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Kettlebrook Short Stay School (Pupil Referral Unit)

Tamworth, Staffordshire

CEIAG: Case Study

The School

Kettlebrook Short Stay School (KSSS) is a successful¹ Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for 60 students who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of this – they have a complete spectrum of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Mental Health (MH) needs.

The school is based in Tamworth, Staffordshire and it is the smallest Staffordshire district. It works very closely with five secondary schools in Staffordshire and two secondary schools who are just inside Warwickshire.

Its students can arrive at the school at any time and all referrals over the last ten years have been with 100% students remaining in education with an individual and progress pathway plans. The vast majority of students² on entry to KSSS are typically academically below national expectations (Key Stage 2) and well below on previous attendance (average 53%).

Through well-structured CPD and learning opportunities, assessments are that over 95% lessons are at least good and consistent with 20% outstanding and dynamic. Attendance is gradually improving with an average 40% improving their attendance at the school compared with the student's previous educational setting.

“Fixed Term Exclusions”, “Violence and Aggression”, “School Community Intervention and Prevention” and absconding has reduced over time as Individual Learning Planning and positive “Behaviour 4 Learning” increases, bringing positive attitudes to Mental Health and Wellbeing for all students and staff; except with 2017-18 cohort where 10% of core students and parents/carers have refused to engage with agencies including KSSS.

¹ OFSTED “Good” October 2018 & Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship school

² 95% White British; 60% boys; 65% permanently excluded; 78% worked/working with external agencies increased over the last 18 months; 30% known to Youth Offending Teams/Police/Crime Prevention; 20% Child In Need /Child Protection; 10% Child Sexual Exploitation; 15% have been to Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service; 60% School Counsellor

Year 11 attainment remains good: 2020 Average Points Score (APS) per pupil = 11.47, 2021 APS = 10.4 and 2022 APS= 7.3 with an average of 18% students moving on to L3 learning and only an average of two students (less than 7%) per year Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

The curriculum at KSSS, continues to be transformed to meet the students' needs to move onto quality Post 16 options. KSSS works in partnership with local and out of area Alternative Provision. This is led and managed by the Senior Leadership Team and a highly professional and dedicated Management Committee which challenges and offers support to the Executive Headteacher and her highly dedicated, experienced and well qualified staff at the school.

2019-2021 has seen many challenges that have needed to be overcome: COVID, national lockdowns, changes to SLT as succession planning occurs, a minority of students who have extreme challenging behaviour, the loss of more alternative provision in Tamworth; the increase in social issues in Tamworth, two of the five secondary schools Requiring Improvement, a change of leadership at South Staffordshire College, a reduction of support from the local external agencies and a strained budget.

The school federated with Burton PRU in 2018 – where two small schools work very closely together sharing expertise, systems and processes but retaining their individual identities, serving very different districts that gives support and guidance to 26% of Staffordshire's secondary students.

Its mission statement of *'Stepping Forwards Together – Caring, Sharing & Aspiring'* remains embedded in the Federation's values of *"Trust, Care, Honesty and Respect"*.

The Approach To Careers Education and Guidance

The careers team is made up of the following staff covering strategic and operational proactive leadership: Careers Adviser, Careers Leader, PSHE teacher, Work Experience Coordinator, Careers Governor and the Executive Headteacher. All staff encourage all students to reach their academic and social potential with a positive destination into their chosen Post 16 next steps.

The school has been fortunate that its Careers Adviser lives in Tamworth and has been working at KSSS for over 10 years – she knows its students well, has excellent connections with them and understands the labour market. As a PRU, the school is very KS 4 top heavy and so must concentrate its careers work with its Year 11s as a priority - as it can have Year 11 students arrive even during the summer exams.

All Year 11 students have 1:1 access to as many sessions as needed with the Careers Adviser. This identifies what each student wants to do and explores what they can realistically achieve. The majority of students will access Work Experience but this is dependent on when they arrive at KSSS, their Individual Learning Plan (ILP), the ability to ensure good Health and Safety in the workplace and finding the right placement to accommodate individual student needs and pass the required H & S checks. Pre-COVID, at least one student would secure permanent employment or an apprenticeship as a direct result of having had a work experience placement as part of their ILP.

All students, regardless of their age, are included in the activities involving the world of work. These include work covered in PSHE, visitors to discuss their work as employers/or employees (ideally based on what the students' interests are), and STEM events. This begins at pre-admissions meetings with the Head of School – where KSSS quickly finds out what each student's interests and career aspirations are. These are shared with all staff to support, encourage and make links to in

their lessons and general discussions with each student and their families. Careers and next step destinations are discussed with students and their families, with external agencies if involved, each term as part of their academic and social progress report meetings.

Careers Quality

Careers has always been an important part of the school's work with its students – ultimately, KSSS wants each student to overcome their barriers to learning and empower them to achieve the success that they deserve, moving forwards on to their next educational step with greater knowledge, understanding, skills set and positive behaviours that will enable them to be more resilient, resourceful, responsible and respectful.

