

Most Inclusive Practice in Special Schools and Alternative Provision

The Summit Centre

The Summit centre is based in Queen Elizabeth's Academy. It is set within an area of significant deprivation. It serves the wards of Ladybrook and Bullfarm/Pleasley, which are among the 20% most deprived wards in the County according to the Government's official statistics (English indices of deprivation 2015). When considering the deprivation measure of education, skills and training, the Summit referral area falls into 10% most deprived areas nationally. The surrounding areas of the Summit Centre have low, levels of education attainment – 13.3% of the population have 'no qualifications' – significantly higher than the national figure of 8%. Furthermore 11.6% of children live in households that are workless (NOMIS 2016). In working households, the average salary is 36.5% lower than the national average for England (National Statistics, 2017) and 38.25% of households are paid less than the 'living wage' (social mobility index data). The Academy is currently undersubscribed with high numbers of SEND (in particular SEMH) students and EAL students.

Queen Elizabeth's Academy SEND numbers have been accumulating rapidly which has therefore identified a requirement for an additional support centre on site which could house the most severe at risk of exclusion students and offer a bespoke education package to meet their needs.

For the past 15 years the Academy has been in special measures and various projects /strategies have been implemented and failed. When I started in 2010 the Academy had over 80 students accessing various off-site alternative provisions and a significant number of exclusions and permanent exclusions too.

The Academy trust decided to support the school by recruiting for staff to run our own alternative provision centre on-site which can support internal and external students places.

Going above and beyond

The Summit staff wanted to bring something bespoke to the Mansfield area to work towards increasing student's confidence with education settings whilst also building strong relationships with parents and other stakeholders.

The Summit team have worked closely within the SEND / PDBW staff and looked at possible strategies and techniques to improve outcomes and attendance. We visited other Schools who are currently implementing similar strategies and discussed how these could influence our findings.

We looked at Primary Schools, Academies, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools within the Mansfield area with similar demographics and studied the impact their interventions had on their children and re-integration procedures for returning to mainstream education. This helped us when designing our own transition procedures for students who are successful with accessing alternative provisions and want to re-integrate back in to school.

While our Academy could take a zero-tolerance towards various behaviour issues and look at permanent exclusions as a solution we would rather offer support within our community whilst also offering the students the possibilities and opportunity of re-integration back into mainstream education if they are successful in our centre. Before the Centre opened in September 2018 there was a small group of staff which already supporting a large number of disadvantage / SEMH students who were no longer accessing mainstream education and were being taught in the schools Learning intervention centre. In total there were 3 members of staff, The Inclusion Coordinator, Director of Inclusion and a Teaching Assistant. The curriculum which was adopted previously was very limited consisting of a few mainstream lessons and some interventions. Little CPD had been done to support the staff in the centre other than the mainstream CPD sessions which were tailored towards mainstream students and staff. The need for bespoke training was identified and a new programme was designed to improve all who teach in the Summit centre. The curriculum in the centre required change and more importantly the staff needed to update their own continuing professional development in line with the environment they are working in.

Since we opened the Summit centre we have catered for a total of 120 pupils all on fulltime timetables, now we currently have a full cohort this year. Since we have been open 19 students have been successfully re-integrated back into mainstream education or referred to a special school as a completion of an EHCP (Education health Care Plan). Staff in the centre have their own bespoke professional development programme which is targeted at supporting students with unique complex issues.

The nurturing environment in the Summit centre means that all pupils are encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability. Progress is celebrated on the achievement boards and awards evenings. The engaging curriculum covers the core subjects with a thread of literacy and numeracy running throughout the other subjects. Staff identify pupils' common misconceptions and ensure they are corrected, lessons are well differentiated for pupils according to interest, ability and learning needs and build on pupils' strengths. The observations show that there is a clear sense of habitual practice, lessons are challenging, engaging and sustain pupil's interest and pupils that enjoy learning are willing to find out new information and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons. This is clearly evidenced in the current attainment levels, progress levels and attendance data. Any barriers to learning, social, emotional or mental health needs are identified at an individual level and pupils have specific learning plans to account for this so all staff can apply strategies to support individuals, these are closely linked to pupil's passports.

Teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants are very skilled, effectively encourage learning and good behaviour for learning and teachers check pupils' understanding systematically in lessons and use their TA effectively to offer clearly directed and timely support.

