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PiXL INSIGHTS

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS TO RAISE BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT



JUNE 2022

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A WORD FROM OUR CEO

Dear colleagues

The booklet you see in front of you is a new and exciting venture for us and our Insights schools. In Associate visits, the issue of 'boys' has come up time and time again over the past few years. It is something you mention as a WIG, as one of the areas you are trying to progress with across your schools and one where there are many complexities and context is vital.

We knew we had to do something to help and support you but also knew the dangers of being generic and so, out of those issues, PiXL Insights was born.

PiXL consultants have worked with dozens of schools this year on the issue of boys; there has been no silver bullet, but instead this project acknowledges that each school is doing something to serve their own context in their own way. The findings from many of the Insights projects are before you for you to read yourself.

I want to say a huge thank you to the PiXL consultants and staff who have worked on this, and to the schools who participated who have been wonderful in sharing their insights with us.

We hope this does what we intended right at the start; providing nuanced professional insights into a crucial issue. If it does, and you are able to act on the things you read in these pages, then we may have a chance of really making a difference. That, for us all, is what it is about.



RACHEL JOHNSON
PiXL CEO



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

ROBERT JOHN MEEHAN

WHY INSIGHTS?

It probably seems unnecessary to state it, but: all schools are different. They serve different communities, they have different histories, they uphold different values, and they structure the education they offer differently. There are some national (and international) challenges that we face as educators that cannot be overcome by one single intervention or solution. These challenges are nuanced and present differently in different contexts.

Our vision in establishing PiXL Insights was to draw on one of the things that is true of all schools: the positive power of sharing professional insight and collaboration. As Robert John Meehan says: *"the most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives."*

In the following pages, you will read about projects designed, delivered, and evaluated by teachers in PiXL schools to meet the specific needs of their students. In this document, we present to you not one single idea, but many – all rationalised, explained, and reviewed by your peers using their professional experience and insight.

WHY BOYS?

Through the experiences of our schools and their PiXL Associates, we are able to gain a picture of key areas of focus, development and concern from across our network of schools. A common area that we hear about is, and has been, the achievement of boys. This is a complex area and, depending on each school's context, the particular group of boys will be different – e.g. boys in receipt of PP funding, boys with high expectations or abilities, or boys who are manifesting low literacy.

GCSE results from 2019 identified that, in most subjects at KS4, girls were outperforming boys. The results were variable at Level 7 Plus. The gap in Art was 15.6% with 12.5% of boys achieving Level 7 Plus compared to 28.1% of girls. The gap in English is also stark with 9.6% of boys' entries being at Level 7 Plus compared to 18.7% of girls' entries. At Level 4 Plus, this gap increases with girls outperforming boys by 16.3%.

When comparing to the GCSE results from 2021 the gap still very much exists. This is highlighted by the headline measures reported by JCQ - *"Female students continue to perform better than male students: female students 7/A grades and above increased by 3.2% and male students by 2.2%."*ⁱ Boys' performance across all GCSE subjects at Level 7 Plus was 24.4% whereas for girls it was 33.4%. At Level 4, the gap is 7%. When we drill down to the performance in exams in different subjects the picture continues to be intriguing – the smallest gap existing in Maths but larger examples in English Literature and History.

At A level, the overall gender gap widens in the summer results of 2021: girls outperform boys at every grade. 42.1% of all A*A grades were from males and 46.9% from females. The gap widens at grade B to girls outperforming boys by 6%. However, the 2019 summer results demonstrate a different picture at A level with boys outperforming girls by 0.7% at A* and the gap is only 0.1% at A*A. However, at A*AB, girls are outperforming boys by 3.2%. At A*ABC grade, the gap widens slightly to just under 4%.

Although exam results demonstrate the gap in achievement, the whole picture is much more complex. Mark Roberts, in his introduction to *The Boy Question*, poses many questions teaching professionals have asked over the years. Amongst them: *"What are we going to do about the gender attainment gap?"*; *"How can we improve boys' attitude towards school?"*; and *"Is there anything we can do about boys' lower literacy levels?"*ⁱⁱ. These are questions that many of us pose day in, day out. In our PiXL Insights projects, many of our schools are clearly asking the same questions whilst embarking on projects to discover possible answers within their own contexts. Some of these projects are on a large scale, for example looking at school CPD. Others are more tightly focused upon a few key boys. Whatever the scale, these schools have built up their knowledge, motivated their staff, developed a repertoire of techniques and embedded practice. They have also evaluated their projects so that we can gain insight from their experience.

PROJECT TIMELINE

JUNE 2021

Released trailer and invited members to submit expressions of interest.

JULY 2021

Met with interested schools to explain more about the process. Sent out proposal forms.

JULY - EARLY SEPT 2021

Schools submitted proposal forms detailing the projects they wished to undertake.

SEPTEMBER 2021

Schools received feedback on proposals. Successful applicants were enrolled on the project.

OCTOBER 2021

Projects began in schools. Recruited hub leaders with relevant skills and experience and assigned schools to hubs.

JANUARY 2022

First hub meetings to discuss progress to date and share experiences.

MARCH 2022

Second hub meetings to prepare for the write-up process.

APRIL 2022

Schools wrap up their projects and complete their Insights write-up.

MAY 2022

PiXL team and hub leaders read and review all write-ups. Design team work on the final publication.

JUNE 2022

Release of the Insights publication to all PiXL members.

¹ JCQ Press Release 2021, slide 23:
<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Summer-2021-JCQ-GCSE-Press-Slides.pdf>
ⁱⁱ Roberts, M., (2021), The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School, Routledge, p.1

INTRODUCING THE TEAM

“Nothing works everywhere, and everything works somewhere.” DYLAN WILIAM



**JOE
SPARKS**

I am the founder and CEO of the Green Round Foundation. I oversee three specialist alternative provisions dedicated to pushing the boundaries of what is possible in alternative education: one school on a street, one on a farm and one in a pub.

I also run a vocational college in Ghana, helping children from remote villages access support and education. I am a leadership coach and work with leaders across the PiXL network, most notably with members of PiXL Alternative. I created the strategy Level Best, and provide pastoral resource and strategies for PiXL schools from Primary to Post-16 as part of PiXL Change. Supporting Insights schools with their mentoring interventions has been a brilliant extension of this work and something I have really enjoyed.



**HANNAH
COSTANZO**

I work full-time for PiXL as the Head of Projects: I lead the team that creates and delivers all PiXL strategies for Secondary and Post-16 members. As well as this, I currently project manage PiXL Insights, PiXL Teaching and Learning and PiXL TV. Whenever we start a project at PiXL, we ask two questions: 1) what are our members struggling with? and 2) how can we help? PiXL Insights inspired me because there was no simple answer to either of those questions. This wasn't something that we could produce internally and launch to schools, we had to connect with the network in a new way to mine the professional experience, expertise, and insights needed to deal with an issue as complex as boys' achievement. It has been a privilege to work alongside so many inspiring leaders this year. My hope is that these Insights inspire more leaders from across the network to work with us in a new way.



**AARON
COSGROVE**

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been a teacher at Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School for twenty years, where I am currently the Deputy Head. We are a boys' school with a mixed Sixth Form, and have been privileged to be awarded both the Sunday Times' Comprehensive School of the Year and London State Secondary School of the Year awards. I have played a key role in adapting to the increasingly complex needs of our pupils while maintaining our traditional approach. I have really enjoyed the opportunity to work through PiXL with different schools, as the only way to make sure you are doing the best by your pupils is to constantly review and adapt. And what better way to do that than to work collaboratively and purposefully with colleagues? I firmly believe that work such as the Insights project is crucial to ensuring that all boys have the opportunity and tools to thrive in school.



**SARAH
MURRELL**

I am an Educational Consultant who has worked in education for nearly 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 and learning and Staff CPD. It has always been important to me to reflect upon how students can reach their highest possible outcomes through the learning and teaching they experience. I currently work with PiXL on a number of projects, as well as with many schools in London, Wales and Northern Ireland as a PiXL Associate. 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.



**SHORNY
MALCOLMSON**

I work full-time for PiXL as a Project Manager, currently leading on PiXL Reading, and have previously worked on academic PiXL strategies such as Unlock, Spine, Independence and Knowledge. I worked in schools for several years, holding roles such as Lead Practitioner for Teaching and Learning as well as Head of English and Media, whilst examining for A Level Language and Literature and GCSE Language and Literature specifications. It has been a pleasure to work with Insights schools, hearing about the different projects – especially those concerning literacy – that schools involved have worked on, as well as seeing the impact on students and teacher practice. I hope this will inspire other school leaders across our network to be creative in their approach to literacy and how we can support students with this crucial skill area.



**MATT
STEVENS**

I am the Principal at Saracens High School, which opened as a free school in 2018 to our first Year 7 cohort. I began my career as a PE teacher and sought out opportunities through the years to contribute to improving schools in difficult circumstances, which allowed me to experience all areas of school leadership prior to taking on my headship. I am driven by improving the life chances of all students and, in my current position, by developing more leaders to do the same.

As educators we are always learning, regardless of our experience or time in post, and so work like this, where we take time to reflect and try new strategies, is vital if we are committed to school improvement. I congratulate these Insights authors who have managed to create time to study and plan, and to work with their colleagues to bring about change.



**JENNY
GAYLOR**

I have had 20 years of senior leadership experience and am currently Vice-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 and appreciate 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 that 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.

USING THIS REPORT

As part of the Insights process, we split our participating schools into hubs based on their areas of exploration. These groups met twice throughout the process to share their progress and support each other.



**HOLISTIC AND WRAP-
AROUND ENGAGEMENT**



MENTORING



**RAISING
INSPIRATION**



**TEACHING STRATEGIES
AND STAFF CPD**

Above the title of each project, you will be able to see the Key Stage(s) and Year Group(s) that the project is focused on. Each participating school has shared some contextual data about their institution, including % boys and % pp, which is clearly displayed alongside their report. Some schools have also shared additional contextual information. Our index on page 95 is a helpful tool if you are looking for something specific. You can find references and further reading on page 92. Here you can also find links to any PiXL resource that is mentioned.

USING THIS REPORT STRATEGICALLY

At the heart of the Insights programme lie professional educators and school leaders who wanted to see how they might improve boys' achievement - as you have seen from the different hubs, there are different themes and approaches that schools have taken.

As you read through these 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
- What the impact or outcome of the project was
- How the project might be continued, scaled up or moved forward.

We hope you find these insights inspiring and helpful - we believe that they demonstrate what can be achieved through careful thought and planning, sometimes even making use of existing resources, structures, and staff.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

To make the most of the insights shared in these pages, you may want to consider some of the questions below as you read this document.

- **Who should read/use this publication?** Who will be best placed to read this publication? Do you want to encourage all of SLT/ key staff to read and gain Insights? Should a few key projects be selected and shared?
- **How will you disseminate the project and its ideas to others?** Colleagues engaged in the Insights programme commented that one of the richest experiences they gained from the project was reading articles and sharing mutual reading and research with colleagues and discussing their attitudes and thoughts.
- **Which projects are more relevant to our context?** There are keys and information on each article, highlighting the context of each school and the key focus of their projects.
- **What in this publication will help us improve our boys' achievement?** Are there common themes that emerge e.g. developing confidence, the importance of consistency, ideas for effective mentoring or ideas about high level communication plus many more ...?
- **How will these projects help me drive forward school improvement?** Hopefully the insights from other schools will help you plan what projects might be pertinent for you.

REFLECTING ON YOUR 'NOW'

- **How confident are your students? How self-motivated, optimistic and self-aware are they?** How can you identify and investigate this? How effective is your collection of student voice? How can you develop this? How can you and your colleagues encourage students to make gains in these areas - e.g. resetting the classroom culture?
- **How aware are your staff of these issues?** How confident are your staff and colleagues in addressing the issue of boys' achievement? How can you identify this?
- **What is the culture and model of masculinity that you project in your context?** Have you discussed this as part of your conversations with staff and students? Do you need to?

FOCUSING ON YOUR SCHOOL

- **What in this publication might help you to improve the achievement of the boys in your school?** Are there common themes that emerge when you think about boys' achievement in your school - e.g. lack of confidence/aspiration, revision skills? Are there particular areas - such as mentoring - that you know you want to explore? How confident are your students? How self-motivated, optimistic and self-aware are they?
- **How can you identify the areas you want to focus on?** What is your data telling you? What do your staff think? What do your students say?
- **Which of these projects resonates with your school improvement plan?** There may be projects that you want to prioritise looking at based on the wider aims of your SIP.
- **Which projects are more relevant to your context?** Are you looking particularly for schools with a similar context to your own school? (Contextual information for each contributing school is available at the end of each article.)
- **Drawing on your professional expertise and knowledge, which projects will have the most impact in your context?** What is already established? What mechanisms already work?

SHARING WITH COLLEAGUES

- **Who should read/use this publication?** Who is best placed to read this publication? Do you want to encourage all of SLT to read it? What about other key staff? Should they read the whole document or should you split them between you?
- **How will you disseminate the project and its ideas with others?** If you have found a project that particularly resonates, how will you share it with different staff members? Colleagues engaged in the Insights project commented that one of the richest experiences they gained from the project was mutual reading and research that they then came together to discuss as a staff team.

IMPLEMENTATION, LOGISTICS AND OPERATIONS

- **What planning might you need to have in place to echo any of these projects?** Think about your timetable, staffing, the SEF or SIP etc.
- **What costs might there be in implementing one of these projects?** In terms of time, money, resource?
- **What risks might there be?** What risks were manifest and discussed in the projects? Are those risks the same in your context? Are there any others? What can you do to mitigate these?

AFTER READING THE PROJECTS, WHAT ARE 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?
- Make a plan - identify your why. Reflect on what and how the project can be developed, including any necessary adaptations for your context.
- If you want any guidance, or are interested in speaking directly to any of the colleagues who ran these projects, please contact Insights@pixl.org.uk in the first instance.
- Share your experiences with us so that we can grow the library of Insights. (There will be a folder for Insights on the PiXL Members Area where we can upload additional reflections from schools.)



HOLISTIC & WRAP-AROUND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

- Bespoke interventions to improve motivation and engagement of boys
- Engaging the Disengaged
- Engagement Centre - Re-engaging Key Stage 3 Students
- BOOST: A Sixth Form Programme
- Boys on Board
- Motivating Boys - A Competitive Approach



**“30 out of 31 boys had
made significant progress
from their starting point
in June 2021.”**

**WILDERN SCHOOL**

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 9 AND 10

Bespoke interventions to improve motivation and engagement of boys

INTENT

As a very large (1950) 11-16 fully comprehensive school, we have to have effective teaching and learning, systems and interventions to make our school 'work' – and it really does! However, we have a very typical gap in the Progress 8 of our boys compared to our girls which remains stubborn. Because of our large numbers, we are always conscious to ensure no one misses out. Our school mantra is 'Every student matters, every moment counts' but this can sometimes lead us to sweeping interventions with the danger of a 'one size fits all' approach.

Using this project as a vehicle, our aim was to identify a group of boys who may underachieve, talk to them about their school experience, try to learn what their specific barriers were, and try to provide some bespoke interventions, either individually or in small groups with similar needs.

We chose Year 9 and 10 boys as we know from previous data that motivation and engagement, and inevitably progress, falter in these years. The boys were identified using their behaviour for learning data, progress data and the knowledge of their personalities by their Director of Progress and Achievement (Head of Year). We started with lists as long as 50 students in both years – again due to our size – but with the help of discussions with PiXL we narrowed it down to a group of 20 Year 9 boys and 22 Year 10 boys. We did this in the knowledge that we needed to start small and could scale up if we saw an impact.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our experienced team of Senior Leaders of Learning, aided by guest speaker and child psychologist Lorraine Lee, set about devising a set of open-ended interview questions asking this group of boys all about themselves. Common themes were identified within answers and some mind mapping of ideas for interventions began. The themes were unsurprising and included: lack of knowledge on how to revise, lack of aspiration, the need for positive relationships and recognition, lack of a sense of belonging, minimum self-study and general motivation, and lack of responsibility taken for own actions.



The following interventions were designed and employed for certain students within the project group depending on perceived need:

INTERVENTION 1 - EXTERNAL MENTORING

A group of 7 Year 10 students and 12 Year 9 students were invited to take part in mentoring which was facilitated by our local Youth Mentors. These interventions were aimed at students who were identified as underachieving and had shown an interest in sport or through discussions could benefit from some positive mentoring. The mentoring sessions equipped students with knowledge, strategies and life skills which could help them thrive academically and throughout their teenage years. This was achieved by creating a safe learning environment where they could develop and grow, and a range of improvements were observed. Students were able to build positive relationships with supportive role models who invested in them; they were engaged in challenging, creative teaching and activities based on relevant subjects; they were helped to better understand and manage their thoughts and emotions; they were supported in building healthy, respectful relationships; mentors explored with them the aspirations, strengths and challenges they may or may not be aware of; and mentors helped in setting realistic goals and giving honest feedback. These sessions took an hour a week over a 7-week period.

IMPACT Of the 17 boys involved in the external mentoring programme, 71% reported their overall experience in school had improved, 59% felt their confidence in their education had improved, 76% felt more motivated at school, 71% felt more motivated about their life and their future, and 53% felt their confidence and self esteem had improved. The only student who did not improve in at least one area already rated themselves highly for each of these aspects at the start of the programme. It will be important moving forwards to pick up those students who didn't feel they had improved in one or more areas.

INTERVENTION 2 - REVISION SEMINARS

Focused revision seminars took place with an identified group of 11 Year 10 and 6 Year 9 boys. In this session, each student was issued with a Personal Learning Checklist (PLC) specific to them, listing the subjects that they were taught and the topics that would be covered in each subject for their respective Year 10 and Year 9 exams. It was explained to students how to use these checklists and in the session they were able to RAG-rate the topics and identify the areas they needed to focus on. In the booklet itself, guidance was given on what students could do with their revision for each Red, Amber and Green topic identified. They were also introduced to planning a revision timetable and time was given in the session for them to complete this with help. The session also talked through different revision strategies and gave them an opportunity to consider which ones would work best for them and which ones they needed to use based on their individualised PLC checklist.

IMPACT Staff met with the Year 10 boys from the revision session on two occasions – once after their exams and once after they had received their exam results. Students completed a Google Form that was based on metacognitive questions designed to help them reflect on the process. 65% of the students stated that the PLC booklets were helpful to them and 82% identified the session as useful. Over half of the students stated that motivation was a key factor in their results and the majority felt that they wished they had started to revise earlier. Based on this feedback, we then decided to run the session with the group of Year 9 boys, taking on board the feedback of earlier help and intervention for them. Although a formal meeting with the Year 9s has not yet taken place (as their exams start next week), the verbal feedback we received from the session was exceptionally positive and there was a genuine sense of appreciation from the students for the PLC booklets and the explanations on how best to revise.

“We are delighted with the support he has been given by you all, and the results too. Very grateful parents here for the efforts and ideas of the school he attends!”

PARENT FEEDBACK



INTERVENTION 3 - CAREERS INTERVIEWS

Students identified with a need for careers/aspiration advice were scheduled for a Careers Interview with the school's Careers Advisor. Although the advisor had already begun his interviews with Year 10 as a whole, the ones identified for this project were filtered to take place as a matter of urgency. Year 9, who on the whole don't have their interviews during this year, were also interviewed. As time allowed, all students from the project were eventually interviewed, regardless of their identified need. In the hour-long interviews, the Careers Advisor, along with the students, created an Action Plan which was subsequently shared back to the students and to their tutors as well. Parents received an email which highlighted that an interview had taken place and contained a guide on planning the next steps with their child.

IMPACT 94% of students when asked to complete an evaluation of the project as a whole said they had found their expedited careers interview either really useful or somewhat useful. The action plan generated includes nominated action points with clear dates stating when these should be completed. As a further development step, the Senior Team has discussed a process of reminding and revisiting these so that they can be sent directly to the students, to keep these points in their immediate consciousness.

INTERVENTION 4 - PEER MENTORING

Staff were asked to nominate Year 11 boys who had a similar profile to our Year 9 project boys but had really started to turn things around – perhaps a little too late! They were asked to speak to our Year 9 boys who were building up to their first practice exams with a set of prompt questions about revision, motivation etc. We provided a free lunch and postcards as thanks. This was a one-off session.

IMPACT The peer mentoring session was well attended by the students invited. We truly believe the lure of free food was the clincher! 58% of students who attended felt this session was really useful or somewhat useful. Although the logistics of setting this session up were quite intensive, the feedback we received unprompted from one parent the next morning made it all worthwhile. **"Morning. I just wanted to say thank you so much for all that you are doing as a school for Taylor. He came home yesterday so inspired about revision!!!! Having met with a teenage mentor who he clearly respected, he has started thinking through his plans for extra work he wants to do. We are delighted with the support he has been given by you all, and the results too. Very grateful parents here for the efforts and ideas of the school he attends!"**

INTERVENTION 5 - PRAISE AND RECOGNITION POSTCARDS

The majority of students on the project had an identified need for positive praise and recognition of their contributions. As a result, all teachers were provided with three praise postcards on a fortnightly basis to be sent to any students whom they felt deserved particular recognition. The names of the students involved in the project were shared with teachers each fortnight but colleagues were asked to only send one to these students if they truly deserved to receive it.

