are then given a limited choice of e-books within the Sparx Reader platform (with adjustable readability settings), accumulating Sparx Reader Points (SRP) by answering questions as they read. Sparx then adapts its book offering based on student accuracy and enjoyment. Because points are awarded based on careful reading – and not based on reading ability – pupils with lower reading ages can accumulate points just as quickly as expert readers.

Weekly Reading Targets

Via Sparx Reader, we set KS3 pupils a weekly target of 600 SRP (roughly one hour of careful reading). To try and mitigate any added anxiety for pupils leaving homework to the last minute, we made a conscious move to recommend shorter and more regular reading sessions of 10-20 minutes per day – helping pupils to build positive, sustained reading habits (with the added benefit of gradually improving their overall concentration). With motivation still a major obstacle, we sought to drive student engagement through competition, implementing a series of reading rewards using the data provided.

Clark, C. and Teravainen-Goff, A. (2018). **Mental wellbeing, reading and writing.** [PDF]. National Literacy Trust. Available from: *https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/mental-wellbeing-reading-and-writing/* [Accessed 5 September 2024].

Department of Education (2023) **The reading framework** [online]. [PDF]. Department of Education. Available from: *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-reading-framework-teaching-the-foundations-of-literacy* [Accessed 5 September 2024].

OECD (2002). **Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement across Countries:** Results from PISA 2000 [online]. Paris: PISA, OECD Publishing. [Accessed 5 September 2024].

Sullivan, A. and Brown, M. (2013) **Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading.** [PDF]. Institute of Education, University of London. Available from: *https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CLS-WP-2013-10-.pdf* [Accessed 5 September 2024].

Rewards and Sanctions

We began by awarding weekly 'skip-the-queue' passes to the top three readers in every class. Across KS3, this amounted to a significant number of weekly rewards – but we started to see an incredible shift in the reading culture when our boys started actively competing for the most points. Building on this culture of competition, we also gifted books and certificates to the Top Readers during end-of-term 'rewards assemblies' and ran termly 'rewards lunches' for the Top Tutor Groups in every year.

Although rewards were a core focus, it was vital to implement a rigorous sanctions policy to enable us to shift the culture from "I don't read" to "I'm struggling to read". All pupils were expected to complete 100% of their weekly reading, with anyone falling below that threshold serving a compulsory after-school intervention session. Firstly, this allowed us to re-motivate disengaged pupils through positive reinforcement (whilst also reiterating the benefits of reading). Secondly, this was an opportunity to consider **why** pupils were struggling – whether through low confidence, poor concentration, low reading age, or lack of time/access. Armed with an array of new data (from reading age, to reading speed, to accuracy and enjoyment figures) we were also far better equipped to identify struggling readers from across the cohort. As such, we were in a stronger position to begin implementing additional intervention programmes to support the development of decoding and comprehension strategies for our weakest readers.

IMPACT
- **28,000 hours of careful reading recorded via Sparx (average 30+ hours per student).**
- **88% (of KS3 pupils) recognise the importance of reading in their personal development.**
- **68% admitted their reading had improved.**
- **45% reported increased concentration levels due to Sparx.**
- **74% admitted reading more than in the previous year.**
- **40% reported reading 7+ books across the school year.**
- **Four-month increase in pupils' average reading age development from Sep-Jul (compared to previous year), with Y7 pupils tracking 10+ months above their actual age.**

By making independent reading visible, Sparx Reader has enabled us to lay the groundwork for a new generation of readers. Accepting that reading is the number one indicator of a child's future success, the burgeoning culture of reading across our school community points to the unmitigated success of this project.

We've also had some brilliant qualitative feedback from our parents:

1. *"I've never seen my son reading books like this before... he gets back from school and he reads all afternoon... he also tells me all about books."*
2. *"I just wanted to say how good the Sparx Reader system is!... the improvement in [my son's] reading and comprehension is incredible."*

NEXT STEPS

Moving forward, one of our biggest challenges will be to support pupils in finding appropriate and engaging texts outside of Sparx, with 68% admitting they struggle when choosing new books. Equally, less than 20% of our pupils discuss reading with friends, presenting an intriguing opportunity to further develop the school reading culture by helping to connect like-minded readers and their recommendations.

