

reaching out

14-19 INITIATIVES IN SUFFOLK SPECIAL SCHOOLS
TO HELP STUDENTS PREPARE FOR LIFE BEYOND
SCHOOL

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introduction

Pupils in special schools are more similar to pupils in mainstream schools than is often realised. True, some special needs pupils may look a little different or have unusual mannerisms. Some have to use wheelchairs to get about and some of them may have difficulties, sometimes severe difficulties, in communicating. They all, generally, learn much more slowly than mainstream pupils. But, fundamentally, they are the same as their colleagues in mainstream schools. They want to be treated with dignity and respect, to make their own decisions and be independent. They get bored easily, they like to socialise and they want lessons to be enjoyable and related to their interests. And, just like their mainstream peers, they are entitled to learn as much as possible of the National Curriculum.

However, both mainstream and special needs students approaching the end of their school career can sometimes find that the National Curriculum subjects seem unrelated to the everyday adult world they are about to enter. They may want to learn practical skills more directly relevant to their lives beyond school. So, mainstream schools offer “Increased Flexibility” programmes, work-related learning and vocational courses. Similarly, special schools have been developing equivalent programmes which help students to reach out to the wider world beyond school, to become established in their local community and to acquire important practical skills for their adult life.

This booklet describes such initiatives in five special schools in Suffolk. Four of the initiatives are new courses established in partnership with

mainstream schools or colleges, although the rationale for the partnership and the nature of the programme are different in each case. Sometimes, as at The Ashley School, the partnership arises because the special school and the neighbouring mainstream school both have similar types of students with special needs. In other cases, such as Thomas Wolsey and Beacon Hill schools, local partnerships have been created because they provide specialist facilities and teaching not available in the special school. By contrast, Belstead School in Ipswich forges partnerships with distant mainstream institutions to help students who come to Belstead from other areas of Suffolk to get to know their local community. At Riverwalk School, the innovation is not a course but new methods to help students play a bigger role in making decisions about their future lives.

It is hoped that this booklet provides an insight into current special school developments which will be of interest both to those who work in special schools and to their mainstream colleagues, especially as they increasingly work in partnership.

Paul Hine

September 2005

The Ashley School

A special school and a mainstream school collaborate to produce a Vocational and Recreational Studies programme to help their special needs students integrate more fully into the community when they leave school.

THE SCHOOL

The Ashley School in Lowestoft is a day and residential school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. It has 125 pupils aged 7 to 16 who come from north Suffolk. About 40 of the pupils benefit from access to resources and support for longer than the school day, so some of them stay until 8:00 pm in the evening and some stay overnight at the school for two or four nights a week.

whole of Ashley's year group) and 10 from the Denes School. Most of the Denes students have SEN statements and some curricular needs in common with the Ashley students.

The programme occupies one day a week and is provided by the two schools and three local training providers: YMCA Training, Lowestoft College of FE and Breakout. There are two key elements to the programme.

THE INNOVATION

In partnership with the neighbouring high school, the Denes High School Business and Enterprise College, the Ashley School has created a programme to help their students deal with the practicalities of life after leaving school. It is called the Vocational and Recreational Studies (VRS) programme and it is for Year 10 and 11 students. The programme has 30 students in each year group: 20 from Ashley (the

- **The vocational element** is intended to improve the students' prospects of entering training and employment after leaving school. It includes taster courses in construction, horticulture and social care and a series of practical workshop sessions in carpentry, jewellery-making, fabrication and engineering, in addition to individually tailored and supported work experience

placements. There are also opportunities for voluntary work which can sometimes provide school-leavers with a stepping stone to paid work. The programme also includes some skills relevant to both employment and home life: courses in food hygiene, health and safety, and first aid.

- **The recreational element** introduces the students to some of the recreational opportunities which may be available to them in adult life. Many of the students will have difficulties in finding employment, so they are likely to have time on their hands and need to know how they can make positive and satisfying use of their time. The programme includes canoeing, orienteering, rock-climbing and fishing, but it particularly tries to show the young people how they can access recreational opportunities. They visit a local sports centre, youth clubs and library and are shown what these places can offer them and how to join and become involved in the activities. They are introduced to community sources of support such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Family Planning Clinic, the Connexions office and the Job Centre. The students visit local youth clubs to see

what opportunities they may provide for social contact.

Wherever possible, the VRS programme leads to qualifications and awards to recognise the students' achievements. These include CIEH¹ Certificates in Food Hygiene and Health and Safety in the Workplace, and the St John's Ambulance Young Life-Saver's Award. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is used to accredit the programme overall. All the programme's students are enrolled on it, and 80% achieve the Silver award. Some return to the school after 16 to continue working towards the Gold award.