IMPACT 14 of the boys when asked to complete an evaluation of the project as a whole remembered receiving a postcard in recognition of something they had done or achieved in class. We have no way of knowing for sure if these students would have received them without our project and drive on the power of recognition and praise, but we have our suspicions! When asked what they received the cards for and how this made them feel, these were some of the replies:

"I got it for maths and got it for determination and it made me feel good about myself."

"I was happy."

"Contribution in Geography, made me feel proud of myself."

Additional areas we wanted to tackle within the project related to developing a sense of belonging in students, metacognition and a sense of agency. These proved more difficult due to logistics; however, we have been planning a community garden project that we would like some of the boys to be involved with when we have the staffing capacity and we will launch this shortly. Metacognition and developing a sense of agency was identified as needing a whole school focus and, having referred to recent educational research about these areas, it was felt this should be part of a CPD theme next year, initially for our Strategic Development Group before launching to the whole school.



EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The impact of each intervention has been clear for us to see. Yet again, unsurprisingly, not everything worked for everyone. When asking teachers for their impressions of improvement in the two aspects of motivation and progress, we have seen a 34% increase in motivation for our Year 10 boys across their lessons and a 26% increase for our Year 9 boys. There has been less of an impact on progress so far but we are confident this is due to the short timescale of our project.

Extending the peer mentoring programme for these types of students would seem to be an important outcome from this project. We use peer mentoring so successfully in other aspects of our school – for example, in our More Able Children and Reading Ambassador programmes. This project seems to reinforce the success of this strategy, as long as the mentors are carefully chosen to match the needs of mentees.

We will continue to promote the use of praise postcards and recognition across the school, however we will adjust the frequency and distribution method.

The use of external (and internal) mentor programmes is something we will look to continue with identified students. These have been evidenced to have had a positive impact on engagement, motivation, self-esteem and confidence.

The format of the revision sessions will continue, however the timing of the session will be extended so that students have more time to complete the activities shown to them. We will also look at moving the sessions to earlier in the calendar so that revision can be spread rather than intense. We will also be using student data to challenge thought processes.

Our next steps from here will be to try to incorporate some of the findings, like the need for better student and staff understanding of metacognition and self-efficacy, into our whole school CPD for next year. We would also like to get our Community Hub Garden project off the ground for those students who we identified as having a need to 'belong' and engage with something within the school but outside of lessons.

When we started, our biggest barrier seemed to be our size. The original plan was always to scale this project up. Whilst there are a few aspects that may work on a larger scale (e.g. more peer mentoring or whole staff training on certain aspects), the key to success is perhaps to keep it small and manageable. To make that work, the identification of individuals who need this kind of intervention is key. Whilst you can start with behaviour and progress data, the person/people who know these students the most are the Directors of Progress and Achievement (Heads of Year) and their tutors.

Identifying students even lower down the school would be a major priority for us moving forwards as well as continuing to match the right interventions with the right students, depending on need.

Michelle Wade

Assistant Headteacher and the Senior Leaders of Learning Team
Wildern School

SCHOOL WILDERN SCHOOL



REGION
Southampton

1952

NUMBER
ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11



% BOYS
48%



PUPIL PREMIUM
14%

OTHER INFO

KS4 has been a 3-year curriculum for many years.

THOMAS BENNETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Engaging the Disengaged

INTENT

The project I envisaged was one that targeted the bottom 15-20% of boys for achievement in our current Year 11 cohort. Traditionally, boys underperform in relation to girls in our school and are more at risk of becoming NEET, as well as being targeted by county lines. Our boys often did not see a relevance in education and cited the reason as being that their parents and grandparents *"did alright without any GCSE qualifications"*. The task was to unpick why these boys, 31 in total, were underachieving and how to support them in seeing the relevance of their education.

At the end of Year 10, all students took part in summer mock exams and this was the basis on which I found my target group of students. I looked at the attainment data, as well as the effort data, and found that the boys were split into two groups: those with low effort who were underachieving and those with low effort and behaviour issues who were underachieving. Therefore, my project needed to have two strands to it in order to tackle different issues in relation to the reasons for their disengagement.

My overarching goal was to close the gap between boys and girls in their summer 2022 GCSE examinations, which would be monitored throughout the academic year through our data captures and further mock examinations. To attain this, I put in place the following plan:

- Student voice
- Literacy intervention for selected students
- One-to-one mentoring
- Teaching & learning strategies to be applied in the classroom, including behaviour/boundaries
- Individual careers and post 16 advice



IMPLEMENTATION

I began the school year in September 2021 by asking all 31 boys to complete a student voice survey. The questionnaire included questions related to which subjects they felt they were doing well in and why, as well as those subjects that they were not doing as well in and why. I also asked them what strategies they felt were successful and unsuccessful in their lessons. I made the decision to keep the survey anonymous so that the boys felt comfortable sharing their honest opinions.

Common themes that emerged from the survey, despite the behaviour differences, included the need for more support, encouragement and modelling in lessons, and also the relevance of the subject in their lives. Another element that came out was the relationship between the student and the teacher; they felt that if they trusted or liked the teacher then they were more likely to try, even if they struggled with the subject or topic. The boys who had behaviour and punctuality issues specifically raised the issue that the teachers did not like them, so what was the point in attending? It became clear that the boys in the project needed a more holistic approach to their learning and to feel that every lesson was a space in which they could make mistakes.

Further to this, I also read *21st Century Boys*ⁱ and *The Boy Question*ⁱⁱ to deepen my understanding of practical techniques to support and develop our pedagogy and to ensure that anything we implemented was rooted in research that had previously been successful. To disseminate this to the rest of the teaching staff, I utilised middle leaders. Every Thursday morning we met as a team. I showed them the data from the summer 2021 mock exams and who our target students were. I also discussed the comments from the survey and how the boys viewed their education. Once they were armed with this information, clear teaching and learning strategies were discussed that could support students in lessons such as modelling, class writing, awareness of low literacy levels for differentiation, positivity in interactions and giving tasks that allowed the boys to succeed and see their success/improvement (quick wins). We also agreed to use the Head of Year and Learning Mentor for Year 11 to monitor and praise punctuality, rather than the class teacher disciplining lateness, to allow a shift in the relationship between the teacher and the student. Middle leaders then took these strategies back to their departments and discussion of these were standing items of the agenda for each department every time they met.

Separately, our Head of Careers organised a one-to-one meeting for every Year 11 student with a member of SLT to discuss post 16 and careers. All of the SLT team were aware of who the 31 students in the project were and further one-to-one support with an outside agency was offered to those students who were struggling with their next academic steps. The Head of Year also supported students with completing applications.

Finally, our Head of Literacy identified those students on the list that had low literacy levels and incorporated them into her tutor time reading intervention programme. The boys met with their reading mentor in small groups twice a week for 8 weeks.

An area, however, that we struggled to implement was the one-to-one mentoring programme. Due to staff absence, particularly in relation to Covid, we were unable to sustain this in a meaningful way. A more informal programme of support was offered by the learning mentor for Year 11 as and when it was needed but the original plan to have a mentor for each student and to meet once a week was not successful.

As the project progressed, I monitored data and also adapted the strategies that we were employing. I shared with the teaching staff Chapter 1 of *The Boy Question* and asked them to read and implement some of the strategies for success such as mastery over performance and to have the boys 'write like you.' With the Year 11 pastoral team, I worked with the Head of Year 11 to implement and model the revision techniques in Chapter 4. This programme of revision development would take place in tutor time in the mornings, led by the tutor, to model and support students with what successful revision looks like as well as the many different ways that they could approach it.

WE ASKED STUDENTS WHAT WAS HELPING THEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL

“Teachers that actually spend time making sure their students understand what is going on and actually trying to help.”

“Encouragement and explaining the question more.”



IMPACT

To measure the impact of the project, I monitored attainment and effort data in November and February, after their mock exams. I also looked at behaviour and punctuality data for specific students. Finally, I asked for feedback from middle leaders partway through the project as to what strategies were working well and what could be improved, and I adapted some strategies accordingly.

The November data capture showed some improvement for the boys in the project but this was minimal as I feel that the strategies had not had time to embed prior to this. However, the February data capture showed much more impact after their mock exams. 30 out of 31 boys had made significant progress from their starting point in June 2021. One of the boys became a persistent non-attender and was taken off roll. In all 30, their progress 8 score had improved. Furthermore, 3 of the boys were no longer in the bottom 15-20% of attainers in the year group. One of the boys in the project had moved from being in minus progress 8 (-0.27) to +0.23. Further to this, the effort for the boys without behaviour and punctuality issues improved significantly. For those who did have behaviour and punctuality issues, there was improvement in their punctuality based on being on attendance report and being monitored by the year team. Positive praise and the use of ASPIRE points, our internal rewards system, had an impact on those students as they were being recognised for their positives rather than their negatives.

Those boys who took part in the reading programme to develop their literacy levels and reading ages improved by 8 months on average during the 8-week course. Further monitoring took place by gaining feedback from middle leaders as to what was having positive impact in lessons. Those areas that were successful were:

- Building relationships
- Setting boundaries
- Individual feedback and live marking
- Parent conversations
- Specific and honest feedback
- One-to-one feedback
- One-to-one progress charts
- Utilising the year team
- Personalised trackers to show progress
- Quick knowledge recall starters
- Rewards
- Positive and supportive conversations

One area that was less successful was attendance at after school intervention sessions and therefore more focus was put on what was happening in lessons and within school time. Again, students did not see the value in these sessions and therefore did not attend. We then linked attendance to these sessions to attendance to prom. The year team built a passport to prom that rewarded positive behaviour, effort and punctuality, which has had a positive impact in the last 6 weeks and during the Easter break.

Overall, I feel the project has been a huge success as the boys involved, as well as others, know that their teachers are invested in them and that we want them to succeed. We have developed an insight into their view of school and it has allowed us, as practitioners, to further develop our pedagogy. We have also realised that there is power in building relationships and helping students to see that they are succeeding. They may not be where they need to be yet, but they can see that they are on the right path and making progress. As a school, we have developed our attendance and punctuality policy across the whole school, which has come as a direct result of the work done during this project.

The next step for this project is to maintain the strategies we are using up to and throughout the summer 2022 exam period. I am also planning to employ the same strategies for our current Year 10 students, and trying to explore some of the pedagogical approaches across all year groups to improve the self-belief and effort of our students. We need to overcome the idea that it is better to not try rather than try and fail, which is our biggest challenge.

Lucy Buchan

Assistant Headteacher (KS4 RSL)

Thomas Bennett Community College

“30 out of 31 boys had made significant progress from their starting point in June 2021.”

¹ Palmer, Sue. (2009), **21st Century Boys**, Orion Books Ltd

² Roberts, Mark. (2022), **The Boy Question**, Routledge



“We have developed our attendance and punctuality policy across the whole school, which has come as a direct result of the work done during this project.”

SCHOOL THOMAS BENNETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE



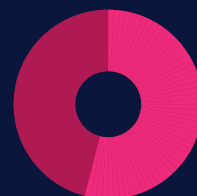
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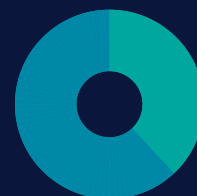
NUMBER ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
53.7%



PUPIL PREMIUM
37.72%

OTHER INFO KS4 has recently moved to a 2-year curriculum, rather than a 3-year curriculum. 9 other secondary schools in the area, of which we are seen as one of the lower choices.



DE LA SALLE SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 7, 8 AND 9

Engagement Centre: Re-engaging Key Stage 3 Students

INTENT

After the debacle of Covid, schools were left with many disengaged students who no longer saw the relevancy or importance of education. Their attitude to learning was poor and their resilience weakened massively by the enforced isolation and stasis of lockdown. They had become comfortable in their lack of challenge. Failure to complete school or gain equivalent qualifications carries serious consequences for young people. Not completing school and failing to gain education or training qualifications is associated with greater insecurity in building careers. Consistently, research shows that early leavers are more likely to become unemployed, stay unemployed for longer, have lower earnings, and over their life course accumulate less wealth.ⁱ

Because of low achievement and/or poor behaviour, many at-risk students have experienced verbal or non-verbal messages from adults communicating low expectations and low trust. Students disengage when there are low expectations.ⁱⁱ Having high expectations of students sends a powerful message that staff believe students are not limited by past behaviour or achievement, and can do more. Strategies and school culture that give students real power and responsibility also tell students that the school believes they can do the right thing.

“The poor motivation of low attainers is a logical response to repeated failure. Start getting them to succeed and their motivation and confidence should increase”.ⁱⁱⁱ School-wide strategies addressing the quality of provision is essential for reintegration to be successful. These students often disengage very early on in their school life before they make the final decision to ‘drop out’. As teachers, we see this clearly. The role of the Engagement Centre is to reengage, refocus and reintegrate.

A disengaged student will have problems in every lesson, they will have issues with friendships and possibly issues at home. These are high needs students in terms of the daily school life. The hope is that the Engagement Centre will offer them that period of time to reflect, refocus and renew. The period of time will be time bound and SMART targets will be set (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely). Once the period of time is complete, there will be a phased and supported integration back into mainstream school.



IMPLEMENTATION

From the research, we were sure this had to be a KS3 project. Identifying the best time to have maximum impact with students was imperative and for this reason we trialled the setting with small groups of Year 7, 8 and 9 students. These students were identified from a combination of assessment, behaviour, attendance and punctuality data. The groups included a combination of SEND, DA and mixed academic ability students.

The project was to set up an Engagement Centre which could offer these students more support, diagnose the issues of engagement within the classroom and offer therapy. They would be removed from the mainstream and their timetable floated alongside the school timetable. All of their lessons would be together in a separate classroom. They would have English, maths and science each day to catch up on loss of learning. Timetable planning in the previous academic year allowed them to have the best practitioners to support them. This was vital. This included teaching staff and employing an Engagement Centre Manager, also responsible for some teaching. Parts of the school day were given over to intervention in the form of work on resilience, goal planning, organisation, strengths and weaknesses in the school environment, self-reflection, motivation and independent study. This time was gained by making lessons shorter.

We met with parents to seek permission and support. As this was a pilot there was a small number of parents who did not want their child to be involved in the project and we had to accept this – after a fair amount of persuasion.

Students were to spend a varying amount of time in the EC, between 6-8 weeks.

Before they came into the Engagement Centre, classroom observations took place to identify needs/concerns. Once their time in the Centre was completed, classroom observations and regular reviews took place to continue the monitoring.

In the first half term we worked with Year 9 students, all boys. They were identified in entry academic quintiles 1-5 and there was a mixture of SEND and high attaining (HA) students.

Findings were that the HA boys did not need this high intervention but a more low-key, regular, coaching conversation and that the mixture of academic quintiles 1-5 was too difficult to manage needs.


In the second half term we worked with Year 8 students. These were a mixture of sexes but only taken from academic quintiles 2-4. This group was much more manageable and the improvement in their engagement in learning was evident much more quickly. Nobody, it seemed, had had a conversation with them about the skills they needed to work on to become truly engaged in their learning.

In the third half term we worked with Year 7 students, again a mixture of sexes. This time, we kept them for one whole term after realising that 8 weeks was too short for the intervention needed.

For this current and last term of this academic year, we made the decision to reintroduce some of the Year 9 boys, who had already attended the EC, and several new boys, to the centre. Upon their return to mainstream lessons earlier in the year, it was clear these students' needs could be met far more effectively in the Engagement Centre.

“When I was in the mainstream I was dead giddy but, in the Engagement Centre, I feel more relaxed and focus more on my work and teachers.”

YEAR 7 PUPIL

A photograph of two young men in school uniforms, likely Year 9 pupils, sitting at a desk and looking down at papers or books. They are wearing dark blue blazers with light blue piping, light blue shirts, and dark blue ties. The tie on the right has a crest. The background is a blurred classroom setting.

“I have had a good experience in the Engagement Centre because I feel like I’m getting stuck in more and getting my head in the game. My behaviour has improved because you can’t get away with much because of the small amount of people. You are noticed much more by the teachers.”

YEAR 9 PUPIL



IMPACT

Indicators we are using to demonstrate the effectiveness of this programme to reengage students include:

- Improvements in students' attitudes, attendance and achievement
- Reductions in referrals to 'Remove', detentions or exclusion
- Improvements in the speed in which students are able to settle into school routines
- Students' increased engagement in lessons and a rise in the number of awards for performance
- Positive contributions to school life
- Positive responses from students, parents and carers to questionnaires
- Positive feedback from teachers

Students in Years 7 and 8 have reintegrated back into mainstream school life and have been overwhelmingly successful at achieving some of the above indicators. Only some of the Year 9 boys returned to mainstream with better engagement in lessons – for the others (and a few more), we felt we needed to offer further intervention as they head into their GCSE years. This is our next project.

EVALUATION

The project in this format is more suited to students in Year 7 and Year 8 where lean, timely intervention and training can have maximum effect. The project highlighted a growing issue with our Year 9 students and their potential disengagement heading into KS4. The ever-evolving EC is now to become a fully alternative provision with the development of a broad curriculum offer suited to these students (all boys for now).

The project also raised a number of whole school questions, which will form the foundation of our next steps:

- How is our teaching and learning adapted to ensure these students can make progress?
- Do staff have clear expectations for engagement in the classroom?
- Do students understand how to be engaged?
- Do staff put enough importance on relationships in the classroom?

Catherine Flaherty
Deputy Headteacher
De La Salle School

Michelle Croft
Assistant Headteacher
De La Salle School

ⁱ Rumberger, R. & Lamb, S., (2003), **The early employment and further education experiences of high school dropouts**, *Economics of Education Review*, Vol 22, Issue 4, pp.353-366

ⁱⁱ Bryk, A.S. & Thum, Y.M., (1989), **The Effects of High School Organisation on Dropping Out**, *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol 26, Issue 3, pp. 353-383

ⁱⁱⁱ Roberts, Mark, (2022), **The Boy Question**, Routledge

SCHOOL DE LA SALLE SCHOOL



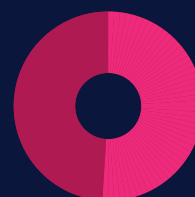
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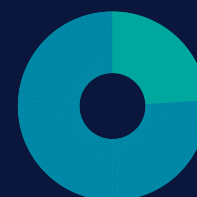
NUMBER ON
ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11



% BOYS
51%



PUPIL PREMIUM
24%

OTHER INFO We are a mixed Catholic comprehensive school.



ST. JAMES' CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 13

BOOST: A Sixth Form Programme

INTENT

We identified that we wanted to reduce the gap between our projected A*-B grades at Key Stage 5 and our WIG. To do this, we began with a small group of students that we believed that we could move and measure the success of the project against. Our intent was borne out of a lot of work that we did around mindset change that we embedded in assemblies and conversations we had with both students and staff around our school values of VERITAS ⁱ - "the search for the truth" - intertwined with the *High Performance: Lessons from the Best on Becoming Your Best* ⁱⁱ book that we read by Jake Humphrey and Prof Damian Hughes.



IMPLEMENTATION

We rolled the project out in two phases. We have evaluated Phase One using in-school data and have evaluated Phase Two with soft data, using student, staff and parent voice so far. Additionally, we will use external results in the summer to evaluate its success in more depth.

PHASE ONE

We began by working with the Head of Year 13 to go through the ideas that we had learnt about through reading the book. We focused on developing a strong mindset for our young people, by focusing on what they could influence and not on external factors that were out of their hands. We used the DAC model by Dr Lazarusⁱⁱⁱ, which asks the following questions:

- a. Demand - What is demanded of me?
- b. Ability - Do I have the skills to complete the activity?
- c. Consequences - What is actually at stake?

We then created a 12-week plan for the student body where we would add one small skill each week that would enhance their revision and readiness for exams. For example, adding something new to an ingrained routine that the student might have. This came from reading *“Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results”*^{iv} by Stephen Guise. The plan had a midpoint when we were able to measure our success, which coincided with our Spring data drop. We used this to measure the success of Phase One.

In addition to the whole cohort assemblies and ongoing conversations, we used 9 students – of which 6 were boys – to do some intense intervention with to try to reduce the gap between our WIG and projected A*-B grades. This programme was named BOOST. The Head of Year 13, myself and my senior link met with these students one-on-one weekly for 6 weeks. We focused our discussions on communicating about controlling the things that they could change and gave them weekly actions for their underachieving subjects. All of these actions focused on exam techniques. We then used the Spring data to measure the success of the programme.

PHASE TWO

We used the Spring data to put in an intense regime of interventions personalised for the students. This included 22 out of 32 students who were boys. In this phase, we used our data to categorise the students into 4 groups. Those that were underachieving across the board would need to be on our Academic Board group. These students had a parent meeting and would be in our BOOST Wave Two group, plus Supervised Study. There were some students who had issues with getting into school on time, so we used the Rise and Shine programme for them. This involved getting them in at 8am and getting them prepared for their day. Lastly, we had some students who needed a place to revise and some structure around this. This group would be placed in Supervised Study for up to 10 periods a week.

We began this second phase with another assembly focused on “Taking Responsibility”, a chapter from the *High Performance*^v book, and this helped to crystallise these last few weeks of revision for the students. At the beginning of this phase, we also had a drop-down day for the whole year group. In this programme we helped support the students with a range of ways to revise. This helped them to ensure that they were ready for the Easter break to maximise their time at home. We ended this phase with a Mock Exam window, where departments focused on exam stamina. These exams were there to support the students with writing for the entire length of an exam. This was not the first time they had done this, as we had exam periods earlier in the year, but it was a good point to get them to think about timing and stamina as the last piece of the jigsaw before they set off for their Easter break.