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Carshalton Boys' Sports College has identified the need to support pupils in finding appropriate and engaging texts. What opportunities are there in your school to develop strategies for identifying texts of an appropriate context and level of difficulty that engage pupils in reading across the age range? Could you make use of our PiXL Reading half-termly newsletters and PiXL Reading Canon Selection Guides as part of this?

- Roundhay School embedded reading in schemes of learning across the curriculum, a strategy that is recommended by EEF for Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools. If this is an area for further development in your setting, also consider exploring PiXL Disciplinary Literacy including 'ideas from the network' for further strategies for making reading tasks explicit to pupils across the curriculum.

- For more ideas on how schools across the PiXL network are developing reading, do check out our PiXL Reading Leadership Bulletins. We produce these for Primary, Secondary and Post 16.

AN ARTICLE FROM LEXONIK   TARGET YEAR GROUP: WHOLE SCHOOL

Striving to end the illiteracy disadvantage for every school child (and their families too)

If the UK is one of the world's wealthiest nations, has a robust education system, and has been celebrating its various fine academic institutions for centuries – can it really be true that we're in a literacy crisis?

When the National Literacy Trust reports[1] one in five children between the ages of five and eight don't own a book, and approximately 40% of children from disadvantaged communities are leaving primary school with unacceptable levels of illiteracy[2], it becomes hard to deny that we are indeed facing a literacy crisis.

[1] Cole, A., Brown, A. and Clark, C. (2022) **Young (aged 5 to 8) children's reading in 2022** [online]. [PDF]. National Literacy Trust. Available from: *https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-and-young-peoples-reading-engagement-in-2022/* [Accessed 5 September 2024].

[2] National Literacy Trust (2024) **Help us tackle the cost of literacy crisis.** Available from: *https://literacytrust.org.uk/support-us/fundraising/cost-of-literacy/* [Accessed 5 September 2024].

THE LITERACY LANDSCAPE

Whether you attribute it to Covid, to teacher retention issues, to the baked-in trend of digital devices in every home, or to the cost of living pressures impacting on every school and family, there's no doubt that the downward drift in literacy rates is alarming. It's a trajectory which should have us looking somewhat fearfully at the well established link between socioeconomic status and literacy. Youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds can, and often do, face a range of challenges which hinder their ability to develop strong reading and writing skills.

1. LIMITED ACCESS TO BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Families experiencing a life of financial hardship are less likely to have books at home or the means to purchase educational materials. In turn, this hampers early literacy development, as children have fewer opportunities to engage with reading outside of school.

2. UNDERFUNDED SCHOOLS

As a business headquartered in the North East of England, we are all too familiar with the fact that schools in economically deprived areas often suffer from inadequate funding. This not only leads to larger class sizes but also results in fewer qualified and confident teachers and far less resource for literacy support and intervention. How can you foster a culture of reading if you don't have these components?

3. PARENTAL EDUCATION

Parental education is significant and should not be forgotten – if parents also have low literacy levels, they will have less capability of supporting a child's literacy journey.

4. LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Many of the schools engaging with our Lexonik literacy interventions do so to support children for whom English is not their first language. Learning to read and write can be even more challenging in these circumstances, particularly in the face of any prior trauma, and where a school itself is underfunded.

A LONG-TERM LOOK ON LITERACY

Low levels of literacy attainment in the classroom (and in the exam hall) are one matter – but the impact in life, and the deep-set disadvantage for the future of this eventual adult, parent, employee, is much greater. Children who struggle with reading are far more likely to face a range of academic, social, and economic challenges later in life.

Where literacy is not served well, academic underachievement will be felt across all subject arenas. Children who do not develop strong reading and writing skills are more likely to struggle in other subjects, leading to lower overall academic performance and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school.

As we emphasise throughout our programme training, it is not simply about being able to get a child to read the words of a text, but to comprehend it, and to improve their broader vocabulary. Reading for knowledge has to be a central focus to all reading strategies in schools.