ORIGINS

The VRS programme has been developed over the past five years. The school initiated the programme partly because it wanted to improve curriculum flexibility and inclusion, but particularly because of findings from the school's own research. In a research exercise funded by the LEA and carried out in collaboration with Connexions, ex-pupils who had left the school in 1996 were asked about the nature of the lives after leaving school. The research showed that the quality of their lives depended very much on the extent to which they were involved in the local

¹ The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, www.cieh.org

The timetable for the VRS programme

Ashley School/ Denes High School Vocational & Recreational Curriculum Sept 2003				
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	
A Y M 10	First Aid Mrs Lockwood + 1 SSA (JB)	Horticulture Mini Enterprise Mrs Vernon + 1 SSA (SB)	Essential Food Hygiene Mrs Brown + Mrs Jones (Mrs Eglington Spring term)	
		Carousel 3 Groups of 9		
P Y M 10	Outdoor Education Mr Chapman Mrs Lockwood + 1 SSA (TH)	Vocational/ Recreational Opportunities Mrs Milton + 1 SSA (SB)	Health & Safety at Work Mr s Brown + 1SSA (JB)	
		Carousel 3 Groups of 9		
	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term	
A Y M 11	Vocational Tasters Motor Vehicle Maintenance (YMCA)1 SSA (JD) Introduction to Retail (YMCA Training) (JP)	Vocational Tasters Construction (Low College) SSA (JD) Introduction to Social Care Mrs Jones + 1SSA (JB)	Vocational Tasters Voluntary Work Opportunities in the Environment 2 SSA's (JD,JP)	
P Y M 11	YMCA Training, Employability Skills Training (AV) Group of 10 Sessions begin 1.00 pm finish 3.00pm Ashley Enterprise Mr Johnson + 1 SSA (JP) Breakout Group of 6 Sessions 1.00pm—3.00pm	YMCA Training, Employability Skills Training (AV) Group of 10 Sessions begin 1.00 pm finish 3.00pm Ashley Enterprise Mr Johnson + 1 SSA (JP) Breakout Group of 6 Sessions 1.00pm—3.00pm	YMCA Training, Employability Skills Training (AV) Group of 10 Sessions begin 1.00 pm finish 3.00pm Ashley Ent Mr Johnson + 1. SSA (JP)	
All Day	Work Experience (Each pupil to receive 1 day a week for a term as list) i/c RM + MT			

community, especially since many of them were not in employment or training and therefore had significant amounts of leisure time. The school wanted to create a programme for its Year 10 and 11 students which took account of this finding and prepared them for the circumstances they were likely to experience on leaving school.

The school was also aware of other developments which supported such an initiative: Government policies such as those articulated in the Government's Strategy Statement for SEN, **Removing Barriers to Achievement**², the encouragement from Government for schools to work together in partnership, the "Increased Flexibility" developments in mainstream schools and the debates surrounding the Tomlinson Review.

ISSUES

Some staff development was required to equip staff to teach particular qualifications. In order to teach the CIEH qualifications in Food Hygiene and Health and Safety in the Workplace, one teacher had to attend a CIEH course at a local FE college for one day a week over 5 or 6 weeks. The work experience element of the VRS programme involved training provided by Suffolk County Council. The outdoor element of the

programme which included activities such as rock-climbing and canoeing required qualified staff, although in this case the teacher in question was already well-qualified.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

From September 2005, the programme is to be extended to include additional organisations. It will include three high schools and another special school. Using the experience of this programme, the Ashley School is leading a new project, working in partnership with the three other high schools and Lowestoft College of Further Education. The Goals Project will deliver an increased number of accredited vocational courses to youngsters with learning disabilities. Each establishment is delivering a pathway based on its own specialism: ICT, retail, sport and leisure, catering, and construction. These are all accredited by the BTEC Skills for Working Life qualification.

THE STUDENTS' VIEW

The students thoroughly liked the vocational nature of the programme. The work experience placements had proved particularly popular and they were very proud of the qualifications they had achieved. All the

² DfES 2004, reference DfES/0117/2004.

students in the first cohort achieved their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Leanne had enjoyed her work experience in a hairdresser's. She thought one of the most useful aspects of the programme had been the job application skills: writing a CV, filling out application forms and visiting local employers. Chris was pleased with the certificates he had achieved in First Aid, Food Hygiene and Health and Safety at Work. He would like a job where he is "kept busy" and he is

thinking of doing a Hairdressing NVQ course at college after leaving school.

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Beacon Hill School

A Life Skills programme concentrating on life beyond school.

THE SCHOOL

Beacon Hill School in Ipswich is for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. Many of them also have Autistic Spectrum Disorders because the school has specialised in helping such students. The Suffolk Outreach Service which advises teachers in mainstream school on how to help autistic pupils shares the same site as the school. Other Beacon Hill students may have Downs Syndrome or William Syndrome, or emotional and behavioural disorders.

The school's 156 pupil's come from southern Suffolk and range from 5 to 16 years of age. There is a one-form entry in the primary department, but at Year 7 the school swells to two-forms as pupils from mainstream primary schools join the school. The school has become very skilful in finding creative ways to help students learn, and makes the fullest possible use of visual, active and practical ways of learning. There are close links with parents, and a multi-disciplinary team of staff work within the school, including occupational therapists and medical

clinicians. On leaving school, many students continue on to college and some subsequently enter employment.

THE INNOVATION

The school has introduced a new curriculum for Year 10 and 11 students in the form of a two-year Life Skills programme. It is a departure from the traditional curriculum which concentrates on National Curriculum subjects and Entry Level awards.

