



# Directory 2025-26

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### Winner

- **Project Title:** Increased access to disadvantaged groups leading to increased admissions of Pupil Premium (PP) students
- **School:** Kendrick School
- **Project Lead:** Dr Karen Perry
- **Contact Email:** kperry@kendrick.reading.sch.uk
- **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Kendrick School's Admission policies for Year 7, Year 12 and Non-routine entry since 2016 gave priority to Pupil Premium (PP) students. However, the number of PP students applying, taking the test, qualifying in the test and then joining the school were low (2.1% of year 7 admissions in 2018 Year 7 entry were PP students). It was identified that this was partly due to lack of awareness and misconceptions of grammar schools in the community and also some PP students lack of confidence to take and achieve in the entrance test and to leave their community to attend a grammar school, even if they qualified for entry. Kendrick School wanted to increase access to disadvantaged groups and increase admissions of Pupil Premium (PP) students into Kendrick School for all year groups and aimed to address this through a variety of activities and approaches, as described below, which aimed to:

- Change the Admission policies for Year 7, Year 12 and Non-Routine (In Year) admission to further increase access and priority to PP students.
- Increase awareness of the school to disadvantaged families and the priority to PP students in admissions.
- Overcome misconceptions about the school in the community including regarding the costs of attending the school.
- Increase outreach work in the local community to raise awareness and strengthen liaison.
- Provide more activities in our Widening Horizons program to include an Information Event, a regular club for year 3-6 PP girls and offer a 6-week familiarisation program for year 5 PP students registered to take our Year 7 Admission test.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change.**

**Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

We met with members of the senior leadership and admissions teams and the Admission Trustees to discuss ways to increase access to disadvantaged groups via changes in the admission policy and through work in the community and with pupil premium (PP) students. This work also coincided with our application for the first round of the Selective Schools Expansion Fund (SSEF) in July 2018 where we were one of the 16 successful schools (from 39 applications). In this application we also aimed to address the needs identified previously to increase access to disadvantaged groups leading to increased admission of Pupil Premium (PP) students and to take an additional 32 students (taking the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 96 to 128) from areas of greater deprivation as detailed below. We also met with the Local Authority to ensure we understood the local needs better, including considering the pupil premium data of the upcoming primary students and developing contacts who would later aid publicity of our activities and to ensure the more deprived local areas were included within the additional places to be offered. We made a proposal which addressed: changes to the Admission policy to increase access to disadvantaged students; increased directed communications and outreach work in the community to aid publicity/awareness and overcome misconceptions; increased regular activities with eligible PP girls and their families to support confidence and engagement; introduce dedicated familiarisation sessions with Year 5 PP students registered for the entrance test to aid confidence, familiarisation of the test content and test procedure; sessions for Year 6 PP students after the test to aid their confidence in accepting any offers and aid transition to Year 7 - all as detailed below. This proposal was shared with all Trustees, all staff, students and parents/carers and there was a public consultation on aspects of this including Admissions, partly as this also coincided with our expansion from 96 to 128 students in year 7 from 2020 entry as a result of the successful SSEF application.

Admission policies: Year 7 Entry: Since 2020 entry, year 7 PP applicants residing in our priority area 1 or 2, have a 5-mark lower test qualifying score than non-PP applicants and are second priority, after Children in Care, in the oversubscription criteria for admission. All eligible PP students who meet or exceed this lower qualifying score are eligible for admission. We decided to adopt this rather than a number or % cap on the number of students eligible to ensure there was no upper limit of the number of possible successful applicants and to give families confidence and trust in the school and the process. From 2020 entry, we separated our existing designated area, based on home postcodes, into Priority Area 1, which was closer to the school and Priority Area 2 which was further away and the additional 32 places for Year 7 entry have been allocated to Priority Area 1 applicants. Priority Area 1 included postcode areas with IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) scores showing more deprivation, which has therefore increased access to disadvantaged students in lower income families, including those just below the threshold for being eligible for Pupil Premium status. Year 12 Entry: All Year 12 PP applicants residing in our priority area 1 or 2 are eligible for entry if they achieve 54 points or above in their best 8 GCSE subjects including English Language and Mathematics and are second priority, after Children in Care, in the oversubscription criteria for admission. Again, all PP students scoring 54 points or above are eligible - they are not required to be in the top ranking students and there is no number or % cap on the number of students eligible to increase access and aid confidence. Non routine (In year) entry: PP students, then Priority Area 1 students (which include postcode areas showing more deprivation according to IDACI bands) are prioritised, after Children in Care, for admissions, when a place

becomes available 'in-year'. All these changes in admissions policies have increased access to financially disadvantaged students and PP students.

Communication, raising awareness and overcoming misconceptions:

- The prioritising of PP students and lower qualifying score for PP students is widely advertised through regular emails to primary schools in Priority Area 1 and 2, in the Primary Times magazine - which is sent to all local primary schools, at open events, Local Authority information and there is an information event in November each year.
- Staff have also attended local primary school parent/carer events including parent consultation events to publicise the work and answer questions and the work is discussed at network meetings with primary school leaders.
- There is a page on the school website dedicated to PP and Service Premium (SP) information and a page dedicated to our Widening Horizons work and the support offered.
- Information on our support for PP families in the application and admission process is given at our Open day and Admission talks and in the supporting information.
- There is a dedicated member of staff who oversees our outreach and Widening Horizons work who liaises with the local schools and PP families to support them as appropriate in accessing the support/activities offered and the admission application process and liaises with local primary schools.
- Accessibility and distribution of key information has increased as all 125 local primary schools have been contacted by our outreach team and details of approximately 60 PP coordinators collated and used to target our information.
- A more personal relationship has developed with these schools resulting in an increase in the number of requests for activities.
- 'In school' activities have been targeted to primary schools from which fewer applications have been received and with higher numbers of PP students.
- We have also visited primary schools with higher PP numbers for transition work and Maths liaison, and we attend a local cluster group of all local primary schools to aid engagement and distribution of information across Reading.
- Reports of all activities are put on our website and shared with parents/carers through the Headteacher's weekly update to aid publicity and engagement.

#### Activities- Outreach and Widening Horizons:

- The November Information event was designed to raise awareness of the school, and overcome possible misconceptions, give information on the Admission procedure (and priority to PP students) and ensure students could start involvement in the Widening Horizon activities from that date from Year 3.
- This was also designed to aid building a more long-term liaison with families to aid developing familiarisation and confidence with the school, staff and students and also ensure the students could work with other primary students to aid their confidence in transition to secondary school outside their current community.
- This event has been reviewed and refined over the years and now includes some parents/carers of students who have been through the Widening Horizon programme and activities and have been admitted to the school, speaking at the event and speaking individually with families to aid and evidence impact.
- This event is advertised to all primary schools in priority area 1 and 2 through emails and contacts.
- The 'Widening Horizons' outreach work was increased and has been refined based on feedback.
- All year 3-6 female PP students residing in Priority Area 1 and 2 are invited to a weekly remote 'Inspire Club' to work with Kendrick students on activities and invited into Kendrick School once a term for activities with their parents to aid familiarity with the school, students and staff.
- This club was originally in school but became remote during COVID and remained mainly remote, with the once a term session in school, as feedback indicated this increased accessibility and access and reduced cost.
- A typical remote meeting involves a starter activity with a member of staff or Kendrick student with the whole group, then primary students are put in break out rooms to work on activities, for example based on Maths, English and puzzles, with a Kendrick student in a small group.
- All Kendrick students have training on safeguarding and 'teaching' techniques to use in these sessions and Kendrick staff pop in and out of the break out rooms for safeguarding.
- We also hold a workshop in school for primary school year groups on the Widening Horizons programme once every half term.
- We invested in a quantity of books and have started a Year 5 Book club where students are able to borrow books to take home to read and then return for discussion and choosing another book at our next in school event.

- All students registered with our Widening Horizons project have free access to an online learning program – originally FROG learning, now Atom Learning to support their schoolwork from Year 3.
- Year 5 PP students planning to take the Admission test receive at least 6 test familiarisation sessions in addition to the Inspire Club, free access to an online support package and a half day in the summer holiday, including a wellbeing session and test experience, to support their familiarity with the school and confidence to take the test.
- Year 6 PP students can continue to attend the Inspire club and are invited into school once a term to aid their familiarity with the school, staff and students and each other to aid their confidence in accepting the place and transition to the school.
- Outreach work for whole classes of primary school students, including science activity days, invitations to Kendrick School for a pantomime and free workshops at Kendrick School have aided awareness of the school and admissions with students and staff.
- Feedback from all activities has aided review and adaptation of future activities to aid effectiveness, for example the move to a remote session and renaming this from its initial name of 'Homework club' to 'Inspire Club' to aid perceptions.
- Parents/carers of PP students who have gained entry to the school have spoken at our information events and attended events to speak to parents/carers to give information on their experiences and to support them.
- An 'Inspire Bulletin' was created and originally sent to over 120 local primary schools in our Priority Areas 1 and 2 to share with their families and to all Year 3-6 PP students registered with us.
- It was also sent to a local Reading charity who works with schools with higher numbers of PP students and put on our school website.
- This has activities and information on Maths, English, reading, wellbeing, inspirational women, as well as poems written by Kendrick students and thinking challenges.
- We also shared activities during COVID including science activities to complete at home.
- Details of our PP support and Admission process are also shared via these communications.
- School uniform costs have been kept low with the school jumper being the only specialised item required– the rest of the standard daily uniform can be bought from high street stores.
- This is widely publicised to aid overcoming potential cost misunderstandings or concerns.

- The pre-loved uniform sale has expanded and is established as a regular event and is widely accepted.
- Year 7 PP students have a transition pack including all key items to start the school including a calculator, dictionaries, art materials, science goggles, etc bought for them to aid transition and this is given to them in July to ensure they are fully equipped for joining the school.
- We started a summer school in 2021 for year 6 students due to join the school which is free to PP students to aid transition.
- All main trips/activities are free to PP students, and this is widely advertised.
- Once admitted to the school there is a dedicated member of staff who regularly contacts and checks in with PP parents/carers and if there any concerns or any additional support required.
- The parents/carers of PP (and SEND) students have access to parents' consultation appointments before the rest of the students and are supported in making those appointments to aid accessibility, contact, support and feedback.
- We also host a weekly refugee club in liaison with the local refugee organisation to aid interaction with the community.
- This involves primary and secondary school children working with Kendrick students whilst their parents/carers have activities with members from the refugee organisation.
- Kendrick School has supported the Whitley Food Cupboard for over 3 years – which is based in a primary school in an area within our designated area of greater deprivation- with regular donations of food and money.
- The Trustees and whole school staff are informed and engaged in this programme through their involvement in regular updates and discussions including sessions on Trustee days and whole school INSET sessions.
- Current Kendrick students are fully aware, involved in and supportive through their involvement in the activities.
- There have also been assembly items on this work including on the Inspire club and Refugee club to raise awareness and support.
- The Refugee Support group is one of the schools chosen charities this year along with Smart Works Reading who support unemployed women to secure employment to aid involvement in the community.

