

Closing the disadvantage gap through tutoring.

Improving the academic progress of Looked After Children through a tutoring scheme.

Crompton House Church of England School

Diocese of Manchester

Context

Crompton House Church of England School was founded 90 years ago for the benefit of the children of Crompton and Shaw, within the borough of Oldham in Greater Manchester. The Christian values and ethos of the school, together with the school's excellent academic attainment has made it one of the most popular and oversubscribed schools within the area. The quality of care offered by the school has been recognised locally and has resulted in Crompton becoming the school of choice for social workers and carers of looked after children. This has led to high numbers of significantly disadvantaged pupils in some school years and consequently the growth of a social, emotional and academic gap between these vulnerable pupils and the more advantaged pupils in the school.

Progress for the looked after children (LAC) was significantly lower than the non-LAC pupils. In Year 7, 50% of LAC pupils made expected progress in maths opposed to 83% of non-LAC pupils and in English 17% opposed to 70%. Cognitive Ability Tests also showed a significant gap and around a third of the pastoral issues dealt with by the school came from this group of young people.

In line with their foundation principle, *Loving God - Caring for Each Other - Achieving Excellence*, Crompton applied for Unlocking Gifts funding to help them reduce this gap and enable these looked after pupils to flourish in school.

The project

The project was based around tutoring for the disadvantaged pupils, to help them in their academic progress and support them through mentoring. The grant enabled the school to buy in two tutors for two days per week for the duration of the two-year Unlocking Gifts project. The tutors were provided through Yipiyap, a tutoring model that uses students who have recently gained good A Level results and who have particular interest or expertise in the subjects where additional support is needed for some pupils.

Being closer in age to the pupils, the young tutors were able to engage with the pupils on their level. This engagement was also supported by the fact that tutors weren't traditional authority figures – pupils could relate to them but also look up them. A gradual introduction

to each pupil and tactful support from the tutors promoted acceptance, trust and positive relationships which allowed the tutors to provide valuable academic support. The project also developed additional pastoral support through a newly appointed chaplain and chaplaincy team from local churches.

Each term subject data was gathered and analysed for progress. This analysis then informed the next term's tutoring programme. The school also held half termly core group meetings to discuss the progress of the project and to plan next steps, ensuring that they were adapting the provision to ensure the best outcomes.

Responding to the need to make the project sustainable after the grant ended, Crompton developed their own mentoring scheme, working with their own sixth form students. Students who wanted to develop their own soft skills were encouraged to volunteer to become a mentor. The school facilitated the passing over of skills from the Yipiyap tutors to their own sixth form pupils by buddying them up, helping the sixth formers to learn the skills they would need to continue the work.

What worked?

Data was collected from the target group and from a group of non-LAC pupils. At the end of the first and second year of the project the data showed that, on average, the LAC pupils made better progress as a cohort in maths and English than their peers and their progress in other subjects was also significantly better than their peers. In the second year of the project the reading gain of LAC pupils in the 8 months between assessments was 12.6 months, compared to a gain of 8.11 months for non-LAC pupils. The project showed that through this intervention looked after children could make better progress than their non-LAC peers.

End of year impact reports by the Yipiyap tutors also showed there was significant improvement for the targeted pupils.

[Pupil name] has shown significant improvement in his ability to form PEE (point, example, explanation) analysis paragraphs which is a key skill in English. His reading skills have also improved significantly and he is much more confident when asked to read aloud in class. He has said he now enjoys reading at home a lot more.

[Pupil name] is making more progress as his behaviour has improved over the past few months. I have seen him more often so have been able to build rapport with him and now we know each other better, he is more likely to accept help. When first introduced to the support he wasn't as responsive and refused help as he wanted to either complete the work independently or avoid it completely.

He is making good progress as his English skills are improving and he now recalls work learnt from previous sessions, which is great to see.

What next?

Now that the funding has ended Crompton will continue the programme with their own volunteer sixth form mentors. Starting the project with the intention of bringing it 'in house' enabled the school to create a smooth transition to their own scheme, drawing upon the expertise of the Yipiyap tutors whilst they were there and preparing the sixth formers to continue the work. In order to develop this volunteering opportunity, Crompton plan to link it to the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, enabling the sixth form volunteers not only to gain vital skills but also to help them achieve a significant award that will help them in their own progress.

Crompton have been proactive in identifying and improving any problems in the approach. Any outlying data was investigated to aid their understanding of the barriers. For example, the project team noted that the application of some boys in the second test was not as positive as it could have been, resulting in regression. Looking into this issue, they found that the lack of effort in the final test was linked to end of year apathy. In response to this they plan to ensure that the second test is carried out at a time that aids positive engagement and they are also exploring the use of reward to reduce apathy.

The success of the project will also be shared with other schools at the Diocese of Manchester annual secondary conference. Crompton also want to consider sharing their learning more widely to help other school communities benefit from their experience and similarly reduce their disadvantage gap.