

An outline of model and provision

Clapton Girls' Academy is an 11-18 girls' school in Hackney with a long and successful history of providing forward thinking education for its learners.

The school identified that their post-16 offer, predominantly Level 3 academic courses, was not an appropriate progression route for all learners. So the school worked with Bel Waters the local authority consultant to develop suitable progression routes for those working below Level 2 at the end of KS4 and whom they felt were potentially at risk of not engaging in further education or training post-16.

Hackney Learning Trust commissioned Inspire! who were already supporting the delivery of Level 1 programmes within the school to help manage the project. A number of possible 16-19 Study Programmes were discussed, but the preferred model was one that allowed learners from Year 10 and 11 to experience vocational tasters at nearby BSix Sixth Form College during the summer term. The Year 11 learners are given an experience of college life, different vocational courses and support for their transition onto a post 16 pathway. The Year 10 learners attend the same vocational tasters prior to starting regular once-a-week sessions in BSix from the start of their Year 11. The project will further support these learners whilst in Year 11 through a programme of course and transition mentoring and support with college applications. This will help them to secure an appropriate progression route at BSix or moving onto an appropriate destination elsewhere.

The learners that progress full time into BSix in Year 12 are all enrolled into the college's Progression Department which provides 16-19 Study Programmes from entry level to level 2. These learners continue to access support and opportunities at Clapton Girls' Academy through a programme of mentoring and enrichment activities. It is anticipated that by the end of Year 12 the learners will be fully integrated into BSix and will continue to access their Year 13 courses without formal on-going support from the school.

TRANSITION

Challenges and how we responded to them

Making partnerships work

"We needed to work closely with the school to ensure they had confidence in the external partners proposed for the project. Also, the challenge of working with different institutions each with dissimilar management structures should not be underestimated."

Understanding the importance of effective communication

"Establishing supportive relationships and clear communication with parents is key. The school were supported with presentations to stakeholders. This ensured the learners and their parents were fully aware of the programme's opportunities and the support provided to allow learners to progress into quality provision regardless of the level they were working at. If all parties are keen for the project to succeed you can usually find a way to make it work. So initial relationship building and communication of the project's aims are vital to its success."

Gaining the support of Leadership and Management

"It is difficult to get a project started unless it has been signed off by the Head and given an identified key contact in the school. We made this a priority as this had been a factor in the success of the Stormont House School project. After a full briefing the Head signed off the project and gave it her full support, this allowed the development of the project to accelerate."

The need to create a sustainable curriculum

"There were some false starts requiring adjustments to the level of work provided to the learners. Matching the needs of the school with the approaches and model of the sixth form or post 16 provider is time consuming but essential for long term success. The school were pro-active and positive about the project, and were engaged in regular project and course planning meetings with the college to iron out any concerns and build in staff and learner visits as part of the project's development."

Robin Childs

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