

Best use of External Professional

Woodbridge High School

What the Judges Said

Great to see a professional being used holistically, having an impact across the board, not just a few pupils.

Context

Woodbridge High School is a mainstream secondary school in the London Borough of Redbridge. There are 1720 students on roll. In ACORN terms it has one of highest percentages within the Borough of most “hard-pressed’ profiles. There are 32 students with EHCPs and another 200 students on SEN Support. 27% of the students qualify for Free School Meals. The school supports some of the most disadvantaged students in the Borough.

In a recent audit (February 2019) the Redbridge School Improvement Advisors described the Inclusion department as ‘exemplary’ in terms of its support structures, policies and practice. The school was highly commended by the LA advisors and they closely identified the detail of our quality assured and effective interventions.

At the heart of our school ethos is open communication and collaborative team partnerships. As identified in the recent audit, our committed team of staff work tirelessly to ensure ‘that the key principles of partnership working such as openness, trust and honesty, agreed shared goals and values and regular communication between partners are upheld.’ (Redbridge School Improvement Advisory Audit, Feb 2019)

Outside Agency working

We have invested time and effort over many years in building effective relationships with outside agencies. The impact of these effective partnerships benefits our students and their families, as acknowledged in the audit. The process of collaborative working has been highly effective and we have provided many successful outcomes for students and disadvantaged families.

We have particularly strong links and effective longstanding relationships with New Rush Hall School (NRHS). In addition, we have received support over many years from the NRH Outreach Service, an external agency which facilitates us with weekly support visits from a specialist outreach teacher for one day a week.

We work closely with the current outreach professional who has supported staff and parents over the past 2 years to identify ways to manage students' specific and complex behavioural needs. In this way we are able to provide our more vulnerable and high needs students with specialist bespoke strategies both in and out of class.

Early identification

One of the positive features of our inclusive practice is how we succeed to early-identify our students' needs. We work proactively with our outreach professional, to refer students to the Outreach Service via an online referral service for time-bound interventions.

Our outreach teacher has assisted us to devise a Behaviour Support Plan to assist staff in identifying students' needs. This policy document has now become an integral part of our school preventative approach and needs-identification process. (evidence – BSP form)

The teacher provides support in both KS3 and KS4 settings who exhibit Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and behavioural needs. We benefit from the service in many ways as it provides a consistent range of interventions that are tailored to the needs of our students and their families, and also for our staff. (evidence – KS3/4 plans)

We are continually striving to maintain high standards in our inclusive approach for our students with Special Education Needs. We work closely with the Outreach professional to achieve this. Woodbridge teams around the child and families go 'over and beyond' to support the social and emotional development of children as well as their educational attainment (School Improvement Audit, Feb, 2019) (evidence – excerpts from audit)

EHCP/Transition plans to NRH

Through our close partnership working of students with more extreme needs we have assisted families through the statutory assessment process to facilitate students with an EHCP. Some of our students with complex behavioural needs have required more specialist provision. We have worked together to secure placements for students at New Rush Hall School, our local specialist SEN school for students with SEMH and behavioural issues.

The outreach professional has assisted us to transition some of our deserving students into special provision placements, as well as to provide support (post-transition) at NRHS. This has been a supportive intervention for students and their families who find the transitory process from mainstream to special school a challenging and emotionally demanding time.

Planning-Reviewing Cycle

We engage with our outreach professional in a cyclical process of planning, reviewing and evaluating programmes of work. Our students, staff and parents benefit significantly from the range of interventions and ongoing support that we are able to provide. (evidence – plans)

All members of our team appreciate regular open dialogue and effective liaison with our outreach professional. We incorporate the teacher into our work and practice and regard her as an integral member of our inclusion team.

Entry

Best use of external Special Needs Professional Jan – Dec 2018

Redbridge School Improvement Safeguarding Audit

Over many years it has been our mission to work mindfully with all our external agencies to help us provide the fundamental emotional building blocks needed to underpin our students' educational attainment. Our partnerships have been commended because we enjoy regular joined up thinking around referred students. This was acknowledged in our recent School Improvement Audit ... 'The process of partnership working is effective because the school has developed and maintained a clear link between external organisations in which opportunities to partner on activities that address shared objectives such as reducing the risk to disadvantaged children and their families is in place.' (Evidence – excerpts from audit)

During the last two years in particular we acknowledge many areas of good practice where we have made the very best use of our New Rush Hall Outreach professional. At the centre of our excellent working partnership is open effective communication and collaborative working.