The Life Skills programme focuses on life outside school. It deals with practical tasks such as getting on a bus, going to the doctor's, making different sorts of journeys, handling money, and understanding what is involved in attending college. The course puts great emphasis on being practical. The students do not sit in the classroom and discuss life outside school: they go outside and into the community to learn. They go into town and practise crossing roads. They visit different types of shops. They go to a post

office. They go to a restaurant to learn how people behave in a restaurant. They visit the local leisure centre to learn what public leisure facilities there are and how to join and make use of them.

The programme deals with the very practical problems the students will face in everyday adult life. They will find appointments difficult if they have little awareness of time. They may find strangers accost them angrily if they have not understood notices such as "Do not walk on the grass". They try to learn how to respond to people who try to engage them in conversation.

Not all of the programme is conducted outside school. Many practical tasks are studied in the school: preparing food for example. But even here, the students would first go to the shops to buy the food and practise getting on and off buses.

ORIGINS

The new course was introduced in September 2004. It was the culmination of several years' research and experimentation. The school first established a 14-19 Working Party and ran a pilot programme with six students. The school consulted parents. It asked them what they most wanted their children to focus on during their last two years at school. The parents

all said that what they most wanted was for their children to become as independent as possible, and to develop their skills in communication and problem-solving.

Wendy Crockett, the Deputy Head who led the planning for the new course, looked at life skills programmes in other schools and the range of life skills awards offered by different awarding bodies. She consulted the college that many of the school's students entered at 16 to ensure that the school's programme would not duplicate the college's life skills courses.

IN DETAIL

The Life Skills programme occupies two full days a week in Years 10 and 11. It is accredited by the ASDAN Life Skills Entry Level Award, which comprises five units:

- **Citizenship** (which includes, for example, Decision-Making, Developing Good Relationships and Resolving Conflict)
- **Community** (which includes, for example, Travelling Around, Using Leisure Facilities)

- **Home Management** (which includes, for example, Preparing Meals, Cleaning the Home)
- **Personal Care** (which includes, for example, Health and Fitness, Personal Hygiene)
- **Preparation for Working Life** (which includes, for example, Finding Out About Work, Health and Safety)

The award is externally assessed and accredited by ASDAN. Further details of the units and their assessment are provided in Appendix 1.

The school's Life Skills programme is provided in collaboration with Suffolk County Council's Community Education Department and Suffolk and Otley Colleges. The programme's scheme of work is set out in Appendix 2.

All the Beacon Hill pupils achieve Entry Level awards in Design and Technology, Food Technology and Science. The majority also achieve Entry Level award in ICT, English, Mathematics and Art and Design. Many also achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award and the Junior Sports Leader Award.

ISSUES

PARENTS Parents were consulted on the introduction of the alternative curriculum by means of a questionnaire survey and discussions at parents' evenings. A parents' booklet sets out the aims of the programme and provides detailed information. Parents have been enthusiastic in their support for the new programme.

TIMETABLE AND CURRICULUM Significant changes were required to the school timetable, since the alternative curriculum occupies all of Tuesday and Wednesday each week. An important principle for the school is that the Life Skills programme must not result in any reduction in the students' level of achievement in their other subjects. The school tries to use the Life Skills programme as a vehicle for developing skills and knowledge needed in the National Curriculum and the other statutory subjects. The most successful subjects for this purpose have been PSHE, citizenship, work-related learning and careers education.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT Staff attended the compulsory one-day ASDAN course in London in order for the school to offer the award, but what the staff found particularly helpful was the link with Thomas Wolsey School. Thomas Wolsey colleagues were able to share their experience of running the

ASDAN course and could offer practical advice on matters such as what coursework to include in the students' portfolios.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS The programme involves significant costs, especially for trips out of school and shopping expeditions.

THE STUDENTS' VIEW

Carl and Kimberley, two Year 10 students, have both thoroughly enjoyed their first year of the Life Skills programme. Carl had particularly liked the excursion to a Chinese restaurant for a buffet meal and a taster session in bricklaying at Otley College. For Kimberley the highlight had been her cookery work experience placement. At school they had practised cooking by first going to Tesco in groups to buy the food. One group had even gone on their own without a teacher. They had a shopping list and had to find the items and pay for them at the checkout. Back at school they had cooked the pasta, pizza and oven chips.

Both Kimberly and Carl felt their main achievement on the course was a greater confidence in going out of school and out of their homes. Kimberly now sometimes goes to town on her own. Carl had been to the Job Centre on his own and spoken to someone to get information about jobs.

ADVICE TO COLLEAGUES IN OTHER SCHOOLS

Beacon Hill School's recommendation to colleagues in other schools considering introducing a life skills programme is that they should first visit other schools to see such a programme in action.

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Belstead School

Inclusive Partnerships with a mainstream school and a college in other parts of Suffolk enable students to become involved in their home town community.

THE SCHOOL

Belstead School in Ipswich is a secondary school for students with severe learning difficulties. These are young people who have very significant intellectual impairment. They have great difficulty in communicating, and many of them are unable to speak. Conventional behaviour and ordinary everyday tasks such as going on a bus are exceptionally difficult for them.