- The Refugee Support Group have spoken in an assembly to all sixth form students.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** This work has had significant impact in many areas including Admissions, increased awareness, outreach work and engagement with the community, as evidenced by the information below, and as recognised by Kendrick School receiving the Sutton Trust Fair School Admission Gold award for the last 2 years: Admissions: In 2018, 2 Pupil Premium (PP) students (2.1% of the intake of 96 students) were admitted into Year 7 at Kendrick School. Since this date, the number of PP students admitted has increased significantly and for 2025 entry, 24 students (18.75% of the intake of 128 students) qualified for Kendrick School. 18.75% Pupil Premium is much closer to local area, (eg Reading Local Authority secondary schools have an average of around 24.7% PP) due to the changes in the Admission policies and activities implemented. The number of PP students registered for the Year 7 entrance test has increased over 3-fold from 22 PP applicants for 2019 entry to 74 PP applicants for 2026 entry due to increased awareness and confidence. Year 7 admissions from Priority Area 1, which includes postcode areas with IDACI scores showing greater deprivation, have increased from 34.4% in 2019 entry to 76.6% in 2025 entry due to the changes in the Admission policy prioritising the additional 32 places for Priority Area 1 only and the communication plan, so has increased access to lower income families who may not be eligible for PP but are experiencing financial difficulties as well as PP applicants. The regular communications with PP families and continued engagement with year 6 students after the test has ensured there has been a nearly 100% take up of the places offered to eligible PP students since 2020 entry thus supporting increased PP admissions. Parents/carers have informed us and have shared this information with other parents/carers orally at our information events, that this procedure gives them more certainty and clarity than having a % or number PP student admission quota, which aids their confidence, transition and decision to accept the place. Only PP and Priority Area 1 applicants have been admitted for non-routine (in year) admissions since 2020 entry which has increased the number of PP students in the school. Year 12 PP admissions have increased from 3 students qualifying for 2019 entry to 9 students qualifying for 2025 entry. Communication, raising awareness and overcoming misconceptions: The communication plan has been effective as evidenced by the increased number of families engaging with our activities, including applying for the test and as evidenced through oral feedback in the community indicating greater awareness and less misconceptions. Accessibility and distribution of key information has increased as all 125 local primary schools have been contacted by our outreach team and details of approximately 60 PP coordinators collated and used to target our information. This has greatly increased reach and engagement. The dedicated member of staff who oversees our outreach and Widening Horizons work has engaged with individual families and schools on numerous occasions and received positive feedback for this. Activities- Outreach and Widening Horizons:

- Attendance of the November Information event has increased significantly from approximately 25 families in November 2019 to approximately 77 families and over 150 attendees in November 2025.
- Feedback includes comments such as: "Before I have some ideas but not that much knowledge to know how it works. Thank you I have ideas how the school is and how it runs and what I could do

to support my child.” (parent), “Now I’ve seen inside the school, I want to come here even more.” (child).

- “Thank you very much for the event yesterday, we were very impressed with it and my younger daughter is looking forward to starting the online classes in January. “
- “Thank you ever so much for the information evening, it was very informative for both myself and my daughter. What an exciting opportunity for young girls. My daughter thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and enjoyed reading the books! “
- The involvement of parents of PP students who had been involved in the Widening Horizons programme and secured places at Kendrick School at the Information Event is very well received.
- These parents comments, as below, also indicate their positive engagement.
- “It was my pleasure to support this event. I will always be grateful for the inspire club, as it made accessing Kendrick possible for X.”
- “Words cannot express how grateful I am for the positive influence you have had on my child's life. Thank you for being a guiding light throughout their educational journey.” !!!” (Year 7 parent)
- These parents/carers of PP students who have taken part in our Widening Horizons activities are excellent ambassadors at our events and when talking with their communities in this way, strengthen this work and aid the overcoming of misconceptions and increase engagement.
- These parents/carers are also effective in the school community, and some have also become members of our parents society.
- The number of PP families with daughters in years 3-6 actively engaging in our Widening Horizons Inspire Club activities has increased significantly – there are currently around 100 families participating regularly from approximately 45 primary schools.
- Feedback is very positive, eg
- “We would like to thank you and your whole team for providing such a wonderful opportunity for the girls by organising this inspiring club. This work truly makes a difference and changes lives.”
- The Inspire Club starting from Year 3 has helped to develop a longer working relationship with these families which has resulted in increased numbers of PP students applying, taking and passing the test.
- Eg feedback from a parent speaking at the information event: “I really enjoyed talking to other parents. Brought back all the memories of me bringing X to widening horizons since year 3. Thank

you once again for all your support. Hope to see you again. “

- Quotes of participants are on our website and included in publicity, for example: “Thank you for all the support. My daughter is enjoying the Inspire Club and looking forward to it every week. We appreciate the effort and guidance, especially in these tough times. She is getting more confident as she gains extra knowledge. She feels inspired working with the Kendrick student helpers.”
- Positive comments have also been received from those students/families who did not gain year 7 entry, eg “Thank you for all the support and resources the programme provided. Although X didn’t achieve the marks required, the learning and experience will undoubtedly serve her well in the future.”
- And some of these students have later gained entry through non routine (in year) and sixth form admissions.
- The familiarisation sessions are well attended with positive feedback
- The online package has received a high number of students engaging with it of around 50 students from approximately around 30 primary schools and has received positive feedback
- The year 6 students who have continued attending Inspire Club after the test have grown in confidence and skills which has aided their confidence in joining the school as evidence by the high take up of offers and their transition.
- The outreach work has been well received and resulted in students joining the Inspire Club.
- Recent outreach events include a pantomime, which approximately 3 primary schools and 360 students attended, a Netball tournament for over 70 primary school students and a Music workshop for 120 primary students.
- There have been increased requests from primary schools to Kendrick for support and activities as a result of the improved collaboration and communications.
- The ‘in school’ activities have responded to some of these requests, eg the request for primary students to see a live performance as many of their students had not experienced this, resulted in invitations to the pantomime: the request to experience competitive sport led to the netball tournament and requests to experience and take part in music fed into the musical event.
- These events have led to increased publicity and engagement in our Widening Horizons activities, eg and email received: “My daughter X attended the pantomime at Kendrick last week and has gained a huge interest in trying to go to Kendrick, which prompted me to have a look for the email I received from Kendrick about the scheme. X is very bright but I don’t think she would be able to pass your entrance exam without any extra help. I’m a single parent so we’ve received pupil

premium for a number of years and think the scheme would be great for her “

- PP students joining the school feel well supported, as evidence by messages from a parent/carers who continue to engage with the school, eg:
- “I wanted to drop you an email after X has completed her first year at Kendrick to say thank you so much for 'Inspire club'. Last year, X was preparing to attend the summer induction event with excitement but lots of anxiety. Now, she is happy, more confident, stretching herself to achieve great results whilst wanting to be fully involved in all elements that the school proves. “
- “X recently received her end of year 7 report, and I could not be prouder. She has achieved an incredible number of exceptional results, and all her feedback is positive. She has settled in very well and regularly enjoys the extra curriculum activities like lunchtime clubs and celebration events, singing in various concerts, drama performances and more recently the London trip and sports day. I believe all these opportunities wouldn't have occurred without the Inspire club. It provided the ideal opportunity for her to access a school that she can thrive and reach her full potential. Thank you for all you do. With best wishes and appreciation. “
- The Refugee Club (RSG) is well attended with approximately 16 families and some of these have also become involved in our Widening Horizons events and year 7 and in year admissions.
- The organisation has said:
- ‘Thank you to you and to all the girls for hosting the homework club at Kendrick. The sessions have gone smoothly and the students are so supportive and kind. The smiles on the RSG children’s faces as they arrive and the helpers come to greet them is plenty of evidence of how at home and happy they feel and how much they enjoy their company and value their gentle support.’
- We have made regular donations of food, toiletries and household products to the Whitley Food Cupboard for over three years now.
- In addition to what we physically collect we have also been able to give £4846 in that time.
- Feedback includes: “At a time when needs are so high, this support makes a real difference to our families”.
- “A parent who has no access to benefits wanted me to thank your parents and staff as she was able to get her child a birthday cake and presents with some of the Kendrick money that has been donated. We were also able to get some emergency items for a mum fleeing domestic abuse recently- thank you so much it is invaluable!” “A family was really struggling after having an infestation of bed bugs recently and your money was able to purchase a new bed and bedding for the child”.

- Cards have been received with thank you messages written by some children, including – “Thank you for sending us food it really helps with our mums.”
- This has also aided publicity and engagement from families in this more deprived area.
- The school’s trustees are fully supportive of this programme and it is regularly discussed at the Learning and Teaching meetings and has been a focus of Trustee days.
- They have also provided ideas for strengthening this process
- The Kendrick school staff are supportive, engaged and committed in this program through their involvement in regular updates and discussions including sessions on whole school INSET sessions.
- The Kendrick students are fully supportive and wonderful ambassadors.
- There are currently approximately 70 students trained and involved in our widening horizons and refugee club activities and receive excellent feedback, eg
- "My daughter thoroughly enjoyed joining the Tuesday Inspire Club remotely. Your sixth form students are a credit to the school
- "I would just like to praise the sixth form student for the remote session she did with my daughter yesterday. She was absolutely brilliant, supportive and explained the questions beautifully”
- The activities have also helped Kendrick students' confidence and skills and aided university applications and future careers.

To summarise, these approaches have made a positive impact in numerous ways including a significant increase in number of PP students and students from lower income families being admitted into the school as well as engaging with activities. There is also increased engagement with the community and better relationships with local primary schools, local parents and the wider community, for example through the work with the local primary schools, Refugee Club and the local food bank. All of this has supported the increased engagement with our programmes and increased applications of pupils eligible for PP applying for, sitting the entrance test and achieving the qualifying score and being admitted into the school. There has been a real shift in culture that Kendrick is a possible choice for communities which did not use to consider Kendrick as a viable secondary school option and families give very positive feedback to their communities of the kindness and friendliness they experience through the staff and student interactions as indicated in some of the messages provided in the previous evidence. The success of PP students in achieving places at the school and the support they get on joining the school is also being communicated through communities which is supporting future engagement. The in-school primary school events have also been highly effective at empowering the primary students attending to ask their parents/carers to enable them to engage with us as demonstrated by the parents

indicating they joined the Inspire club after the pantomime visit. This has also been evidenced by the involvement of some of our refugee families in our Widening Horizons programme and the award of the Sutton Trust Fair Access Gold Award in 2024 and 2025. “Gold is awarded to schools who have made several determined and significant changes to their admissions policies to ensure that there is fair access to all pupils regardless of socio-economic background. For your school we wanted to recognise the multiple systems you have in place to support access for children eligible for pupil premium including your adjusted test requirements and especially your free tutoring programme.” The support and commitment of the whole school community – staff, trustees, students and parents is very important in the effectiveness. The training and awareness of Kendrick students to the students and communities they work with is also very powerful as these primary students and families see these students as role models to which they inspire as in our school motto which is – “Lead, inspire and make a difference. “

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### Winner

- **Project Title:** Oracy as culture: Embedding “Speak Like Confident People” through a whole-school framework
- **School:** Beaconsfield High School
- **Project Lead:** Sian Allen
- **Contact Email:** allen-s@beaconsfieldhigh.bucks.sch.uk
- **Category:** Teaching, learning and curriculum development

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** At Beaconsfield High School, our curriculum is driven by a vision to develop girls of character - curious in thought, courageous in action and confident in themselves. While our students achieve highly academically, quality assurance lesson visit write-ups revealed a recurring linguistic pattern: students frequently prefaced correct answers with qualifiers such as, “This is probably wrong...” despite secure subject knowledge. This indicated a confidence gap not in cognition, but in articulation.