Our external SEN specialist provides us with a range of interventions on a weekly basis. We deploy the member of staff to lead both half termly and termly support programmes for a range of students with specific and complex behavioural needs.

Staff training materials

Together we have planned and delivered a number of interventions, including individual and group work programmes. We regularly refer individuals and groups of students on a rolling termly cycle. In addition we have been able to work together to deliver CPD joint training sessions on Managing Calm in the Classroom as well as Mentors training resources (evidence – inset training materials for NQTs)

Schemes of work

We work consciously with our outreach professional to draw up joint plans with smart targets and inclusive strategies for students, staff and parents. These plans are shared at staff inclusion meetings and briefings and are circulated to staff via email as well as uploaded to our school systems. The outreach professional has delivered a number of pastoral support programmes including anger management, emotional regulation, self-esteem and resiliency skills training for students. (evidence – examples of Schemes of work)

Individual student plans

Our teaching staff benefit from the strategies outlined in the termly plans as these opportunities help to provide insights into effective teaching styles and approaches. The behavioural strategies drawn up by the Outreach professional assist staff to make informed decisions about their differentiated teaching and learning methods. (evidence – plans/reviews)

Our teams of staff (including heads of year, counsellors, psychotherapist, mentors) regularly meet with the outreach professional to review and tailor strategies to help students facilitate progress (evidence – list of behaviour/inclusion meetings)

We work with our external SEN teacher to provide a highly effective and holistic approach. Positive relationships are always key to our successful working. Our partnership working was commended in the recent audit. We have been able to build a dynamic culture into our inclusion team, infused with inspiration and determination to succeed. (evidence – excerpts from audit)

Resilience Group Skills workshop

At the heart of our school ethos is the importance of supporting students' self-esteem and ensuring their wellbeing. Deploying our outreach professional to deliver interventions tailored to individual and group needs is key to our success in assisting our students to reach their potential. We have facilitated a number of students in this way, by providing group workshops and as well as lunch time interventions for our most vulnerable students with social and emotional needs.

Working with School Therapy Dog

The outreach teacher has combined work with the school therapy dog. This has proved effective for many students with emotional dysfunction especially anger issues, ADHD, anxiety and depression. Students have reported ... 'Jeeves, our school dog has helped me through my exam stress, I don't know how I would have coped without being able to talk to him every week'. The dog has also escorted students (with school refusing issues) into school and assisted them to talk openly and thus build confidence. This innovative intervention has been effective and hugely popular among our students.

Staff have also commented that the presence of a school dog has helped in supporting their wellbeing ... 'having the therapy dog in school makes me feel happy and brings a positive vibe'. There have been many suggestions that it helps bring a sense of calm and nurture to the school environment. In support sessions the dog is able to help facilitate the outreach professional to provide an open and trusting space where students can communicate their feelings openly in group work.

The external professional along with the therapy dog has worked closely with the school counsellors in setting up a weekly lunchtime club for our younger and more vulnerable students. This popular club for Y7, Y8 and Y9 provides a calm and containing space to relax and spend reflective time. (evidence – poster / photos)

Lunchtime mindfulness Club

We have organised that the outreach professional introduces mindfulness sessions to the lunchtime club. It has become an integral part of the session and is well attended. Incorporating a relaxation interval / mindfulness session in the middle of the school day is now well received by many students. The feedback is positive in terms of the restorative impact and management it has on student stress levels. We are in the stages of developing this to provide an after school extra-curricula club. (evidence – photos)

As detailed, we feel we benefit from a range of SEMH interventions that our outreach teacher delivers, in partnership with our inclusion staff and wider teaching and support staff.

We are committed in providing our students with the foundations they need for successful learning, enhanced confidence, responsible citizenship and effective communication.

We believe we deploy our outreach professional in many resourceful ways, and it is through our consistent efforts that we are able to provide the best care and attention to our SEN community. It enables our most vulnerable and high needs students to benefit from the supportive and inclusive experiences that we provide.

We highly regard our agency-partnership working in school, as we believe we make the very best use of our outreach professionals.

We nominate this example, which we believe is worthy of recognition and details many aspects and evidence of our good practice.