“40% of the students on BOOST Wave One increas(ed) their grades in all subjects.”



IMPACT

The impact of Wave One was that our ALPs grade went up from 5 to 4 and our A*-B projections rose too, from 59.9% to 64.4%. This was helped by 40% of the students on BOOST Wave One increasing their grades in all subjects.

Phase Two's impact is much more subjective, but we hope to see a continuation of our upward trend in our external results in the summer.

The students have said the following about the project, **"The scheme helped me to structure my revision and ensure I dedicated the right amount of time and effort into my subjects, making the goal of reaching my target grades seem more achievable"**.

Staff said, **"During our RSLs, we were able to ensure students who were underachieving would be placed on a programme of personalised learning, supported by the school. We very much appreciated this."**

Parents stated that they always felt **"supported by the school"** and thanked the school for **"all they do"** to support their child.

Alex Aldridge

Head of Sixth Form

St. James Catholic High School

ⁱ Our school Values - Excellence, Resilience, Integrity, Trust, Aspiration and Service (**VERITAS**)

ⁱⁱ Humphrey, Jake and Hughes, Damian, (2021), **High Performance: Lessons from the Best on Becoming Your Best**, Cornerstone

ⁱⁱⁱ Humphrey, Jake and Hughes, Damian, (2021), **High Performance: Lessons from the Best on Becoming Your Best**, Cornerstone

^{iv} Guise, Stephen, (2013), **Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results**, CreateSpace Publishing

^v Humphrey, Jake and Hughes, Damian, (2021), **High Performance: Lessons from the Best on Becoming Your Best**, Cornerstone

SCHOOL ST. JAMES' CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



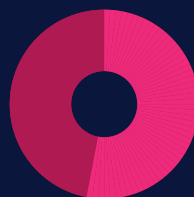
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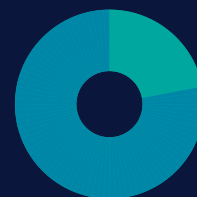
NUMBER ON
ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
53.5%



PUPIL PREMIUM
21%

“The scheme helped me to structure my revision and ensure I dedicated the right amount of time and effort into my subjects, making the goal of reaching my target grades seem more achievable”.

ST. JAMES' CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL PUPIL



**LONGHILL HIGH SCHOOL**

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 9

Boys on board

INTENT

This project was designed to support the academic progress of a group of underachieving boys in Year 9. We wanted to improve their behaviour, relationships with adults, punctuality and achievement in Maths and English. The project involved the Head of Year, Pastoral Support, a Year 9 Maths teacher and Reading coach. Sixteen boys were selected, twelve of whom are entitled to free school meals and two who have special educational needs.



IMPLEMENTATION

We began by imagining what success would look like at the end of this intervention for the boys. Success in general would be a greater level of engagement in their education. For some of the boys, we felt that one of the barriers which prevented them from engaging in their school life positively was a negative attitude towards teachers and that many of the boys lacked trust in adults.

We felt that the boys would benefit from a positive male role model. The project was launched, therefore, with a Motivational Speaker/Coach who visited for a day and worked with the boys. We found a highly recommended coach who was young and someone we felt the boys could relate to. The boys responded positively to him, they felt understood and listened to, as well as inspired. He returned half way through the project to see how they were getting on and set targets for the end of the project. The boys follow him still on social media and he proved the perfect person to inspire them. We discussed issues such as misplaced anger, lack of motivation, lack of responsibility and low self-esteem.

Although the boys were of differing abilities and had different starting points, none of them were making expected progress towards their target grades in English and Maths. To establish a baseline assessment, we ran a reading comprehension task and gained accurate reading ages and raw scores for each student. The results showed that on average the group were reading at an age 2 to 3 years below their chronological age. Each student also took a self-diagnostic assessment in Maths which reflected the teacher assessed grades – most were 1 to 2 grades below where they should be according to their target grades. The boys identified in this group all turned up late to lessons and were losing a significant amount of their education because of this.

The main three areas of focus were therefore identified as support in developing reading, maths and punctuality. Our reading coach created a timetable, which provided between 6-8 hours of additional reading time with each student over the period of a term (30 minutes per week). Prior to the sessions, she met with each student to introduce them to the library and get to know them a little, so that she could prepare and order books and reading material of interest to them.

With help from the Local Education Authority, we funded an Online Maths Tutor programme which our students could access both in school and at home. The boys met as a group every Friday morning and spent 20 minutes working on their Maths programme.

The boys respond best to short, sharp challenges, so we built the project to work in this way. The first challenge was a two-week competition on the most assignments completed and hours spent accessing the online Maths programme. This supported them in getting used to completing work at home and accessing the programme from the library at school. It also successfully involved parents in their Maths development.

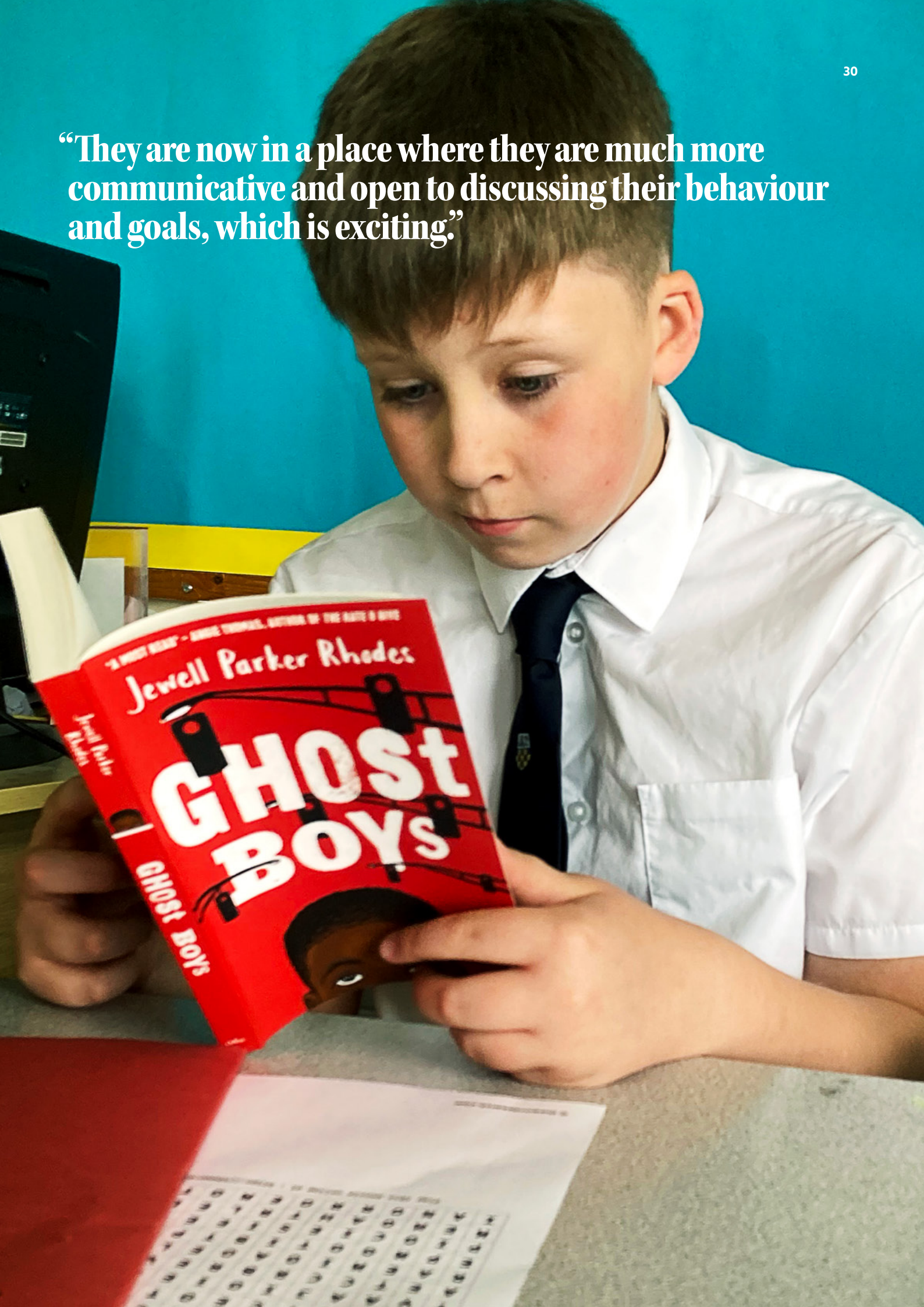
The weekly reading intervention helped the boys improve their reading and comprehension skills. They also benefited from 1:1 attention and time in the library. Towards the end of this project, we added a whole year group challenge, which was to read a novel in three weeks.

We used a competitive element to improve punctuality to lessons. The boys paired up and earned points together. Points would not be logged unless the student checked in with the Year 9 team at the end of the day. This enabled us to increase our daily contact with them all, enabling us to develop routines and establish consistency.

‘It was great to have a competition around getting to lessons on time but now I’m in it, I no longer need that focus. The change has stuck; I don’t need the reward anymore.’ YEAR 9 PUPIL

Each boy has responded positively and differently to the project. I have found it is important to listen to what motivates and works for them. For example, some loved the paired punctuality challenge but others felt pressured and preferred to work alone on changing a behaviour pattern. What is clear is the more attention and time they were given with adults, the greater their level of communication and engagement has become in school. They have risen to the higher level of challenge and communicated more effectively in response to the support we have provided.

“They are now in a place where they are much more communicative and open to discussing their behaviour and goals, which is exciting.”





OUTCOMES

As a group, the average reading age has increased by one year from 12 to 13. The boys are between 13 and 14 years old. As a group, they have reduced the number of minutes late to lessons from the Autumn to Spring term by 1,380. None of the boys truant lessons anymore.

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

STUDENT 1 An improvement in behaviour. 69 behaviour points in the Autumn term. 12 behaviour points in the Spring term.	STUDENT 2 Baseline reading age of 2.38 years below chronological age. End of project reading age of +0.46.
STUDENT 3 A total of 102 minutes late to lessons in term 1. 22 minutes late for lessons in term 2.	STUDENT 4 Maths grade 4 as a baseline. End of project Maths grade 6.

The next step for this group of boys is to work on PiXL's Level Best programme. They are now in a place where they are much more communicative and open to discussing their behaviour and goals, which is exciting.

NEXT STEPS

We are also looking at ways in which we can further engage the students' parents and carers with their child's education, through positive conversations. We plan to roll out the online Maths provision across the school by allocating Heads of Faculty to work with identified students during Mentor time. Our reading coach is using whole school data to identify students who are not supported by the SEN department but have a low reading age and will struggle to access the curriculum. This data is shared with teaching staff so they are aware and can provide personalised resources.

Miranda Wells
Assistant Headteacher
Longhill High School

SCHOOL LONGHILL HIGH SCHOOL



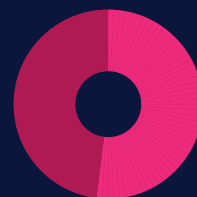
REGION
Brighton

912

NUMBER ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11



% BOYS
52%



PUPIL PREMIUM
39%



HYLANDS SCHOOL

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 10

Motivating boys - a competitive approach

CONTEXT

Hylands School is an 11-18 school in Chelmsford, with a very mixed intake in terms of social background and academic ability. Boys' engagement in the current context that I work in has always been a concern, and certainly falls within the national trends and patterns that we are experiencing within all educational settings within the UK. I was, therefore, keen to take on a project intended specifically to motivate boys.

The criteria for taking part in the scheme was boys who had been identified in both Attitude to Learning (A2L) grades awarded from the Autumn 1 data drop as 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate', or if they were a cause for concern with regards to negative behaviour points. Form Tutors also suggested students to participate. As Head of Year 10, I decided to focus on my year group. The selected boys were notoriously late to lessons, their engagement was very low, and they would often leave lessons without producing the amount of work that the classroom teacher deemed satisfactory. Primarily, it was aimed at those HELP (High Effort, Low Progress) students in the Horsforth Quadrant. Some students were EAL students so access to the curriculum was in itself a real challenge, whilst others had SEN needs which led to their disengagement.

INTENT

During the initial planning stages, I began by thinking about finding a 'hook' – something that would engage this particular group of students. It needed to be tangible to them, but also have a real sense of purpose to support the teaching and learning of the students. After some thought, I decided to combine my two greatest passions: teaching and learning, and football! I decided to base the scheme on the biggest club football competition in the world – the Champions League. (Unfortunately, it would not feature my beloved Tottenham Hotspur...!) The overall premise was that students would be in direct competition in the classroom against another student participating in the scheme. It would not have a direct impact on other students in the room, and would be very 'onerous-free' for the teaching staff. For me to see any impact, I would need to run the scheme over two half terms. We therefore began at October half term and ran until February half term.



IMPLEMENTATION

To introduce the scheme and build interest, students were given a ticket of invitation to attend a launch (picture 1). Immediately, the intrigue was there as I did not say specifically what the scheme entailed, but it had the Champions League logo on it. As students walked into the school hall, the famous Champions League anthem was playing (if you know you know...). I then explained how it would work, with students battling it out with each other to decide the winner.

Immediately (and I knew this was coming), I heard the response: "So Sir, we're not playing football?" I had anticipated this, and was ready with my answer: "No, this is about your academic achievement, but with a spin on football." Obviously, I had a few eye rolls, but the majority remained engaged.

Students would be given a scorecard each morning (picture 2) which focused on four very simple elements within the classroom: punctuality, equipment, engagement in lessons, and completion of work. This card was big enough to fit in the top pocket of their blazers. They would then give this to their classroom teacher at the start of every lesson. Every time they received a tick in the box this would equate to a 'goal' for the team they were representing. They would then bring the card back to me at the end of the day and I would add up their total goals (maximum 15) and input these as their score for the day.

PICTURE 1: INVITATION



PICTURE 2: SCORECARD

	PUNCTUALITY /EQUIPMENT	ENGAGEMENT	COMPLETION	TOTAL
Period 1				
Period 2				
Period 3				
Period 4				
Period 5				

To gain the students' engagement, during the launch I carried out a 'live draw.' This was to determine what football team they were representing and, more importantly for the boys, against whom they were competing. So, by the time the launch finished, every boy knew what the scheme was, how it worked, who they were representing and more importantly for them who they were up against.

In order to keep them engaged through our use of Google in school, I created a Google Classroom for the boys so I could update them every day.

To give students tangible rewards, every time they got a clean sweep of goals in one lesson, they were awarded a reward point in line with the school's reward policy. I also made it the students' responsibility to hand in the scorecard every day after school. I would deliver it to them during my rounds in the morning as Head of Year, but they had to give it in at the end. I gave them two days grace to get used to this, but after that it was a case of no card, no goals, no reward.

Students played each other over the course of one day. I then collated the results, and league tables were published once updated.

One of the negatives I envisaged was that there was not going to be 100% engagement. I appreciated that, so the students that did not engage had to see the tangible side of the scheme for them to improve their academic performance. Likewise, students who were not particularly lovers of football could have been put off, so for those the explanation of the bigger picture was key.

I also conducted a launch with staff during ten minutes of CPD and explained their role in this. All they needed to do was to tick the card and give it back to them. I also followed this up with an email so they were aware of who was part of the scheme.



IMPACT

The scheme proved to be very successful with the boys who stuck to it until the end. They could see the effect that it was having on their engagement in lessons and the completion of work.

Staff commented that it gave students that extra reason to be focused in class. Students had that extra motivation to succeed in lessons. It was no coincidence that in our end of term celebration assembly at Christmas when we display the top 10 students who have achieved the most reward points, 3 of these were from the Champions League scheme. One of the boys was even awarded the Headteacher Award of an Amazon voucher, so there were tangible successes.

Once the group stage finished, students moved into the knockout stage after Christmas. This allowed the students who were fully engaged to progress. This meant playing against someone over the period of 3 days. We changed the parameters to increase the challenge so that staff then had to give students a rating of 1, 2 or 3, with 3 being the highest. Again, this was set by the classroom teacher according to what they were looking for.

To conclude the scheme, I held a 'Champions breakfast.' Nothing fancy, just a hot chocolate and a croissant, but then named the winner and awarded the prize. This proved to be a great success and again that tangible element was evident.

For most of the students who completed the scheme, their A2L grades increased. It was particularly nice to see during the scheme the amount of A2L grades awarded by teachers that were now deemed as 'good'. It has inspired the boys to take ownership of their learning and the financial implication on the school is next to nothing. We even had two of the boys apply for the year group Leadership team – something that I would never have foreseen at the start of the course.

This scheme has scalability. You can run it across multiple year groups and change the format completely to fit your school setting. It is very simple, and not onerous at all for teaching staff. The key takeaway here is that the scheme is not looking at attainment, which is the responsibility of the classroom teacher: it is looking at the motivation of boys to improve their engagement in lessons and to improve their attitude to learning. If we get this diet right, then the improvement in attainment will be visible and we will see a shift in student progress, particularly with the boys that we serve.

Daniel Hawkins

Extended Leadership Team (Head of Year 10 / Head of PE)

Hylands School

SCHOOL HYLANDS SCHOOL



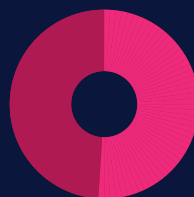
REGION
Essex

738

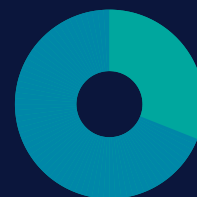
NUMBER ON
ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13

