



BRIDGE4LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Bridge4Learning opened Weston Point College in 2009. We now operate over two sites in Runcorn, Weston Point College and the LEAP Centre.

OUR MISSION

Our two provisions have a common mission. To offer vulnerable and challenging young people the chance to re-engage with education in a supportive, safe and secure environment.

Students have typically experienced “failure” in previous settings. Students have been excluded or were disengaged. They often arrive with us frustrated and angry.

We recognise from the very start that what we offer has to be very different if we are to engage students with the learning process. The educational experience that we offer our complex young people is personalised. Students have high levels of support. They need to feel relaxed in the company of staff and other students.

Students have to enjoy attending school. Our skilled and dedicated staff, led by the Head Teacher Tim Whittle provide a highly supportive non-judgemental environment. We hope to develop the young person’s sense of self and promote happiness.

By promoting emotional stability students access the curriculum more effectively and through a range of accreditation start to receive tangible, nationally recognised qualifications including GCSEs. We are proud of the fact that all of our students achieve. This then allows them to, with support, make appropriate applications for Post 16 provision. Last academic year all of our students achieved examination success and all of them started Post 16 provision. We are confident for similar success this year.

Our positive view of the provision we offer is also shared by Ofsted; our two inspections to date have both found us to be “good” across all areas. The inspections have highlighted the improved behaviour and attainment of our students and the excellent student-adult relationships which characterise both sites.

DEVELOPMENT

We have significantly expanded our KS3/KS4 provision over the last two years. We offer up to 24 places for male students on our Weston Point campus. Our LEAP Centre is a small specialist setting. This centre with its very high staffing ratio, caters for more vulnerable students, including female students who have been or are at risk of CSE.

We cater for individual need and offer carefully tailored bespoke packages to students. We have made good use of work placements, College courses and a variety of external professionals to build the confidence and self-esteem of our students and to improve their readiness to participate in Post 16 Education and Training.

Through the expertise of our Directors we are able to offer a range of support services to the Local Authority and to schools within Halton and in surrounding authorities. We are in the process of refining the services that will be on offer but they include whole school review of SEN and behaviour management systems, individual assessment and guidance on students’ needs and support on reintegrating students following exclusion.

We are included in the Halton SEN offer and this provides more information on our provision both for parents and for other education establishments. We have already had interest from parents about what we can offer and we would be keen to build contacts with local schools to see if we can develop partnership approaches to the meeting of student need.

OUTCOMES AND ATTAINMENTS

Despite their previous negative experiences within education our students make significant progress in so many ways, these are not always measurable, but many are and are set out below:-

The majority of our students arrive with literacy and numeracy levels well below the expected level for their age. This is often as a result of undiagnosed learning needs, fragmentary attendance or due to external factors. These factors have often contributed to their oppositional and challenging behaviour.

Due to the expertise of our staff, and our positive learning environment we provide a safe and secure setting. We operate like a “family”. We offer unconditional “love” and support. Staff model positive behaviour at all times and find our best diffusion technique is the use of humour. We love the sound of laughter.

We have demonstrated that over the years that we can enable all of our students to achieve nationally recognised, externally accredited qualifications. This success has been achieved because we provide students with an emotionally stable environment that makes them feel safe. Consequently they are prepared to give learning a chance. All our leavers achieve external examination success. All have the functional levels of literacy and numeracy to allow them to access the Post 16 courses of their choice. Our students gain Functional Skills or GCSE qualifications. In addition our young people also follow a range of Open Award or AQA short courses.

Examination success is very important but we are pragmatic and flexible and we find other ways to “rebuild” our students. School is a concept, not a building and we engage students in a range of off-site settings if necessary. We offer a range of outdoor activities as part of the curriculum. These activities help to engage students, help cement relationships, develop social skills and build confidence and self-esteem. Many of our young people have attendance above national requirements with significant improvement from their previous setting.

Students themselves have organised and planned residential, setting up their own campsites and preparing their own meals. Students take part in a range of forest school activities. One young person last year described the camp as the “best” experience of his life.

Students have taken part in successful Enterprise projects. We also support students who follow work placement programmes in the local community. Again, these activities as a Community Support Worker recently noted, promote a “significant improvement” in behaviour and confidence.

All we do is designed to re-engage young people who have disengaged from education. Student attendance is excellent.

We are used to students arriving with difficult and challenging behaviour. They have often been excluded from previous settings following aggressive or violent behaviour. It is therefore a measure of our success that we have had no permanent exclusions, none in the last four years. Ofsted describe the behaviour at Weston Point College as Good.

It is not to say that we don’t have incidents of poor behaviour, but the way that our staff team manages behaviour means that incidents reduce in frequency and severity. There have been no incidents of RPI (Restrictive Physical Intervention), in the last four years. This indicates how skilled we are at de-escalating, diverting and modifying behaviour.

PARTNERSHIPS

A key element of our success with our students is the creative and supportive way in which we engage, with parents and outside agencies. We recognise, that if we are to make a significant



difference to the outcomes for our students, we must adopt a corporate and collaborative approach in order to provide a joined up response that addresses both the needs of our students and their family. We look forward to developing and strengthening our links with Local Authorities and all partner agencies. We are always open to creating new ways of working together to improve the effectiveness of our support for our students.

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Many of our parents and carers are amazed at how effectively our young people engage. They feel that we both understand and accept their children and rekindle a desire in them to get back into education. The way that we operate the curriculum maximises student engagement and, often for the first time, their children want to come to school. We have students who are genuinely disappointed when we have a school holiday!

This success builds trust and this enables us to work with parents who sometimes have been reluctant to engage with agencies and parents who may have been thought to be “hard to reach”. This breaking down of barriers has been very important in achieving the improvements that we see in attendance, behaviour and attainment.

MOVING ON

At this time of year we “lose” our Year 11 students. We celebrate this important rite of passage by taking our young people out for a leavers’ meal. This can be an emotional evening for both staff and students! Many don’t want to leave us but they are now prepared to move on.

APPLICATIONS

With the loss of our Year 11 students we have places available at both our centres. We would welcome applications to Weston Point College at this time.

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