It means that no matter whether they're seeking to answer a science question or write a geography exam paper, they can decipher and decode in a way they could not without good literacy knowledge. Dr Sharon Vaughn speaks at length about comprehension as an outcome when students have reading fluency, morphemic knowledge, and background knowledge. It's not about single comprehension strategies, but ultimately the sum total of the ability to read for knowledge.

Social exclusion is another little-discussed topic. Illiteracy can lead to social exclusion, as children and adults who cannot read well may find it difficult to engage with their peers or participate fully in society. This can result in feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and a lack of confidence. Beyond which, the same child may find themselves navigating a more negative path in life – one of limited job opportunities and earning potential, or even, one of criminality and discord.

Education is about giving yourself choices and giving yourself the opportunity of a limitless life.

HOPE AND SCOPE A WAY FORWARD BEYOND THE DISADVANTAGE

At Lexonik, we've come to establish our own vision, a liveable and actionable mantra of resolute conviction.

It says: "Nobody should be limited because they can't read."

We set that bold statement at the heart of everything we do, because we don't believe that a young person should remain shackled by their early experiences of reading and vocabulary, and we absolutely do not believe that a child or young person cannot be helped to have a positive and successful journey with literacy. But importantly, it's not a one-person, one-party, one-tool fix.

Turning around the current literacy trajectory in this country requires many things, many of which revolve around collaboration and cohesion. Providers like ourselves sit primed and ready to partner and to participate, but we also need to have a seat at the table, and to know that the right funding is reaching the very schools who will need to implement new measures.

THIS MEANS THAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE:

1. Increased funding – particularly for schools in economically disadvantaged areas. With this, schools can seek more qualified teachers, reduce class sizes, and provide access to high-quality literacy resources.

2. Early intervention programmes at any age – yes, like ours. Early intervention is critical for preventing illiteracy. The government should actively support businesses that can play a part in bridging the literacy gap, not just in Key Stage 1 but across the whole education spectrum and into Further Education.

3. Support for parents and families – supporting parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, means an increased likelihood of improving children's literacy outcomes. Strategies could include parenting classes, literacy workshops, and resources which enable parents to support their children's learning at home.

4. Community and volunteer involvement – as a business we are passionate about encouraging staff to volunteer and we really believe in reading activities in the community or the support of local libraries. There are so many ways we can embed a culture of literacy across our communities.

5. Technology and digitisation – whilst much has been learnt post-pandemic, we must continue to explore and understand technology and the delivery of literacy tools. We applaud technology initiatives around tutoring, digital libraries and edtech platforms on every level.

