

An outline of model and provision

Skinners' Academy is planning to re-open its sixth form in September 2015 offering a Level 3 curriculum.

In order to support those learners unable to achieve Level 2 at the end of KS4, the academy wanted to develop an alternative pathway from Year 9 that would provide an appropriate curriculum and opportunities to support the progression and transition of these learners at the end of KS4 into KS5.

The academy wanted to develop a parallel curriculum offer incorporating vocational qualifications for their identified cohort and were keen to explore a partnership model in Year 11 to enhance the delivery and variety of vocational qualifications as well as give learners the experience of studying within a post 16 college environment.

Working in partnership with Bel Waters, the local authority consultant supporting the project, the academy has developed a new pathway within KS4 with learners working towards qualifications at Entry Level 3 and Level 1 incorporating an opportunity for Year 11 learners to study and gain an additional vocational qualification through attending BSix Sixth Form College one afternoon each week. The college course – a BTEC in Vocational Studies, is designed to offer learners tasters in vocational areas that the learners could progress onto within the college post 16.

The project will continue its support in Year 12 for those learners that progress full time into BSix through agreeing to deliver an element of learning of both the 16-19 Study Programmes in Stormont House and Clapton Girls' Academy. Links with BSix are now established and the college is easily accessible from Skinners' Academy so they are an ideal partner for this new project.

TRANSITION

Challenges and how we responded to them

Making partnerships work

"The academy did not have an existing sustained relationship with BSix Sixth Form College but it was easy for learners to travel there. The academy is developing a new sixth form which had previously focused exclusively on A-Level provision and needed an alternative for those working at the lower levels. Contacts developed by Bel Waters during development of the Stormont House School sixth form programme have allowed the school to work with high quality providers and support services from the start."

Gaining the support of Leadership and Management

"The academy has a new Principal who is committed to providing high-quality progression routes to all learners and has backed the project from the start."

Understanding the importance of effective communication

"Using lessons learnt from Stormont House School learners, staff and parents are being kept informed throughout the project. It is important to make the time to have these important conversations."

"This type of 16-19 Study Programme will only be successful if you have the full support of parents. It is important to address their concerns about studying in a college or provider and challenge any misconceptions or outdated information. Doing this at an early stage will help prevent issues arising during recruitment and enrolment."

The need to create a sustainable curriculum

"The Year 11 programme is being used to test elements of the model with the intention to incorporate the most successful of these into a shared delivery Year 12 16-19 Study Programme. Our challenge is to create a curriculum that suits the needs of both our current and future students, we hope our work with our Year 11 programme will support us with this."

BSix Sixth Form College are working closely with the school and using knowledge gained from the other projects to inform the development of the Skinners' Academy 16-19 Study Programme."

Laura Thackaberry
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