Student voice consultation reinforced this. Students described anxiety about being judged and reluctance to speak publicly. National research, including Voice 21’s work on amplifying girls’ voices, highlights the need for structured talk to support confidence and equity. Within our girls-only context, this work takes on particular significance, ensuring that intellectual confidence is deliberately cultivated rather than assumed.

Staff also identified inconsistency in how oracy was defined and developed across subjects. Consequently, our School Improvement Plan prioritised embedding a shared language of high-quality oracy across all key stages, ensuring that talk is explicitly taught, modelled and assessed.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

Establishing a shared framework and language: We embedded the SLCP (Social, Linguistic, Cognitive and Physical) framework as our whole-school model for oracy development, aligning it with the ‘BHS Six’ (our learning and teaching SIP priorities) to ensure curricular coherence. I introduced a simplified mnemonic - “Speak Like Confident People” - displayed in every classroom and used as a touchstone for planning, modelling and feedback. This intentionally addressed linguistic self-minimisation by modelling assertive academic phrasing and reinforcing one of our school’s new cultural pillars - “Back Yourself”. Oracy objectives are now referenced in schemes of work, form time programmes and student leadership

opportunities.

School Pedagogical Spine – WalkThrus: Sherrington and Caviglioli’s WalkThru texts are our school’s official pedagogical resources. Every teacher holds a set, and these texts underpin CPD, PLC inquiry, lesson visit dialogue and learning and teaching briefings, providing a shared pedagogical language. Strategies such as Warm Calling, Think–Pair–Share and “Say It Again Better” are now regular language across faculties, ensuring pedagogy is both research-informed and practice-embedded. Crucially, the oracy framework is aligned with our Ordinarily Available Provision principles. Carefully scaffolded discussion routines, explicit modelling, rehearsal opportunities and predictable formats reduce cognitive load and support students with SEND, speech and language needs or processing differences. Inclusion briefings have explicitly drawn on the SLCP framework to demonstrate how high-quality oracy strengthens accessibility within the academic curriculum.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) innovation: Oracy has become a focus within PLC inquiry. Teachers have trialled innovative strategies including introducing explicit oracy assessment criteria, piloting oral assessment tasks, and the History department’s “Dragon’s Den” assessment, which required students to pitch historical solutions, assessed against structured oracy criteria. This demonstrates teacher ownership and experimentation beyond central direction.

Middle Leader capacity building: In Summer 2024, our Oracy TLR holder led Academic Middle Leader training, revisiting the four strands, exploring Voice 21 research and co-designing processes for departments to identify explicit oracy opportunities in their schemes of work. Departments are now accountable for embedding oracy objectives and can evidence high-quality classroom dialogue in planning, assessment and review.

September INSET – “Refinement, not revolution”: At September INSET in 2025, oracy was positioned not as an add-on initiative but as core practice refinement. Teachers engaged in practical modelling of questioning and talk routines, explored research on student anxiety and discussed “What will we stop letting slide?”. This reinforced oracy as pedagogy that improves thinking, participation and inclusion.

Curriculum innovation: The Year 7 EPIC Programme (Explore, Plan, Investigate, Create): To embed oracy from the outset, I devised a year-long Year 7 programme entitled EPIC, delivered fortnightly across the academic year. Loosely modelled on the Extended Project Qualification, EPIC develops independent inquiry, research skills and structured presentation. Students learn explicitly how to articulate ideas, respond to questioning and present confidently. This establishes a developmental pathway that continues through Year 9 TED Talks, Sixth Form Hustings and national speaking competitions.

Pastoral and co-curricular embedding: Oracy is timetabled within our pastoral programme across all key stages. A weekly “Speak Like Confident People” form-time focus runs across Years 7–11, with each half-term aligned to a specific SLCP strand. Centrally produced slides ensure equity and consistency.

Activities include “Say It Again Better”, Just a Minute, rank-and-justify tasks and role-play, providing regular rehearsal of structured talk. In the Sixth Form, Wednesday form time is explicitly designated as Oracy Day, providing dedicated space for advanced discussion, presentation practice and articulation of high-level ideas. This ensures that the developmental pathway begun in lower school continues through to Year 13, supporting university interviews, leadership roles and public speaking beyond school. Showcase opportunities are deliberately mapped across the year group journey to provide progressive platforms for public articulation. In Year 7, students present as part of the EPIC programme, establishing early confidence in structured inquiry and presentation. Year 8 students participate in the House Oracy Competition, while Year 9 culminates in the TED Talk competition, offering a high-profile platform for persuasive speaking. In Year 10, students engage in both GCSE Speaking and Listening assessments and a Future Pathways oracy project, articulating aspirational goals with clarity and conviction. In the Sixth Form, oracy becomes increasingly sophisticated and authentic. Students lead assemblies, deliver EPQ presentations, participate in Model United Nations and the Bar Mock Trial, and engage in Sixth Form Hustings, modelling evaluative academic discourse and leadership communication. These examples represent a selection of the structured opportunities embedded across the school to ensure oracy is practised, refined and celebrated at every stage.

Communications strategy: Oracy is embedded through deliberate, multi-level communication. At strategic level, it is explicitly referenced within our School Improvement Plan, with progress reviewed through departmental evaluation and Trustee reporting. This positions oracy as a whole-school priority rather than a discrete initiative. At curriculum level, departments reference explicit oracy objectives within schemes of work and assessment design. At pedagogical level, our shared WalkThru framework underpins CPD, PLC inquiry, lesson visit dialogue and learning and teaching briefings, ensuring consistency in classroom practice. Through quality assurance processes, structured talk and student articulation are routinely referenced in feedback, normalising professional dialogue around oracy. Culturally, oracy is celebrated and reinforced publicly through assemblies, House competitions, the Year 9 TED Talk final and a dedicated Oracy Award at our annual Prize Giving event. In addition, a recent enhancement to our Getting Life Ready achievement framework introduced a specific oracy category, ensuring articulate contribution is recognised consistently in everyday classroom practice. This ensures that parents, carers and students alike recognise the value placed on confident, thoughtful communication. What began as a response to bright students prefacing correct answers with “This might be wrong...” has evolved into a cultural shift across the school - strengthening how our students think, learn and speak with conviction. By aligning strategy, pedagogy, monitoring and celebration, oracy is embedded within core systems rather than reliant on individual enthusiasm. A recently produced “golden thread” overview document clarifies how our Vision, Cultural Pillars, BHS Six, GLR competencies and SLCP framework interconnect, reinforcing that oracy is not an isolated initiative but part of a coherent, strategically aligned approach. This alignment is reflected in measurable impact across classrooms, student leadership and speaking platforms.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** Student survey data indicates strong and consistent implementation. In our 2024-25 Learning and Teaching Student Survey, 98% of students report that teachers actively develop oracy skills across subjects,

including those traditionally perceived as less discussion-based. Participation in oracy-rich opportunities has increased across debates, TED Talks, House competitions and public speaking events, with a broader range of students represented. Notably, over 20 Year 12 students voluntarily entered Gresham College's Young Orator of the Year competition, demonstrating growing confidence to engage in national-level academic discourse. Recent lesson visit data provides compelling evidence of implementation fidelity. In Geography, for example, students undertook a "Race Across the World" presentation task underpinned by explicit oracy success criteria, including eye contact, vocal delivery and purposeful visual design. Clear modelling ensured accessibility for all learners, while structured peer feedback required students to evaluate against shared criteria, reinforcing attentive listening as a core oracy skill. Presentations demonstrated confident articulation and concise summarising of complex material. Several students explained that they had deliberately prioritised clarity and visibility so their communication would be "easy to follow," evidencing genuine internalisation of the framework. Across subjects, lesson visits show that students are less likely to hedge their answers and more likely to respond clearly and confidently. Instead of prefacing answers with "This might be wrong...", students now respond in full sentences, use precise terminology and explain their reasoning without apology - a change repeatedly evidenced in lesson visit write-ups and triangulated through student voice. Students can explain the purpose of oracy, reference the SLCP strands, and describe how purposeful academic talk strengthens their thinking and learning. Importantly, success is not confined to traditionally confident speakers. Several TED Talk finalists and runners-up have been students with SEND, demonstrating that structured, scaffolded oracy enables a wider range of learners to succeed publicly. Departments can now evidence explicit oracy objectives within curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Structured talk has also strengthened the quality of student leadership dialogue across all key stages. In Student Council debates - involving form representatives from Year 7 through to Year 13 - students engage cogently and calmly with the Senior Leadership Team, demonstrating clear reasoning, active listening and growing confidence in their delivery. Leadership observations note reduced reliance on filler language and increasingly assured body language, reflecting development across the cognitive, social, linguistic and physical strands of the SLCP framework. External validation reinforces this cultural shift. Our 2024 Ofsted inspection noted that pupils "feel empowered to speak up because they feel listened to" and are supported to become "confident and independent learners.". Inspectors also recognised that pupils' personal development has a "very high priority," affirming our strategic focus on oracy as a driver of confidence and inclusion. Oracy at Beaconsfield High School is no longer a standalone initiative - it is embedded within curriculum design, pedagogical practice, pastoral structures and student leadership. Grounded in research and aligned with strategic priorities, it provides a coherent framework through which every student is explicitly taught to think, speak and contribute with confidence. What began as a simple linguistic observation - students apologising before expressing correct answers - has evolved into a whole-school infrastructure that strengthens intellectual confidence and equitable participation. Students no longer hedge their ideas; they articulate them with clarity, precision and conviction. In embedding oracy systemically rather than episodically, we have not only changed how our students speak, but how they see themselves - as assured thinkers, leaders and contributors to the wider world.