INTERVENTION IN ACTION: AN EXAMPLE

Lexonik celebrates its 15th year in 2024, and throughout that time we've seen huge success in helping individuals and school populations make great progress in moving away from disadvantage, armed instead with greater literacy aptitude and confidence. Our various programmes have been proven by the National Literacy Trust to achieve average reading age gains of 27 months in just six weeks, while also boosting enthusiasm for reading and broader school learning activities.
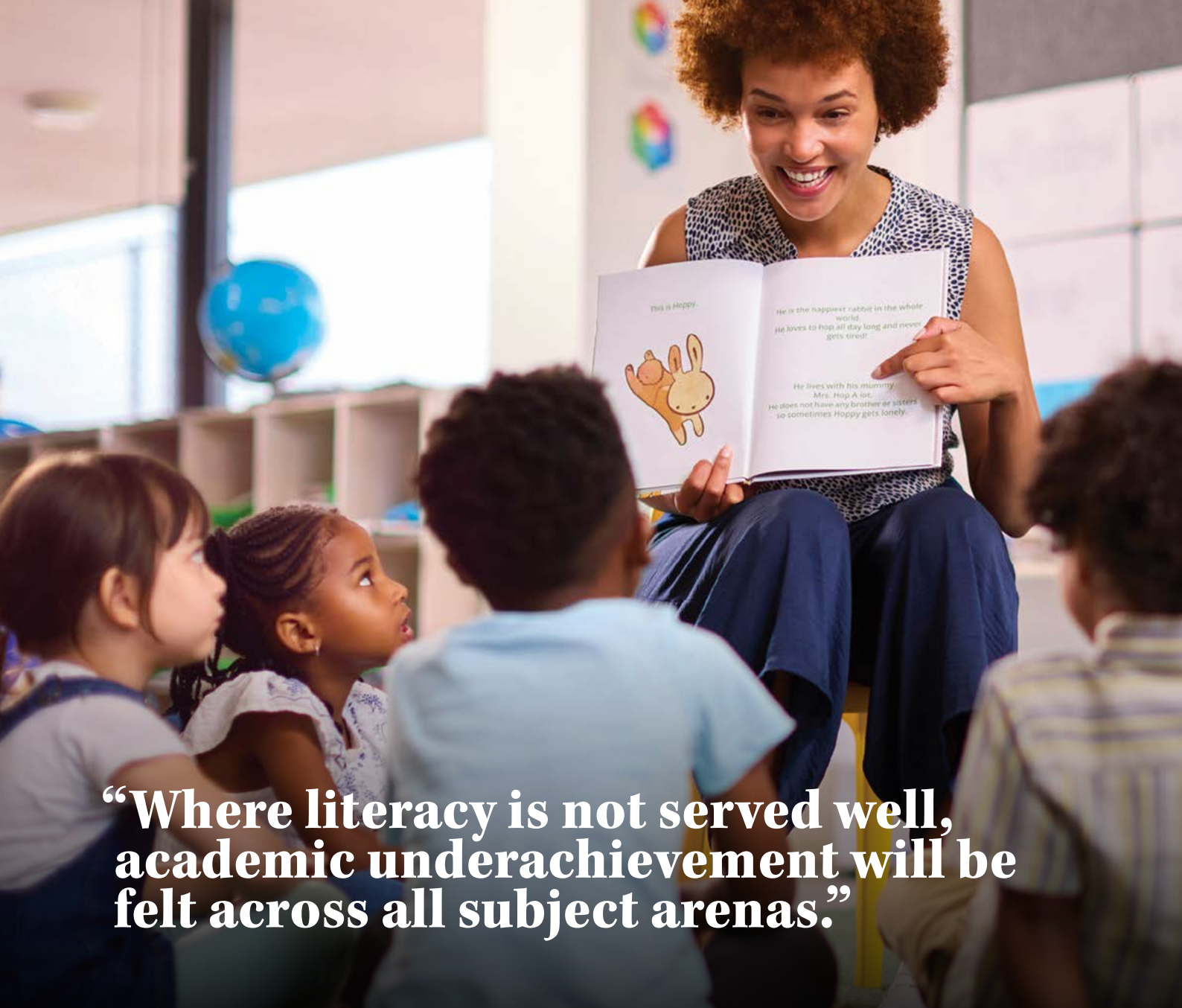
To find out more about the impact of our literacy programmes, read our case studies to discover how we're transforming student outcomes.

Explore them here: **https://lexonik.co.uk/case-studies**.
To find out more about our interventions contact: **phil.luke@lexonik.co.uk**.

Sarah Ledger
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
LEXONIK

> **"Where literacy is not served well, academic underachievement will be felt across all subject arenas."**

Lexonik has announced its inaugural awards, celebrating excellence in literacy across the UK. To enter, go to lexonik.co.uk/awards. The award event, taking place in June 2025, will also feature keynote speakers from the education arena, and masterclasses specifically for Lexonik customers.

ADAPTING THESE IDEAS

- Sarah identifies the importance of 'reading for knowledge' as a focus for schools' reading strategies. Is this a feature in your setting? Is it perhaps more prevalent in some curriculum areas than others, and if so, how could staff work together to share ideas and practice?

- We know that schools do not always have the funding they require to purchase all the books they would like students to be able to access. Our PiXL Reading Canon Selection guides including some brilliant PiXL exclusive discounts from publishers, so do check these out via our website.