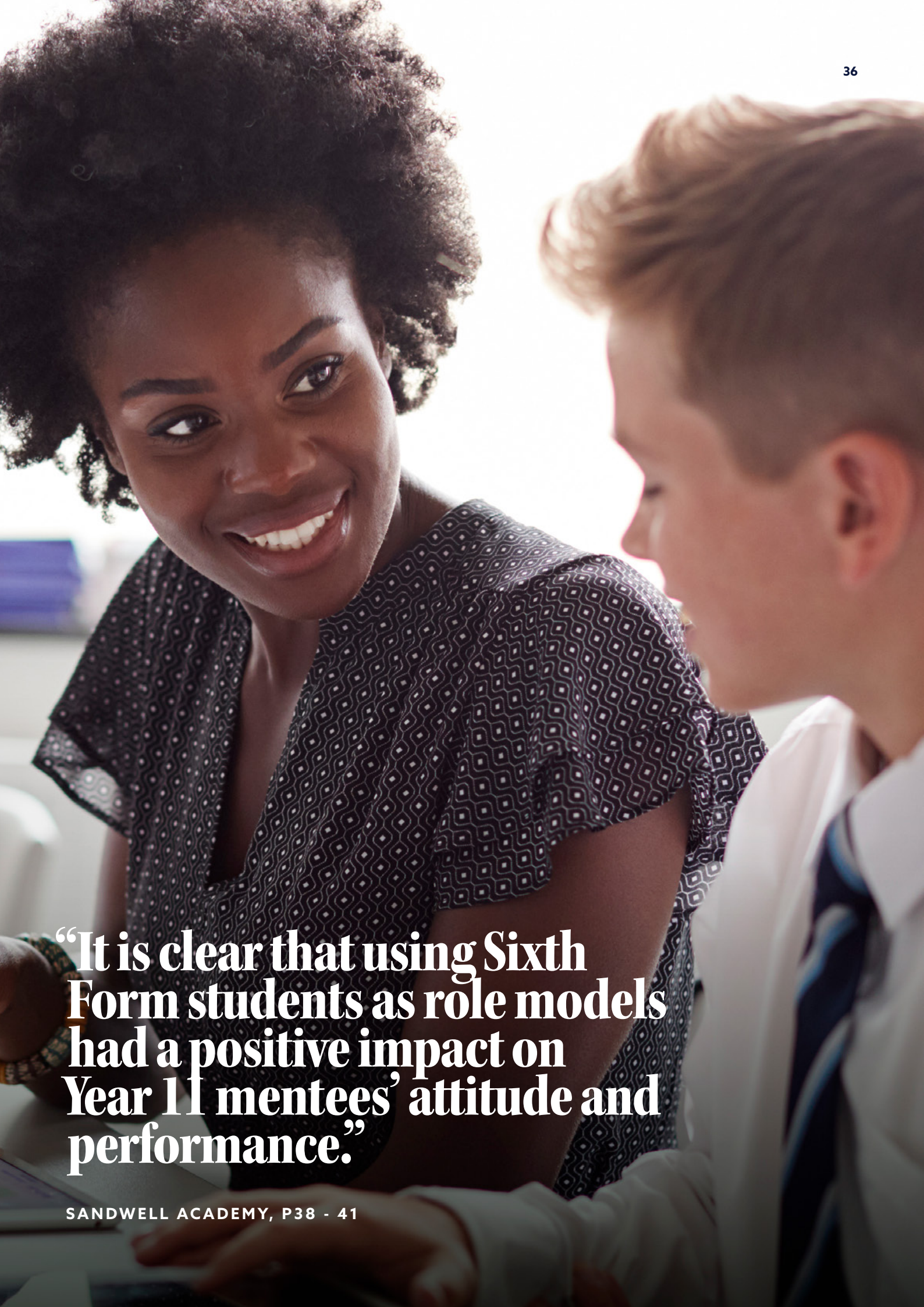


% BOYS
51%



PUPIL PREMIUM
31%



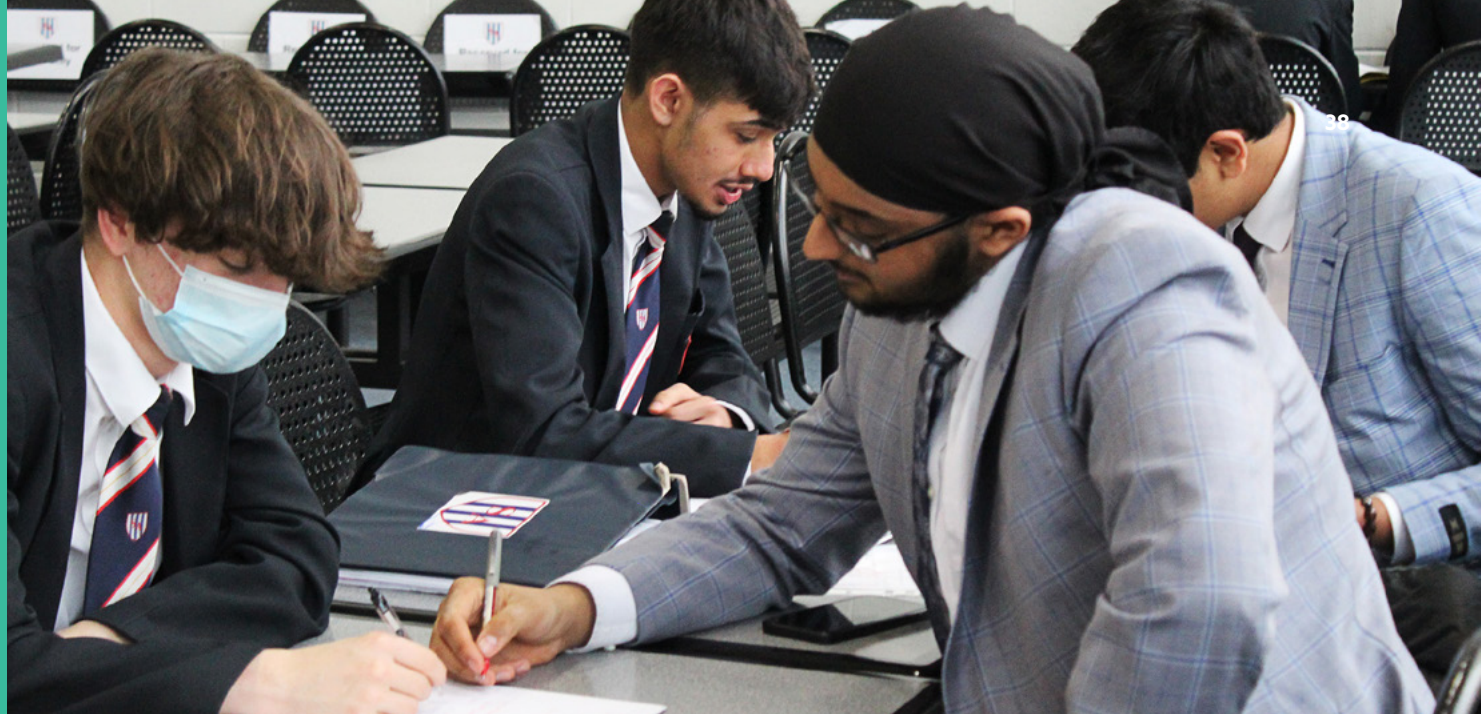


“It is clear that using Sixth Form students as role models had a positive impact on Year 11 mentees’ attitude and performance.”



MENTORING

- Academic Peer Mentoring Programme
- How mentoring can raise aspiration and further develop the potential of boys with HPA
- How can peer mentoring impact boys' engagement?
- Boys' Peer Mentoring Programme



SANDWELL ACADEMY TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11 AND 12

Academic Peer Mentoring Programme

INTENT

Boys' attainment has always been a key area for development at the Academy, as it is nationally, with Covid-19 exacerbating the issue.

This year we decided to trial an Academic Peer Mentoring Project. The aims of the project were to improve boys':

- aspiration to excel
- motivation to learn
- performance at Key Stage 4

The Academic Peer Mentoring Project utilised our highest performing Sixth Form students as one-to-one mentors for Year 11 male students. Mentors focused on one specific GCSE subject in which the Year 11 mentee was underperforming.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation stages of the Academic Peer Mentoring Project were:

RECRUITMENT OF ACADEMIC PEER MENTORS

We started by looking through the GCSE exam results of our current Year 12 cohort and identified students who had gained a Grade 7, 8 or 9 in any GCSE subject. Once students had been identified, teaching staff were contacted to determine a student's suitability to become an Academic Peer Mentor (APM). Following the selection process, successful students were invited to take part via email. The email was deliberately very positive and sold the benefits of taking part in the project. At this stage, little detail around the arrangements was provided to encourage students to find out more and volunteer.



RESPONSE TO RECRUITMENT

Interested students were required to complete an electronic form expressing their initial interest. The form asked students to identify their preferred 'high grade' GCSE subject, which was of benefit where students had more than one option. In response to the invitation email, we received 27 expressions of interest. It was felt that this was a manageable number for the pilot and could potentially impact over 25% of the Academy's Year 11 male cohort and make a sizeable difference.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING OF MENTORS

Subsequent to receipt of expressions of interest, an induction and training session was arranged with prospective APMs. Training session material was prepared that included:

- a programme overview and details of the role
- expectations of mentors' conduct
- strategies for how to motivate a mentee
- how to plan a session
- important dates for Year 11 students
- safeguarding considerations

During the session, mentors were encouraged to ask questions in order to ensure they had a full understanding of the role and the associated expectations.

SELECTING MENTEES

The number of Year 11 pupils involved in the project was limited by the number of suitable Sixth Form mentors. Once mentors were confirmed and their preferred subject agreed, Year 11 students' data for the available subjects was analysed to allow the matching of mentees. The main focus for intervention was core and EBacc subjects. Male students who were predicted to achieve two grades or more below their target grade in a particular subject were selected for consideration. Other secondary factors were also considered, including Pupil Premium and High Prior Attainers.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Parents of potential mentees were contacted by phone prior to informing Year 11 students. This was a deliberate strategy to gain parent buy-in before students had the chance to speak to parents and possibly undersell the opportunity. During these phone calls, the project's aims were shared, parents' interest was determined, and permission secured for their child's regular attendance for ten weeks. Sessions were planned to run weekly on a Friday from 3:20pm to 4:30pm. Friday was selected to avoid any clashes with other after school activities that run Monday to Thursday.

INFORMING THE MENTEES

Year 11 mentees were invited to a 'working lunch' where the project, its aims and intended benefits were explained. Expectations were clarified and pupils were given the chance to ask any questions.

THE FIRST ACADEMIC PEER MENTORING SESSION

The first APM session involved an icebreaker and introductions between mentor and mentee. Expectations were restated, with a clear reminder that the Year 12 mentors were choosing to give up their own time to help and support their mentee.

VENUE

The Academy's restaurant was chosen as the most suitable space in which to deliver the Mentoring Project. The open nature of the venue allowed Academy staff to ensure that all students were engaged, and Year 12 mentors did not feel unsupported. The available tables ensured that each mentoring pair could work separately, but supervision of over 54 students could take place with one or two members of staff. Additionally, the restaurant allowed refreshments to be served, and these were provided free of charge as an incentive to attend.



DETERMINING THE REQUIRED RESOURCES

In the Year 12 training session, mentors were asked what they felt would make the delivery process most effective. As a result, we provided ruled notebooks, mini whiteboards and pens, textbooks and revision guides to aid the sessions.

INCENTIVES

A reward system was considered appropriate for the Year 12 mentors in recognition of their time and commitment. It was decided that after every four sessions, a mentor would be rewarded with a £10 Amazon voucher. To qualify, they must attend all sessions and work effectively with their mentee, as judged by staff informal observations.

ENDING THE PROJECT

The APM Project ran for ten consecutive weeks, with the number of sessions based on guidance from the EEF Toolkit.ⁱ

IMPACT

PROBLEMS THAT AROSE

As with everything, the best laid plans sometimes have to be adapted. Notably, some sessions were postponed as a result of Academy closures. Furthermore, student illness and the occasional prior commitment prevented some students from attending. Absences were overcome by asking mentees and mentors to work flexibly with another student, or occasionally putting two mentees together with one mentor. Students were never turned away from a session.

MENTEE STUDENT VOICE

A student voice questionnaire was used to gather feedback from the mentees about the impact they had experienced from the APM sessions. Key findings from mentees were:

- 77% agreed they were glad to be selected for the APM programme.
- 88% felt they have benefitted from taking part in the mentoring sessions and would recommend the programme to other students.
- 82% believed their subject knowledge has improved due to the sessions and had enjoyed working with a Sixth Form student.
- 71% stated that their confidence had improved as a result of the mentoring sessions.
- 53% reported working harder in lessons since starting the sessions and completing more homework.

MENTOR STUDENT VOICE

A student voice questionnaire was also used to gather feedback from the Academic Peer Mentors. Findings included:

- The average Mentor enjoyment rating was 4.5/5.0.
- 91% felt their own confidence has improved as a result of being an APM.
- 83% felt their speaking skills have improved.
- 67% felt their patience, organisation, explanation and leadership skills had all improved.
- 100% of mentors were likely to encourage other Sixth Formers to be future APMs.

Some of our favourite feedback comments were:

- **"The programme has led me to realise the effort needed to be a teacher."**
- **"Thank you so much for involving me in this fantastic opportunity, I have become a much better version of myself."**
- **"I enjoyed the mentoring thing as a whole, and I think it should be done every year."**



UNEXPECTED IMPACT

One of the most surprising impacts of the Academic Peer Mentoring sessions was the fact that other students requested to join the sessions. One such student observed a mentoring session whilst waiting to attend a behaviour meeting and subsequently showed interest in participating. The student's attendance was agreed, and he completed the programme successfully, receiving mentoring for GCSE Spanish. Partway through the project, another Year 11 student asked if they could participate, as they had heard positive feedback from their peer group. The request was agreed and the student displayed a positive attitude throughout the sessions.

IMPACT ON GCSE PERFORMANCE

Changes to teacher predictions were used to gauge impact on student attainment during the APM Project. The data shows that the largest gains were made in Maths and Science subjects, with most students showing an improvement of one GCSE grade.

CONCLUSIONS

The APM Project effectively engaged mentees and mentors, and the vast majority of students reported benefits from being involved. Initial findings suggest that the APM Project may be better suited to improving Science and Maths, though further investigation with future cohorts is required.

It is highly likely that the APM Project will be repeated with the 2022/23 GCSE cohort, and consideration is being given to running both an Autumn and Spring programme to involve more students.

For the next iteration of the programme, a wider range of subject resources will be selected to support APMs in delivering their sessions. The top tip for anyone replicating this project is to engage parents before students.

Overall, the Academic Peer Mentoring Programme exceeded expectations in terms of engagement, attendance to sessions, and enjoyment. It is clear that using Sixth Form students as role models had a positive impact on Year 11 mentees' attitude and performance.

Debbie Walton
Deputy Headteacher
Sandwell Academy

Cairon Morris-Ashman
Gender Attainment Coordinator
Sandwell Academy

¹ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/peer-tutoring>

SCHOOL SANDWELL ACADEMY



REGION
West Midlands

1366

**NUMBER
ON ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
54%



PUPIL PREMIUM
26%

OTHER INFO

Intake of students come from the six towns that make up Sandwell.



JOHN MADEJSKI ACADEMY TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

How mentoring, in a deprived area, can raise aspirations and further develop the potential of boys who have high prior attainment

INTENT

At John Madejski Academy we have a 64% boy-heavy student roll. One thing that has been apparent at the school since I arrived in September 2021 is that lots of our students do not see the wonderful and significant potential that they possess. It's not difficult to understand why. Whitley is one of the most deprived areas in Reading, and in 2021 had an unemployment rate of 39%. Given these circumstances, some pupils find it hard to imagine what their future could look like outside of the area of Reading. Upon taking on the PiXL project, I wanted to see if I could challenge the high prior attaining boys to seek their potential and raise their aspirations beyond a level that they originally imagined. I vividly remember during our 6th Form open evening one of our brightest Year 11 boys stating, **"I'm not even sure what a Russell Group University is"**. This is not something that I would expect every student to know, but it is certainly something we wanted our prior attaining higher students to aspire to because they had the potential to do so. This was a light bulb moment for me because it opened my eyes to how much work I needed to do to raise their aspirations, particularly with the top end.

THE GOAL WITH MENTORING

In order to achieve my goals, I thought the idea of mentoring a small group of boys myself, alongside every student having an individual staff mentor, would be the most effective method. In our school setting, we had a group of 14 boys whose potential was evident from their KS2 data. I thought that by taking them out of their comfort zone in group sessions, giving them access to different reading materials and teaching them to take



ownership of their studies, we could see vast improvements in their exam results. The project also included engaging them in an extra-curricular trip to Eton College to partake in workshops. As the year went on, we also looked at study skills to help entice the boys into fulfilling their maximum potential. The ultimate aim for the boys was to increase the Progress 8 measurement to as high as possible, ideally aiming for a positive score, but also to give the boys confidence in being independent in their studies which they could take onto A Levels and beyond. The project was going to be managed by myself, as their Head of Year, and I worked closely with the Head of Departments in English and Maths for feedback as well.

IMPLEMENTATION

I wanted to make significant improvements with the boys over a short space of time, but I quickly realised that this was going to be more challenging than I anticipated. We used PPE data from June as our benchmark for their initial progress, and we were going to use our PPEs in November and January as our check points before the exams themselves. As Roberts (2022) suggests, "Boys tend to overestimate their academic progress and probably do less revision as a result" and this was something I knew I was going to have to deal with after the first month of our project.ⁱ

After the first 2 weeks of September, I started the "Boys' Club" on a Friday morning during tutor time. During these sessions, the 14 boys and I read articles on a variety of different topics. I initially chose one which was relatable (but had a higher reading age than the GCSE requirement) to engage them and then progressively moved onto topics which were out of their comfort zone, and had a controversial edge. This was largely easy to facilitate as I was able to manage tutor times to be without those students and I had the support of my tutor team for this, as it was aiming to help develop analytical skills.

PRE-PPEs

Prior to our first set of PPEs in November, we spent some time discussing and creating a revision timetable. This was deemed to be an important part of the process, as we wanted to make sure the boys did revise, but also knew how to revise. We spoke of the "spaced practice"ⁱⁱ (Roberts, 2022) in depth and made sure the timetables were reflective of lots of short, concise revision sessions. I often encouraged the boys to watch TED Talks and use YouTube as part of their revision sessions; for all the internet does poor, it has some fantastic revision resources supplied by teachers.

POST-PPEs

After our set of PPEs in November, we made the decision to do our final set of PPEs in January. This was in part due to having to have 3 sets of data points in the year with the worry of Covid still looming. Originally, our final set were due to be at the end of February, and I do think our results would have been different if this was the case. The students at this point were measured against their results from November, although there was a very short turnaround in between the two sets of exams.

Following on from the exams, it was decided to heighten the ambitions of the students by taking them on a day trip to Eton. During their visit, they were able to participate in a variety of activities with lecturers and teaching staff from Eton, including one on employability and an analytical workshop. The students also indulged in a sporting activity which was far out of their comfort zone. Trying new activities allowed the students to understand that they are always going to experience varying levels of success in their lives – something which helped build resilience in what is an upcoming stressful time.

**“Our High Prior
Attaining boys had
improved by a whole
grade, on average,
within 6 months”**





IMPACT

Overall, the project's impact was varied. The initial idea of the boys' group once a week was useful. I found that many of the boys had never read newspaper articles before and didn't ever read them online, so hearing them debate was excellent. One in particular which caused debate was an article from The Guardian on footballer Richard Keogh's sacking from Derby County following a car crash. Lots of the boys did not have an interest in football, but were very interested in analysing the case and giving detailed reasons in arguing their point of view. By facilitating an open discussion across a table, the boys could sense their confidence in speaking in front of each other growing, and this was easily transferred to lessons, in particular their English lessons, to a great success. However, although the boys' club started strongly, it became challenging to keep consistency with it from my part as a Head of Year as I was often pulled into meetings which hindered the progress of it. If I was able to designate a member of staff with the capacity to manage this bi-weekly, I feel the success would have been heightened.

Our revision timetabling and techniques had high levels of success for those that engaged within them. As quoted previously, some of our boys were still not able to acknowledge the importance of their revision and they often over-estimated their capabilities. However, some were equally not engaging in the revision and still achieving a high Progress 8 score. The impact of our sessions and revision techniques demonstrated some progress in our data scores between the two sets of PPEs in November and January, and significant improvements from where they were at the start of the academic year. Our Progress 8 score for our High Prior Attainment students in their Year 10 PPEs in June was at -1.09. Of course, this was their first set of exams so naturally we expected them to be lower. By the time our data from the PPEs in November came, the Progress 8 score had improved to -0.35. By the January exams it had improved to -0.09. Our High Prior Attaining boys had improved by a whole grade, on average, within 6 months. I would say the hard work that was embedded at the start of the year and the revision skills sessions were a big reason in shifting this number, and the aim as we push towards the exams in the summer is to get the Progress 8 score to a positive. Finally, our trip to Eton had a significant impact on the students. Given our demographic, it was fair to say our boys at first felt out of place at Eton, but their willingness to attempt every activity and challenge themselves gave them new-found confidence in their capabilities as they were able to hold their own amongst their Eton peers. They came away from the trip highly reflective, which can only be a good thing. **Will the impact continue to thrive into the exam season? We will see...**

Charlie Oakley

Head of Year 11 / Raising Standards Leader
John Madejski Academy

ⁱ Roberts, M., (2022), *The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School*, Routledge, p.61

ⁱⁱ Roberts, M., (2022), *The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School*, Routledge, p.57

SCHOOL JOHN MADEJSKI ACADEMY



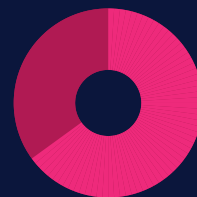
REGION
Reading

800

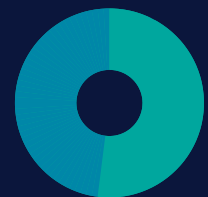
NUMBER ON
ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
64%



PUPIL PREMIUM
52%

OTHER INFO Our school is in the most deprived area of Reading which had an employment rate of 39% in 2021.

**BULLERS WOOD SCHOOL FOR BOYS****TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 9 AND 10**

How can peer mentoring impact boys' engagement?

INTENT

I chose to focus my project on the impact of peer mentoring on boys' engagement with their learning and buy-in to the school community. Our decision was in response to data from a specific year group. Even though the vast majority of our Year 9s are mature and make excellent progress at the school, there is a group struggling to make the right choices on a regular basis, whether that be in relation to their behaviour or approach to learning. Also, as our Year 10s are the oldest year group (the school has only been open four years), it has been difficult for the Year 10 students to appreciate the responsibility they have as role models for the younger students, without having had any older students to look up to themselves. To combine the desire for a group of Year 9 students to more actively engage with school life, and for some Year 10s to understand their potential as model students, particularly with the introduction of prefects this year, I decided to introduce a system of peer mentoring between two small groups of Year 9s and 10s. Given the close age gap, one risk was that the Year 9s



would not see the Year 10s as appropriate mentors. With a mature group of Year 10s, keen to help, however, I thought that piloting the project had such positive opportunities, it was a risk worth taking.

Seven Year 9 students were initially selected on the criteria that they had large potential to succeed academically and across the school community. I also looked for evidence that they could make the right choices in school, that they were receiving positive points in their lessons, but were distracted, or distracting, leading to a considerable number of negative points as well. The next challenge was choosing the mentors. Even though it was important that the Year 10 students were mature, considerate and trustworthy, it was vital that they had sufficient confidence, presence and credibility to be relatable to the Year 9s. I wanted the mentors to be able to communicate both the importance of their education, but also understand and appreciate how tricky it can be to focus at times. Many of the students chosen are prefects but this was not a limitation, and responsible students who missed out on being a prefect were also selected. Once the pairs were decided, I moved on to implementing the project.

IMPLEMENTATION

I liaised closely with our Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour, who discussed my plans with Senior Leadership as a whole and was very supportive with the logistics of the project. We individually spoke to both groups of students, letting them know they had been selected and why. From the Year 9s, there were mixed reactions: some thought it would be pointless, due to the small age gap between the students; others were concerned about who their mentor would be, and if they would have anything supportive to say, or just moan at them for their behaviour. Some of the students were open-minded, and understood that this was another opportunity for support, as they want to be better behaved in school but are struggling to make those changes themselves.

The Year 10 mentors met with our Behaviour and Inclusion Manager who mentors students and facilitates external mentoring. She trained the boys in the importance of the role; how to have a sensitive conversation without condemning, and how to word questions that facilitate discussion. She also highlighted the importance of safeguarding, and to speak to someone if a Year 9 made a disclosure. They were provided with a document on effective mentoring to support them in their sessions if necessary.

On arrival at the weekly session, each pair of students is given a 'Mentor Pack'. These include questionnaires with general questions about their week, along with some specific questions on the amount of positive and negative points the Year 9 student has received, and in which lessons. We also provide the Year 10s with their mentee's data from the last week: their positive and negative points, the ratio between the two, the lessons in which they received them, and what category the points fall under. The mentors ask them to write details of the events, discuss them and set achievable targets for the next week, along with strategies to help them achieve that goal. This gives a certain amount of structure, whilst allowing for an open discussion. Targets can be based on points (e.g. 'no negative points in Science' or 'two more positive points next week') or more general, depending on the student. Setting the targets means that students leave the room feeling they have something to work towards next week, after having discussed with their mentor the areas in which they are struggling and having acknowledged their successes.