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- **Project Title:** Social Mobility at Newstead Wood
  - **School:** Newstead Wood School
  - **Project Lead:** Ben Williams
  - **Contact Email:** bwilliams@newsteadwood.co.uk
  - **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Disadvantaged Progress, Attendance and Destinations

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

In my role as KS5 Lead and whole-school Pupil Premium Strategy Lead, my priority has been to remove structural barriers, raise aspirations, and ensure that disadvantaged students achieve outcomes that reflect their true potential. My work spans KS4 and KS5 and is grounded in equity-based practice, high expectations, and carefully targeted support. At KS4, our disadvantaged cohort now outperforms their peers in Attainment 8 Average Point Score. This reflects the effectiveness of an equitable, research-informed strategy where support is tailored to need rather than delivered uniformly. Daily attendance tracking, priority parent communications, and consistent Heads of Year intervention have contributed to whole-school Pupil Premium attendance averaging above 96% — a significant achievement for a disadvantaged cohort nationally. I regularly share EEF-aligned strategies with staff, reinforcing the principle of equity, not equality, and ensuring high-quality teaching and targeted approaches are embedded across departments. At KS5, we have seen a sustained narrowing of the Pupil Premium attainment gap alongside rising progress and improved access to high-quality destinations. I have ensured that disadvantaged students receive early, targeted careers interventions; dedicated support with university and degree apprenticeship applications; and bespoke academic mentoring that builds confidence and independence. Our work has resulted in increased applications to selective universities, broader access to competitive apprenticeships, and higher levels of post-18 readiness. Ensuring access to resources has been a central priority. I have secured laptops and digital access for those who need it so that technology never becomes a barrier to learning. I have also established supervised study spaces, structured catch-up programmes, enhanced mentoring, and exam-familiarisation opportunities specifically for vulnerable students, improving academic resilience and reducing anxiety. A key part of supporting social mobility is widening access to opportunity before KS5 entry begins. As a heavily oversubscribed grammar school — receiving over 1,000 applications for 225 places — I have led on the principle of grammar schools having two entry points, not one. To promote genuine accessibility, I work with local schools between Orpington and Lewisham, ensuring students are aware that a grammar school education remains available to them at 16. This has

strengthened local outreach, diversified our intake, and ensured that high-aspiration pathways are visible to students who might not otherwise consider them.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** These combined approaches have delivered measurable impact: improved outcomes at KS4 and KS5, exceptional attendance among disadvantaged students, increased confidence and aspiration, and greater representation in high-quality post-18 destinations. Most importantly, students who once faced significant barriers now leave our sixth form with strong results, clear ambitions, and the belief that they fully deserve a place in the most competitive academic and professional environments. I remain committed to creating a culture where disadvantage is never a predictor of destination and where every student has the opportunity, support, and belief to succeed.

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- **Project Title:** Beaconsfield High School Well-being Pyramid
  - **School:** Beaconsfield High School
  - **Project Lead:** Emma Pritchard
  - **Contact Email:** pritchard-e@beaconsfieldhigh.school
  - **Category:** Pastoral care and personal development

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Following the Covid pandemic, Beaconsfield High School experienced a significant and sustained rise in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs among students. This manifested in very high footfall to Student Support (at times up to ten students per hour), frequent panic attacks occurring in corridors and lessons, increasing lesson avoidance, and a rising number of emergency call-outs. Anxiety, emotional dysregulation and Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) were becoming barriers to learning, attendance and engagement, impacting both individual outcomes and the wider learning environment. At the same time, staff reported feeling increasingly ill-equipped to manage the scale and complexity of SEMH need presenting in classrooms. Staff survey feedback highlighted uncertainty around how to respond to panic, anxiety and avoidance behaviours in a way that was supportive without inadvertently reinforcing them. This led to increased pressure on pastoral systems, inconsistent responses across the school, and a growing reliance on the school counselling service, where waiting times were increasing and capacity was being stretched beyond what was sustainable. There was therefore a clear need for a coherent, graduated and preventative approach to mental health and wellbeing that moved beyond crisis response. Students needed earlier intervention, shared language and practical strategies to help them understand uncomfortable emotions, reduce avoidance behaviours, and build psychological flexibility. Staff needed training, confidence and a clear framework so that they could respond consistently, supportively and effectively, without SEMH needs overwhelming teaching and learning. The work aimed to address these needs by embedding a whole-school, evidence-informed graduated response that normalised mental health conversations, reduced stigma, and placed self-help and early intervention at the centre of provision. By grounding the approach in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), the work focused on helping students tolerate discomfort, remain engaged with learning, and take values-based action, while also equipping staff with a shared model and language to support students confidently and sustainably. This reduced pressure on specialist services, improved consistency, and restored learning as the core purpose of the school while safeguarding student wellbeing.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):** In response to a sustained rise in SEMH need following the Covid pandemic, I led the design and implementation of a whole-school wellbeing framework centred on a clearly articulated graduated

response: the BHS Wellbeing Support Pyramid. This work represented a deliberate shift away from reactive, crisis-led support towards a preventative, psychologically informed and educationally grounded model that could be understood and applied consistently across the school community. The work began with a clear diagnosis of need, triangulating student footfall data, incident logs, counselling waiting lists, staff survey feedback and student voice. This highlighted high levels of anxiety, panic attacks, lesson avoidance and Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), alongside increasing staff concern about confidence, consistency and capacity. The existing system was placing unsustainable pressure on specialist provision and was not enabling early intervention at scale. To address this, I worked with Educational Psychologists and external experts to identify Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as the underpinning framework. ACT was selected because it offered a robust, evidence-based model for understanding anxiety, avoidance and emotional discomfort while remaining appropriate for a school context. Central concepts such as acceptance, commitment, values and psychological flexibility were translated into practical strategies that could be used by staff and students without requiring therapeutic expertise. The Wellbeing Support Pyramid operationalised this thinking into a clear, four-tier graduated response. Universal provision (Level 1) was strengthened through curriculum design, assemblies, tutor time and regular communications, ensuring that all students developed a shared understanding of emotions, stress, panic and coping strategies. Level 2 was deliberately designed as an early-intervention, self-help stage, supported by structured ACT-informed booklets, tutor guidance and a defined six-week review cycle. Clear escalation pathways ensured that students could move to targeted (Level 3) or high-level (Level 4) support where needed, without unnecessary delay. To ensure consistency and sustainability, I designed and embedded robust systems and processes. Referral mechanisms were clarified and automated, with tutors playing a central role in early identification and review. Placement panels, fortnightly triage meetings and shared tracking ensured that support was coordinated, reviewed and responsive. Additional capacity was secured through the recruitment of a Learning Mentor and the expansion of the counselling service to six days per week, enabling waiting lists to be cleared and maintained at manageable levels. Workforce development was a critical lever for change. I led a programme of whole-staff training, including inset sessions and ongoing pastoral briefings, focused on ACT, psychological flexibility and understanding avoidance behaviours. Training explicitly addressed staff confidence, helping colleagues respond compassionately to distress while avoiding reinforcement of avoidance. Staff were supported to use consistent language — particularly around acceptance and commitment — creating a shared approach across classrooms, tutor teams and pastoral staff. Student education sat at the heart of the work. PSHE curricula were redesigned to include explicit SEMH education across year groups, including lessons on anxiety, panic, coping strategies and emotional literacy. Assemblies and tutor time reinforced key messages, while the Wellbeing Hub and visible displays normalised help-seeking and reduced stigma. Importantly, students were taught the difference between feeling unsafe and feeling uncomfortable, empowering them to remain engaged with learning even when emotions were challenging. A sustained and deliberate communications strategy ensured that the whole community was brought with the change. Staff were engaged through consultation, training and clarity of systems, reducing anxiety and building trust in the framework. Students received repeated, consistent messaging across multiple contexts so that support pathways became familiar and accessible. Parents and carers were engaged through regular newsletters, website updates and direct communications that explained both the rationale and the processes underpinning the graduated response. This transparency helped align home-school expectations, particularly around attendance,

lesson avoidance and the role of self-help. Student and parent voice were actively sought through surveys, evaluations and feedback mechanisms. This feedback informed iterative refinement, including adjustments to Level 2 resources, clarity around escalation routes, and ongoing review of balance between normalising mental health discussion and avoiding over-pathologising stress. Survey data demonstrated improved mood indicators, high awareness of the wellbeing framework, and strong confidence in accessing support, evidencing meaningful cultural change rather than superficial compliance. Overall, this work delivered educational change by embedding a psychologically informed, values-driven wellbeing framework that restored learning as the core purpose of the school while safeguarding student mental health. It strengthened staff confidence, improved consistency, reduced pressure on specialist services, and empowered students with the skills and understanding needed to navigate discomfort without disengaging from education.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The implementation of the BHS Wellbeing Framework and graduated support pyramid has had a significant and sustained impact on students, staff and the wider school system. The work has shifted the culture from reactive crisis management to proactive, psychologically informed support, with clear evidence of improved confidence, capacity and consistency. Impact on students: Students have developed a clearer understanding of mental health, anxiety and emotional discomfort, alongside increased confidence in accessing appropriate support. Through explicit teaching in PSHE, assemblies and tutor time, students now share a common language around wellbeing, panic, avoidance and coping strategies. This has reduced stigma and encouraged earlier, more appropriate help-seeking. Evidence from student surveys shows high levels of awareness of the wellbeing framework and clarity about where and how to access support. Students report increased confidence in managing anxiety and uncomfortable emotions, particularly through the use of Level 2 self-help resources, which emphasise acceptance, values and committed action rather than avoidance. Many students are now able to remain in lessons despite anxiety, reducing disruption to learning and improving attendance and engagement. Crucially, the number of crisis presentations has reduced. Incidents of panic attacks requiring emergency response have fallen, and there has been a marked decrease in corridor-based distress during lesson time. Students are more likely to seek support through planned, structured routes rather than during moments of acute crisis. Counselling waiting lists, which were previously growing, have been stabilised and reduced, with students accessing specialist support in a more timely and targeted way. The graduated response has also improved outcomes for students experiencing lesson avoidance and EBSNA. Clear messaging around the difference between feeling unsafe and feeling uncomfortable, reinforced consistently by staff, has helped students and families understand the importance of continued engagement with learning alongside emotional support. This has led to improved attendance patterns for students previously at risk of persistent absence. Impact on staff: Staff confidence in responding to SEMH need has improved significantly. Training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and psychological flexibility has equipped staff with a shared framework and practical strategies, reducing uncertainty and emotional labour. Staff report feeling better able to support distressed students without reinforcing avoidance, and more confident in maintaining boundaries that protect learning. Staff survey feedback indicates increased clarity around referral processes, support pathways and thresholds for escalation. The Wellbeing Pyramid has removed ambiguity, enabling staff to act earlier and more

consistently. This has reduced reliance on individual judgement and alleviated the sense of being “ill-equipped” that was evident prior to implementation. The work has also had a positive impact on staff wellbeing. By reducing crisis-led interruptions, improving systems and increasing capacity through additional staffing, staff report fewer high-stress incidents during lessons and tutor time. Teaching and learning have become more stable, with fewer disruptions linked to unmanaged anxiety or distress.

Impact on systems and sustainability: At a systems level, the framework has created a sustainable model of SEMH support. Footfall to Student Support has reduced to manageable levels, with students increasingly supported at Levels 1 and 2 rather than default escalation to specialist services. The introduction of clear review cycles and placement panels has ensured accountability, oversight and responsiveness. Governance reporting demonstrates improved strategic oversight of student mental health and wellbeing, with regular data updates evidencing trends, impact and areas for refinement. Parental engagement has improved, with feedback reflecting greater understanding of the school’s approach to anxiety, attendance and support. This has reduced conflict, strengthened trust and improved alignment between home and school. Overall, the impact of this work is evidenced not only in improved data and reduced crisis demand, but in a cultural shift. Students are more resilient and informed, staff are more confident and consistent, and wellbeing is embedded as a shared responsibility that supports — rather than competes with — learning.