KSSS has also been increasing its networking links in the educational world of careers – the Enterprise Advisers from The Careers & Enterprise Company Enterprise Adviser Network have been instrumental in helping the school become a part of other groups to increase its deeper understanding of careers in schools. Industry links have been established and the school is invited to careers events throughout the year.

The school uses the Compass assessment process each term to help monitor and review its work with professional conversations about its progress and development to ensure that careers remains at the core of all that the school does.

The external careers team at Entrust has also worked with KSSS to review how it delivers careers in a PRU – which at times is *“rather different”*. The school received a small grant to purchase careers posters, books and travel to take its students to Post 16 interviews, as well as attend careers events in the district. It continues to work closely with the National Citizen Programme in the local area – the up-take varies with each cohort of Year 11 leavers.

The school's first assessment in July 2019 against the national **Quality in Careers Standard** assessment criteria showed students received a *“good, personalised approach”* (fully meeting 5 out of the 8 Benchmarks and the additional Quality in Careers requirements), but its recording systems needed to be more formalised.

More work was required to engage more employers/employees with its students for meaningful encounters and the school needed to expand its offer of Work Experience to all students. This typified some of the barriers that KSSS was facing pre-COVID being a PRU school – *“not everyone wants to work with or be associated with students who have been permanently excluded”*.

Fortunately, the school has been able to continue to work hard in ‘levelling this field’ and seeking out workplace providers who do understand its students and want to work with them. By July 2021, the school had fully met all of the Quality in Careers criteria and more importantly was re-establishing its community workplace links as it entered the “post-COVID” era – many of its previous links had broken down due to COVID and there had often been changes of personnel within these businesses.

The school is extremely proud to have been re-accredited as fully meeting all of the Gatsby benchmarks together with the additional career-related learning outcomes for its students, and thereby achieving the national **Quality in Careers Standard**.

The Careers Leader comments: *“This has been a particularly proud achievement as we come out of COVID, especially as we are a PRU. This national Standard provides us with the recognition that we are implementing good practices in the world of careers and information, advice and guidance for*

our students, who often find it difficult to engage with education. As leaders, we are ensuring that our students are offered the knowledge, skills and understanding to continue to develop their Careers into adulthood and beyond”.

Measuring The Impact Of Quality Careers In The School

Operationally: Most weeks the careers team will meet in person (if not then they stay in touch via emails) catching up with the work with each student and planning future objectives. SLT will request Work Experience placements for students who are ready to have a weekly placement. Staff are updated with progress of each placement and this is shared with students on their return to school, constantly reinforcing the student’s success as well as enquiring and encouraging reflection on how the placement is going.

Strategically: Each term the careers team formally review progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks by up-dating Compass and planning developments. Each term the Head of School and the Careers Leader will update the school’s Governors in reports to Management Committees with the link Governor. Annually, reviews of progress are undertaken against the school’s careers calendar and development plan, leading to proposed plans for the new academic year.

Formal feedback is undertaken over the academic year with students, families, visiting careers staff and work experience placements. This is collected and reviewed at the school’s termly Compass meetings in order that the careers team is able to amend practices, if required, and build on the opportunities the school can offer. As the Careers Leader says: *“The bottom line is our students get onto their chosen post 16 pathway, with minimal NEETs”.*

Moving Forward

The school aims to establish more links with different industries in the local district to offer its students more opportunities. It is working to ensure that each curriculum area has quality links between the curriculum and careers, which can be built upon term by term.

Working closely with its federated school, Burton PRU, KSSS aims to establish a sustainable quality careers programme so that neither school has any NEETs which the school’s Careers Leaders says: *“is a challenge when over 70% have been permanently excluded, but we are averaging out at less than 10% per academic year”.*

The school was invited to share its experience at Entrust’s relicensing as an Awarding Body for delivering Quality in Careers in the summer of 2021, about which the Careers Leader says: *“informally becoming a careers ambassador has been an honour”.*

The school has also been invited to work with other PRUs on sharing good practice in careers – *“we could have two thirds of Staffordshire PRUs working towards/gaining the full accreditation of the Quality in Careers Standard by the end of 2023”.*

Within its local district of SEND & Inclusion, the school has successfully achieved known Post 16 destinations for over 50 students who have been highlighted as needing additional SEND or Inclusion resources. This is the first time that KSSS has achieved this. It is also the first to cross reference its ‘September Guarantee’ tracker – this will help the Local Authority’s Post 16 destination tracking team to further support these highly vulnerable learners.

The school’s Careers Leader concludes: *“Finally, I would suggest that, like most things, without Headteacher & SLT support in making careers a fundamental part of the curriculum design and*

*appointing quality staff to take on these roles that are needed, it could be an uphill struggle. But as an educationalist surely careers education is what our final objective is for students leaving school at 16 or 18. Use the national **Quality in Careers Standard** as a development tool, not simply an award, and it will help you to make sure that you and your team offer every student the best bespoke opportunities as possible. If we can do it so can you."*

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