

## NPQSL Case Study

# To work in triangulation with staff, students and parents/carers to improve the Progress 8 outcomes for disadvantaged students across the school.

**Name: Kerry Payne**

**School: James Calvert Spence College**

I am the Director of English at a rural school in Northumberland. The school has been 'Requires Improvement' in the previous three inspections and, to date, has not yet been awarded 'Good'.

The focus of my initiative was to work in triangulation with parents/carers, students and teachers to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged students across the whole school. The school has a large proportion of disadvantaged (PP) students- 40% of the total on roll between years 7-11 (2018-19). Historically, PP students have not made as much progress as their non-disadvantaged (NPP) peers. This has always been a key focus in the School's Improvement Plan (SIP) and also within Directorate Improvement Plans (DIP).

From the reading and face to face days, I identified two key areas which I needed to improve to reverse the PP/NPP trend.

Firstly, from a whole school perspective, I needed to engage PP parents/carers and provide more opportunities for them to work with us to close the gap whilst raising students' aspirations in life and improve their progress in school. As a result, I introduced strategies to increase parents/carers involvement with the school through parent/carer support meetings, 'Core Support Sessions' and a 'Study Speed Date' event. The events involved working in partnership with staff from different levels. *Browning (2014)* identifies ten ways to 'build trust'. I felt these were paramount if I was to get the results I desired. I listened to staff and I listened to the views of the stakeholders. The events were a success: 100% of PP parents/carers found the 'Support Sessions' useful. However, parents/carers wanted more opportunities to support their child with their exams so I suggested the 'Study Speed Date' event. This became a whole school event and was a success as indicated in the staff, parent and student questionnaire feedback. One member of staff commented: "A great turn out from parents and students, there was a lovely atmosphere in the hall. Students and staff gained a lot from the evening and it's helped to build a positive relationship with the community, especially with Year 11 and their exam confidence." This demonstrated that I could show the required leadership skills to plan, co-ordinate and lead a vast number of staff with a positive outcome that made an impact on student progress. Both students and parents enjoyed the event. One parent stated: "This has been interesting to hear all about different ways of revising and understanding it all. It's been great doing this". As an additional whole school initiative, Directors across the school and ELT were given students to mentor as well as additional waves of intervention such as inviting parents/ carers in for supportive meetings and sending letters home offering support.

Secondly, I made improvements in English to support our PP students by offering additional learning opportunities and further engagement opportunities in lessons as well as making my team more accountable. I quickly recognised that I wasn't offering staff an opportunity to analyse their own data. Previously, I analysed the English data which I then shared with my team. This discussion led me to fine tune our monitoring and evaluation system so that staff analysed their own data and, therefore, had a clearer understanding of who was underachieving in their own groups. The data intervention grids meant staff became more accountable for their data. It also meant that the interventions could be revisited at each data collection point to monitor the impact and respond appropriately. This was then rolled out to Directorates across school to improve the progress of those underachieving.

At the face to face day for 'Teaching and Curriculum Excellence' the *HMCI's Report (2017)* and *The Sutton Toolkit (2014)* made me consider the effectiveness of our current curriculum and groupings for PP students. Previously, I had discussed with staff how groupings could be impacting the progress of our PP students. As a solution, *The Sutton Trust Toolkit (2014)* suggested that 'Reducing class sizes' was an expensive but effective way of improving PP

progress. With the Head Teacher's support, I introduced an additional class into Year 11 which resulted in smaller class sizes and enabled us to create more bespoke learning environments for PP students. I also amended timetables so that underachieving PP were given additional support with an English specialist.

The whole school and core subject PP progress measures (P8) improved. The whole school PP data improved by +0.46 which shows significant improvements from the start to the end of the initiative with the same cohort of students which, again, highlights the success of the project. In addition, the PP and NPP gap also closed - the whole purpose of this initiative.

As a leader, the programme made me more aware of how to prepare, plan, introduce, monitor and evaluate a project at a whole school level. I created a 'risk management plan', a 'communication plan' and a 'business plan' as well as reading empirical research to ensure that the project would succeed before it was launched. The NPQSL programme has made me more aware of my own strengths and areas to work on as a leader. The 360 degree diagnostic results showed that I improved as a leader over the course of the programme. My NPQSL made me recognise the differences between leading and managing as well as how to motivate and involve staff in projects to achieve the desired outcome.

I still have further exciting plans for the future - this is not an isolated initiative but part of a bigger, longer-term strategy for the pupils in our school. I now feel more prepared for my first Assistant Headship having successfully completed my NPQSL.