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- **Project Title:** Accessible 11+ Entrance Test Content
  - **School:** Reading School
  - **Project Lead:** Greg Fairchild
  - **Contact Email:** gfairchild@reading-school.co.uk
  - **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Local bright children were not attending our Open Day nor registering for the entrance test, as they were put off by the reputation and reality of the test content. Those that did were struggling to gain admission because of an uneven playing field regarding knowledge and understanding of the test content, created by tutoring. Furthermore, the School faced accessibility issues regarding access arrangements that our test provider were unable to provide.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):** I sought input from primary school leaders, peers in other grammar school admissions roles and academics researching assessments. This, along with internal data analysis and understanding of grammar school admissions legislation, helped identify the problematic sections of our previous tests as well as propose potential new areas of test development. Working closely with external experts including the RNIB and British Dyslexia Foundation, I have both shaped the design of innovative English/Maths content and written hundreds of test questions across a range of the wider Key Stage 2 foundation curriculum, a novel approach unseen elsewhere. I have also taken inspiration from the presence of creativity in the PISA assessments to put together a suite of 'creativity' assessment prompts, in order to assess as holistic. I have trialled this content widely and iteratively in numerous primary school and secondary school contexts, across a range of demographics and contexts. I have written extensive rationale for policy change, proactively sought honest feedback from primary school teachers and parents during policy consultation (as opposed to hoping it goes through unchallenged) and purposefully got teaching staff involved with the creativity judging in order that they see 'behind the curtain' of the process by which the School selects the students they will teach next year. I have been bold in moving the entrance test to July this year, managing the logistical challenges that this involves in order to satisfy the intent that the Summer break does not create a further stretch between those with and without access to tutoring or study.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The removal of Non-Verbal Reasoning and ability to explicitly state that only content covered in the Key Stage 2 curriculum up to the end of Year 5 will be assessed is a key publicity tool that revolutionises the

messaging around interest in and access to grammar schools. Setting the entrance test myself and having data from multiple contexts enables swift reactive and proactive amendments to the test, something that is otherwise unheard of with other test providers. It can be tailored to the School's changing priorities. In its first year, the introduction of KS2 foundation curriculum subjects substantially reduced the disadvantage gap seen in other subjects. My innovative entrance test content is now being adopted by likeminded grammar schools across the country, who share a vision that grammar school admissions can work harder to re-set the advantage gained by tutoring.

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- **Project Title:** Preferential Option for Disadvantaged Students
  - **School:** St Ambrose College
  - **Project Lead:** Dermot Rainey
  - **Contact Email:** principal@st-ambrosecollege.org.uk
  - **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Disadvantaged students (PP/SEND) & pupils from areas of high deprivation based on post code analysis. With the latter, there was also some overlap with analysis of ethnic codes and with a more diverse student body than ever, we wanted to ensure that all students felt welcome and could be themselves here, regardless of background.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

Having read through the nomination, a lot has been covered already. As a Catholic school, 'preferential option for the poor' is a key element of Catholic Social Teaching. We have amended that to have a general goal of giving preferential option for disadvantaged students, conscious of loose stereotyping amongst other factors. The founder of the school, Blessed Edmund Rice continues to impact on our vision and aims. Edmund was wealthy but was focused on providing opportunities for those on the margins, advocating for equality, not least by providing education for those who were denied at as a result of the Penal Laws. Edmund's story helped reshape our Mission Statement back in 2018. That particular INSET day was key in refocusing the aims of the school. We feel that, 8 years later, the discussions on that day have come to fruition. The outcomes for pupil premium have been outstanding and on many occasions surpassed non-PP in recent years. SEND/PP are focused on at the start of every progress/intervention meeting - they are always given priority. Indeed, much of the new OFSTED framework is what we've been doing for a few years and this will be recognised in the report when it is published. When I started at the school in 2017, approximately 3% of our intake were of black heritage. It is now 30% with numerous students travelling 10+ miles across 2 or 3 forms of public transport from the far side of Manchester to attend St Ambrose College. We have been awarded the designation of being an 'Anti-Racist School' through Leeds Beckett, with part of this work being disturbed as staff by David Hermitt who led INSET for us. The unconscious bias training as part of CAGS/TAGS was also important. We've learned a lot about code-switching and racial profiling. We lack black member of staff so use the 6th Form Leadership team to help guide us in areas where we lack the knowledge and experience. We have also achieved Silver status for the Equalities Award, again needing to meet challenging criteria. Across the school, there are programmes such as STEM SMART allowing disadvantaged KS5 STEM students access to further guidance opportunities through Cambridge

University. Almost all of those students (approx 15 over the past 2 years) live in post code areas of high deprivation. Our record of success via The Sutton Trust is also exceptional. At least 1 more offer this year (black African heritage and living in Collyhurst, North Manchester) with year on year success over the past 5 or 6 years. Analysis of disadvantaged students going off to Russell Group universities is also impressive. The boys themselves are proud to be 'Ambrosian' (published inspection reports acknowledge this) - that really means something. They know the Edmund story and values. They helped write an original play called Real People outlining the real stories of asylum seekers. The students, over time, have worked with the community at SERV in Salford where the Christians Brothers assist asylum seekers as part of that community. It was the inspiration for Real People. As mentioned in the nomination, writing to Andy Burnham without being prompted and Mr Burnham subsequently attending to hear about the boys' advocacy on homelessness is another clear example of 'looking out the window to those on the margins' and being stirred to act. Our students will go on immersion to Sierra Leone yet again in February half-term. Over a dozen will spend time visiting and working with our sister school, St Ambrose Academy in Freetown. The outcomes at GCSE for disadvantaged students rank amongst the highest nationally but it is comments such as "levelling up in action" (Good Schools Guide) which help us realise that our vision is evident from the views of those beyond our community. Perhaps a highlight of the school year is our Inclusivity week in June/July. This often involves disadvantaged students sharing their experiences with other students in a packed out lecture theatre. Students have presented on their individual situations, some relating to SEND and sexuality.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The impact is that we have a highly inclusive community where all pupils feel they belong. We use The Engagement Platform (TEP) for our student surveys and have achieved the 'top 10%' badge (highest available) for pupil inclusion, pupil enjoyment, pupil recommendation and pupil effort. TEP also used us as a case study in the last academic year due to our high scores in particular area. The scores are way above the national average/ benchmark scores throughout (case studies can be provided but one focuses on 'how Catholic Social Teaching and the school's charism inspires students to make a positive impact in the modern world'). The report provided by TEP shows PP/SEND scores with our PP 'headline engagement' score being a full 2 points on a scale of 10 above the national benchmark (non-PP were 1.5. above). SEN students were even higher compared to national with students on an EHCP a full 2.5 above national with non-SEND coming in at 2.3 above. Therefore, our 'preferential option' approach is allowing disadvantaged to feel more engaged and being advocates of the school more than non-disadvantaged. The OFSTED ParentView also provides significant evidence e.g. just 1% responded disagree to the question about their child being happy at school, nobody put agree or disagree for their child being safe at school and 98% would recommend Saint Ambrose to another parent - way higher than the average for those questions if not amongst the highest to be found nationally. Outcomes in exams speak for themselves e.g. A8 score of 74.54 for pupil premium students in 2025 and nothing below 70 since 2019. The progress 8 score for PP has been higher than non-PP for most of the past 7 years. In 2024, the last time a P8 score was issued, PP score was +1.21. This year the A8 score for SEND was 73.83. More generally, there isn't a Catholic school nationally where boys attain higher at GCSE than they do at St Ambrose. Although we only had 3 SEN students in Y13 last year, their average points score was a superb 55.94 (compared to 43.56 for non-SEND) including 1 student taking up a place at Oxford. The outcomes

for black students was mentioned in the nomination. Since the TAGS/CAGS training on unconscious bias, we analyse progress and data by ethnic groups as well. With a growing number of students from various black heritage backgrounds and indeed increasing diversity generally, this is crucial. There is no gap at A level and at GCSE, the A8 score for students of Black African heritage (8 boys) was 80.63, for the 15 'Black Other' it was 77.6. Assembly themes and focusing on calendarised Black History Month also increase the awareness and create a sense of belonging. The culture and ethos creates an environment where the boys are given permission to be themselves, to believe they can be all they can be and to stand in front of their peers and share their challenges and journeys without fear of judgement or ridicule.

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- **Project Title:** Aylesbury Grammar School Flagship Research Programme and Journal
  - **School:** Aylesbury Grammar School
  - **Project Lead:** Katrina Blunt
  - **Contact Email:** kblunt@ags.bucks.sch.uk
  - **Category:** Teaching, learning and curriculum development

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** For seven years, our pioneering Flagship Research Programme has enabled Aylesbury Grammar School to develop a platform for evidence-informed practice. This is linked to our overall strategic school vision to strive to become international leaders in academic and pastoral development, and to provide an education for all our students that is unparalleled. These two strategic strands are directly linked to the impact of research at Aylesbury Grammar School. The Flagship Research Programme brings together enthusiastic, like-minded professionals with the aim of improving professional practice by engaging with research and sharing it with others through an annual Staff Forum and our in-house journal, Flagship. It has led to benefits individually for staff and it has facilitated whole school development. There are challenges for schools and teachers in implementing proven approaches from academic research, including the ability to access research, understand and trust the research, and formulate an actionable plan from the research. Also, context plays a key part in how successful a new approach or initiative is within a particular school. The Flagship Research Programme has enabled staff and students to engage with educational research within our school context through conducting research projects (at classroom-, department- and school-level, as well as pioneering research on emerging trends) over the past 7 years (students over the past 3 years). It has provided innovative CPD for staff through conducting research projects and attending evidence-informed CPD sessions, and enabled staff and students to develop their research literacy. This has all contributed to the development of a culture of research within our school.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

I lead the Flagship Research Programme each year and invite all staff to participate. This is in its eighth year now, with over 40 previous projects having been conducted over the past seven years, and seven more projects being undertaken in the academic year 2025/26. Every year, staff researchers present their research projects to the rest of the staff body at our annual Staff Research Forum in June and they also write up their research for our in-house journal, Flagship. This publication is circulated both online via the School website (Flagship), and via physical copies to key stakeholders. I am responsible for all aspects of this from training researchers, supervising the projects, managing ethics, coordinating research methodology and ultimately collating the professional journal. Recruitment for the Research Programme is mainly following the research forum when staff see their colleagues present, and then put themselves

forward to conduct research the following year. This year has also seen the launch of a bursary scheme which I designed to recognise the research work that our staff do, demonstrate the importance that we place on research as a school and enable us to increase the accountability for impact of the research projects. To communicate the research opportunity to staff, and also to gain their ongoing support for data collection for projects each year, I have spoken at INSET, Head of Department meetings and staff briefings. Over the past few years, I have also developed our collaboration with external parties. This has included supporting schools who have approached us for guidance when introducing and embedding research in their schools, and ensuring that our research is shared externally. We are active members of a number of external networks including Challenge Partners, the International Boys Schools' Coalition (IBSC), Association for Character Education (ACE). I also act as the mentor for our international researchers as part of the IBSC action research programme, ensuring that the culture of research is strengthened whilst those new to research feel fully supported.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** I recognise the importance of monitoring the impact that our research projects have within AGS and beyond. This ranges from insightful CPD for individual teachers, to department and whole-school level projects. Some highlights over the years from the research programme include: a two-year positive masculinity project culminating in a Y8 Personal Development Programme, supporting other schools nationally and internationally in this challenging area and conference presentations and workshops; a research project examining how to create an anti-racist environment resulting in the introduction of the Student Committee for Change, Diversity Week and Celebration and Awareness Days; a two year literacy project leading to the appointment of a Literacy Lead, Department Literacy Champions, whole year group reading books as part of Personal Development, whole staff reading books and forums, as well as an oracy month entitled AGS Speaks Up; and a project researching teenage device use and its impact on wellbeing and learning, which has led to a follow-up project this year, designing and measuring the efficacy of a 6-8 session Personal Development Programme for Year 7s, and which also led to the researchers presenting their work at a national summit in London in Sept 2025. The overall impact of the Flagship Research Programme is far-reaching and goes beyond the programme itself. It has been instrumental in developing a culture of research at AGS which was also recognised by the Chartered College of Teaching as AGS was awarded the Research Mark Plus in May 2025.