KS4 have knowledge retrieval activities similar to mainstream education. All lessons start with a knowledge retrieval activity in order to consolidate knowledge. This allows students to develop the schema needed to develop their knowledge. Knowledge organisers are used in all lessons and provide students with the core knowledge they are expected to learn. We have designated a time at the end of every day for knowledge retrieval practice. This allows our mentors to hold short quizzes and discussions around what students have learnt throughout the day. The Summit gives parents accurate information about how well their child is progressing, how well their child is doing in relation to the standards expected, and what their child needs to do to improve.

This is supported by our termly Attitude to learning reports and also progress reports. Parents are required to attend half termly meetings to discuss their child's progress and needs.

Most pupils start The Summit Centre well below their age expectations in reading, spelling, and quality of handwriting, Maths and English, despite this all pupils including disadvantaged pupils make sustained and substantial progress. Data is collected termly.

The centre has created fantastic relationships with a number of partners. These alliances have enabled us to deliver creative projects and interventions to dozens of students. In the short period of time we have been open we have built relationships with the local Police and PCSO's who now regularly attend our new anti-social behaviour meetings monthly, Primary and Secondary schools in the area, Inspire and Achieve who support with student's mentors and workshops on consequences for behaviour, Youth Services, Fair Access, NEET Services and many more local agencies. This has had a significant impact on improving relationships between both the student and their parents and agencies in the community. The community PCSO's and community Police Officer regularly support the Summit with interventions and crisis workshops. This is seen as a positive step forward rather than a negative as students are given the opportunity to discuss any concerns with them in a familiar and safe environment. This allows students to recognise the help and support available from the PCSO's and police.

Some students have a reduced academic offer with a greater focus on personal and social development. On initial referral to the Summit all students are expected to be able to achieve a GCSE unless their prior attainment levels suggest this is unlikely. Consequently, the vast majority of the accreditation achieved is at GCSE or GCSE equivalent level. If students are unlikely or unable to achieve a full GCSE other alternatives such as vocational Skills or Entry Level qualifications are offered alongside the GCSE.

The ability to offer a unique, varied, education package for key stages 3 & 4 is something which no other educational provider in the Mansfield area are able to offer. Currently we have successfully re-integrated 3 key stage 2 student into their new placements whilst also supporting a complex group of key stage 3 & 4 students. Nationally we are above the standards for attainment and progress too. Our lessons in the centre are orientated to the child's interest and needs. The classrooms are set at a stage not age-related learning which we find works well to meet the child's needs. The child will have a dedicated mentor always with them in class to ensure they are safe and supported through every lesson. In all our learning rooms we have a separate room for child who might feel anxious or stressed. This can be accessed at any point throughout the day. We believe in rewarding both behaviour and academic ability and students will receive regular calls home for positive behaviour and progress. The child will receive additional support with reading and writing and spelling with his mentor daily. Additional support can also be provided for his/her numeracy sessions if required.

Students can enjoy learning musical instruments, taking part in our bespoke football lessons whilst also enjoying one day a week off-site exploring the local parks and the peaks with their mentors/class. Since we have started running all these sessions we have noticed a significant increase in some student's attendance by 30%.

Staff in the centre are good at incorporating student's interests into lessons. For example, Music, football, and computer games.

Students have an agreed safe and quiet place for them to go to when they feel anxious due to overloaded by sensory stimuli.

Students also access our weekly enrichment programme, which explores social skills and emotional wellbeing. This programme is also working towards outdoor qualifications such as Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award which some students might want to pursue further in college.

We are so proud to support children with a variety of subjects and interventions

Key stage 4 Provisions

- GGCSE Maths
- GCSE English
- GCSE Science
- AQA – Independent living
- Food technology
- NCFE Public Services
- NCFE Travel & Tourism
- PE
- Design and technology (Bronze)
- NCFE PSHE
- Duke of Edinburgh (Bronze Award)
- Functional Skills Numeracy
- Motional
- Friday Enrichment programme

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Interventions / Aspirational workshops

Breaking down barriers
Enrichment days
On-site anger management coach (group work and individual workshops)
Summit centre counsellor
Street Doctors
Local Business (Work experience)
Youth Services workshops
ELSA Support sessions
Star Reader
Adventure training (Inclusive for all students)
PCSO support meetings
Career Workshops
NEET Support interventions
Boxall Profiles
Counselling Support
Mainstream / Special School Transition Support
Christian Distinctiveness workshops

Our students really enjoy taking part in their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award and John Muirs Award. All KS4 student take part in this programme throughout their time in the centre. Staff from the centre also run additional voluntary courses within mainstream education. We have noticed that since we have run this course and similar courses as part of the child enrichment programme that the child's attendance has improved and there has been a significant decrease in negative behaviour.

