

An outline of model and provision

Stormont House School, prior to September 2014, was an 11-16 special school with a cohort of approximately 100 pupils.

The learners have multiple complex needs with most achieving a Level 1 or lower threshold at the end of KS4. Transition at 16 was an issue as many found the change from the supported school environment to college or apprenticeships difficult and there was a high proportion of drop out from post 16 courses. Parents were keen for their children to remain on the school's roll post 16 and responded enthusiastically to a HLT/DfE consultation to provide 16-19 Study Programmes within the school. The DfE approved 20 post 16 places from September 2014.

From September 2013 Bel Waters was contracted to work with the school as an Associate Deputy Head for two days per week. Her brief was to create a 16-19 Study Programme that prepared the school's learners for appropriate progression destinations by developing a tailored curriculum offer. This was to be delivered by both the school and the college or training provider and was sufficiently flexible to meet the needs and interests of the learners. The agreed model was a one year sixth form for existing learners at the school, transitioning from Year 11 into Year 12.

The one year model:

- is focused on preparing learners for further study away from the school environment
- is based on shared delivery with a college or training provider
- offers a vocational / skills based 16-19 Study Programme planned in partnership with the college or training provider
- supports progression and transition into the partner college or training provider for further study for the following year
- offers extended work experience and employer mentoring in the learner's preferred vocational area

- allows learners to remain part of the school and on the school roll by ensuring their 16-19 Study Programme incorporates school based activities
- provides enhanced Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance and Life Skills with focus on local progression opportunities and relevant support services that can support the learners during their studies and into adulthood.

This full time 16-19 Study Programme includes three days in school and two in a training provider or college. While in school, learners spend two days studying the core subjects – English, maths and ICT (which are accredited through Functional Skills qualifications), PE and the BTEC Extended Award in Workskills. On the third day they carousel through three different partner-led and funded programmes focusing on personal and social development. The carousel has included an Enterprise project, delivered by the school in partnership with Inspire; a nutrition and personal health programme funded and delivered by Peabody and a summer term 'Skills for Life' programme, delivered and funded by Public Health. The school has set up a number of partnerships with social outreach services and local charitable organisations to prepare the learners for their next steps into employment and adulthood. During the spring term the learners also complete their one day-a-week extended work placement. The preparation and evaluation of the placement is accredited and contributes towards their Workskills qualification. For the remaining two days, the learners are based at a local FE college or training provider where they complete their vocational study. In some cases the work covered on these courses also supports the accreditation of the Edexcel Workskills qualification, allowing the learners to attain a larger qualification over the one year period.

Challenges and how we responded to them

Making partnerships work

"Have clear agreements on how your partnerships work e.g. who is responsible for what is essential. To ensure successful partnerships and positive learner experiences we established strong working links with our partners through frequent communication and planning and review meetings."

Understanding the importance of effective communication

"It is important to have a direct line to key individuals at your training provider or college."

The need to create a sustainable curriculum

In a couple of cases our learners' first choice of vocational study proved not the right choice in practice. Fortunately our partner gave us a number of options for learners. We were able to have a Plan B.

Managing competing priorities

"It is important to have management and other school stakeholders on board making them aware and a part of the process. Juggling the current Year 12 cohort and the prospective cohort at the same time is also a challenge. The strategy has to allow for the managing of two year groups for two thirds of the year. You have to be organised!"

Claire Napier

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