THE INNOVATION

Belstead School wanted to help its students to become involved in their local community to prepare them for life beyond school, but it faced a problem with students who came to the school from other parts of Suffolk. Located in Ipswich, the school could only introduce them to local facilities in Ipswich, not to those of their home towns. Belstead has found a

solution by creating Inclusive Partnerships with a school and a college in other towns.

In the case of two students from Haverhill, the partnership was established with their local mainstream school in Haverhill, the Samuel Ward Upper School and Technology College. In Year 12 and Year 13, the students attended the sixth form at Samuel Ward for two consecutive days a week, accompanied by a member of staff from Belstead to support the students throughout the two days. In the other three days of the week, they attended Belstead School.

The two students, Gary Dawson and Luke Hynds, enjoyed being part of the sixth form common room at Samuel Ward. Although they were not able to speak themselves, they liked being in an environment where conversations were taking place around them, and they liked doing the washing-up in the common room.

Most of the Samuel Ward students did not engage with Gary and Luke; they simply accepted Gary's and Luke's presence in the sixth form. However, one of the Samuel Ward A level students took a particular interest in the two visitors and she volunteered to support them during her private study periods. She found this so engrossing that when she finished her A levels and left the sixth form she decided to work with special needs students as a career and joined the staff at Belstead. Ruth Robbins has been a Learning Support Assistant at Belstead School since September 2004.

At Samuel Ward, Gary and Luke were able to join various classes. Art and drama proved to be the most successful subjects for them. The two schools staged a joint production of Peter Grimes at Snape Maltings Concert Hall, including a duet sung by a student from each school. Gary and Luke were also able to join GNVQ lessons in Leisure and Tourism, and in Health and Social Care. Activities such as visiting a Haverhill leisure centre with a group of Samuel Ward students introduced Gary and Luke to facilities in their local community. This first Inclusive Partnership ran from September 2003 to July 2005. Gary and Luke have since progressed to college courses and community-based leisure activities.

A Belstead teacher, Michelle Hughes, played a key role in establishing the partnership with Samuel Ward, setting up the arrangements, accompanying and supporting the two students, and helping Samuel Ward staff to adjust to them. Once the partnership was well-established, a learning support assistant was able to take over the support role, and Michelle simply monitored the project while being able to turn her attention to setting up further partnerships.

The next partnership project was with West Suffolk College in Bury and it began in September 2004. It enables two post-16 Belstead students from Brandon, near Bury, to attend the college for one day a week and school for four days a week. The students have been joining different mainstream classes in vocational subjects, the most successful of which have been motor vehicle studies and a sports and leisure course. The two students integrate well into the college: they are able to eat independently in canteen and they have some social contact with the college students.

The school is continuing to build on these partnership arrangements. It hopes a Year 9 student from Haverhill will be able to attend Samuel Ward for an occasional session, and that a similar arrangement can be made for a student from the Thomas Wolsey School. Samuel Ward School is strongly committed

to the principle of involving students with special needs into the mainstream community and is keen to repeat the arrangements when Belstead again has sixth-formers from Haverhill. In the meantime, Belstead is in discussions with another mainstream school about the possibility of involving a local Belstead student in its sixth form.

A related development at Belstead is the creation of what might be termed an "Increased Flexibility" programme in a special school. It is designed for profoundly disabled Year 11 students who need an alternative to the traditional curriculum. The school worked with Community Education and a voluntary agency, "Re-Think Disability", to produce the programme. It includes:

- going on public transport (for example, helping students to get on a bus without physically resisting, and when accompanied by unfamiliar staff)
- shopping
- swimming in a leisure centre
- going out for drinks
- going to the cinema.

The fundamental aim of the programme is to get students out of the familiar confines of their school and into the wider world around them and to become involved in local activities and meet unfamiliar people.

ISSUES

PARENTS Parents were strongly supportive of the projects from the outset. They were consulted in advance and were very pleased that their children might be able to attend a mainstream school. An evaluation conducted at the end of the first year of the project found great satisfaction amongst the parents. The parents receive a great deal of information, week-by-week, from the accompanying member of staff about how the students are faring at the mainstream institution.

STAFF (AND STUDENT) DEVELOPMENT The Inclusive Partnerships have benefited staff and students. Staff and students at the mainstream institutions have become more familiar with special needs students, and have therefore become welcoming and accommodating to those with special needs and better able to engage with them. The Partnerships have produced a more inclusive ethos in the host institutions. Belstead staff have benefited too. When they saw, especially from videos of the students' work, what their students had been able to

achieve at the Samuel Ward School, they raised their own expectations of their students.