All students with the Summit Centre take part in outdoor education. Our KS3 students visits local parks and historical sites local to the centre. Over time as student's confidence and self-esteem increase students travel further and eventually take part in their final expedition which is normally in the lake district for 4 days 3 night.

Evidence of innovation

Why we feel the summit is unique and innovative is due to the amazing staff who work in the centre and go above and beyond for every child.

When we looked at recruiting the right type of teacher for the centre we thought about the vision and values the centre represents within the community which is "Learning without boundaries and care without limits" We want everyone who accesses the centre to achieve the highest standards. We found that an open approach allows good practice to be modelled, shared and applied into teaching. Modelling: I believe pedagogical professional development is best led by good practitioners, we assigned our new staff to work closely with senior staff to gain experience and understanding of our values. Having a consistent approach to teaching for all staff ensured students who accessed our centre understand our preferred methods for teaching and therefore there was a good understanding in regards to consequences for behaviour and expected standards for learning.

We are fortunate that the staff who work in the centre have been carefully selected to meet the needs of our students. All support staff has unique backgrounds that we find help reassure and inspire our students. Currently, we have a Semi-professional footballer, ex Women's England basketballer, retired professional rugby player, ex-military instructors, and ARNA support worker as well as senior GCSE teachers. All these staff have a unique way of working with students and supporting their dreams and aspirations.

Evidence of sustainment over two years

The last 2 years have been amazing. We never expected the centre to have such an impact in the community and within Nottinghamshire area. Within this short period of time we have been open we have gained new relationships with various organisation, worked closely with local authority to meet the needs of children and increased teaching capacity within the centre to offer additional session. We had to follow a step by step plan for the Summit Centre to be operational and succeed

Step 1, We justified the need for the change which ultimately affects all students and staff within the Academy/community and to those who joined us in September from Key stage 2 through staff forums and department feedback.

Step 2, Analysed previous SEND data from the past 3 years and looked at trends and possible difficulties both students and staff have faced.

Step 3, Support required to achieve success. The information previously gathered raised immediate concerns as the intake of our new cohorts starting. We realised that we needed additional support for this project to work and become successful and to be cost effective, therefore we enlisted the support from our MAT / academy SENCo and Family SENCo, setting out our action plan. We also sought support from our academy lead head of behaviour who discussed current initiatives in place to support our current and soon to be year 7 students with behaviour and attendance concerns.

Nationally the current rise in exclusions and demand for schools and academies to support children who are at risk of permanent exclusion, there is further demand for more AP centres.

Department of Education Report 2018 has stated that further investment from the government and local authorities is needed to meet the demand of students/schools requiring additional support.

The report identifies 82% of LA's reported that demand for AP/PRUs has increased within the last 3 years.

According to figures from the same DFE document studies suggests that the number of pupils in AP's has increased by around 3,782 since 2012 (from 12,950 in 2012-13 to 16,732 in 2017-18). This was a rise of 29% (between 2012-13 and 2017-18), compared to an overall rise in the pupil population of 7%.

With this in mind we are now planning on increasing student numbers for the centre and also opening a new centre to work with post 16 children.

Since the centre has been open we have had zero NEET children. All our students are linked with mentors who support them with all their post 16 options. The staff in the centre go above and beyond in regards to supporting children with applications to college, interview prep time, Clothing for interviews and CV writing skills.

Parent Feedback has been really positive in particular the support through the Covid pandemic.

CS Mum said

"The summit centre has been amazing for CS, it has helped settle him down. They have helped him point out his weaknesses as well as his strengths and by doing so this has filled him with so much confidence which has given him the confidence to plan ahead what he wants to do after school life. Without the Summit Centre I don't think we would be where we are now with his learning. The staff give him the opportunity to learn the way that he can cope with and this has worked amazingly. I cannot thank the team enough for everything they have done"

AY Dad said

The centre supported AY through lockdown whilst finding time to get the children interested in subjects outside of school. Great relationship with parents"

HN Mum said

"The Summit Centre offers a positive learning environment, everyone is friendly and the staff are supportive"

