

2015-16 MICROLINK AND AOC CHARITABLE TRUST AWARD FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DISABILITIES

LEICESTER COLLEGE

Supported Learning Department

PROMOTING PROGRESSION FOR LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES

The Planning: Purpose and Process

- Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities was long-established. The cumulative effect of changes, including the relocation of one of the programmes in 2013 into a purpose-built facility for Specialist Learning for Learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) provision, and a number of other curriculum, employer and management developments created increased opportunities for progression for students. Under this project, provision was therefore offered via three programmes:
 - learning for work: tailored English and maths provision with employability skills, for students with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - learning for living: aimed at students with severe learning difficulties to develop independent living skills
 - specialist sensory provision: for learners with profound and multiple difficulties.
- The objectives of each of the programmes under the special needs curriculum were to:
 - empower students
 - provide an inclusive learning journey to all students
 - focus on developing employability skills, confidence and preparation for adulthood
 - deliver contextualised English and maths, tailored to each student's specific needs
 - offer work experience opportunities which were representative of real jobs within the local area
 - measure the distance travelled and progression made since commencing the programme.
- This initiative aimed to progress 90% of students onto further provision or a sustainable progressive outcome, e.g. a job or mainstream study.
- Ultimately, the college wanted the project to help students engage with society and improve their life experiences.

Planning into Practice

- A rigorous initial assessment recorded students' education, health and care needs before making the transition to college. Assessment began prior to this through an extensive school links programme and transition week. Tutors visited schools to observe potential students in their current setting and feedback was shared at leavers' review meetings before commencing provision. This proactive, multi-agency approach ensured a smooth transition, matching students to the correct programme and allowed the college to develop student-focused timetables/targets with appropriate levels of support.
- Although qualification-focused, the content of the learning for work programme supported students through their practical learning experiences. Learning was layered and built knowledge through incremental provision, recapping on previous learning outcomes.
- In the learning for living programme, an individualised programme was created where literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT were all contextualised and delivered. Signalong was used in this programme to support and develop communication skills and was a total communication system in which signs were used along with body language, facial expression and tone of voice to convey meaning.
- The sensory curriculum in the PMLD programme focused on intensive interaction (eye gaze, vocalisation, facial reaction, decision making etc), through a range of subjects. Students had the use of two fully-equipped discovery rooms incorporating assistive technology for sensory development, as well as experiencing a variety of sports using a sensory approach.
- A range of e-learning, e.g. Moodle, was used in PMLD provision to monitor and record progress.

- The learning for living programme included sessions focusing on eBay and media to develop IT and enterprise skills. For example, students were taught how to manage stock, list items, price them and provide excellent customer service.
- Adapted assessment methods incorporated the use of photography, video recording and witness statements.
- Special short courses for students aged 25 and over provided the opportunity to develop English and maths within a contextualised setting. This innovative programme embedded skills into a session that also developed, for example, football skills.
- A multi-agency approach was used involving county and city councils, the NHS, schools and parent/carers. All service providers were consulted to ensure that students' needs were fully understood so that they were able to achieve and progress and monthly review meetings were timetabled.
- Multi-lingual student support workers provided support for students in their transition into college.
- Non-attendance was followed up by learning coaches with telephone calls/meetings with parents/carers.
- Staff and parents worked together to support learning and discussed progress whenever required.
- In 2013, a coherent management structure was implemented to be responsive to students and external agencies, strengthening relationships with local authorities and improved implementation of policy changes affecting the area.

Continuing Development

- The management team developed a strong approach to learning development and teaching through inclusion of sharing good practice at all area meetings and a website allowed staff to share ideas across campuses; this was supplemented by staff development activities.
- A series of quality improvement interventions led to new training plans. Observations, appraisals, and curriculum staff 1:1s drove improvements in teaching and learning through the training plans. External drivers such as the SEND reforms have also influenced plans for updating staff.
- There are outstanding links to other departments and the leadership and management is strong and promotes teamwork, diversity and continuous improvement.
- The curriculum offer in 2016/17 will be extended to include a new bridging course for students who need the sensory input and small group provision that is available in the college's specialist unit but who need a different curriculum offer to meet their other learning needs.

Outcomes/benefits to date

- In 2014/15, the college was working with the following students:

Age	16-18	19-24	25+	Total
Learning for work	33	62		95
Learning for living		82	19	101
Specialist PMLD provision		24	15	39
Total	33	168	34	235

- Retention in 2014/15 was 98% and achievement (completion) was 96%.
- In 2013/14, the PMLD programme resulted in sustainable progression for 179 out of 180 students.
- Attendance targets and monitoring systems resulted in retention of 97% for all long programmes and 100% for all short programmes in 2013/14.
- The Supported Learning area has been involved in shaping national policy and developments in special educational needs and disabilities through partnership work with city and county councils and involvement in a national project funded by the Department for Education to develop sector leaders' Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA).
- Jams and chutneys made by the students in partnership with a local charity are now sold at the local branch of a large supermarket and increasingly in small local shops.

- The award money was used to extend the use of technology for the benefits of students. The college started using Earwig to capture evidence of student progress, which can be assessed by parents, carers and is a permanent web-based record for students.

Relevance and Replication

- The project demonstrates clarity on its approach to the inclusive curriculum very effectively, matching teaching and learning to individual needs and the promotion of a wide range of progression routes.
- There is commitment to provide appropriate and comprehensive resources to the project, particularly the PLMD strand and very effective approach to multi-agency working.
- The project has encouraged and supported the student voice and has fostered a long-term approach to transition, including college, adult life and employment.
- The project has demonstrated long-term sustainability because of senior management team and governor support. Investment in the curriculum infrastructure, in staff expertise and commitment to multi-agency/partnership working in a very challenging financial landscape has also resulted in the project's sustainability. Other colleges would benefit from understanding how this project has maintained this unusual range of provision including the PLMD strand.

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