- Sarah discusses the importance of parents. At PiXL we have a range of parent support materials as part of our whole-school reading package. It includes author talks, bookmarks and a guide for encouraging reading for pleasure.
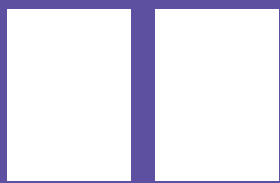
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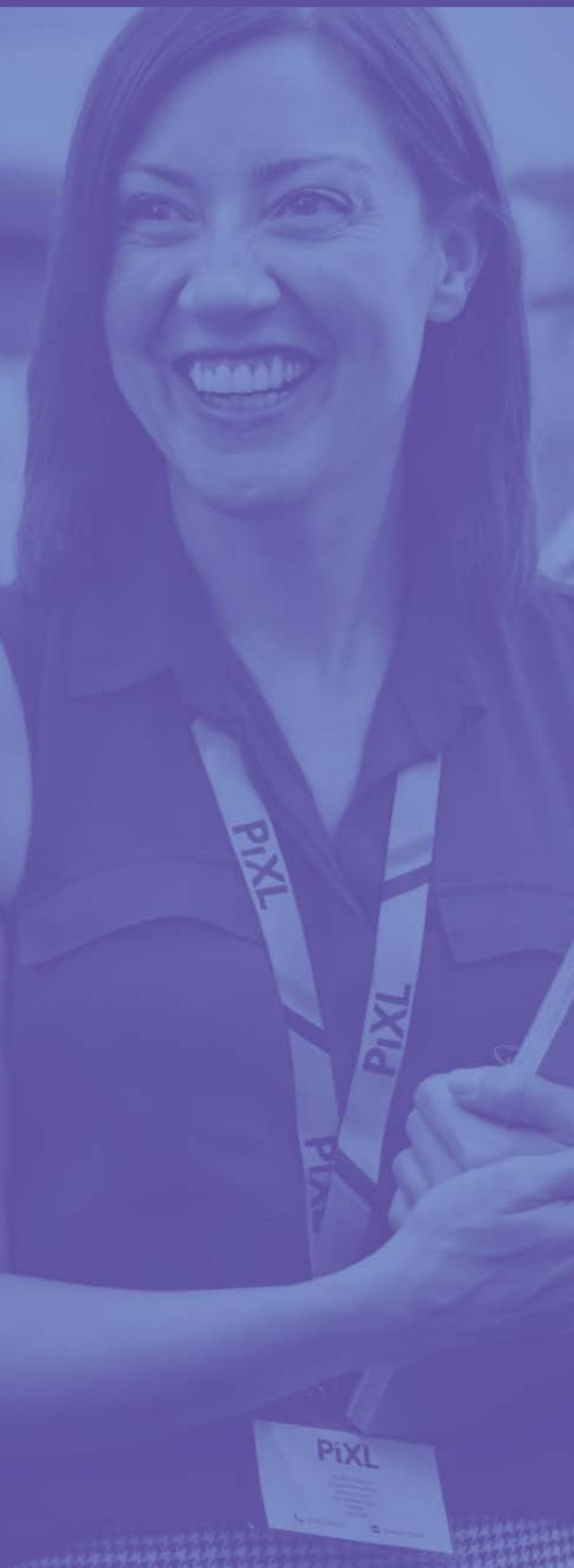
PiXL STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES THAT MAY HELP

You are best placed to know what the areas of need are for your learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Here are just some of the resources and strategies that we have at PiXL that we think will support any student, but may perhaps have the most impact with those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The article following this summary is an in-depth look at our Financial Education package, developed with Young Enterprise.

LEADERSHIP THINKING

Our PiXL in Conversation series on PiXL TV features conversations between PiXL CEO Rachel Johnson and invited guests and specialists, where they really get into the heart of an issue or topic. There are a range of episodes available to stream, each approximately 45 minutes in length, but ones that may be particularly useful in this context are:

Reaching the unseen children
with Jean Gross

Unpacking inclusive education
with Daniel Sobel

Making the invisible visible
with Alex Wheatle

READING

A number of schools focused on literacy and reading in their Insights projects this year. We know that unlocking reading for young people is fundamental to their outcomes and life chances. We have a range of support for reading across the sectors, including a leadership thinking guide for each sector to help support the implementation of any strategies and resources used.