“Very quickly the mentors became invested in their mentees’ improvement and success; after just one week, there were smiles of pride when the amount of negatives decreased, and high-fives and fist bumps as their mentees walked towards them”



IMPACT

I have tracked both soft and hard data as the project has progressed. Even within the first few weeks, I noticed that the ratios of positive to negative points for the Year 9s were turning green on our behaviour tracking systems, a good indicator that not only were the Year 9s perhaps avoiding incidences of poor behaviour but were also buying in and impressing their teachers. As well as this, having conversations with both mentors and mentees highlighted that they are finding the project to be a valuable experience. The Year 10s feel it is an opportunity to support a younger student through school, balancing the need to connect personally and build relationships with the necessary firmness to ensure they succeed. Very quickly, the mentors became invested in their mentees' improvement and success; after just one week there were smiles of pride when the amount of negatives decreased, and high-fives and fist bumps as their mentees walked towards them. The mentees have valued the conversations with an older student; someone who can speak their language, understands what it is like to be in our school at this time, but can be trusted to support them on their journey through school. On reflection, the most significant achievement in this project is the relationships that have been built. Boys in different year groups, who might have ignored each other in the corridor, now acknowledge each other. In particular, it is pleasing to see how the Year 9s talk about there being someone looking out for them, believing in them, but also holding them accountable when they fall short of their goals. The selection of the mentors was a vital process. There is no doubt that the mentees would not have responded so positively in the meetings if the mentors were all 9-grade students who had never received a detention in their school career. It was essential for them to be relatable. This group of students, straddling two years, have a common understanding of the challenges that boys face at school; that being quiet for a double lesson is hard but you have to try, and it is not an excuse to receive a detention. The Year 9s react much better to our mentors on these topics than they might with a member of staff; our mentees feel seen, they feel heard, and they feel understood.

Currently, I would make no changes to the project; it is working better than anticipated and behaviour data for the students is improving. Strong bonds are being created between year groups. Although the project could be scaled up to include a larger group of students, there is something sincere about it being a carefully selected handful. This has meant that all pairs are in one room, supervised by me, and are able to see that they are not being singled out in this project, but are part of something unique and special. For other schools interested in peer mentoring with a small age gap, I recommend you select your mentors very carefully, make sure they have a strong personality, and ensure they understand the experience of the mentee. This will support in building those valuable relationships, leading to open conversations about what is happening around the school building, and what changes can be made to facilitate success.

Emily Best

English Teacher

Bullers Wood School for Boys

Patrick Bidder

AHT for Behaviour and Community

Bullers Wood School for Boys

SCHOOL BULLERS WOOD SCHOOL FOR BOYS



REGION
London

720

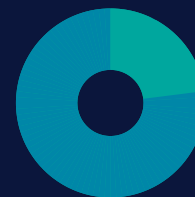
**NUMBER ON
ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-10



% BOYS
100%



PUPIL PREMIUM
20.42%

OTHER INFO Open since 2018 - Single sex all boys school - Located in a Grammar School area



“On reflection, the most significant achievement in this project is the relationships that have been built”



FREDERICK GOUGH SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEARS 7, 8 AND 10

Boys' Peer Mentoring Programme

INTENT

For a number of years, the progress and attainment of boys at Frederick Gough School has been much lower in comparison to that of the girls. This is in spite of the fact they are achieving similar scores at KS2 and, as a result, are starting at the same base point with similar targets. Having tried various strategies in attempt to narrow the gap between boys and girls, we decided as a school that we would have a whole school drive towards raising the attainment and accelerating the progress of boys. Alongside our whole school improvement plan, we devised and implemented a boys' improvement action plan. One of the strategies included in the plan was the notion of older boys (Year 10) mentoring and working with younger boys (Years 7 and 8).

In terms of what we are hoping to achieve from the mentoring programme, it is very much two-fold. Primarily, we are looking for our boys to become much more independent, organised and self-sufficient than they currently are. The typical Frederick Gough boy is amiable, pleasant and will do enough work in class 'to get by'. What they don't do is work at home – whether it be revision, preparation for the next day/week etc., or independent research. Over time, we are looking to change this culture and we believe the mentoring programme will support this aim. Our aspiration is that mentees will learn how to set their own targets for improvement and organisation with the help of their assigned mentor. We are also hopeful that the added responsibility given to the mentors will see them become more mature, responsible and, as a result, elevate their level of independence and resilience. With regards to the selection of the mentees and mentors, we looked at a certain profile of student. The mentees were selected on character and personality as much as assessment data. We were very keen to work with the 'coasting' or 'under the radar' type of boy in an effort to raise their level of independence and resilience before the start of GCSEs in Year 10. After much discussion with the Year 7 and 8 Pastoral Teams, we selected forty students in total – twenty from Year 7 and twenty from Year 8. We discussed their attitude to learning, character traits, personality and their out-of-school interests. We then liaised with the Year 10 Pastoral Team to find mentors who would be a good match for individual boys from the selected mentee group. We felt it imperative there was an element of shared interest when pairing the mentees and mentors as the success of the programme very much depended on relationships between the pair being positive.

IMPLEMENTATION

Having selected both our mentees and mentors, we devised a supplementary plan which was designed to equip the mentors with the appropriate skills for mentoring. We organised for the mentors to receive specific mentor training from a subject specialist, who would coach the boys in developing a rapport with their mentees and how to frame questioning in order to elicit the information required from their mentees.

The information we were particularly interested in is:

- What are the barriers to learning and progress?
- How can you help yourself to overcome these?
- What do we need to change to make this happen?



The mentees participated in five hours of training sessions which focused on relationship building and questioning. Once their initial training was complete, we were ready to begin the mentoring programme in earnest. To coordinate the project, we offered the role of programme coordinator to an existing member of staff. His role would be to organise and facilitate weekly meetings between the mentors and their mentees. Originally, the meetings were to take place on a weekly basis during a set lunchtime. The boys would meet to discuss previously set targets, evaluate their success and set new targets for the following week. We also supplied lunch in the form of chip butties! However, we soon realised that because the meetings had an hour's slot, they were not as focused or as fast-paced as we'd like. This was evidenced through the lack of engagement in conversation between some of the pairs. After discussing the process with the boys, we moved the weekly meetings to a 15-minute slot during another time in the school day. With a change of staff member coordinating the meetings, there has also been a significant increase in the level of engagement and positive outcomes from the meetings. As part of the evolved process, mentees are now recording their targets and revisiting them on a weekly basis. They are also guided towards what they could be discussing and what their targets are focusing on. To increase the level of camaraderie and fellowship, and develop relationships further, we have invested in mentoring badges for the boys and have also planned a school excursion for those involved in the process.

IMPACT

The project is long-term and its true impact will only be measured in the next two to three years. In the short term, we are looking at the impact mentoring has had on the mentees in terms of the number of PREP pieces they've completed since the mentoring programme began in comparison to before. PREP is a new programme we've introduced this year that will eventually replace homework. A piece of work is set online for every subject each week. Students organise and plan the order in which they'll complete their PREP and when. They have a week to complete all their PREP work. The intended outcome of PREP is to encourage students to become more independent and resilient before they begin GCSE courses in Year 10. A primary focus of the boys' mentoring programme has been PREP and coaching the mentees in terms of organising their time, completing work and knowing it is okay to ask for help rather than ignore the issue. At the time of writing, there is clear evidence that the boys involved in the mentoring programme are engaging:

1. more than they were pre-mentoring;
2. more than their peers not involved in the mentoring programme.

As stated, the boys' mentoring programme is a long-term project. The ultimate aim is for our boys to become much more independent in their learning, be more encouraged to work (revise) at home, and consequently become more successful in terms of their KS4 outcomes to the point that they are just as successful as girls. We are hoping the programme will snowball as this year's mentees go on to become the mentors of tomorrow. We will also be looking to increase the number of mentees and mentors taking part in future programmes.

Liam Dillon
Assistant Headteacher
Frederick Gough School

“The ultimate aim is for our boys to become much more independent in their learning”

SCHOOL **FREDERICK GOUGH SCHOOL**



REGION
North Lincolnshire

1340

NUMBER
ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Year 7-11



% BOYS
52%



PUPIL PREMIUM
32%




RAISING ASPIRATION

- The Impact of Single-Sex Tutor Groups in a Mixed Comprehensive School
- Sixth Form Tutor Heroes - Developing Self-Regulation And Metacognition In Year 7 And 8 Boys Through Peer Mentoring
- Don't Call it Literature
- Practice For Progress - Getting Boys To Work Smarter

A young male student with short, light brown hair is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue school blazer over a light blue collared shirt and a diagonally striped tie in shades of blue, red, and white. He is standing in front of a wooden bookshelf filled with books, which are slightly out of focus. The lighting is warm and soft, highlighting his face.

**“It was the best thing that
ever happened in school”**

GREENDFORD HIGH SCHOOL PUPIL, P 58-61



Boys' Achievement
(10M4) has given
me confidence and
helped me improve.

GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 10

The Impact of Single-Sex Tutor Groups in Mixed Comprehensive School

PROJECT OUTLINE

- To recruit a member of staff to lead Year 10 Boys' Achievement with the vision that they would become a specialist in order to counter underachievement at Greenford High School.
- To target 20 underachieving or at risk of underachieving boys and assign them to one form: 10M4.
- To use research-led practice to empower the Boys' Achievement lead. They would monitor the progress and achievement across the school, bridging the gap between students and teachers.

WHY FOCUS ON YEAR 10 BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT?

Our boys continue to underachieve compared to the girls. Closing the gap between girls and boys continues to be one of the top school priorities.

WHY NOW?

In July 2021, I stepped into a new position at Greenford High School: KS4 leading on Achievement. Covid and lockdown exacerbated the achievement gap, with many of our boys returning to full-time education disengaged. Most noticeably, they struggled with the routines expected.

WHAT WAS OUR NEW BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT VISION?

1. To know each student in the school in order to be a bridge between students and staff.
2. To inspire and motivate the boys.
3. To be their everyday point of contact.
4. To engage regularly with home.
5. To help students break down academic barriers by interacting with their subject teachers.
6. To teach and model resilience and self-efficacy.

A condensed vision was also shared with the boys: change the narrative – your experience and life so far will not limit your potential.

“The form is like a family compared to other forms.”



HOW DID THE PROJECT COME TO FRUITION?

1. GETTING THE RIGHTS BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT (BA) LEAD

At first, we needed to *"debunk the male role model theory."*ⁱ Mark Roberts stresses the importance of how colleagues drive change in boys' attitude and behaviour. We needed a Behaviour lead who could identify the needs of the students, empathise with their situation, facilitate opportunities to drive change and reflect on their impact. When selecting a Boys' Achievement lead in Year 10 it was important that we found the right person who could tailor a programme to raising achievement.

2. GETTING THE RIGHT BOYS

With the right Boys' Achievement lead in place, selecting the students was the next important step. Using the most recent data – end of Year 9 interims – twenty students were selected. With the Year 10 Head of Year, we considered achievement, PP, SEN and personality, making careful selections about who would be involved.

3. CREATING THE RIGHT PROGRAMME

Furthermore, as character has become a prominent part of our school culture, we needed a lead to facilitate a programme that built *"character through community"*ⁱⁱ and challenged behaviour when it became a barrier to learning. More than ever, Gross continues, *"there has never been a time in which young people were more in need of character development."*

ⁱⁱⁱ The programme focused on the GHS character strengths: courage, community, responsibility, resilience and compassion.



Form time became the most valuable start to the day for the boys.

- Guest speakers were invited from across the school to offer relatable experiences.
- One-to-one mentor sessions facilitated in-depth reflections on targets and data.
- Revision skills sessions helped tackle gaps in knowledge and prepare students for upcoming GCSE exams taken in Year 10.

Outside of these 20-minute daily sessions, the BA lead championed his boys across the school. He monitored the boys by dropping into lessons and every Monday worked with a group of them during study club after school.

4. GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT TO STAFF / PARENTS

So far, he has raised the profile of the boys by contributing to the staff newsletter, running a year team CPD and a whole school CPD. Finally, regular phone calls, especially in term 1, were used to discuss positive behaviour as well as concerns. *"Resilience requires relationships"*^{iv} and the BA lead works hard to continue to foster relationships by showing his investment in their potential. Each term, the BA lead writes a parent newsletter that is sent home and shared with staff to celebrate their achievements.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

- To begin with, the boys outlined their initial problem with being selected: 67% did not value being selected, commenting that they felt "they had done something wrong."
- Now, 81% feel happy they are part of the group.
- 93% of the boys value the conversations over interims and target setting.
- 68% value the guest speakers that visit during form time to share their experiences in school and life.
- 75% of the boys value organisational help – i.e. reminders of key events happening and how to prioritise workload.
- The attitude to learning improved from satisfactory to good between interim 1 and 3, with an additional 9 teachers grading their attitude as "outstanding".
- Improved confidence: those who were invisible at the start of the year have found their place and are visible. They share their opinions, ask questions more regularly and feel they can adapt to difficulties they face on a daily basis.

Sir is real.

He tells us the hard truth.

He tell us what we need to hear.

“Boys’ Achievement has helped motivate me more and I have improved a lot since September.”



PUPIL, GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL



“Boys’ Achievement has helped me with confidence and performance in certain subjects.” PUPIL, GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL

When asked, the BA lead recalled the moment that united the form: a shared breakfast. Over croissants and smoothies, the form started to feel “special” – their words. At Christmas, the BA lead took them to play football and basketball for an afternoon. In term 2, the boys started to feel their group was unique. It was a space where the BA lead created opportunities “for us”, they said.

When asked what the best aspect of the BA role was, he stressed that impact was down to the relationships he’d fostered with each student. As Gross outlines, *“if children are to be resilient in the face of challenge and difficulty, they need first to be able to understand and manage strong emotions that they will experience.”*^v He continues to champion each student, liaising with colleagues and staff regularly. As a result, students have improved their resilience, “becoming more curious, adaptable and capable”.

WHAT ARE MY RECOMMENDATIONS?

If I were to launch this programme in another school, I would take the following steps:

1. Identify whether there is a need in your school and from what year group.
2. Create a clear vision for the team and students that aligns with the Headteacher’s SIP.
3. Secure funding for a TLR to lead on the project.
4. Employ the right TLR to lead on the initiative.
5. Select the right students who would benefit from the initiative.
6. Share the vision with staff.
7. Hold regular line management with the TLR holder, using a coaching approach.
8. Create systems to track progress of boys.
9. Regularly celebrate and offer enrichment opportunities.

Andrea Hetherington
KS4 Lead
Greenford High School

“It was the best thing that ever happened in school.”

PUPIL, GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL

- ⁱ Roberts, M., (2022), **The Boy Question**, Routledge
ⁱⁱ Gross, J., (2020), **Character: Taught or Caught?**, Impact
ⁱⁱⁱ Gross, J., (2020), **Character: Taught or Caught?**, Impact
^{iv} Gross, J., (2020), **Character: Taught or Caught?**, Impact
^v Gross, J., (2020), **Character: Taught or Caught?**, Impact
^{vi} Stace, C., (2021), **Five Ways to Build Resilience in Students**, Pearson

SCHOOL GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL



REGION
London

1929

**NUMBER
ON ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Year 7-13



% BOYS
50%



PUPIL PREMIUM
31%

OTHER INFO

Our school serves one of the most deprived areas in London (UB1).

**WEST LAKES ACADEMY**

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 7,8 AND 12

Sixth Form Tutor Heroes - Developing self-regulation and metacognition in Year 7 and 8 boys through peer mentoring

WHY

Up until the start of this academic year, we had always operated under the hypothesis that our gender gap develops towards the end of Year 8. This was after a previous review of assessments and outcomes. With the redevelopment of our Key Stage Three assessment and analysis methodology, feedback from primary schools and a review of our behaviour logs, we were able to identify that this was no longer the case. The gender gap was clearly present across nearly every subject from term one in Year 7, and this was replicated into Year 8 as well. The gap was also bigger in key student groups such as disadvantaged and SEN students.

WHAT WE WANTED TO ACHIEVE

Our WIG or aspiration is to have no gap at all! However, we are aware that to be truly impactful specific interventions are required at subject level. The gender gap in Science couldn't be closed with the same targeted strategy as that deployed in English. However, we could ensure that all learners had every other barrier removed so that these subject level strategies and foci could have the desired impact. The first step was to see what these barriers were and how we could close them.

IDENTIFYING OUR PROJECT

We used staff voice to identify what the barriers were that could be impacting our population. The main concerns that we could identify with our Year 7 and 8 population of male students fell into two main strands:



1. Engagement and passion in their learning: it was consensus of the students that school was being done to them rather than with them. This trend was confirmed in student level interviews.
2. Organisation and self-regulation: students were aware of what needed to be done, they just couldn't see a clear process. The swap from a primary environment to a secondary one, where they are expected to self-manage, just wasn't supporting learning and our current method of communication of deadlines via a planner wasn't enough.

With staff already committed to responsive teaching and gap closure within our exam cohorts, it was clear that any new projects or interventions could not have an impact on this. Therefore any development that was put into place had to require minimal staff time. We also wanted to explore how to develop key skills and attributes within our Year 12 students before they applied for sixth form leadership positions in Year 13 and then for university and/or apprenticeship places.

Using the initial strands, we decided that we would focus on identifying key core groups of male students within tutor groups. Tutors could support this through a review of students' data and also their behaviour logs, looking for areas of need. This would mean we were targeting about 40-50 students in Years 7 and 8.

To each tutor group we would assign two Year 12 sixth form students who we branded 'tutor heroes'. These tutor heroes would be issued with a specific brief and set of resources and would then work with the identified students over the remaining school year.

We wanted the tutor heroes to focus on three key areas:

1. Student aspiration and how their education contributed to this
2. Student organisation and self-regulation of work, specifically home learning
3. Student metacognition and learning strategies focused around revision techniques

The aim was that these areas would then permeate across all curriculum areas and close the gender gap that was forming across subjects, or at least give the students more skills to access their subjects and any specific interventions within them.

HOW

LEADING WITH EVIDENCE

To enable the project to have impact, we wanted it to be evidence-led. There is clear evidence supporting how a focus on improving the two core concepts mentioned above can have a positive impact.

1. That self-regulation and metacognition can have positive impact on learners and close gaps (EEF, 2021)ⁱ
2. That a strong aspiration and a focus on remaining in school to develop their education has a positive impact on their achievements (Lessof et al., 2018)ⁱⁱ

We couldn't just deploy sixth form students and expect them to be experts in supporting in these areas, so first and foremost we gave them an opportunity to embed with their tutor group. Once the students were recruited, they attended once a week and supported the tutor in the delivery of our pastoral curriculum. This gave them the opportunity to establish positive peer relationships and be seen as a role model.

During this time, we also supported our tutor heroes with:

1. Identifying the small group they would be working with.
2. The tools required to support this process. Through our reading we had discovered three really valuable resources to underpin our strategies:
 - a. Multiple example-led texts such as *The Boy Question* by Mark Roberts ⁱⁱⁱ, or *The Revision Revolution* by Helen Howell and Ross Morrison McGill ^{iv}
 - b. Specific concrete planning resources that students could interact with. For example, planning boards from 'The Study Buddy' ^v
 - c. An impactful method to support conversations around aspiration they could be easily trained in and then deployed. We settled on 'WOOP' (Wish Outcome Obstacle Plan) - a science-based mental strategy to identify and fulfil wishes, set preferences and change habits ^{vi}.



MAKING IT WORK WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS

This approach was going to take some curriculum time from both sets of tutor groups. Our pastoral curriculum is already well established and planned so it required some developmental work with the leads in this area to minimise the negative impact on this.

We also already have multiple interventions running in tutor time so ensuring that the timing of each session was correct was vital. This is where we decided to be flexible – not all tutor heroes attended on the same day, meaning that the intervention choice wasn't curtailed. This limited disruption and also meant that we could target the correct students.

REFINING OUR PLAN

After all the developments, reviews and reading, the concrete plan we implemented was:

1. Tutor heroes would be paired up with Year 7 and 8 tutor groups.
2. They would spend three or four sessions developing positive relationships with the tutor group they were assigned to.
3. Through discussions with tutor and staff-led reviews of behaviour logs and academic reports, a key cohort of male students was identified.
4. After training, the tutor heroes would use supplied planning resources to log and share deadlines and tasks with the whole tutor group. They would then use this with the small cohort to plan when and how they would achieve these tasks, supporting their self-regulation.
5. Once every half term, they would hold a WOOP session with their students to focus them on an aspiration and plan how to achieve it. They would then 'nudge' their students whenever possible to focus on strands of their WOOP.
6. At the behest of the tutor heroes, we would look at developing a celebration event if students were successful in achieving strands of their WOOP or significantly improved their outcomes.

Since the project is based on effective peer relationships, it was important to ensure that all tutor heroes were integrated into a tutor group where positive working relationships could be established. The pastoral team were fantastic at this: they worked diligently with the students to make sure that the right hero was paired with the right tutor group.