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- **Project Title:** Closing the Gap
  - **School:** Lawrence Sheriff School
  - **Project Lead:** Becca Wall
  - **Contact Email:** becca.wall@lawrencesherrifschool.com
  - **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Student needs: to overcome the barriers to education that students in receipt of FSM and Pupil Premium have experienced and continue to experience and ensure that they i) gain access to selective education and ii) make the same level of progress as peers.

Staff needs: to make information as easily accessible as possible, to upskill all staff to have a range of tools available to them, to enable more effective tracking and monitoring of progress.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

**Outreach work** Aim - to encourage more PP families to register for the 11+ and increase the number of PP children who achieve a place at LSS. Aim: to break down barriers to access selective school education.

- Headteacher asked to attend all primary school consortium groups across Warwickshire to explain our vision, the work we are doing and seek help from primary school Headteachers.
- Banner at the front of school to highlight admissions policy and support on offer.
- Admission lower entry requirements for those eligible for FSM.
- Saturday information day.
- Flyers sent to all primary schools in catchment area (~100 schools).
- UPS teachers work on project to provide activities in school which will aid in getting all students secondary ready but also help with 11+ familiarisation i.e. science, maths and literacy activities.

- Sixth form students volunteer in local schools.
- Atom Learning information on website and sent out to all primary schools within catchment area (~100 schools).
- PP admissions and achievements highlighted and celebrated at all open evenings.
- Accessible website information guiding parents through the 11+ application process.
- 11+ revision materials available for parents through the website or in printed packs.

**Transition work** Aim - to ensure PP young people have a sense of belonging and are ready to learn from day 1.

- PP Champion makes contact once offers made.
- Discusses enhanced transition needs.
- Informs families of support available.
- Uniform and equipment provided.

**Start of Year 7** Aim - to identify issues earlier and foster a sense of belonging.

- GL reading assessment carried out to inform interventions.
- Student check-ins.
- Family check-ins.

**Heads of Year 7-13** Aim - to effectively track and monitor impact and personalise interventions.

- Given allowance for biannual meetings to track enrichment, trips, activities, progress, wider participation.

- Parents/Carers, contacted by HOY to complete biannual pupil review questionnaire with their son/daughter, to encourage participation, with HOY feedback post student meeting. Building a home school dialogue.
- Liaise with Asst Head Inclusion for actions e.g. priority in enrichment activity, support with travel, subject intervention etc.
- Summit meetings for impact to be assessed so graduation approach.

**Staff information** Aim - to reduce staff workload and increase impact of communication.

- Inclusion SharePoint one-stop shop for all information.
- PP highlighted in SIMS and Edulink for registers and on seating plans.
- Data analysis breaks down each subject. Year group, class for further analysis.

**Staff responsibility** Aim – to create a culture where progress is everyone’s responsibility and staff take ownership of interventions and impact.

- Twice a year ALL teaching staff document the interventions used and impact.
- Department meeting standing agenda.
- All QA paperwork tracks micro cohorts.
- Every PP student automatically gets textbook, revision guide, flashcards, revision materials, etc.
- Encourage participation rather than wait for interest e.g. fully funded music tuition, sports teams, DofE.
- All staff involved such that new catering contracts include enhanced provision for FSM such as meal deals.
- All staff involved such that kitchen staff will highlight PP students who are regularly not accessing FSM, underspending or overspending. This allows follow dialogue so that changes in circumstance can be identified and supported.

**Trustees Aim** – to ensure ownership and responsibility at all levels of the trust and to create a culture of inclusion.

- Agenda item on every Pastoral Committee.
- PP statement analysis.
- Provide additional financial support e.g. disadvantaged funding in sixth form not bursary for wider activities and additional income to support Y7-11.

**SLT Aim** – to ensure ownership and accountability at all levels within the school and to ensure a culture of inclusion.

- Culture of everyone's responsibility by prioritising in staff meetings.
- Track wider participation across all activities – summit meetings, pupil voice, collate sports, music, trips and activities.
- Intervene as needed with personalised support e.g. bicycle spring/summer vs bus pass in autumn/winter; sports teams outside of school, additional food vouchers for holidays.
- Personalised approach very much built on relationships and belonging.

**Parent/Carers Aim** - to create a culture of open dialogue key to building relationships enabling parents to seek help.

- Parents' Forum carried out to consult with parents about all aspects of provision and how it can be improved.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** Impact of outreach Increase from 3-4 % pp to consistently ~10%.

Impact on participation All disadvantaged students who wish to take part in music lessons are supported; this means that a greater proportion of disadvantaged students (25.9%) take part in music lessons than the whole school (19.8%). Students are actively encouraged and we do not leave it for them to ask. Staff in the Music Department approach students and suggest they benefit from this support. All Year 7 disadvantaged students were supported to take part in the residential activity weekend. Any student wanting to take part in a school trip or activity was supported (again this support is promoted rather than simply being available). Participation is on the agenda for the termly meetings with the Head of Year so that we can proactively identify opportunities. The proportion of the students across the whole school attending residential or whole school day trips was 46.5% and the proportion of disadvantaged students taking part was higher at 46.8%.

Impact on attendance The data shows that the attendance gap within school is 2% (96% for school and 94% for PP) and that this is significantly below the national gap of 7.1%. It is pleasing to see that this gap has narrowed for the second consecutive year; however, there is still a gap, and we will continue to proactively work to reduce this further. In addition, the gap within school is significantly smaller than national data: in 2024-25 our overall school data was +4.0 and it was +7.7 for PP students compared to national data. This suggests that the tracking and support is having an exceptional impact on school attendance.

Impact on outcomes Prior to this 'outreach to GCSE' process there was a significant gap in GCSE attainment. Data showed an average attainment 8 gap of  $-1.6$  and an average progress 8 gap of  $-1.2$ . The GCSE cohorts of 23-24 and 24-25 were the first two cohorts to pass through the school with the entire programme from transition through to GCSE. 2023-24 cohort showed exceptional attainment and progress data showing that the gap has not only closed but is now positive. This is remarkable given that these students enter the school with up to 20 marks below the AQS. Attainment 8 for whole school 7.6 and for PP 7.5 and Progress 8 for whole school was 0.89 and for PP 1.15. Although there is no Progress data for the 2024-25, cohort data suggest that it would have been even more positive as the attainment for the whole school was 7.5 and for PP it was higher at 7.69. As these students entered the school with a lower average qualifying score their progress would have been even higher, we estimate it to be 1.25.

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- **Project Title:** Tackling misogyny through the curriculum and beyond
  - **School:** St. Ambrose College
  - **Project Lead:** Sarah McManus
  - **Contact Email:** [misssmcmanus@st-ambrosecollege.org.uk](mailto:misssmcmanus@st-ambrosecollege.org.uk)
  - **Category:** Teaching, learning and curriculum development

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** The work was developed within the context of SAC as an 11–18 all-boys secondary school, where both national and internal evidence highlighted a pressing need to address sexism and misogyny in a more strategic and sustained way. Nationally, the 2017 OFSTED review into sexual harassment in schools identified significant concerns across secondary education, particularly around the normalisation of sexist language and harmful gender stereotypes. This national backdrop prompted us to reflect critically on our own context and practice. The ethos of SAC is focused on ‘concern for the whole person’, rooted in the Eight Essentials of Edmund Rice- the founder of the school. We were not motivated simply on reducing behaviour incidents in school, but wanted to ensure that students were going to be compassionate and active allies in the wider community. Within school, although individual incidents involving misogynistic behaviour had been addressed promptly, this response was largely reactive and case-by-case. There was not a cohesive, long-term, whole-school strategy to challenge underlying attitudes which meant staff responses were inconsistent and dependent on individual confidence levels. With the support of Senior Leaders who were invested and involved from the beginning, I developed a staff survey. Colleagues reported witnessing sexism from both students and, at times, staff. 41 % had personally experienced sexist attitude from students. Some staff stated this was on a weekly basis. 74 % of staff stated that gender stereotyping happens, with 48 % stating they had heard sexist language being used by staff. Importantly, many staff expressed a lack of confidence in recognising more subtle or “everyday” forms of sexism, and were unsure how best to challenge them effectively. There was also a clear concern that our behaviour policy did not explicitly or robustly address sexist language or conduct. A large proportion of students reported hearing sexist or misogynistic remarks in school. While most of these comments were attributed to peers, some students cited examples of gendered language used by staff, such as “man up”, indicating that problematic norms were being reinforced. This reflected the national findings from OFSTED, highlighting this as an issues in schools across the country. Wider research showed that there are clear links between students who display misogynist behaviour and poor mental health, highlighting the need to tackle the root causes of the behaviour and support students in processing their emotions and feelings. As such, it was critical that there was the infrastructure in place to support students when tackling this issue. It became clear that working closely with pastoral staff, sixth form mental health ambassadors, and undertaking mental health first aid training for wider staff was crucial. Collectively, this evidence revealed several interconnected needs:

- A clear, shared understanding across staff and students of what constitutes sexism and misogyny
- Increased staff confidence and consistency in identifying and challenging inappropriate language and behaviour.
- A behaviour policy that explicitly addressed sexism and misogyny
- A proactive, preventative curriculum approach that enabled boys to critically explore gender norms, relationships, respect and equality.
- A whole-school culture shift to ensure long-term impact.