At Primary

- Author podcasts
- Decoding personalised learning checklists
- Support with echo reading and performance reading
- Reading for pleasure newsletters
- Walking talking reading
- Half-termly bulletins for reading leads (this is in addition to the support available through PiXL's DTTR package)
- CPD webinars

At Secondary & Post 16

A whole-school reading approach which includes:
- Author talks and career-related 'why read' videos
- CPD webinars
- Materials for supporting parents
- A reading canon selection guide (and discounts on texts)
- Videos from schools about their reading strategies
- Reading fluency package
- Half-termly bulletins for reading leads

SPOKEN LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY

Supporting young people's spoken language skills is also vitally important. At the start of academic year 2024/25 we launched our 'Let's Talk' programme across primary and secondary, which provides monthly topical videos and accompanying resources, in collaboration with authors, and which support staff in having high quality conversations. At the start of academic year 2024/25 we launched our 'Let's Talk' strategy across all phases, which provides monthly topical videos, filmed by an expert, and which support staff in having high quality conversations with students.

At Primary

- An EYFS communication and language package that includes CPD from Jean Gross on how to support the development of C&L in early years settings
- An oracy Leadership Thinking Guide, as well as CPD and resources to support oracy in the classroom
- Resources to support debating in the classroom, including a wide range of debating mats that can be used to stimulate classroom debate
- An extensive vocabulary package including Leadership Thinking Guides on Vocabulary and Word Consciousness, CPD and resources on morphology and etymology

At Secondary & Post 16

- PiXL Unlock is a vocabulary strategy with resources that support the development of tier 2 and tier 3 subject-specific vocabulary, as well as emotional and social vocabulary
- Our Up for Debate strategy
- A Disciplinary Literacy package with support for literacy leads and subject teams – with more to come this year

In June 2025, we will release a cross-phase Communication & Language CPD package, again supported by Jean Gross, that will be aimed at classroom practitioners.

THE HORSFORTH QUADRANT

First developed by the team at Horsforth School, this simple quadrant that plots student progress against effort is a brilliant resource for diagnosing what support students need. Since this idea was shared with us, PiXL have developed a range of resources and supporting materials for this strategy.

PiXL CHANGE

PiXL Change resources help to guide precise pastoral care that truly makes a difference. The resources promote courage and self-awareness in order to inspire change in me, so I can inspire change in us, so that we can inspire change in them.

Level Best is a self-improvement tool that helps people change their own lives for the better by facilitating change and flow over time. By targeting things that they want to change, Level Best can provide a road map for pastoral intervention, resulting in academic progress. Level Best is a deep dive, a long-term resource to navigate, track and inspire change.

PiXL FUTURES

We have a variety of resources to support students in constructing aspirational goals for themselves. At Primary, our PiXL Futures package focuses on exploring how key skills and attributes, such as independence, teamwork and compassion, relate to the workplace. At Secondary, we have careers-related resources as well as a wide variety of support for helping students secure their next steps after Sixth Form, with a range of resources to inspire and support students in applying for universities and apprenticeships.

PiXL also works with a wide variety of community partners who work in this space, all of whom have resources, support and advice that is freely available. You can find out more about our community partners on our website.

PRACTICE FROM OTHER SCHOOLS

Finally, as a leadership network we are always mindful of the incredible power of sharing practice - that's why at our National Conferences you will always hear from PiXL members about their innovations and journeys. We have a few other ways that we share school practice:

- Obviously, we have these PiXL Insights publications, all of which are available to download as PDFs;
- We have a documentary-style series on PiXL TV called PiXL in Action where we go into schools and examine different aspects of their practice;
- We regularly produce 'Ideas from the Network' documents which outline how different schools have been tackling key issues like attendance and parental engagement, as well as one specifically on supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This is just a snapshot of some of the support available to you as a PiXL member. We are constantly revising strategies and developing new approaches and resources to support schools, based on what our members ask. So do check with a PiXL Specialist if you have any questions or email our team on admin@pixl.org.uk.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION PACKAGE

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH FINANCIAL EDUCATION?