USING THE DATA

Our Key Stage Three assessment data is very rich (and granular) so it enabled us to easily identify students who would be of benefit within this project. We also triangulated this with a similar analysis of reward points and behaviour sanctions. We have a prototype of the Horsforth Quadrant based around this and, if we sustain the project in future years, will look to utilise this based around the different quadrants and specific approaches to each. This data will also allow us to monitor the impact of the support both at student and subject level.

As the plan progressed, we learnt several valuable lessons. Concrete modelling of strategies to the students was key, but they had to be engaged in the process. Regular check-ins with tutor heroes was essential – an initial settling time and then tutor survey revealed that visits had started well but had become sporadic. This was solved with a simple agreement and clarification of expectations. Finally, we needed to be really careful with data and documentation at each step of the process. Certain information was extremely confidential and needed care and sensitive management at all levels.

Finally, when we implement this next time we will focus initially on establishing a positive and committed culture across the groups. The strategies we developed were all strong, however certain students didn't want to engage fully because of the stigma or culture around them. This was easily addressed during the sessions, however it could have been removed if the development of a shared culture is front loaded into the roll out next time around.

“The aim was that this would permeate across the curriculum areas and close the gender gap that was forming across subjects”



OUR FINDINGS

The project is still in its infancy so data trends and conclusions are tentative. Using our analysis system, we have seen that the gender gap has closed in several subjects across Years 7 and 8 which were the target years for the project. This hasn't been seen in other year groups. We have also seen a reduction in behaviour points and sanctions for the cohorts regarding completion and submission of homework on time.

These early findings will be analysed in much more detail through our end of year exams to ensure the project is having an impact. With the project focusing on revision techniques as well as self-regulation, we are expecting to see a further gap closure across the identified cohorts based on initial findings.

In an environment where there are multiple strategies underway it is hard to determine if this one project had the desired impact. The data would suggest it has had some positive impact and student voice would also indicate that. When the Year 7 students were asked about their tutor heroes, they were unanimously in favour of them and positive about the support that they bring.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

From evaluating areas of this project it is clear that more thought needs to go into transition between primary and secondary schools around the area of student self-regulation. We all have a subject focus and also a focus on how to behave, but have we given enough thought to the learning behaviours and self-regulation required to make that transition? I believe that based on these findings an explicit tutor programme for all, starting earlier in the year, will have significant positive impact. After this has been completed (and the new Year 12 students have settled into the academy) we will look to implement a similar programme of targeted support based around similar identifying characteristics. We have introduced an earlier data capture into Year 7 to support this. We will also look to use the expertise generated in the first cohort of heroes to train the next so it becomes sustainable in the long term. We are lucky to have a sixth form attached to our academy which we can recruit from. However, we elected to target just Years 7 and 8 to maintain the age gap. If we had not had a sixth form, I have no doubt that with a tightly developed programme a similar model could be developed with Year 11 students.

Finally, if I had to identify the most important aspect required to get the project working, it is the tripartite relationship between tutor, sixth form tutor hero and selected students. Utilising pastoral knowledge and staff to establish these relationships is vital if the intervention is to succeed.

Barry Simpson

Vice Principal and RSL

West Lakes Academy

ⁱ EEF, (2021 October), **Metacognition and self-regulation**

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation>

ⁱⁱ Lessof, C., Ross, A., Brind, R., Harding, C., Bell, E., & Kyriakopoulos, G., (2018),

Understanding KS4 attainment and progress: evidence from LSYPE2, Kantar Public

ⁱⁱⁱ Roberts, M., (2021), **The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School**, Routledge

^{iv} Howell, H., & Morrison McGill, R., (2022), **The Revision Revolution: How to build a culture of effective study in your school**, John Catt Educational Ltd

^v **The Study Buddy**: <https://thestudybuddy.com/>

^{vi} **WOOP**: <https://woopmylife.org/en/home>

SCHOOL WEST LAKES ACADEMY



REGION
North West

1210

**NUMBER
ON ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
51%



PUPIL PREMIUM
23%

OTHER INFO

West Lakes Academy is a member of West Lakes Multi Academy Trust. The school is located 5 miles from Sellafield, a large multi-function nuclear site.



THE ANGMERING SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Don't call it Literature - engaging boys through stories

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Boys get a bad press; they are often thought to be lazy or disruptive, bored and apathetic, and thought to disengage with reading and stories over time. This isn't fair: boys are struggling to find themselves in the ever-changing landscape of what it means to be 'masculine' and given half a chance they would fall in love with storytelling and the escape that it could offer them; the lessons it could teach; the adventures it could take them on.

With this in mind, I looked at the boys in my classes and wondered whether there was anything school could do to unlock these high ability but disadvantaged boys. I wanted to help them re-engage with literature generally and, more specifically, fall back in love with stories.

Current research suggests that this group is especially likely to disengage from English and frequently underperform in Literature. They also, historically, tend to disengage from reading and rarely go on to do English at A Level.

In order to try to influence their attitudes, I planned to meet with twelve high ability Year 10 Pupil Premium boys. The reasoning for Year 10 was both personal and professional. I have a Year 10 son myself who, having once been an avid and enthusiastic reader, now barely picks up a book. Professionally, I am in the fortunate situation of teaching two Year 10 Literature classes and therefore know many of the boys I was going to work with from my lessons and would easily be able to track progress and attitude, even after the conclusion of this project. Finally, Year 10 is that breakthrough year, when boys are maturing and becoming braver to reflect and share yet still young enough to find joy and excitement in stories.

Having decided on my target group, I soon realised that at our school we did not have 12 boys that met this criteria of being both high prior attainers and Pupil Premium. I needed to reduce the number to 10, ending up with eight boys regularly meeting for biscuits and chats.



Every Tuesday for twenty minutes during our DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time, eight boys would traipse into my classroom – suspicious and wary at first, silent and embarrassed as I explained the project. Four weeks later, they were eagerly waiting outside my classroom, even forgiving me for frequently forgetting the biscuits. We discussed their attitudes towards stories, books and literature. We carved out time for me to tell them my stories and created a space for them to share theirs.

We considered the role of stories in society with the outcome being them producing their own stories. The focus was on creativity, confidence building and a reframing of literature as storytelling.

HOW CAN WE GET BOYS TO BOTHER?

I am very lucky to work in a school where relationship building and getting to know our students are school priorities. The SLT were supportive and enthusiastic and felt that the project was both exciting and valuable. The end goal of increasing the number of boys choosing to do English at A Level was an attractive one, and working with a group of students often overlooked was encouraged.

In order to have a baseline idea of attitudes, I conducted an initial survey of student voice. Results were inconclusive: some boys enjoyed reading, others did not; some boys enjoyed literature, others found it boring. Most boys had loved reading when they were younger and all had been read to. I suppose my stereotypical beliefs that these boys were going to be a cohesive unit were beginning to shatter. They were individuals, and very quickly I realised that this was going to be the focus of these sessions – each of them had their own unique story and my job was to build the trust and confidence for them to share the magic hidden inside each one.

The project began with reading and discussing different types of stories. We started with traditional fictional stories (sharing our favourite books), and moved on to biographies and autobiographies, graphic novels, podcasts and TED Talks. Students were set homework to choose a text from the genre we were looking at and share their opinions of it with the group. We listened; we laughed, and read and talked. Mostly, we talked. We shared opinions, ideas... stories.

As the project continued and the suspicion and wariness subsided, so the stories began to flow. I could see that the main obstacle to these boys' success was a belief in themselves. The belief that they had something worth sharing. Being given that space, that attention, meant that they began to have the confidence to open up. To start sharing, to start laughing and start believing that they might be interesting.

The initial outcome had been for the boys to tell their stories. It soon became apparent that they did not feel that anything interesting enough had happened to them to warrant space and time. Any attempt by me to show models of others telling their stories or me telling mine just reinforced their beliefs that they had nothing worth sharing. As mentioned before, this was a confidence issue. I was at a loss.

After a very enlightening session with the organisers of the project at PiXL, I adapted my outcome and had the boys imagine their future. What would an exciting life look like and how would they get there?

SO WHAT NOW?

The impact of the project is very difficult to measure. How do you quantify the smiles and the increased confidence? The self-belief that the boys now had to share their stories which they had previously thought to be irrelevant. The pride they had in being part of the special Tuesday club. How do you measure the value I got from getting to know these boys, their dreams, their fears, their sense of humour? The relationships we built over the last five months are unquantifiable.

It became clear to me that for many of them, this was the first time an adult in school had taken an interest in them and whilst they were sceptical initially of why they had been chosen, they soon realised there were no expectations or judgements.



In my final project evaluation survey, I read about how much the boys had enjoyed our time together. One student commented that he particularly liked "how open and informal the meetings were, so we were comfortable sharing our ideas and stories". Another student said he had learnt "how valuable and important stories are, even small ones". This had been a time to talk, and talk they did.

When we first started, the sessions were very much teacher-led. I told jokes, read aloud, played podcasts. Slowly, as the boys emerged from their shells, they began talking and sharing, telling me about the books they had read and recommending podcasts to each other. I could barely get a word in edgewise.

Their stories about their imagined future lives were revealing: they were ambitious, they wanted success, and they wanted to change their worlds for the better. One student wrote about going back to Malaysia and helping out his family with the knowledge and skills he had learnt in the UK. Another wrote about becoming a lawyer and being able to be a voice for those who did not have one. They inspired me by their vulnerability and their aspirations.

Looking to the future, it would be amazing if there was a way to continue these meetings. Perhaps broadening the criteria so as to have more participants and perhaps increasing the time spent together to half an hour. Twenty minutes always felt too short. Perhaps get to a point where the boys would be confident enough to discover and finally tell their stories – their actual stories, rather than the imagined ones. Time will tell whether they will succeed in their Literature GCSE. I have already noticed that the students I teach are more confident to contribute to class discussions, more engaged and appreciative of the stories we study. A colleague has said that the behaviour of one particularly tricky character has improved.

Are they more willing to consider taking the subject at A Level? In the survey, they have said yes, but we will have to wait and see. Hopefully, what they have taken away from this time together is the value of stories and how they unite us, how they teach us about each other, how they make us human. And what is literature if not stories? So don't call it Literature, call it Magic.

Ms Maggie Moe

English Teacher and Oracy Lead
The Angmering School

SCHOOL THE ANGMERING SCHOOL



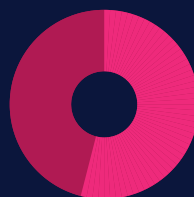
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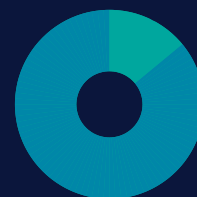
**NUMBER ON
ROLL**




YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
54%



PUPIL PREMIUM
13.90%

A close-up photograph of a young boy with freckles, wearing a dark school blazer over a white shirt and a dark tie. He is leaning forward, focused on writing with a black marker on a piece of paper. His eyes are closed or looking down intently. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window with light coming through.

“Hopefully, what they have taken away from this time together is the value of stories and how they unite us, how they teach us about each other, how they make us human.”

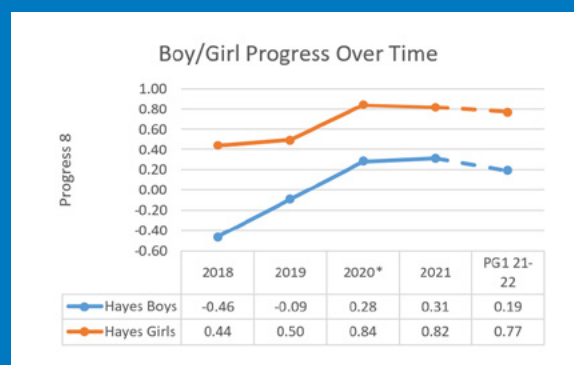
HAYES SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Practice for Progress - Getting Boys to Work Smarter

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Hayes School is a large, mixed secondary school in the London Borough of Bromley. Our GCSE results have been above the national average, however we have had clear gaps in the progress between boys and girls. This gap was most prominent in 2018 and, whilst it narrowed in 2019, a gap remained. At the start of this academic year, our first data entry was predicting that the gap was to be similar to that in 2019.

BOY/GIRL PROGRESS 8 OVER TIME



PLANNING THE PROGRAMME

We reviewed the student data from this first data entry and created a Horsforth Quadrant. We identified a group of boys who demonstrated high effort but were not making progress. The plan for our project was to set up a coaching/mentoring programme to support students with the best ways of studying and memory. The project would also use GCSEPod to help support these students in making progress. We started the project in late October with 22 Year 11 boys, however our plan was to review this group throughout the year and add students where needed. We reflected that perhaps in previous years we had not worked so much with 'high effort, low progress' boys.

We asked all students to complete an initial survey to help us get a start position and as something to measure impact against later in the year. We asked students what their confidence levels were like when thinking about exams. All students were lacking in confidence and expressed they were not sure of the best ways to revise. A change in our school day following Covid meant that we identified before school as a good time to regularly meet these students. We were confident that, because they were students who were engaging well and showing high effort, they would attend before school.



IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME AND HOW IT EVOLVED

We met the 22 students and shared the plan and the reason why we had chosen them. It was crucial to explain that we knew they were working hard (and praise them for this!), but we wanted to support them on working smarter and getting more from their study. The students were invited to attend every Monday at 8am. This gave us 50 minutes with the students before lessons started. The sessions took place in a computer room as it allowed students to work independently and complete GCSEPod assignments whilst mentoring conversations could take place.

Whilst attendance started off very well, we realised that the Mock Exams in November meant that these sessions would not take place and this break caused a loss of momentum. It was clear that a regular routine – same day, same time, same room – had been key in getting students to attend. We believed that starting something like this in October would need to evolve and change as we expected some fatigue and motivation to decrease if we did the same thing. We also knew that we would identify additional students who we wanted to work with.

After Christmas, following completion of Mock Exams, we identified a further 28 students who were making lower than expected progress. This time, there was a mixture of students who also had low effort. The students were put into groups, leaving us 4 groups in total. The original group that started together remained the same, with 3 additional, smaller groups. Each group were allocated 2 members of the SLT and a Lead Teacher from our Teaching and Learning team.

We launched our support programme to the 4 groups all together in a special assembly. Branded 'Practice for Progress (P4P)', the premise was that students collect 'points' from their teachers when they demonstrate good attitude to learning in class, but also for sharing revision/study that they have completed at home. More points were awarded for the work completed at home. Teams then add their weekly points together and compete for rewards (queue jumps for the canteen, chocolate etc.). Students met in their teams with their team leaders on a weekly basis. The focus of the meetings were to discuss and share a particular study skill for students to try in that week.

A programme of revision techniques was put together using video input from our Teaching and Learning team. These techniques were shared with the whole of Year 11 as well as through the tutor programme and on a Year 11 Padlet.

WEEK	DATE (w/c)	METHOD / TOPIC
1	31 JANUARY	Revision timetabling and planning
2	7 FEBRUARY	PLC checks - identify a red area for each subject and do a revision activity on it
HALF TERM		
3	21 FEBRUARY	Mock Week 1 - Personal Revision activities linked to mocks
4	28 FEBRUARY	Mock Week 2 - Personal Revision activities linked to mocks
5	7 MARCH	Cornell Revision method
6	14 MARCH	Retrieval Practice (GCSEPod)
7	21 MARCH	Knowledge Organisers
8	28 MARCH	Dual Coding
EASTER		
9	18 APRIL	Spacing and Interleaving
10	25 APRIL	Thinking Maps

Unfortunately, again, the momentum of P4P was lost slightly following our second round of mock exams. In addition, feedback from students caused us to make some changes to the scheme. Firstly, our intention was that collecting points would act as motivation for our students; however, it became clear that this was having the opposite effect. Some students felt that they were 'on report' and many of them had never been on report before. Therefore, having a card and needing to see the teacher at the end to collect points was not having the desired effect.

Secondly, we needed to ensure we had a good re-launch following the mocks, making sure that we could deliver a consistent routine each week (same day, same time, same room) and the focus for the meetings needed to be more about mentoring and study habits than about collecting points. Following a review at an SLT meeting, we adapted the cards that students carried so that these were more self-reflective, completed by them and used to plan what they would be doing over the next week.





IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

We surveyed the students again at the start of May to ascertain their confidence levels to compare with at the start and also to look at the revision strategies that they had found work best for them. The confidence levels of all students had gone up and most were now either very confident or fairly confident about exams. They were all able to express which revision techniques they felt work best for them. Chunking, flashcards and blank page retrieval were the techniques these students found most effective. They also found working on past papers helped with their confidence levels. We look forward to seeing the impact of this project with the actual exam results. Our internal data predictions indicate that these students have been making progress.

SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

Our key reflections following the conclusion of this project have been:

- Routine is crucial – ‘same day, same time, same room’.
- Intrinsic v extrinsic reward? We thought we knew what would motivate these boys, but we were wrong. Could that be because of the group we had? Might it be different if we were working with a different cohort of students?
- Share the study skills tips and explain why they work.
- Use of video to create study skills tips meant that we could share with all students (and parent/carers).

David Loomes

Assistant Principal

Hayes School

“Routine is crucial – ‘same day, same time, same room’”

DAVID LOOMES, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

SCHOOL HAYES SCHOOL



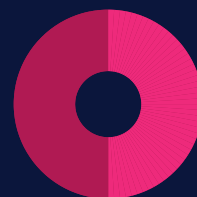
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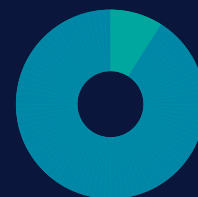
NUMBER ON ROLL



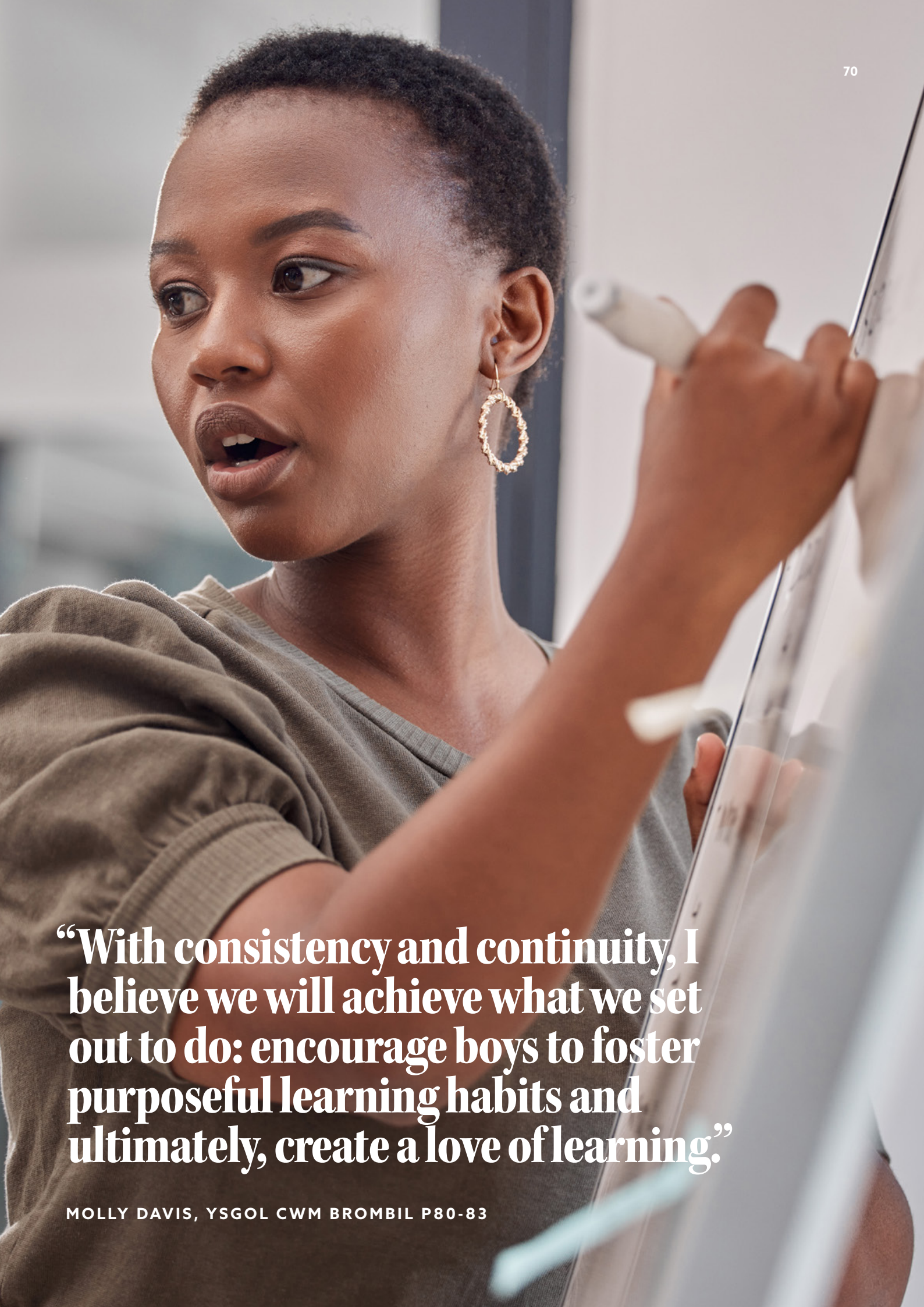
YEAR GROUPS
Year 7-13



% BOYS
50%



PUPIL PREMIUM
8.7%



“With consistency and continuity, I believe we will achieve what we set out to do: encourage boys to foster purposeful learning habits and ultimately, create a love of learning.”