Crucially, PSHE/RSE had been identified as an area for improvement in a previous Ofsted report. Concerns had been raised about the lack of a robust PSHE offering and the way it had previously been delivered. There was low effort from pupils in the PSHE lessons being delivered and staff lacked confidence in delivering more challenging topics such as sex and relationships. There was a clear opportunity to redesign the curriculum to ensure students developed the knowledge, skills and values needed to engage respectfully with others and to leave school confident and emotionally literate.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

The first step was to adapt the behaviour policy. Sexism became its own category, allowing staff and pupils to understand how incidents would be dealt with. I undertook a Farmington research project focusing on tackling misogyny in schools. This involved research, networking with other schools, observing good practice, and presenting the research at Oxford University. Through the research, I developed- The Emotional Literacy Mentoring programme. Male staff volunteers were trained to mentor targeted students, modelling reflective, emotionally literate masculinity. Staff ranged from the deputy head, to P.E staff, to science teachers. I designed and delivered training and produced a structured booklet to guide sessions. Departments were supported in reflecting on how gender stereotypes could be explored within their own subjects. For example, analysing the presentation of male and female characters in literature. To build 'cultural capital', departments reflected on careers in their subjects and how these might link to stereotypes, and to also consider speakers that would widen students perspectives. Engagement with parents and carers. This is something planned for this year, inviting parents and carers to attend an information evening to share the rationale behind our strategy and approach. Research was also delivered to governors to ensure shared understanding and support I designed a comprehensive programme for PSHE. The curriculum addressed root causes of misogyny through lessons such as:

- Healthy relationships and consent

- Pornography
- Incel culture
- Managing mental health and wellbeing

Schemes of work mapped how each unit addressed sexism and misogyny. These included assessment guidance, lesson resources and worksheets. Speakers were arranged to ensure variety and expertise. These included targeted sessions, such as consent with Year 9 and pornography with Year 10. To ensure sustainability, it was crucial that all staff were engaged and that pupils felt empowered to lead. This involved:

- Providing CPD to PSHE staff to facilitate challenging discussions focusing on how to create respectful ground rules, managing language, and safeguarding their own wellbeing.
- Delivering training to Early Career Teachers to build confidence in recognising and addressing sexism
- Delivering training at Manchester Metropolitan University to trainee teachers on teaching PSHE and navigating challenging RSE content.

Through Bright Futures CPD, I shared the strategies with schools across the North West, extending impact beyond our context. I shared my findings with other PSHE/RSE leads in the Diocese. For form time, I created a range of form-time oracy tasks focused on emotional literacy. Examples include discussions around emotional literacy- working through scenarios where highly charged emotions are likely and discussing possible root causes and responses. The best asset of our school are the pupils. It was essential that they led on this work as much as possible. I worked closely with Equality Ambassadors to reflect on how they could integrate strategies into their own role. Students are also involved with assemblies, with Sixth Form students leading on issues such as White Ribbon Day and challenging homophobia. One Year 13 pupil spoke about what being an ally meant to him and practical steps his peers could take in protecting women. He delivered this to all year groups. I have also supported staff to set up an ongoing workshop with the local all-girls secondary school. Other staff are now leading on visits where both KS3 and Sixth Form students meet with their female counterparts and discuss misogyny. Students talk about their concerns and experiences, how to be good allies, and then feedback on their experiences to their year group. I am also collaborating with TEP, helping to support other schools in placing a more consistent focus on equality.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The work undertaken has begun to shift attitudes and behaviours, whilst also extending to curriculum design and classroom dialogue. Staff voice demonstrates a significant increase in confidence when addressing

sexism and misogyny. Colleagues report that they now feel equipped to recognise both overt and 'subtle' forms of sexism, and understand clearly how these link to the revised behaviour policy, which now includes explicit sanctions for misogynistic language and conduct. This clarity has led to greater consistency in classroom practice and corridor interactions. The Emotional Literacy Mentoring Programme ran for a full academic year. Staff involved reported observable progress in most targeted students, particularly in their ability to articulate emotions and reflect on behaviour. Almost all staff stated they would be happy to participate in the programme again and that it allowed them to foster positive and meaningful relationships with students. Since the students included in the programme had been nominated by heads of year, it allowed pupils to have targeted intervention. It also allowed pastoral leads to learn more about the root causes of negative behaviour, and better understand students emotional and social needs. The quality of curriculum planning has also been strengthened. For example, at Key Stage 3 in Drama, lessons now explicitly explore gender stereotypes in characterisation. Similarly, in R.E., students undertake enquiry-based projects such as "What if women were absent from the Bible?", requiring research, theological reflection and critical thinking. Parents have contacted the school to report that students have presented their findings within their own churches, demonstrating both intellectual engagement and transfer of learning beyond the classroom. The Diocesan inspection recognised the redesigned PSHE/RSE curriculum as "the best schemes of work" the inspector had seen, particularly noting how effectively they supported staff delivery. The inspector described the programme as transformational in enabling pupils to tackle current issues. The most recent Ofsted inspection judged the PSHE programme as exceptional, awarding it the highest possible grading under the new framework as part of Personal Development. Inspectors highlighted that students were well-rounded, articulate and reflective. Student voice during Ofsted reflected that male role models within the school openly shared their experiences and emotions, enabling pupils to do the same. There has been a substantial reduction in recorded sexist and misogynistic behavioural incidents. While behaviour data alone does not evidence cultural transformation, when viewed alongside student voice, curriculum engagement and staff confidence, it indicates meaningful change that we will continue to build on. Sixth Form students now actively lead assemblies for initiatives such as White Ribbon Day, reflecting critically on masculinity and responsibility. Male staff also lead assemblies for International Women's Day, modelling allyship and reinforcing consistent messaging. Curriculum choices at Key Stage 5 also reflect impact. During A-Level option interviews, staff now explicitly challenge stereotypes — for example, the assumption that academically strong male students "should" choose STEM. The careers programme has similarly evolved. Students analyse and encounter career pathways in PSHE that challenge traditional stereotypes, including women in trades and male primary school teachers. Careers events highlight this with external speakers and visitors offering a broad range of expertise that go beyond the stereotypes of men in the workplace. Creative expression has also reflected impact. A school production written and performed by pupils last month explored male loneliness, mental health, self-esteem and societal expectations around emotional suppression and success. The production was written and performed by pupils ranging from Year 7 all the way to Year 13. Students wrote their own monologues, demonstrating vulnerable and deep emotional maturity. It encouraged pupils to be self-reflective, and challenged the stereotype that boys do not show emotions or vulnerability. It was an inspiring display of the talents of pupils but also their maturity in understanding the previous stereotypes and barriers young men faced. Workshops with a local all-girls school now take place annually at Key Stage 3 and Sixth Form level. These sessions allow female students at our local all-girls secondary school to share lived experiences directly with male

peers. The workshops have allowed students to better understand the issues young women face. Students returned to school and presented reflections to their peers, sharing the key messages and strategies. Student voice noted how much they had learned and how valuable it was, noting that it changed their perspective. All pupils were keen to continue being involved and so many other students in the year group wanted to be involved that we had to create a carousel of students with a waiting list. We are currently working on a strategy for more pupils to be involved in the future. Beyond the school, at least six schools across the North West have implemented measures following CPD delivery, including Emotional Literacy Mentoring programmes, PSHE curriculum redesign and cross-curricular approaches to challenging stereotypes. This was as a result of sharing the research and findings with local PSHE leads, senior leadership teams, and ECT's. This is incredibly heartening and shows that strategies to tackle misogyny and sexism through the curriculum and beyond is being undertaken by many schools around the country. Most importantly, it has reframed the issue of misogyny not simply as a behavioural concern, but as a teaching and learning priority. By addressing root causes through curriculum, mentoring and cultural leadership, the work has created sustained impact on both academic engagement and personal development — ensuring that students leave school not only successful in examinations, but equipped to contribute positively and respectfully to the wider world.

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- **Project Title:** Leaders of Tomorrow, Disadvantaged Students
  - **School:** Chelmsford County High School for Girls
  - **Project Lead:** Clair Maslin
  - **Contact Email:** cmaslin@cchs.co.uk
  - **Category:** Supporting the progress of disadvantaged students and aiding social mobility

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** Recognising that talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds were under-represented and often faced barriers to accessing and thriving in our school, we set out to change both the narrative and the systems that shaped opportunity. Our aim was simple: to ensure that a child's social background would never determine their ability to benefit from the education our school provides.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

As a team, we led the development of the Leaders of Tomorrow Programme, a strategic initiative designed to widen access, raise aspiration and support long-term success for students from disadvantaged communities. A key strand of this work involved strengthening partnerships with local primary schools serving areas of high deprivation. Through outreach sessions, enrichment activities and information events for pupils and families, we worked to raise aspirations, demystify the admissions process and break down perceived barriers to applying. Alongside this, we reviewed our admissions procedures and introduced a new entrance assessment designed to better recognise potential and reduce disadvantage for pupils who may not have had access to extensive preparation or tutoring. Our commitment to social mobility continues well beyond admission. In the Sixth Form, we recognised that traditional national indicators of disadvantage were not capturing the full picture. Students were sometimes only being identified as disadvantaged when universities made contextual offers. In response, we developed a bespoke disadvantage matrix, combining a range of indicators to give each student a simple disadvantage score. Alongside traditional measures such as FSM, the 16–19 bursary and previous Pupil Premium eligibility, the matrix also considers postcode deprivation, pastoral circumstances such as young carers, and students' prior educational experiences. This approach enables staff to track progress more effectively and implement timely interventions, ensuring students receive the right support to thrive academically and progress to aspirational universities or apprenticeships. Communication has been central to the programme's success. Internally, we worked to build understanding and commitment among staff by sharing research, data and student experiences, helping colleagues recognise the barriers faced by disadvantaged students and the role we all play in addressing them. Externally, we prioritised clear, sustained communication with partner schools, pupils and families through workshops, outreach activities and regular engagement with primary leaders. Through the Leaders of Tomorrow Programme

we are helping to reshape expectations within our school and community, ensuring that talented local children—regardless of background—are able not only to access our school but also to thrive and succeed within it.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The Leaders of Tomorrow Programme has had a clear and measurable impact on both student access and the wider culture of our school. Over the past three years we have seen a significant increase in the number of disadvantaged students successfully gaining admission to the school. Previously, the school would typically admit only five or six students from disadvantaged backgrounds in each cohort. Through the work of the programme this has increased substantially, with numbers now consistently in the teens and reaching 18 students in the most recent admissions cycle. This reflects both the removal of structural barriers within the admissions process and increased confidence from local families that our school is accessible and supportive. Our outreach work has also had a strong impact within the local community. Last year alone we visited 11 local primary schools serving areas of higher deprivation, working with over 300 pupils through enrichment sessions designed to raise aspirations and introduce them to the opportunities available at our school. The relationships we have built with these schools are now well established, and we are welcomed back each year with enthusiasm from both staff and pupils. This reflects the trust that has been developed and the positive reputation the programme has built within the community. Within the school, the initiative has also influenced staff awareness and practice. Through ongoing communication and collaboration, colleagues are increasingly engaged with the school's commitment to social mobility and more confident in identifying and supporting disadvantaged students. The introduction of the Sixth Form disadvantage matrix has further strengthened this work, providing staff with a clearer and more holistic understanding of student circumstances and enabling earlier, more targeted interventions where needed. Together, these developments represent not only improved access for disadvantaged students, but also a broader cultural shift within the school towards a more inclusive and proactive approach to supporting social mobility.

