

Alternative to Fixed Term External Exclusion – Leadership of the Work Ethic Centre model- Phase 2

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The Rationale, purpose and objectives

This assignment is the second phase of a project which was started in May 2007. The initial project came about after a review of Behaviour Strategies revealed that fixed term external exclusions were not only high in our school but were also not necessarily meaningful. We felt that academically our students were achieving and therefore we needed to pay closer attention to their behaviour. After much discussion we decided that a centre would be created to house students who had taken part in anti social behaviour. Careful thought was given to the rationale of the centre so that it could not be perceived as a “sin bin”.

Rationale

- Students entering the centre should be given the opportunity to reflect on the aspect of their behaviour that might have been antisocial, unsafe or generally unacceptable.
- Work would be set and be appropriate
- A meaningful working environment would established
- The centre would be staffed by Heads of Year and SLT only
- Students who enter the centre more than once would automatically be referred for mentoring on the second occasion (if this was not already in place)
- Heads of Year would at some point during the day see their students and discuss the issue which lead to them being in the centre.
- Parents would be kept informed at every stage.

Heads of Year were given specific tasks to do:

- It was their responsibility to ensure that students and their parents were told about the centre.
- They would approach subject leaders and collect work for the students.
- A timetable was drawn up so that students were never left unsupervised.

The result of the above has been a reduction in fixed term external exclusions and in a positive learning environment students have been given an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour.

Objectives

As leader of the pastoral team I felt the next step forward was to review the centre by looking at:

- The reduction in external exclusions is it a genuine reduction or simply reflecting the time of year
- What impact did Heads of Year perceive the centre to have had on the behaviour of individuals in their year group?
- What is the general perception of the centre by pupils / staff
- What impact has the centre had on pupils' behaviour? How might this affect academic performance?
- Is mentoring as rigorous as it could be in terms of remedying poor behaviour
- Is the work still appropriate since Heads of Department have created banks of work which can be used at anytime?
- How do we reduce the numbers going into the centre (what strategies can we introduce to continue the reduction)

Impact Assessment

In order to assess the impact of my leadership in this project I looked at the outcomes for;

1. Hamstead Hall – the pupils, staff, academic results
2. Communication with parents has it improved?
3. Personal – my interpersonal skills, communication with colleagues generally and the Pastoral team specifically

Outcomes

It was clear that over the year pupil numbers for external exclusions have steadily fallen, especially when compared with the previous four years. The fact that pupils really do not like going into the centre and would rather be externally excluded is testament to its success as a deterrent. The staff in general is happy that low level behaviour is being seriously addressed. The link between the success of the centre and genuine academic results can only be assessed over a period of time. What is clear, however, is the fact that children no longer miss out on certain supervised activities because they have been removed from the class room. For example; examinations can be taken in the centre unlike when students went home for external exclusions.

Comparison of Fixed Term Exclusions Years 2006 - 09

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Apr	6	5	3	5
May	23	5	6	4
Jun	19	19	10	5
Jul	16	11	7	6
	64	40	26	20

Having the centre has also made it easier to actually start looking at the number of external exclusions for minor incidents and those really serious incidents. Every child who enters the centre is mentored. This has made created another strand to our behaviour policy as previously pupils engaged in low level behaviour would not necessarily be mentored.

Communication with parents have increased: Whilst in the past parents were only told via a telephone conversation that their child had been involved in low level disruption now as well as a phone call there is a letter to inform parents about the incident and to inform them of the consequences of the child's actions. Parents are invited into school if the student is a repeat offender. The result of greater communication with parents is that parents do not feel that we as a school are not working with them.

The introduction of the Work Ethic Centre has a learning curve for me because:

- I was forced to look at the way I spoke to staff. I had to recognise that no one is perfect and it can be quite intimidating to have some one question what you have or haven't done. Diplomacy is more successful than simply speaking your mind!
- Communication is vital - I became aware of the fact that it is imperative that colleagues feel apart of the project and take ownership of it, without that commitment, projects will fail because a school isn't a home but a machine which needs all the little parts to function! The centre was designed to help all staff – the whole school not just me.
- I began the journey of reflection – reflecting on actions before I even took them and certainly after I had taken the action – what effect had my actions had on others.
- My views on issues become more strategic and less personal.
- I realised the importance of not leaving things to the last minute – this behaviour clearly does reflect not just on my performance but on people's perceptions of me.
- Ultimately I am much more confident in my approach because I know what I am doing and I am not afraid to ask questions nor do I feel that people do not want to help me!
- My work is to help the students enjoy and achieve whilst at school – Therefore I can focus on obstacles differently.

Concluding evaluation of the EAP programme

This project has taught me many things about myself including the fact that; it is not possible to do it all yourself, regardless, of how enthusiastic you may be about something. Instead, to involve others is to cut the work load and at the same time get others on board. Listen and recognise that although you may not agree with others, does not mean that their ideas are rubbish.

The EAP programme has given me the confidence to look at the way forward and as a result I have been instrumental in setting up a Parent Coffee Morning. It is an opportunity for parents to come into school for reasons other than their child's poor behaviour. This development is in recognition of the fact that until we have parents working with the school, behaviour, will never be as good as it can be.

I believe that sanctions and rewards can go hand in hand therefore if you have developed sanctions as a school it is necessary to look at your reward system –

How effective is it?

Are the children interested?

Has it influenced behaviour in any way?

The result has been to work with the Heads of Departments and Pastoral Team to develop a system where Merits are important. The end of the school year saw students queuing up to convert their merits into items from the "shop" and older students talking about how they intend to get merits.

The EAP has opened new and exciting windows for me.