The Belstead students have undoubtedly benefited from the experience. It was noticeable that at Samuel Ward their behaviour became more mature, and by contrast it regressed when they returned to Belstead. Moreover, it was not just the Belstead students who benefited. There were only very occasional incidents of mainstream students being inclined to tease or torment their guests, and these incidents were always nipped in the bud by the accompanying teacher, with the result that the mainstream students immediately realised how they ought to behave towards people with disabilities. Indeed, one Samuel Ward student, a difficult youngster at risk of exclusion, became a champion of Gary and Luke after being challenged about his attitude towards them.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Establishing the partnerships took time and effort. Once a partnership is operating there is the cost of providing an accompanying member of staff to support the students at the host institution. In addition, having one member of staff to support only one or two students is, of course, an expensive staff-student ratio. The Samuel Ward partnership was established with financial support from the LSC. Furthermore, although the host institution is local for the students, it

may not be local for the accompanying member of staff who may then have a longer, possibly much longer, journey to work. Fortunately, in the case of the first Partnership project, the accompanying teacher, Michelle, happened to live half-way between the host school and her own school.

ADVICE TO COLLEAGUES IN OTHER SCHOOLS

Setting up these partnership arrangements was not easy. The accompanying teacher found it hard work to challenge prejudices and stereotyped perceptions in the mainstream institutions and to elicit positive attitudes from her mainstream colleagues. Nor did staff at Belstead find the partnership arrangements easy. They had to come to terms with additional resources being devoted to a few students whose behaviour when they returned to Belstead deteriorated from what it had been at the mainstream school. However, the difficulties have to be measured against the significant benefits of the scheme.

Sue Chesworth, the Headteacher of Belstead, stresses that such projects depend on very strong support and commitment from the Head and senior leaders at both institutions, as well as keenness and energy on the part of the accompanying staff.

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Riverwalk School

“Person-Centred Planning” and “Circles of Support” to improve decision-making about each student’s future and to enable them to take a bigger role in making the decisions.

THE SCHOOL

Riverwalk is a school in Bury St Edmunds for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. It has 120 pupils aged between 2½ and 19. It has been the setting for a six-month project featuring “Person-Centred Planning” and “Circles of Support”, techniques which are promoted by a charitable foundation which also provided a project leader to work with the school.

THE INNOVATION – Person-Centred Planning

The professionals who make decisions about the futures of special needs students can easily find themselves making decisions based on what is convenient for the existing service provision rather than beginning by thinking about what the young person might want. “Person-Centred Planning” is a device which tries to overcome this tendency. In the

words of Project Leader Helen Lee, the aim is that decision-making should be “person-led rather than service-led”. It puts the young person at the centre of planning about their future during Years 9, 10 and 11, and it seeks to change the attitudes of those working with the students.

Person-Centred Planning typically begins with the Transition Review meeting for Year 9, a meeting which involves parents, carers, Connexions staff, teachers, social services and health professionals. At the first meeting, attention focuses on assembling a portfolio of the young person’s work during the forthcoming year. The portfolio will have three themes:

- **Dreams and Aspirations**
- **Gifts** – the areas in which the student has particular skills

- **Relationships** – identifying which people are most important to the student in different ways.

The themes are carefully chosen to encourage people to take a positive view of the young person and their potential, instead of adopting the traditional view of “needs” and limitations. All those involved in the Transition Review undertake to do some individual work with the student during Year 9 on particular aspects of these themes. The work is recorded in the portfolio so that the portfolio can become the focus of the next Transition Review. In Years 10 and 11 a fourth theme, Futures, is added to the portfolio work. The action plan arising from each Review is based on the evidence in the portfolio about the young person.

The portfolio can take many forms. It would not necessarily be an A4 binder; it might not contain words. It might be a box containing pictures, cuttings and significant objects.

THE INNOVATION – Circles of Support

There is always a risk that young people with special educational needs will have more decisions made for them than is strictly necessary. “Circles of Support”

help 14+ students to play a bigger role in making decisions about their future by drawing on the support of those closest to them.

A Circle of Support is a group of people who help the young person to engage better with the world around them. The group act as advocates and advisors. The young person decides whom to invite to be a member of the circle. It is likely to include family and friends as much as school staff. The young person also decides where and when the group should meet, choosing the circumstances which will make her or him feel most secure and relaxed. The meetings therefore do not necessarily take place in school or in school hours. They might, for example, take place in the student's home.

Circle meetings take place every 4-6 weeks. The convener – initially, the Project Leader Helen Lee - arranges the meetings, chairs the discussion and ensures the decisions of the meeting are acted on. The meetings have the same themes as the Person-Centred Planning portfolios, but they also discuss life-style, what the person has done and experienced, and their personal styles of communication, for example whether they prefer gestures to speech. Helen finds it can be difficult for those closest to the student to think in terms of gifts and strengths, but

this shift in the way the young person is viewed is one of the fundamental purposes of the Circle of Support.

ORIGINS

The Head, Barry Ellis, attended a Suffolk County Council 14+ meeting at which the Regional Co-ordinator for the charity Circles Network described its Credo East initiative for East Anglia. Barry promptly signed up Credo East for a six-month project at his school.

IN DETAIL

The six-month Credo East project at the school lasted from January to July, 2005. It was funded by Credo East and involved no expenditure on the part of the school. Project Leader Helen Lee worked in the school for 1½ days a week during the project.