At PiXL, we believe in improving the life chances of all young people. For us, this includes ensuring that they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to navigate and thrive in an increasingly complex financial world. This article will summarise the current picture of financial education in schools, and introduce you to our PiXL Financial Education Package (available for KS1-KS5).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF POOR FINANCIAL EDUCATION HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE DEVASTATING

- **Almost a quarter of 18-to-24-year-olds have less than £100 in savings and often use a credit card, overdraft or borrow money to afford everyday essentials such as food and bills.[1]**
- **Those leaving school without an effective financial education are at high risk of financial abuse, fraud and debt from an early age.**
- **Over one quarter (26%) of 11- to 17-year-olds spend their own money on gambling activities.[2]**

As is so often the case, evidence suggests that students with certain characteristics, including those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, may be more significantly impacted by a lack of high-quality financial education than their more advantaged peers, with research highlighting the strongest negative factors affecting financial capability to be living in social housing or living in an income deprived area.[3]

WHY TEACH FINANCIAL EDUCATION?

Financial education provides children and young people with the core life skills that are essential to support them in achieving financial wellbeing, in a world where 73% of adults in the UK fall below the financial literacy benchmark. The Money and Pensions Service's Children and Young People's Financial Wellbeing Survey 2022 - a nationally representative survey of children and young people (aged 7 to 17) across the UK - highlighted that children and young people who had experienced a meaningful financial education are more likely to:

- **Feel more confident about managing their money**
- **Disagree with the statement 'I feel anxious when thinking about my money'**
- **Save money more regularly**
- **Have a bank account that they use**
- **Have positive attitudes towards money**
- **Talk about money**
- **Demonstrate positive day-to-day money management skills, such as shopping around to compare prices and planning ahead for how they will buy the things they need.[4]**

ONE OF THE MOST COMPELLING REASONS TO PLACE GREATER EMPHASIS ON FINANCIAL EDUCATION IS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT MONEY.

The Young Persons' Money Index 2022/23 – an annual survey which tracks the provision of financial education in schools as well as attitudes towards money of UK students aged 15 to 18 - identified that:

- **68% of the young people surveyed say they worry about money or personal finances – and that jumps to 85% among 17 to 18-year-olds.**
- **70% of young people say increases in the cost of living have made them feel more anxious about money. That number rises to 83% among 17 to 18-year-olds.**

THE EVIDENCE MAY SOUND BLEAK, BUT IT PRESENTS SCHOOL LEADERS WITH BOTH A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY.

GETTING AROUND THE BIGGEST BARRIERS

The three biggest barriers to delivering successful financial education in schools are:

Lack of prominence of financial education in the statutory curriculum (and awareness of statutory requirements)	**Insufficient time to focus on financial education**	**Lack of training and high-quality resources**

Our Financial Education package includes a Leadership Thinking Guide which goes into the detail of how leaders can get around some of these barriers, but for now we are going to focus on the third point: lack of training and high-quality resources.

THE PiXL FINANCIAL EDUCATION PACKAGE

Our PiXL Financial Education package was been developed alongside Young Enterprise, and has been awarded their Quality Mark. The goal of the package is to support children and young people to have positive attitudes towards money, to be confident handling their money, and to be able to demonstrate financially capable behaviours. As time is one of the key barriers to delivering financial education, we have produced a streamlined package with three, fully resourced, ready-to-deliver sessions per Key Stage (six for Key Stage 2) covering some of the most pertinent topics in financial education, with content for each key stage building on previously covered content.

The package is structured using three overarching themes – **financial wellbeing, financial confidence and financial resilience** – with each practical session providing key questions designed to stimulate discussion and support wider personal development including communication, self-reflection, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking.

HOW TO ACCESS OUR PACKAGE
The package is included in PiXL membership at no extra cost. Simply follow the routes below to access for your sector.

Primary members:
PrimaryWise > Resources > Whole School Materials > PiXL Financial Education Package

Secondary/Post 16 members:
Members Area > Resources & Strategies > Improving Life Chances > PiXL Financial Education Package

1 Evidence submitted by Money and Pensions Service - *Inquiry on Primary-School aged Financial Education*, All Party Parliamentary Group (2021)
https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Inquiry-on-primary-school-aged-financial-education-Report.pdf

2 *Young People and Gambling Annual Report*, Gambling Commission (2023)
https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/young-people-and-gambling-2023

3 *Children and Young People Financial Capability Deep Dive: Vulnerability*, Money and Pensions Service (2018)
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230827065022mp_/https:/maps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/cyp-deep-dive-vulnerability.pdf