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- **Project Title:** Embedding an instructional coaching culture to grow teacher expertise and secure positive outcomes for all students through our bespoke master coaching programme.
  - **School:** Ilford County High School
  - **Project Lead:** Fazila Hakim
  - **Contact Email:** fhakim@ichs.org.uk
  - **Category:** Teaching, learning and curriculum development

**Please describe the student/staff needs your work aimed to address:** My work addresses the need for a more personalised, supportive, and empowering professional development experience for staff, ensuring that every teacher, regardless of experience, feels equipped and motivated to improve their practice so they can enrich the learning for our students. At ICHS our teachers needed access to expert, granular, high frequency feedback that helps them understand where they currently are, identify what is holding them back, and recognise the specific, actionable steps required to move forward. By leading a strategically designed instructional coaching model, our teachers are empowered with high-quality exemplars, purposeful rehearsal, and sustained professional feedback. These systematic structures are central to building the desired collective efficacy, ensuring that continuous improvement becomes a core driver of our school's improvement vision. Whilst my leadership on professional development in previous years developed a strong culture of professional learning, evidenced by a shared pedagogical language, high levels of staff motivation and visible pockets of excellent practice, the need for an evolution grounded in personalisation to produce sustained improvements and growth was apparent. My current leadership in improving teaching and learning through instructional coaching sees teacher development as more personalised where the coaching structure breaks improvement into manageable, bitesize steps and supports our teachers in making meaningful, sustained changes in the classroom. Teachers now have development that is more personalised and practice embedded through deconstructing models and purposeful rehearsal. My leadership aims to ensure that the needs of all our students are met and sustained. That the correct conditions and learning environment is created so that students think and participate more, leading to deeper learning and stronger understanding. Through growing teacher expertise our students feel a sense of belonging as they are exposed to an embedded learning environment which is equitable, responsive and adaptive. Students feel they matter as they are exposed to an environment where they are valued and add value through quality teaching. Ultimately, my implementation addresses the need for a developmental culture where growth is purposeful, energising, and collective, where teachers are supported to become the very best version of themselves, and where continuous improvement leads to sustained transformational experiences for both staff and students.

**Please describe the work you undertook to meet these needs and undertake educational change. Please also make reference to your communications strategy (i.e. how you brought people with you?):**

Teacher feedback and lesson data indicated the need to update the then current professional development programme. The data revealed a variation in the quality of teaching across and within departments. There was also evidence of lethal mutations and common errors in the teaching strategies shared through the programme. Teachers expressed a desire for a more individualised professional development programme tailored to their context, classes and subject. This led to the decision to adopt instructional coaching as our school's professional development model. Drawing on research on implementation and improvement science, I developed both a rationale and an implementation plan using James Mannion's making change stick model to implement our bespoke master coaching programme. See infographic created for this below. James Mannion – Making Change Stick.

At the heart of this plan was a commitment not to introduce instructional coaching as just another passing initiative, but to invest in building the right environment and culture that would embed coaching into the very fabric of our schools DNA. My aim was for staff to see it as a collaborative process, one they were part of from the very beginning, rather than something imposed upon them. It became a journey they could join from conception to launch. This approach helped foster a sense of belonging and motivation among everyone involved. I invited all teachers to apply for a place on the master coaching programme as a trainee coach. Application was via a statement of interest. There were no conditions to who could apply as long as they showed a desire and motivation to improve teacher expertise so we could influence the best outcomes for our students. 16 teachers were chosen to become coaches and represented a cross section of our teaching staff and different experience levels. Following an exploration of various instructional coaching models, we selected Jim Knight's evidence informed The Impact Cycle as our framework. This choice was intentional and rooted in the strengths of the framework. First, the Impact Cycle is built on partnership principles, such as equality, choice, dialogue, and voice, which position teachers not as recipients of advice but as empowered collaborators. This is essential because sustainable professional growth occurs when teachers feel ownership of the process rather than compliance with it. For example, the principle of equality positions teachers as co-learners, choice allows teachers to select the goals and strategies most relevant to their context, dialogue promotes open two-way conversations, and praxis encourages teachers to apply learning directly to their classrooms. These principles respect teachers as skilled professionals and create the trust needed for meaningful change. To support this educational change, I deliberately created the conditions Daniel Pink identifies as essential for genuine motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Pink's work shows that when people are supported with autonomy and meaningful choice, their engagement and creativity increase, particularly in cognitively demanding tasks such as teaching, where traditional reward-and-compliance systems undermine performance rather than enhance it. I therefore structured the coaching process so that teachers had genuine autonomy, selecting their own goals, and deciding which aspects of their practice they wanted to develop, ensuring the work felt personally meaningful rather than imposed. This chosen approach aligned improvement efforts with teachers' professional aspirations, which in turn strengthened their sense of purpose and commitment to the process. By focusing coaching conversations on incremental, classroom-embedded refinements, I supported teachers in building mastery over time and recognising their growing impact on pupils. Together, Knight's partnership principles and Pink's motivational drivers create a coaching culture that is not only developmental but energising: one where our teachers feel empowered, invested, and motivated to

improve because the process honours their professionalism, supports their growth, and connects their efforts to meaningful impact. The use of The Impact Cycle positions our teachers as skilled professionals whose expertise and context drive meaningful improvement. By prioritising respect and partnership, the Impact Cycle replaces top-down coaching with a relationship built on trust, reflection, and shared decision-making. This foundation strengthens the Identify, Learn, Improve structure, ensuring development remains relevant and aligned with teachers' own goals. Crucially, the Impact Cycle keeps student learning at the center. Each stage prompts teachers to consider how instructional decisions affect pupils' progress, engagement, and wellbeing. This focus grounds coaching in real classroom impact, ensuring that every change in practice is directly linked to improved student outcomes. Jim Knight – The Impact Cycle

I developed a year-long master coaching training programme to equip our coaches with effective instructional coaching skills. The sessions, which combined purpose, research, activities, and practice, were well-received by our trainee coaches. Each session enabled them to learn, reflect, and deepen their understanding of The Impact Cycle. The last part of the training programme was an opportunity for our trainee coaches to commit to a coaching partnership with each other giving them an opportunity to implement and put into action their training before the whole school rollout. Giving them both experience as a coach and the lived experience and appreciation as a coachee. I would QA the coaching sessions offering feedback and help the coaches make refinements. Our coaches then received fortnightly updates 'coaching bites' in their inbox to keep the fundamentals of our training programme fresh, actionable, and consistently embedded in their day to day practice. Our year long programme marked the beginning of our carefully designed three year plan. A key driver of its success was the strategic redesign of our Wednesday timetable to protect dedicated time for coaching cycles. This intentional structural change helps ensure that coaching is not seen as an add on, but as an integral part of the school day. By embedding coaching into the rhythm of the week, we aim to increase the completion rate of cycles and create the conditions for sustained teacher growth and ongoing professional development. My innovative thinking extended beyond pedagogy to the strategic integration of technology to enhance coaching and quality assurance. By embedding platforms such as Steplab and IRIS Connect, I introduced powerful video analysis tools that streamline lesson observation, reduced staff workload, and enable highly responsive, data-informed coaching conversations. I am in the process of developing our T&L instructional coaching playbook as a digital interactive platform. Building our own library and bank of videos of effective practice that can be used as context based models during the instructional coaching process. This creates a consistent, accessible, and authentic professional learning system. It gives our teachers on-demand access to high quality examples from their own classrooms, strengthens coherence across coaching, and makes sessions more efficient and targeted. By capturing and sharing context driven real practice, it builds a culture of shared expertise, supports effective onboarding, and provides a sustainable, evolving bank of best practice that enhances the impact and scalability of your teaching and learning strategy. I designed our communications strategy to include all teachers in the implementation process, not just those in the training programme. Each week, a different trainee coach presented key points from the coaching training session at the staff briefing and welcomed questions from teachers not on the training programme. All session resources were uploaded to a SharePoint folder, ensuring access for all staff members, not just those participating in the

programme. This approach fostered inclusivity and enabled the entire staff to engage with the implementation process from the very beginning.

**Please describe the impact this has had on students and staff including evidence of this:** The impact of our approach is evident in the positive outcomes achieved for our students, the strengthened sense of belonging among staff, and our recent glowing Ofsted report. The images below illustrate these successes in practice. Our influence extends beyond our own school; we are now partnering with neighbouring schools to scale our flagship instructional coaching model across the borough. This work has also attracted the attention of influential educators who have shaped my own thinking. For example, James Mannion, author of *Making Change Stick*, will be visiting our school to deliver whole-staff training on improvement and implementation science. This will ensure that the strong outcomes we have achieved through our instructional coaching model can be replicated across other whole-school priority areas. In addition, we are currently collaborating with Jim Knight to plan for an upcoming visit in which he will deliver training to our teachers to further strengthen our practice. These external partnerships highlight the credibility, reach, and growing recognition of our work, as well as the wider impact of our leadership on professional learning and school improvement.

Staff Testimonials Director of Sixth Form I am proud to support Fazila's nomination for the Grammar School Heads Association Innovation Award for her transformative leadership of the Master Coaching Programme at ICHS. She has not only introduced a research-driven approach to professional development but is creating a culture where instructional coaching is at the heart of teaching and learning or in her words 'part of our school's DNA'. Through her guidance, I feel empowered as an educator, learning from her on how to become an instructional coach for my colleagues, a skill that will have a lasting impact on our school community. Fazila's ability to combine passion, research, and purpose has inspired us all to strive for excellence. Her work will no doubt enhance classroom practice and student outcomes, and its influence will continue to shape our school for years to come. She exemplifies innovation, collaboration, and commitment to making every teacher- and with them- every student thrives.

Head of MFL Through my participation in the programme, I have significantly enhanced my expertise in curriculum development and innovative teaching strategies. This journey has enabled me to embed evidence-based practices that foster engagement, independence, and resilience among learners. These improvements have not only raised attainment but also cultivated a culture of curiosity and confidence in Modern Foreign Languages. Mrs Hakim exemplifies outstanding leadership in teaching and learning. Her commitment to curriculum innovation has transformed classroom practice, ensuring lessons are engaging, inclusive, and aligned with the highest standards. She consistently drives improvement through evidence-based strategies, mentoring colleagues, and fostering a culture of collaboration. Her ability to integrate technology and authentic resources has made learning more accessible and inspiring for students, resulting in measurable gains in attainment and confidence. Mrs Hakim's vision and dedication have had a profound impact on both staff development and student outcomes, making her an exceptional candidate for this award.

EPQ/HPQ Co-ordinator By introducing research-informed, project-based CPDL, Mrs Hakim has reshaped professional learning in ICHS into genuinely teacher-driven. Her approach allows every member of staff to select an area of practice that is meaningful to them and so ensuring that improvement is both purposeful and sustained. She has not only implemented this structure but actively celebrated the innovation and successes of colleagues, building a culture in which professional inquiry is valued, shared and recognised. Her leadership of the Master Coaching programme has further strengthened this culture. Mrs Hakim has provided staff with expert, supportive coaching for coaches that develops reflective practice and that will elevate teaching quality across the school. Mrs Hakim engages thoughtfully with colleagues at all levels ensuring that their voices are heard, and their feedback informs ongoing improvement. This is evident through her work on creating the Teaching and Learning working party that saw representatives from various departments contributing and having a say so that we create a consistent culture when it comes to teaching and learning principles we would like to see in all classrooms. This resulted in the ICHS Pedagogical Principles, also affectionately referred to as IPPs by all the staff. This commitment to developing staff, nurturing professional curiosity and embedding research-led practice has been well appreciated by staff who have used this opportunity to become better practitioners. Through her dedication, influence and unwavering belief in staff (any staff) potential, Mrs Hakim has had a significant and lasting impact on teaching and learning in ICHS and this makes her highly deserving of any award that reflects innovation in teaching. After all, Innovation is about changing those around us to do the things we do best even better and that's exactly what Mrs Hakim has done.