ISSUES

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS The school needed to find a room for Helen to conduct her meetings. Circles of Support meetings sometimes need teachers and other professionals involved in the meetings to be willing and able to attend some meetings outside of school and school hours. Now the six-month project has ended, Helen's role as the

convener of Circle of Support meetings has to be filled by the school's own staff. The Transition Review meetings have always taken place, albeit in a different style prior to the project, so these meetings have no implications for resources.

PROJECT OUTCOMES The school has found the project invaluable for changing the attitudes and perceptions of staff in the way they engage with both the students and their students' parents and carers. The values and techniques of Person-Centred Planning and Circles of Support have infiltrated the everyday work of the school.

THE STUDENTS' VIEW

A Circle of Support has done wonders for Jess, a Year 11 student whose self-confidence has blossomed. Her first circle meeting took place in her bedroom at home. It was very cramped but she felt too nervous to have the discussion take place anywhere else. By the second meeting, she was able to cope with meetings in her kitchen. Ice-cream helped the discussions along, and meetings could last up to two hours. Eventually she became sufficiently confident to accompany her Headteacher Barry Ellis to a conference platform and answer questions from an audience of 150 people, a

remarkable change for a girl who previously just used to hide away under her baseball cap.

Craig's circle includes his mum, his foster-carers (a married couple), his Teaching Assistant Sue, his social worker Claire and his Headteacher Barry. They tend to last about an hour. Initially, they took place at school, but they have since moved to his home. Cake, rather than ice cream, is the catalyst for discussion at Craig's meetings.

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Thomas Wolsey School

Link courses with the neighbouring school and college enable students to spend part of the week studying at mainstream institutions.

THE SCHOOL

Thomas Wolsey School in Ipswich caters for pupils with physical and sensory impairment. It has 86 pupils between the ages of 3 and 19. Roughly half the pupils have a physical impairment which requires them to use a wheelchair. About half cannot see or cannot hear and do not communicate through speech. Some pupils have both physical and sensory impairments. It is the only school in Suffolk for pupils with these conditions, so the pupils come from all over the county and some of them have long journeys twice a day, sometimes leaving home as early as 7:45 am.

Generally the students achieve Entry Level awards, together with Bronze and Silver levels of the ASDAN award, but as the innovation described below reveals, they sometimes achieve good grades at GCSE.

THE INNOVATION

The school has established link courses at the neighbouring Thurston High School and at Suffolk College. The Thurston High School link allows Thomas Wolsey students to study for GCSEs in science and ICT using more specialist science facilities than are available at Thomas Wolsey. All Year 10 and 11 students attend the high school for one afternoon a week to work in a science laboratory, and currently two students attend ICT classes. The science co-ordinators at each school decide how the science teaching should be shared, with Thomas Wolsey concentrating on theory and Thurston High School dealing with the practical aspects. The contact between the two schools means the mainstream staff have developed their skills in working with special needs students. In addition to teaching the students at the high school, two of the high school staff teach at Thomas Wolsey for three sessions a week, and some “whole pyramid days” – the two schools are in the same pyramid of schools -

are devoted to special needs, covering topics such as engaging with students who have no verbal communication.

On the college link course students spend two days a week at college and three days at school. Initially, the course was based largely on ASDAN, but it is now hoped that the range of subjects included in the course can be expanded and that some Thomas Wolsey students will be able to slot into mainstream college classes rather than being taught as a separate special needs group at the college. Several college staff have taken training courses to give them more skills in special needs education. The college course does not lead to awards or qualifications, other than ASDAN, but the value of it is that the students are able to go outside their special school environment and become part of the wider community. The students like the adult world of the college and the opportunity it provides to widen their circle of friends and contacts.

ORIGINS

Four years ago the SENCO at Thurston High School developed a close working relationship with the Science Co-ordinator at Thomas Wolsey. The SENCO was a science teacher and initially wanted Thomas Wolsey's advice on assessment and

moderation for special needs students in science. In the course of the contact between the two schools, the SENCO noticed that one of the Thomas Wolsey students seemed to be capable of GCSE level work in science, perhaps of grade G standard. The student was entered for GCSE Double Science and surprised everyone by achieving grade CC. This eye-opening development prompted Thomas Wolsey to see what other students might be capable of GCSEs.

There had been a link between Thomas Wolsey and Suffolk College for a long time in the form of Year 14 students from the school being accompanied by a member of staff on taster courses at the college for one-day a week. Year 14 students are those who remain at their school to the age of 19, an entitlement specified in their statement of special educational needs. Year 13 students were aware of the college course and asked to be able to join it, so the school made the course part of the Year 13 curriculum from September 2004.

ISSUES

The link courses have both benefits and drawbacks.

BENEFITS For the students the courses provide more involvement in the local community, a novel and stimulating learning environment with more specialist

facilities, and new social opportunities. The high school and the college – both staff and students – become used to engaging with special needs students. Indeed, the very existence of a college course option was beneficial for the school students because it presented them with a choice to be made and gave them valuable practice in making decisions for themselves about an aspect of their lives.

DRAWBACKS On the other hand, the link courses are not without their difficulties. Although Thurston High School is only five-minutes' drive away from Thomas Wolsey, transporting the students in mini-buses is a lengthy process since many of the students are wheelchair-users. The college course does not have this disadvantage since the students are there for whole days. However, the college is not easily accessible for wheelchair-users.