4 *Children and Young People's Financial Wellbeing Survey: Financial Foundations*, Money and Pensions Service (2022)
https://maps.org.uk/en/publications/research/2023/uk-children-and-young-peoples-financial-wellbeing-survey-financial-foundations

FURTHER READING

Focused on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds specifically

1. Gross, J. (2022) *Reaching the Unseen Children: Practical Strategies for Closing Stubborn Achievement Gaps in Disadvantaged Groups.* **Oxon: Routledge.**
2. Major, L. E. & Briant, R. (2023) *Equity in Education: Levelling the Playing Field of Learning.* **Woodbridge: John Catt.**
3. O'Brien, J. (2016) *Don't Send Him in Tomorrow: Shining a Light on marginalised, disenfranchised and forgotten children in today's schools.* **Wales: Crown House Publishing Ltd.**
4. Sobel, D. (2018) *Narrowing the Attainment Gap: A Handbook for Schools.* **London: Bloomsbury Education.**

Classroom pedagogy & curriculum

1. Alexander, R. (2020) *A Dialogic Teaching Companion.* **Oxon: Routledge.**
2. Claxon, G. (2002) *Building Learning Power: Helping Young People Become Better Learners.* **Bristol: TLO Ltd.**
3. Gershon, M. (2013) *How to Use Questioning in the Classroom: The Complete Guide.* **CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.**
4. Knight, B. (ed) (2022) *On the Subject of Values… and the Value of Subjects.* **Woobridge: John Catt.**
5. Major, L. E. & Higgins, S. (2019) *What Works? Research and Evidence for Successful Teaching.* **London: Bloomsbury Education.**
6. Myatt, M. & Tomsett, J. (2024) *AP Huh: Curriculum conversations with alternative provision leaders.* **Woodbridge: John Catt.**
7. Payne, T. (2017) *Stretch and Challenge for All: Practical Resrouces for Getting the Best out of Every Student.* **Wales: Crown House Publishing Ltd.**
8. Powley, R. (2018) *Powerful Pedagogy: Teach Better Quicker.* **Oxon: Routledge.**

Inclusive practices

1. Bomber, L. M. (2021) *Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in School.* **Broadway: Worth Publishing.**
2. Brooks, R. (2019) *The Trauma and Attachment-Aware Classroom: A Practical Guide.* **London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.**
3. Sobel, D. & Alson, S. (2021) *The Inclusive Classroom: A New Approach to Differentiation.* **London: Bloomsbury Education.**
4. Ward, C. (2019) *On the Fringes: Preventing Exclusions in School through Inclusive, Child-centred, Needs-based practice.* **Wales: Crown House Publishing Ltd.**
5. Ward, C. & Galpin, J. (2021) *The Anxiety Workbook for Supporting Teens Who Learn Differently* **London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers**
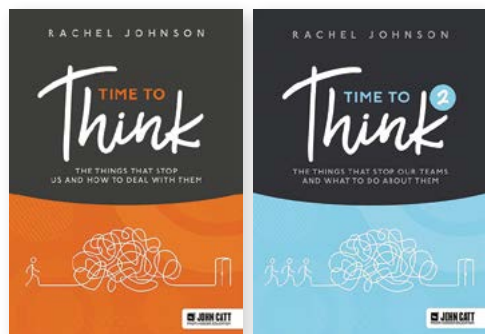
Mindset and psychology

1. Clear, J. (2018) *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones.* **London: Penguin Random House.**
2. Czikszentmihalyi, M. (2008) *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.* **New York: Harper Perennial.**
3. Dweck, C. (2008) *Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential.* **New York: Ballantine Books Random House.**
4. Willingham, D. T. (2021) *Why Don't Students Like School?: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom.* Second Edition. **New Jersey: Jossey-Bass.**

PiXL also have a series of books published by John Catt and written by our CEO, Rachel Johnson.

These are short, practical books aimed at supporting leaders of all levels.

We have three other PiXL Insights publications that may be of interest to you and your colleagues:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HOW ARE YOU GOING TO EMPOWER YOUR LEARNERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS?

PiXL
INSIGHTS