MOLLY DAVIS, YSGOL CWM BROMBIL P80-83



TEACHING STRATEGIES AND STAFF CPD

- Can modelling and timed practice improve the performance of boys in English Language?
- How to coach boys to use learning strategies across all subjects in order to improve progress
- How does retrieval practice and low-stakes testing impact Year 8 boys' attainment?
- What is the impact of Doug Lemov's feedback strategies on improving boys' engagement levels in lessons?
- Supporting 10 Year 11 boys through research-led teaching strategies and Level Best coaching

**THOMAS CLARKSON ACADEMY**

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Can modelling and timed practice improve the performance of boys in English Language?

INTENT

In our academy, we identified when looking at trend data that at the end of KS4, girls were outperforming boys when it came to achieving a strong pass in GCSE English. Historically, more girls leave with a higher grade pass in English than boys. We identified that one of the barriers to boys having more success was the lack of extended writing in their responses, both within class and more formal assessment situations. The problem was not just with the quality of their responses, but the quantity of their responses too, which meant they were not able to demonstrate enough understanding to achieve the higher mark band.

This project was necessary to help close the gaps between female and male performance and to increase the number of male students achieving a strong pass in English Language. Despite it being well known that 'pupils have made less academic progress compared with previous year groups' (EEF)ⁱ, we were keen to improve the results from our last validated results in 2019. As stated in the EEF report, 'there is also evidence that... disadvantaged pupils may have been harmed disproportionately by school closures'.ⁱⁱ Wisbech is a highly deprived Fenland town (average IMD 4) so I am confident that our Year 11s, who have not had an uninterrupted school year since being in Year 8, have suffered the impact of lockdown more than the national average disruption measured by the studies from the NFER, Department for Education and GL assessment.

We set ourselves the challenge of supporting the targeted male students to make rapid progress to catch up with the learning lost from 2020-2021 and exceed the results of our cohort in 2019.

In our current Year 11, we have 75 boys. We selected a sample size of 24 high ability students, mainly White British Boys, which is 32% of the male population. 100% of them had targets to achieve a grade 5 in English by the end of Year 11. At the end of Year 10, only 20.8% were achieving a strong pass in English.



After looking at their end of Year 10 PPE GCSE English paper, we decided that we needed to do something to encourage the boys to write more in their exam. We researched strategies to implement and decided on two main ideas to focus on in order to increase output of writing.

Our strategies to implement in Year 11 English lessons:

- Modelled writing
- Timed answers

IMPLEMENTATION

Looking at our trend data, the most reliable working at grades and end of course predication came from our PPE seasons. As a result, we decided to use the Year 10 July PPE data as the baseline and the Year 11 March PPE as the comparative data to measure impact.

The actual implementation was led by the Head of English and the English team. The targeted students were in different classes, so the plan to increase writing output was shared with the whole department during CPD time. We have been increasing our use of visualisers over the years, and the English department were already avid users, often sharing good practice with colleagues across the academy.

We modelled writing using visualisers to show the students the quantity and quality of writing needed to secure the higher marks. We used the 'GPS' teaching sequence discussed in the One Education news blog:

EXPLICIT TEACHING - INVESTIGATION - IDENTIFY, CREATE AND CHANGE - TEST DECONSTRUCTION - MODELLED WRITING - GUIDED WRITING - INDEPENDENT WRITING ⁱⁱⁱ

The time to invest in modelled writing was planned into the curriculum and staff who taught the target group and needed this extra time were given the freedom to steer away from the cohort curriculum as and when needed to focus on this strategy.

We introduced timed answers to our lessons. At the start of the year, students had the most amount of time to write their responses. Over time, the amount of time given was reduced to increase the pace of writing. Teachers also modelled what could be achieved in the reduced time, showing students that it was possible to write more in less time.

The main problem we came across during this project was Covid-related absence, both from students and teaching staff. Some of the students in the study missed an abnormal amount of teaching time and one student did not return to school at all during Year 11 due to Covid-related anxiety. There were other sensitive external factors that had an effect on the wellbeing of some of the participants that is unusual for our Year 11 cohorts and this undoubtedly would have affected the impact.

IMPACT

FINDINGS, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

When looking at strategies that have impact, it is always difficult to isolate which has had the most impact when we do so much to help support our learners. It is also important to remember that we're only moving forward if we take the whole cohort with us. When we introduce strategies, although we are focusing on the targeted students within our discussions, of course, by the nature of our jobs, we are interested in getting the best out of all students and helping all students succeed. We shouldn't celebrate closing gaps if it means attainment has dropped, so when evaluating impact it was important to us to ensure female students' results had not dropped, therefore giving us a false sense of success.

We are confident with the integrity of our PPE data. Therefore, we are confident that measuring the impact from the starting point of July 2021 and the end point of March 2022, allowing six months of implementation of the plan in between, is effective. Looking at the data, we are most impressed by the improvement that this plan has had in increasing achievement of grade 5s in GCSE English amongst the targeted boys. The achievement of grade 5+ tripled in the six-month period. Looking at the percentage of boys achieving their target grades, we are now not that far behind the national data from 2019. When we compare our target group to the whole male cohort,



the impact of the plan is clear, with 6.5% more of the targeted group meeting or exceeding their target grades of 5+ compared to the whole cohort. When looking at the gaps for grade 5, back in 2019, TCA's gender gap was actually below national average. Our current data shows the gap has increased, despite the boys making so much improvement in the number obtaining a grade 5. This is because as well as the number of boys achieving grade 5 increasing, the number of girls has also rapidly increased.

The data that I am surprised about is the grade 4 improvements: the percentage of targeted students who are now on target is lower than the percentage of the whole cohort. However, the gap between genders has closed more for grade 4, and comparing to national average from the last national data set, is a positive statistic. It is important to note that the performance of our female cohort has not declined.

	Baseline for targeted students July 21	End Point for targeted students March 22	Impact for targeted students
GRADE 4+	37.5%	66.7%	66.7% are now achieving their target grade
GRADE 5+	20.8%	62.5%	62.5% are now achieving their target grade

Comparison Data

	Targeted students on target - March 2022	Whole male cohort on target - March 2022	TCA gender gap 2022	National gap 2019 between gender ^{iv}	TCA gender gap 2019
GRADE 4+	66.7%	74%	11.3% gap	14.1%	17.7%
GRADE 5+	62.5%	56%	17.8% gap	17.3%	14.8%

ONE OF OUR TEACHERS HAD THE FOLLOWING REFLECTION:

"Both boys since I had them in September really bought into my teaching style and the different methods and tips that I taught them. Both boys have always asked me for extra work such as exam practice papers to complete at home. I have always marked the work and given the boys specific feedback on how they can improve their responses. The boys always listened during feedback lessons and when they had an assessment again, they always implemented the changes that I recommended to the class and the specific recommendations that I gave to the boys"

MR BRONIZEWSKI, KS3 ENGLISH LEAD & YEAR 11 ENGLISH TEACHER

As an academy, we are now considering how to implement the strategy of modelled writing and timed responses across the cohorts. The modelled writing strategy fits well into our developing literacy improvement plans, of which all subjects and departments are responsible for implementing in their areas. We've found that timed responses are a successful way to pick up the pace in lessons and we are looking at ways to expand upon the premise that when skills are introduced, the students are given an extended amount of time to complete related tasks, and then over time the duration allowed is decreased to teach students to respond with a quicker pace. It's important that when we speak to students about pace, we explain why it is important that they use time effectively, not just for exam purposes. The discussion and teaching lends itself to wider wellbeing conversations about the positive impact that using time effectively can have.

Lisa Tarsitano
Vice Principal
Thomas Clarkson Academy

Ian Gooda
Head of English
Thomas Clarkson Academy

ⁱ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-covid-19-on-pupil-attainment>

ⁱⁱ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-covid-19-on-pupil-attainment>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.oneeducation.co.uk/news-blog/teaching-writing-effectively-modelled-writing>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-education/about/statistics>

“The achievement of grade 5+ tripled in a six-month period”



SCHOOL THOMAS CLARKSON ACADEMY



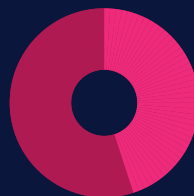
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**NUMBER ON
ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
46.3%



PUPIL PREMIUM
35%

OTHER INFO Across our school we have 29.3% EAL and 16.2% EAL.



AMERY HILL SCHOOL TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 10

How to coach boys to use learning strategies across all subjects in order to improve progress

INTENT

After looking at a few years' worth of data, it became apparent that boys were doing better in Maths than in English. This posed the question – why? The project was set up in order to address this difference and to develop strategies that would at first address the shortfall and then become a preventative measure rather than a curative one.

During the project we aimed to not only discover the reasons for the difference in progress between Maths and English, but to also implement strategies that teachers could use and, through coaching, that the targeted boys could also use themselves – not just in English, but in other lessons that they may find challenging, too.

The specific target of the project was to decide what skills targeted boys lacked in order to progress as well in English as Maths, but with a wider curriculum view. The project was carried out as the school's Professional Learning Group (PLG). The group comprised of 13 members of teaching staff from different subjects throughout the school and teaching staff with a range of experience, from ECT to experienced HoDs.

Our target group were Year 10 boys who were going to be on the 3-4 or 6-7 grade boundaries next year. We selected a group of 15 boys using data from previous data captures, mocks exams and reports.

Our first port of call was to uncover the reasons as to why there was a gap between Maths and English and then to develop, trial and share strategies and experiences that would then go on to potentially become a programme for identified pupils (not specifically boys) in lower years.



IMPLEMENTATION

The PLG met once every half term to discuss findings and share strategies, successes and failures. Our first meeting was to discuss the direction of the project. SLT had identified the gap and came to the meeting to discuss the data that had been used. During the meeting we discussed the question of why there was a difference. At this point, we thought that we were able to boil it down to two points. Either they did not have the strategies to deal with long-answer questions asked of them in subjects like English, History and Geography etc., or they lacked the intrinsic motivation to attempt the longer-answer questions and had become daunted at the prospect of trying.

We used whole school data to select a small group of boys that fell into the targeted group and gave them a questionnaire to ascertain how they felt about longer-answer questions and whether they felt they had any strategies that they employed to help them. We also had a control group of boys that took the same questionnaire. The results from this were interesting. The group of targeted boys' answers suggested that they felt that they didn't have any strategies to deal with longer-answer questions and some didn't have the confidence or the will to ask for help. In comparison, the control group of boys' answers were mixed. Most asked either their peers or teachers for help. They also felt that they did have strategies that they would use during the longer tasks.

We then researched strategies that we could use with the boys to help them engage with the longer-answer questions in subject-specific contexts but also cross-curricular. We then of course put the different strategies into practice with the targeted boys within our subjects. At the next meeting, we fed back on the successes and the failures. By sharing experiences we were then able to use many different strategies with the same pupils over a number of subjects. To keep a record of the strategies people had used, as well as the perceived successes or failures, I set up a Google form for teachers to complete after a trial had been made. It was best to make this a very quick form to complete that simply asked for the targeted pupils, a description of the strategy and the success or failure and reasons why. However, a bit of nagging was required for some of the group to complete it.

The sharing of ideas and strategies was incredibly important, whether they were successful or unsuccessful. It meant that teachers within the group were able to try successful strategies with targeted pupils in their classes from other subjects. This also allowed for pupils to practise transferring the strategies that they had learnt in one subject to another. One example of this was a pupil that had learnt a strategy to break down a blank page, by creating boxes that the pupil filled in one by one in order to write a practical method in science. This strategy was then used in a theory PE lesson. The pupils knew exactly what to do and commented 'Excellent. I can do this. I did this in science'. This success also gave the pupil the motivation to be successful in the PE task.

The project is not finished and as a group we will be presenting to the whole school about the strategies we have developed as well as our final findings. We will also finish the year with a follow-up questionnaire, to see if the boys' perceptions have changed as a result of the interventions and scaffolding we have used.

I felt that the only problem we had as a group, was that there were too many of us for the project to be truly focused on one aspect addressing boys' achievement. This was due to members having avenues and ideas that they wanted to pursue, meaning that it took a large amount of time for us to decide a focus that we were all happy with.

Some strategies that teachers employed for stamina were:

- Chunking up spaces - using boxes to break down large answer spaces
- Using and analysing model answers
- Essay planning boxes

And strategies for addressing intrinsic motivation included:

- No fear of failure
- Building up confidence using praise

“The hope is that this would have impact as a preventative measure, rather than a curative response to boys underperforming”





IMPACT

We have seen some progress in the targeted boys' attitude to bigger tasks, as well as how they respond to using strategies to break down these larger tasks. This has made these tasks much less daunting. However, this is currently anecdotal, in the form of work produced. Our next stage of the project that will be carried out in the later stages of the summer term is to give the targeted boys the survey that we gave them at the start and see if their reflections have changed. This will coincide with some subject testing and therefore, data generated and analysed. At this point, we will be looking at any improvements that have been made in longer-answer questions compared to longer-answer questions that they completed in their March mock exams.

If I were to embark on the project again, I would do it with a smaller group of colleagues. Colleagues had lots of different directions that they wanted to pull the project in, in response to their own classes and experience. I felt this blurred the focus of the project and made it difficult to make progress in some areas and therefore may have lessened the efficacy of the research.

I feel the next steps are to continue the coaching of boys in strategies they can use themselves and also to run workshops to develop their intrinsic motivation lower down in the school. The hope is that this would have impact as a preventative measure, rather than as a curative response to boys underperforming. This will obviously require planning and maybe time off timetable to make the biggest impact on these pupils. Also, it would be beneficial to revisit year on year throughout their five years in secondary school, in order to embed the strategies and therefore make them holistically effective.

Andy Platt

Deputy Head of Science
Amery Hill School

“It meant that teachers within the group were able to try successful strategies with targeted pupils in their classes from other subjects. This also allowed other pupils to practise transferring the strategies that they had learnt in one subject to another.”

SCHOOL AMERY HILL SCHOOL



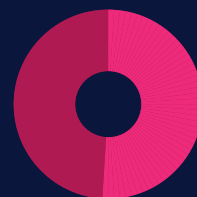
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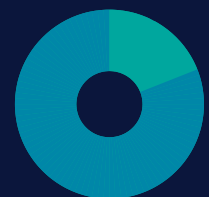
NUMBER ON
ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-11



% BOYS
51%



PUPIL PREMIUM
19%



YSGOL CWM BROMBIL

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 8

How does retrieval practice and low-stakes testing impact Year 8 boys' attainment?

INTENT

When we returned to school as 'normal' in September 2021, we acknowledged that children had gaps in their learning as a result of national lockdowns. We wanted to find a way of getting our pupils to adopt purposeful learning habits and make up for lost time. We also considered that historically, girls outperform boys in GCSE examinations across Wales. History repeated itself in the Summer of 2021, which is why we wanted to target boys in particular.

Pinkett and Roberts¹ suggest that implementing tests of a low-stake nature in the classroom helps boys to retain knowledge and improve their engagement in learning. With this in mind, and a growing emphasis on retrieval practice in our school, we decided that utilising frequent retrieval tasks and low-stakes tests could be impactful on boys' attainment. The overall aims of this project were:

- to teach boys how to recall knowledge
- to introduce them to a wide variety of retrieval strategies
- to form good learning habits that they can take forward into GCSE years to support them with revision for future exams.

THE TEAM INVOLVED

At the beginning of the project, a group of teaching staff expressed an interest in participating. We met in person to discuss ideas about retrieval strategies we currently used in our own classrooms and shared what had worked well for our pupils. Teachers of English, Religious Studies, Welsh, Geography and History were involved in the project. We decided that all subjects would implement frequent low-stakes testing during lessons with Year 8 pupils.



IMPLEMENTATION

DESIGNING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

We decided that pupils would complete a summative assessment at the beginning of the project. Following this, they would complete frequent (at least 2 per week) low-stakes tests in specific subjects for 5 weeks. Then, they would complete a second summative assessment at the end of the 5-week period, which would follow the same structure as the first assessment (with different content). We would then compare the results of the first and second assessment to measure the impact on attainment.

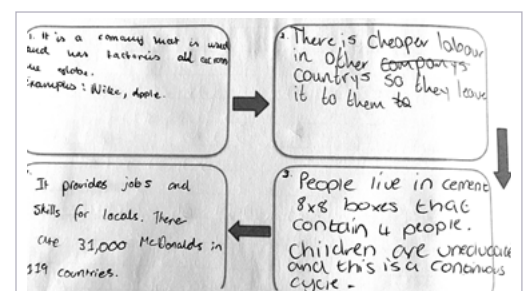
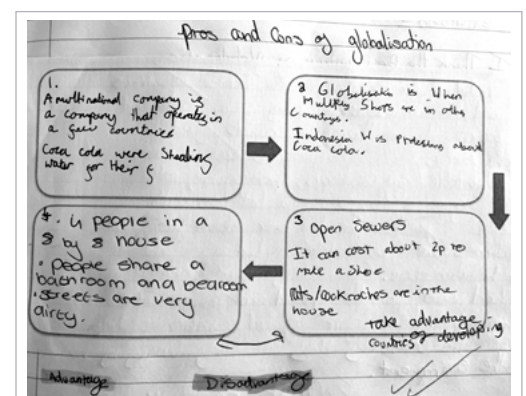
DESIGNING THE ASSESSMENTS

Many teachers were familiar with Kate Jones, researcher and writer on the topic of retrieval practice. She has published a practical resource guide for the classroom, from which we drew ideas to use ourselves. As a group, we discussed how we would measure impact and came to the decision on the structure of the summative assessments we would all use, to make our results as reliable as possible. Both assessments would be out of 20 marks; the first 10 marks on the paper would be retrieval questions, such as 'name 3 persuasive writing devices' or 'what does a complex sentence contain?' This would then be followed by a question worth 10 marks where pupils had to apply knowledge and skills, such as analysing a poem, or writing a speech.

SHARING DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

We created a Microsoft Teams group where staff involved were added and we shared retrieval strategies such as Cops and Robbers¹¹. This is a task where pupils must list what they can recall about the topic under 'Cops' then ask a partner for their ideas and list these under 'Robbers', thereby filling gaps in their knowledge. Tasks such as this were implemented at least twice a week in each subject that participated. Having the Teams group was beneficial because we were able to use a wide variety of retrieval strategies; this improved pupil engagement and they expressed how enjoyable it was to have a range of tasks instead of repeating the same one continually. That being said, pupils explained how the use of Cops and Robbers, Retrieval Relay, Quizziz and Kahoot, to name a few, were more enjoyable than having a 5- or 10-mark quiz displayed on the board at the front of the classroom; they felt this was something they did often and appreciated the variety of tasks instead.

With group tasks such as Retrieval Relay (pupils work in groups of 4, each one filling in a box with what they remember about the topic), we found that some pupils did not respond as well as others to this; they preferred working individually. This could have been because they were shy, anxious or not as vocal as others in their group. A problem with this was that the more vocal and confident pupils in each group could sometimes dominate the task so teachers had to ensure that every pupil wrote something down in order to measure each pupil's understanding and memory.





MEASURING OUTCOMES

Three Year 8 classes completed the full project where boys' attainment was measured through the assessment data. In total, 29 pupils completed both summative assessments. Results showed that 62% of boys achieved a higher score in the second assessment, 7% had the same results, and 31% achieved a lower score.

PUPIL VOICE

We spoke to pupils immediately after the retrieval task (during the lesson) and nearly all feedback was positive about the variety of retrieval tasks they completed. Pupils felt that retrieval practice was helping them to remember what they had learned in previous lessons and they expressed how completing these tasks regularly was improving their memory. Pupils said they particularly liked the use of flashcards, Quizziz and Kahoot. (The latter two are online platforms that can be used to create and distribute quizzes/tests.) These were also helpful for teachers because tests were marked instantly and therefore feedback could be given to pupils immediately. This was helpful because pupils could see where they had gone wrong, fill gaps in their knowledge and discuss correct answers with their peers while still being aware of the questions from the quiz.

IMPACT

STAFF INSIGHTS

Teaching staff involved in the project felt that in general, providing tests of a low-stakes nature was positive because the competitive element encouraged boys to participate. Concerns shared about the project included the lack of explanations pupils provided in extended answers; one teacher said, "knowledge recall was generally good but boys across classes that are banded by attainment were not showing significant improvement in fully developing their answers". As a group, we discussed this issue and decided that we should have immediately followed retrieval tasks with a task where pupils had to apply knowledge and skills to a question which requires an extended answer. Considering the 31% of boys who achieved a lower score in the second assessment, when we proceed with the second phase of the research, staff will have to ensure that a reflection task is done at the end of every lesson so pupils can consolidate new knowledge learnt. Staff will also need to ensure that retrieval tasks are appropriate for each individual pupil and their needs so that each task is accessible for all. Also, staff need to ensure each pupil completes all retrieval tasks in full; a way of ensuring this happens is to collect all tasks at the end of the lesson, check for completion and therefore track progress.

CONCLUSIONS, NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project has shown us that retrieval practice plays a huge role in learning and engagement across the curriculum. We were pleased that most boys' attainment improved but we were not surprised that 100% of boys did not improve. Therefore, we are working towards increasing the number of boys whose attainment improves through retrieval practice. There is room for growth in our project, which is why in the next phase, we want to involve a larger number of pupils, staff and departments. We also want to change the process slightly – anyone looking to replicate something similar should note the following: the retrieval task should appear at the beginning of the lesson, like an APK task. Immediately after this, pupils should undertake a task where they have to explain something in relation to the retrieval task. For example, the retrieval task could be 'name the writing technique where 2 things are compared using the words "like" or "as"' (answer = simile). This should be followed by another question such as 'why has the writer used a simile in the poem and what is its effect on the reader?' This type of task, where pupils are required to explain why or explain how, should also be repeated regularly and built upon gradually so that they can develop their extended writing skills.