Significant timetable changes have been needed to facilitate the link courses and these have produced some problems. For example, the Thomas Wolsey Science Co-ordinator works three days a week and none of these days coincides with the link day.

The link courses also have resource implications in that school staff need to accompany the students to the school and college. This is particularly an issue

for the ICT GCSE which has only two students attending the course.

THE STUDENTS' VIEW

Michael Smith, Sammy (Samantha) Prentice and Michelle Howlett are Year 13 students on the Suffolk College link course. They attend the college for two days a week to study ICT, drama and media studies. Michael particularly enjoyed making a poster in ICT. Michelle liked the college tutors. They all appreciated the social opportunities and have made friends at the college.

ADVICE TO COLLEAGUES IN OTHER SCHOOLS

Colleagues in other schools considering link courses need to recognise that a good deal of commitment and energy may be required, for example to overcome the apprehensions of staff in the mainstream school or college. Thomas Wolsey was fortunate in having had experience of this because it has an outreach service which advises staff in mainstream schools on how to work with certain types of special needs. Good communications with the link institutions are vital. Detailed planning is important, for example to ensure that topics or assessments are not duplicated in each institution.

CONTACT DETAILS

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appendix 1

Beacon Hill School: further details of the ASDAN Life Skills Award

Units

Unit: Citizenship

Section 1: Self Advocacy (Making Choices)

This section is designed to show that the candidate can make choices and speak up for themselves.

Section 2: Caring for Others and the Environment

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness and understanding of the importance of helping others and caring for the environment.

Section 3: Decision Making

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness and understanding of the decision-making processes at local/national level.

Section 4: Developing Good Relationships and Resolving Conflict

This section is designed to show that the candidate understands the importance of developing good relationships and resolving conflict.

Section 5: Different Communities

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness of religious and cultural differences and similarities between people, and has an understanding of the importance of respecting others.

Unit: Community

Section 1: Personal Safety

This section is designed to show the candidate has an understanding of how to keep safe when out in the community.

Section 2: Travelling Around

This section is designed to show the candidate can travel safely and independently in the community.

Section 3: Shopping

This section is designed to show the candidate can use a range of shopping facilities.

Section 4: Seeking Help and Advice

This section is designed to show the candidate has an understanding of where and how to use help and advice facilities in the community.

Section 5: Using Leisure Facilities

This section is designed to show the candidate can use a range of leisure facilities.

Unit: Home Management

Section 1: Preparing Meals

This section is designed to show the candidate has the skills required to make a snack/meal.

Section 2: Safety in the Home

This section is designed to show the candidate has health and safety awareness in the home.

Section 3: Using Equipment

This section is designed to show that the candidate can safely use a range of equipment found in the home.

Section 4: Money Management

This section is designed to show that the candidate has skills in using and managing money.

Section 5: Cleaning the Home

This section is designed to show that the candidate has the skills required to keep a home clean.

Unit: Personal Care

Section 1: Drugs: Identifying and Understanding the Effects of Harmful Drugs

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness and understanding of the dangers associated with smoking, alcohol and drugs (harmful and not prescribed by a medical practitioner).

Section 2: Health and Fitness

This section is designed to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Section 3: Healthy Eating

This section is designed to show the candidate has an understanding of what foods are needed for a healthy diet.

Section 4: Personal Hygiene

This section is designed to show the candidate has an understanding of the importance of personal hygiene and knowledge of the personal care facilities available.

Section 5: Different Roles and Responsibilities in and outside the Home

This section is designed to show the candidate has an understanding of different roles and responsibilities both in and outside of the home.

Unit: Preparation for Working Life

Section 1: Finding Out about Work

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness of the different types of jobs in the workplace.

Section 2: Preparing for a Work-related Activity

This section is designed to show the candidate the importance of planning when preparing to take part in a work related activity.

Section 3: Taking Part in a Work-related Activity

This section is designed to show that the candidate has taken part in a work related activity.

Section 4: Health & Safety

This section is designed to show the candidate has an awareness and understanding of Health and Safety rules in the workplace.

Section 5: Using Help and Advice to Plan your Next Steps

This section is designed to show that the candidate can use help and advice facilities in planning their next steps.

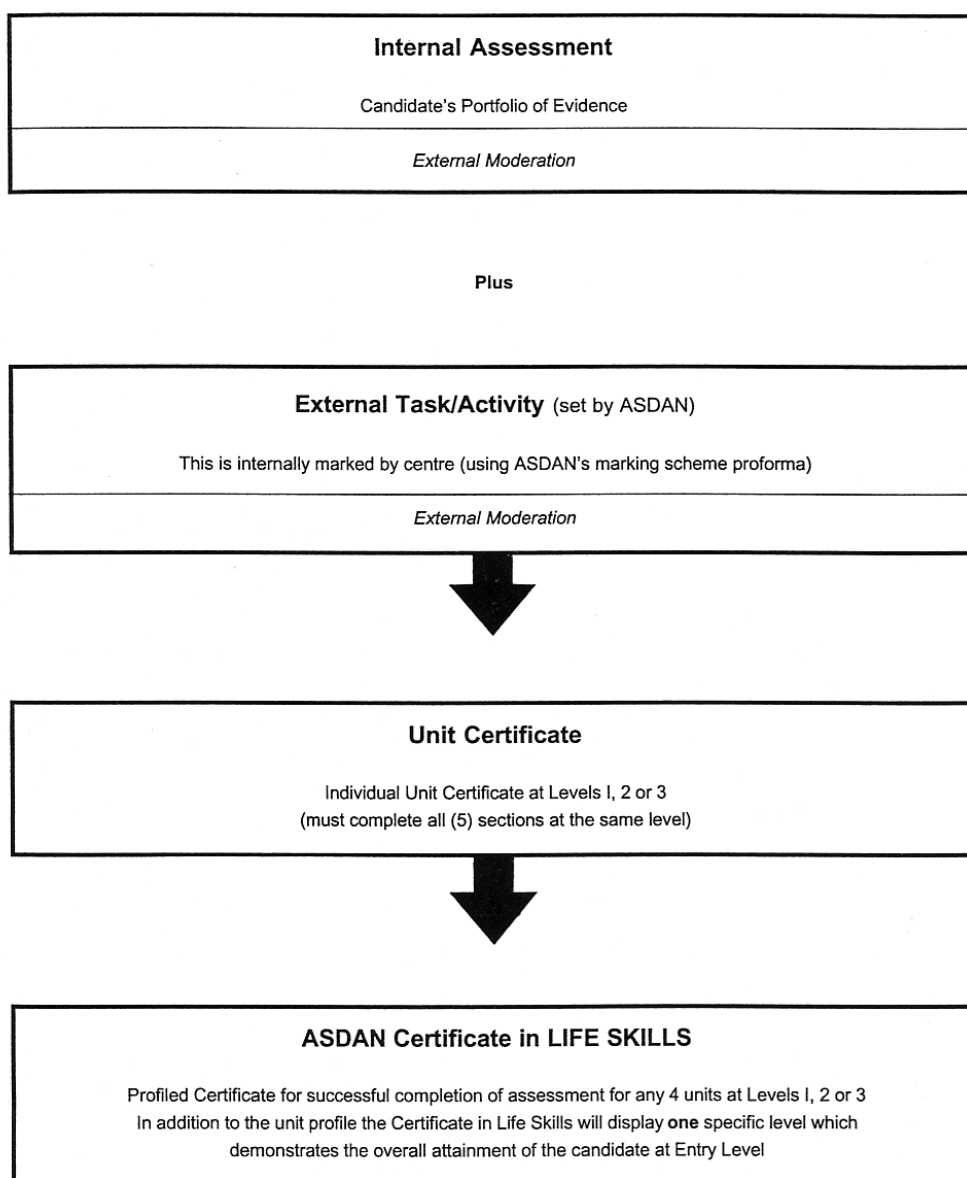
In meeting the objectives for each unit the candidate will be required to show increasing levels of knowledge, skill acquisition and competence when following the same unit at the higher levels (Levels 2 and 3).

It is inherently implied that a candidate working at Level 2 must possess the knowledge and skills required at Level 1 in the corresponding unit. Equally a candidate working at Level 3 must possess the knowledge and skills required at the lower levels (Levels 1 and 2).

Scheme of Assessment

Overview

The diagram below provides a general overview of the route towards achievement of the ASDAN Certificate in Life Skills through the completion of any 4 units at levels 1, 2 or 3.



Beacon Hill School: the Life Skills Programme scheme of work

Underlined - is
Certificate - is
life skulls.

NEW CURRICULUM 2004 - 2005

YR11

Objectives

To improve:

Interpersonal skills including communication
Personal safety and effectiveness
Cooperation in the community
Education for leisure
Confidence
Independence

National Agenda

Challenge
Motivate
Encourage achievement

Key Skills:

Improving own learning
Working with others
Problem solving
Number & ICT literacy

Work Skills

To maximise employment opportunities
Engage in work related learning

TERM 1		YA	TERM 2		YA	TERM 3		YA
Day 1 am	College Links pm Citizenship		Day 1 am	College Links pm Personal Care		Day 1 am	College Links pm Home management	4B
Units / sections 1,2,3,4,5			Section / unit Health & fitness Section 5 rules			Section 3 using equipment Section 4 Money management Section 5 Cleaning the home		
Day 2 Social Skills Personal care section drugs Also include (PSHE – GV) Peer group pressure Sex education – contraception – HIV & Aids Relationships: – Going out in groups – Marriage – Pregnancy & parenthood Leaving Home			Day 2 Getting Around (help from Malcolm Andrews Road Safety Officer) Road safety Also include: Journeys by taxi, car, train, bus Community: section 1 personal Safety section 3 shopping section 4 seeking help			Day 2 World of Work Tasters Visits to be organised to: ♦ Hairdressers ♦ Warehouse ♦ Charity Shop ♦ Care Home ♦ Hotel ♦ Factory		