With consistency and continuity, I believe we will achieve what we set out to do: encourage boys to foster purposeful learning habits and ultimately, create a love for learning.

Molly Davies
English Teacher
Ysgol Cwm Brombil

¹ Pinkett, M. and Roberts, M., (2019), *Boys Don't Try?* Oxon: Routledge

² Jones, K., (2021), *Retrieval Practice: Resource Guide*, Suffolk: John Catt Educational

“Pupils felt that retrieval practice was helping them to remember what they had learned in previous lessons and they expressed how completing these tasks regularly was improving their memory”



SCHOOL YSGOL CWM BROMBIL



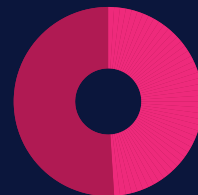
REGION
South Wales

1360

**NUMBER ON
ROLL**



YEAR GROUPS
Years 1-11



% BOYS
49.1%



PUPIL PREMIUM
32.01%

OTHER INFO School opened four years ago

**JCoSS**

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 7-11

What is the impact of Doug Lemov's feedback strategies on improving boys' engagement levels in lessons?

INTENT

RE-BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE

After 15 months of COVID, it was clear to the staff that some key areas needed to be addressed with students. At the forefront was to return our students to a place of greater confidence, resilience and risk-taking in their work. It had been noted that students, whilst happy to be back in school, were not strongly demonstrating typical JCoSS attributes of managing organisation, nurturing their talents and spending time on learning. These also happen to be three of the core values that we place on our students' and this project became part of our wider school improvement plan to reset, rejoice and reinvigorate.

PROJECT BEGINNINGS

In September 2021, the project initially started with group of lead teachers delivering a summary of findings from a range of books on the challenge of teaching boys, and how this was fitting into the landscape of what we were seeing in school. It also included some helpful tips for staff to take into consideration during planning, marking and feedback stages.

However, due to the pressures of COVID absentees and leadership capacity issues, the project only began in earnest in January 2022, after Sasha and I were appointed to the role of 'Lead Practitioner for Teaching and Learning' in late December 2021.



FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

The project aimed to improve engagement levels of boys (and girls too) using feedback strategies and ideas from Lemov's book *Practice Perfect*. This became a core text that we used to respond to the issues identified of reduced confidence, resilience and risk-taking.

LEMOV STATES:

“...applying feedback in complex situations is challenging... We can know what feedback to give but not how to establish social norms that allow us to be constructively critical.”ⁱⁱ

This perfectly demonstrated the issues and patterns we were noticing in student behaviour, and we required different approaches. We aimed to use a range of feedback strategies outlined in the book across Year 7 to Year 11 students. Whilst qualities such as confidence, resilience and risk-taking can be difficult to quantify, the mixture of staff and student questionnaires and group interviews has helped to provide insight into the interventions' impact - which you will read about later in this article.

THE STAFF TEAM

We aimed to create a trial group using the existing 'lead teachers' (six) alongside a range of staff members (ten) from different subject areas. The role of this group would be to pilot a feedback strategy and provide feedback on its effectiveness with a specific class/group of students/individual.

We wanted a positive approach to the project, which we hoped would lead to greater uptake of the strategies across the wider teaching staff. This was helped by having a varied group of staff in the trial group.

IMPLEMENTATION

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS

The project was initially built on evidence from the summer 2021 attitude to learning data, which indicated that engagement, participation, and attitude were all areas to be addressed. Data showed that poor engagement with lessons was not necessarily specific to boys, but that pupil premium pupils (whilst barely making up 6% of the school) were more likely to have negative behaviour logs. As our Head of Pupil Premium was already tasked with specific interventions for these pupils, we therefore decided to take a more holistic approach.

THE FEEDBACK CYCLE

We met with the 'lead teachers' to explain the project for the remainder of the school year and the expectations. A closed invitation was sent to a group of staff who would also join the trial group. The group became quite substantial in size to allow for flexibility of staff whose workloads could vary month to month. We agreed with the trial group that they would feed back to us at the end of each month. However, we found that staff submitting their findings on an email chain during the weeks of the one-month period was incredibly positive, as each staff member wanted to build on top of the last person's. It allowed for more immediate sharing and collaboration between staff on what was working and what wasn't. At the end of each month, the findings were collated into a newsletter. This was shared with all staff via staff notices and as part of our morning briefings. The wider teaching staff were encouraged to test the strategies themselves based on the feedback of the trial group. While the rest of the staff began this, our trial group would begin to work on the next feedback strategy to be trialled. This pattern continued for the remainder of the school year. As lead practitioners, we also met fortnightly with the Deputy Head for Teaching and Learning. Our meetings began to create an open dialogue about our findings and how we could take advantage of the positive momentum.



THE STRATEGIES WE TRIALLED

At the time of writing, we have trialled the following strategies:

- 'shorten the feedback loop'
- 'power of positive'
- 'make it an everyday thing'
- 'describe the solution not the problem'.

We will be testing 'practice using feedback' and 'lock it in' later on in the year.

This is a high volume of strategies to test, and it could be argued that we have not given enough time to truly see the impact. However, what it has given us as a teaching staff is a sense of purpose and direction in addressing some of the issues of confidence, resilience and risk-taking. Despite the volume, the project was surprisingly easy to implement due to the trial group doing such a marvellous job in creating a buzz around what they were testing.

We were able to identify which strategies were most clearly addressing our concerns with student confidence, resilience and risk-taking. **Shortening the feedback loop** combines two schools of thought: **"giv[ing] participants feedback right...this will improve performance far faster than giving more extensive feedback"**ⁱⁱⁱ and **"learners find it easier to improve their mistake when they are corrected quickly."**^{iv} We found this allowed us to improve the stamina and self-confidence of students.

Additionally, strategies such as 'power of positive' meant that we were able to challenge students to build resilience. This idea is captured well by Lemov: **"people tend to improve most and fastest at things they are good at or by applying their existing talents in new settings."**^v We were also reminded of Sherrington: **"It's a well established aspect of the growth mindset research that, in order to succeed, students need to approach a challenge with a positive attitude, understanding how to learn from previous mistakes and not be afraid of making them."**^{vi} This highlighted to us that we were choosing the right path to work on improving the resilience of students.

IMPACT

Findings from our student questionnaire heavily endorsed the 'shorten the feedback loop' strategy, with 78.3% saying they preferred it when feedback was quick and to the point. From the group interviews conducted with students, a Year 10 student said, "When I don't understand something, I need help from teachers and that usually takes a while depending on how other students are finding the task". This highlights that the feedback loop is important but achieving it is still challenged by the hierarchy of needs in the classroom. One member of staff was able to adapt the strategy to fit the context of her practical subject: "shortening the feedback loop... enabled [students] to apply this to their own work...in this scenario this was very effective and efficient in getting all students their work."

Other interesting findings came from the 'power of positive' technique, where 61% of students stated they prefer to know what they have done wrong rather than what they have done right. Despite this response, one of the staff in the trial group said "the other positive from this is the respect and trust that [the student] has gained from this, and my feedback to him is not only related to him developing his musical skills, but his leadership abilities." Another said: "there is a mutual trust and it has resulted in students enjoying each other's successes, praising each other, and becoming confident not only with the examination rubric but I've also noticed how their spontaneous spoken French has really blossomed".

All of these qualitative comments from staff demonstrate the positive impact the project has had. The real success has been down to those in the trial group creating that positive foundation for students to thrive in. Our structure, with different teachers from different departments in the trial, has also meant that the wider teaching staff feel supported as there is someone in their own departments that they can speak to about the feedback strategy and how it has worked.



LIMITATIONS

It must be added that the response rate for the questionnaire was low as it was sent to all Year 7 to Year 11, so the accuracy of our findings would be improved with more responses. The sample size for the data quoted here was 85 students. However, the qualitative data of group interviews and open questions on the questionnaire did provide some very interesting valid data which truly reflects the current landscape at JCoSS.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

The project was a timely one in the first academic year with no pandemic closures. It allowed for a resetting of systems and reinvigoration of staff and students. If this project was going to be scaled up, I would like to see small lesson study groups of 4-5 staff investigating one of the specific strategies with an agreed group of students over the course of the year. I would also like more specific landmark dates pencilled in the calendar for more meaningful conversations about findings and how to adapt the strategies to specific students.

If you are interested in running a project like this in your school, we think it would be a good one if your school still feels like it did when you are operating this year as if it were still the height of COVID. It has been an excellent project to recalibrate the need for Teaching and Learning as the key pillar for school improvement and for getting back to the importance of pedagogy.

Sunny Gunnesee and Sasha Stock

Lead Practitioners for Teaching and Learning
JCoSS

ⁱ We use the MENSCH acronym to encapsulate the good behaviours we want to see in our students:

- M - Manages their organisation and behaviour
- E - Encourages others to learn
- N - Nurtures all their talents
- S - Spends time on learning
- C - Considers the feelings and opinions of others
- H - Honours the school and each other

- ⁱⁱ Lemov, D., (2012), **Practice Perfect**, Jossey-Bass Publishing, p. 108
- ⁱⁱⁱ Lemov, D., (2012), **Practice Perfect**, Jossey-Bass Publishing, p. 118
- ^{iv} Roberts, M., (2022), **The Boy Question**, Routledge, p. 80
- ^v Lemov, D., (2012), **Practice Perfect**, Jossey-Bass Publishing, p. 121
- ^{vi} Sherrington, T., (2019), **Rosenshine Principles in Action**, John Catt Educational Limited, p. 44

SCHOOL JCoSS



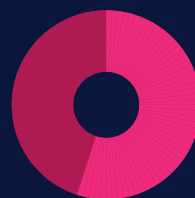
REGION
London

1332

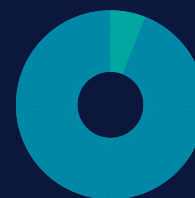
NUMBER ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
53.7%



PUPIL PREMIUM
6.14%

OTHER INFO School opened in September 2010 as a 6 form voluntary aided school with an ARP (now PSRP) for students with autism. Build with support from the DfE, Barnet LA, Norwood and donors from the Jewish Community. It was a response to the demands for an academically aspirational and inclusive school which embraced all traditions of Judaism.



ST. WILFRID'S C of E ACADEMY

TARGET YEAR GROUP: YEAR 11

Supporting 10 Year 11 boys through research-led teaching strategies and Level Best coaching

THE ISSUE

For a number of years, we have discussed and trialled strategies to raise the achievement of boys. Although our boys perform well, (P8 for boys in 2019 was +0.35), a gender gap still persists (-0.32, 2019). Many of the approaches we have used which were intended to raise the performance of boys have understandably also benefitted the girls, and as a consequence the gap has not decreased. The work of Matt Pinkett and Mark Roberts in *Boys Don't Try?* dispelled some of the myths we suspected; however, we felt that we still didn't have the most effective tools for addressing the issues with our boys.

WHAT DID WE DO?

As a staff body, we try to take the best from educational research to improve our practice. We formed a reading group where each staff member read one of the books within the PiXL reading list:

1. Palmer, S., (2010), **21st Century Boys: How modern life is driving them off the rails and how we can get them back on track**, Orion
2. Roberts, M., (2021), **The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School**, Routledge
3. Wilson, G., (2013), **Breaking Through Barriers to Boys' Achievement: Developing a Caring Masculinity**, Bloomsbury Education
4. Wilson, G., (2021), **Let's Hear It from the Boys: What boys really think about school and how to help them succeed**, Bloomsbury Education
5. Younger, M. and Warrington, M. et al, (2005), **Raising Boys' Achievements in Secondary Schools**, Open University Press



We met, reviewed and discussed these texts. The staff left the session feeling enthused and inspired with a collective list of actions that we could explore. More discussion followed before we agreed to focus on two strands:

1. Mentoring and support (using PiXL Level Best)
2. Applying three strategies to implement within the classroom – taken from Mark Roberts' work, *The Boy Question*

HOW DID WE DO IT?

We identified 10 boys to be mentored and 10 staff to work with these students. Joe Sparks trained these staff (remotely) using the Level Best mentoring programme. Over the two terms, information was shared by the staff who taught each student with the relevant mentor, along with data from PPEs.

In a remote session, we explained the three strategies we wanted the boys' teachers to implement.

The three strategies were:

- 'Feed for Fulfilment' - providing written scaffold just for the boys who lack confidence, then using their work as an example of effective practice within classroom discussion;
- 'Rephrase to amaze' - where the teacher takes the boys' answers and layers subject-specific vocabulary into their response, using this to praise the student whilst adding confidence;
- 'Let them write like you' - where staff live model a response, articulating their decisions regarding vocabulary, content and structure.

WHAT WORKED?

STRAND 1

The majority of the mentoring had a positive impact. One student said: 'The conversations with Sir have really helped me because he spoke to me about everything. I really did not want to let him down because I saw him every Friday. I really revised because I wanted to make him proud and I wanted to make myself proud too.' This student's focus in lessons improved, and subsequently so did his grades.

However, a few mentors unfortunately struggled to regularly meet with their student due to conflicting timetable demands which yielded less success.


STRAND 2

The three strategies were introduced in a single, remote CPD session. Staff bought into the concepts, however only the staff who taught the 10 boys were present. As a result, the strategies were not fully embedded across the Academy, which in hindsight we regret.

At the point of writing this report, the numerical data is inconclusive. There appeared to be a link in the improvement of grades of the students who had met regularly with their mentor. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that the in-class behaviour and attitude of mentored students had improved.

However, the absence of numerical data does not mean to say that impact was not evident. We are confident from this project that the mentoring and the strategies worked. But as the phrase goes, 'it's not what you do, but the way that you do it.' We saw some results, but we are certain that tweaking our methodology will reap greater rewards.

“We are confident from this project that the mentoring and the strategies worked”



“We feel that classroom practice is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to addressing the underperformance of boys. It is the bit that we see, and because of this project, we now have more tools and strategies to chip away at this.”



Moving forward, we will continue to mentor our boys, however this will be more closely monitored, and staff will be supported so that they maintain their commitment to regularly meeting with their student. We feel that careful consideration of timetables and the matching of staff to students is necessary. Within the project, we identified 10 boys and started the mentoring in December. Going forward, we intend to start the mentoring in September and will mentor at least 30 boys.

Strand 2 was more successful in the English department. The live modelling was already embedded in their practice. The department spent time working on the 'Feed for Fulfilment' strategy, discussing how it works in their subject, looking at specific examples in English. Staff within the English department came back to this regularly in their meetings and discussed the impact. Consequently, it has had a greater impact.

We believe that the three strategies selected were the right ones and, in some cases, have been highly effective. Moving forward, we will introduce these to all of the staff next academic year. We will focus on a strategy at a time, committing departmental time to discuss, practise, embed and refine so that these strategies become routine practice.

Working with PiXL provided us with a list of books which we had not previously considered. PiXL gave us the opportunity to work with Joe Sparks (who we would highly recommend), along with our PiXL Associate. It is the latter who sparked a new level of thinking. Stewart Edgell was data-driven and when we discussed the project, he questioned the impact and how we would measure this. In preparation for our first meeting, we collated information which outlined the historical performance of boys, along with data regarding the behaviour of boys. This presented a stark picture as it highlighted trends. In one year group, a ratio of 5 boys to 1 girl had spent time in our internal isolation space, with most referrals being made for behaviour which had taken place outside of the classroom.

On reflection, we feel that when looking at performance data, we often immediately begin to find a solution which focuses on improving our teaching to address underperformance. Whilst this is still a valid reaction, the data showed that there were factors beyond the classroom that were influencing our boys.

We feel that classroom practice is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to addressing the underperformance of boys. It is the bit that we see, and because of this project, we now have more tools and strategies to chip away at this. The next challenge for us is how we address the issues linked to boys, their attendance, behaviour, and the culture beyond the walls of the classroom.

Kirsty Coomber

Deputy Headteacher

St. Wilfrid's C of E Academy

SCHOOL ST. WILFRID'S C of E ACADEMY



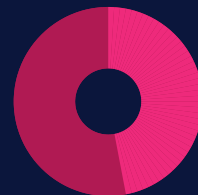
REGION
Lancashire

1513

NUMBER ON ROLL



YEAR GROUPS
Years 7-13



% BOYS
46.4%



PUPIL PREMIUM
24.4%

OTHER INFO We are a large comprehensive school with a demographic, in terms of ethnicity, which is representative of our local area. Each student in years 7 - 11 has access to a 1:1 device.

PiXL STRATEGIES

PiXL STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Some of the projects in this publication include mention of specific PiXL strategies and resources. Please find below a brief description of some of the key strategies that might be of use to you when thinking about positively impacting boys' achievement.

PiXL CHANGE AND LEVEL BEST

Our PiXL Change strategy centres around Precise Pastoral Care - it centres around changing behaviour and habits of both staff and students through high support and high challenge. Level Best, developed by Joe Sparks, is a coaching strategy that helps students articulate what they want to change about their behaviour.

You can read more by going to the PiXL members area > PiXL Strategies > PiXL Change.

CHARACTER AND THE PiXL EDGE

We offer an extensive range of resources to use with students that support the key life attributes of Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communication (LORIC). We also have the PiXL Edge, which is an accreditation scheme that rewards students for the activities they undertake to develop these key skills.

Find out more by going to the PiXL Members Area > PiXL Strategies > LORIC.

HORSFORTH QUADRANT (AND HORSFORTH QUADRANT APP)

The Horsforth Quadrant was shared with us by PiXL members Horsforth School. It is a quadrant that groups students based on effort and progress. Since the team at Horsforth shared this idea, we have developed a number of extra resources and ideas for how these groupings can be used for impact.

Find out more by going to the PiXL Members Area > PiXL Strategies > Horsforth Quadrant.

READING

We offer a vast and growing package which aims to support schools and students with reading. There are currently two comprehensive packages available to support you: firstly, to create your whole-school approach to reading and secondly to develop provision to support students with reading fluency.

Find out more by going to the PiXL Members Area > PiXL Reading.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Whilst PiXL do not have a particular view on Teaching & Learning, we are committed to finding ways to equip leaders with options best suited to their needs. The PiXL Teaching and Learning team have explored a wide variety of T&L theories, research and evidence, and have translated these into practical CPD resources for you to use in your school.

Find out more by going to the PiXL Members Area > PiXL Teaching & Learning.

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

On Boys' Achievement

1. Palmer, S., (2010), *21st Century Boys: How modern life is driving them off the rails and how we can get them back on track*, **Orion**
2. Pinkett, M. and Roberts, M., (2019), *Boys Don't Try: Rethinking Masculinity in Schools*, **Routledge**
3. Roberts, M., (2021), *The Boy Question: How to Teach Boys to Succeed in School*, **Routledge**
4. Wilson, G., (2013), *Breaking Through Barriers to Boys' Achievement: Developing a Caring Masculinity*, **Bloomsbury Education**
5. Wilson, G., (2021), *Let's Hear It from the Boys: What boys really think about school and how to help them succeed*, **Bloomsbury Education**
6. Younger, M. and Warrington, M. et al, (2005), *Raising Boys' Achievements in Secondary Schools*, **Open University Press**

On Education and Leadership more widely

1. Alexander, R., (2020), *A Dialogic Teaching Companion*, **Routledge**
2. Beard, A., (2018), *Natural Born Learners, Our Incredible Capacity to Learn and How We can Harness It*, **Weindenfeld and Nicolson**
3. Black, P. and William, D., (1998), *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment*, **GL Assessment Ltd.**
4. Christodoulou, D., (2013), *Seven Myths about Education*, **Routledge**
5. Claxton, G., (2002), *Building learning power: Helping young people become better learners*, **TLO Limited, Bristol**
6. Davies, I., (2017), *Debates in History Teaching*, **Routledge**
7. Didau, D., (2015), *What if everything you know about education was wrong?* **Crown House Publishing**
8. Dweck, C., (2008), *Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential*, **Ballantine Books**
9. Dweck, C.S., (2008), *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, **Ballantine Books, Paperback edition**
10. Hattie, J., (2009), *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analysis relating to achievement*, **Routledge**
11. Major, Lee Elliot and Higgins, Steve, (2019), *What Works? Research and Evidence for Successful Teaching*, **Bloomsbury Education**
12. Willingham, D., (2010), *Why Don't Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How The Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom*, **Jossey-Bass**

Blogs, articles and websites

1. From NACE: *Attainment and the gender gap: understanding what works*
2. From UNESCO: *2019 Gender Report*
3. Gender and Education Association (GEA)
4. From Estyn: *Closing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in school* (2008)
5. From Ofsted: *The Annual Report of HMCI*
6. From SecEd: *Attainment: closing the gender gap*
7. Academic review article: *Trends in gender gaps: using 20 years of evidence from TIMSS*
8. From ReviseSociology: *What is the Gender Gap in Education?*
This contains a collection of analysis on the 2019 exam series, including infographics from the Guardian and statistics from JCQ on the GCSE and A Level results
9. From JCQ: *Browse analysis of previous examination series*
10. Gary Wilson: *Raising Boys' Achievement*

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