



Unlocking Gifts

A report on some small scale projects
that address disadvantage

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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
EDUCATION OFFICE

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Foreword



The gospel message calls us all to a life of service, particularly to the poor and disadvantaged, and we are passionate about the role our schools can and must play in this. Unlocking Gifts is an outworking of that passion.

The project has enabled Diocesan Boards of Education to use additional resources to enhance the life chances of some of the most disadvantaged children that we serve. The case studies in this report show what a big difference can be made with even modest investment.

We agree with the Department for Education that the gap in achievement between rich and poor as indefensible. The introduction of the pupil premium was intended to address this injustice and to make sure that every child receives high-quality education regardless of their gender, race, disability or socio-economic background. However, all the data shows that too many of a person's life chances are dependent not on the choices they make or the effort they put in, but on the background they come from. Deprivation remains the key determinant in attainment at every Key Stage.

It is our hope and prayer that these case studies will stand as models for future work across the country and that their achievements will inspire and challenge schools to start their own projects to 'unlock the gifts' of the children they serve. The need is urgent.

I am grateful to all those who have been involved in this project: The Jerusalem Trust for providing the funding; the staff, pupils and diocesan teams involved for their hard work and creativity; Karamat Iqbal for his work partnering with the schools and the Church of England Education Office for managing the project.

The schools and dioceses have shown commitment and a willingness to take risks and try new ideas. They, in turn, will acknowledge that they have learnt much from the experience. In working in this way they have embodied our vision for education, demonstrating what it means to be deeply Christian, serving the common good.

The Rt. Revd. Stephen Conway
Bishop of Ely

“More than 200 years ago the National Society began providing, systematically, schooling for children across England and Wales. It was a response to a deeply felt moral obligation to provide education for all, a gift of grace overflowing from the grace and love of Christ lavished in the church then and now. It was especially for the poorest and most vulnerable. The Church of England’s service in education is a form of service to others. It is practical love in action.”

THE MOST REVEREND AND RT HON THE LORD
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY



Introduction

Church of England schools embody the principles of their foundation two hundred years ago to bring the best education to children irrespective of their family circumstances.

The government has recognised this most recently with church schools winning awards for their imaginative use of the pupil premium.

There is clearly much more to do to eradicate inequality in education outcomes. As part of persevering with this goal, 'Unlocking Gifts', made available through the Church of England's Education Office, offered schools the opportunity to generate ideas on how to focus resources on relatively simple programmes to make a difference to the most disadvantaged groups.

The funds were awarded after a successful proposal by the Education Office to the Jerusalem Trust, to enable some pilot project work in this area.

The Jerusalem Trust released more than £93,000 to be used for projects which had a clear focus on improving the lives and education of vulnerable¹ (including the invisible²) church school pupils.

Dioceses and schools were invited to bid for some of the funding by identifying these specific groups among their pupils, and design projects that would most likely meet their needs.

¹ Deciding on what makes children 'vulnerable' can be hard indeed, given the number of causal factors. Such children can fall into a number of categories, including those whose parents face certain given circumstances. In this context, it could be said that a child is vulnerable who is at a particular risk of not reaching their educational potential. Vulnerable children can be found in even the most successful schools and communities, where they may be overlooked.

² DCSF (2010): Pockets of Poverty.



A lead consultant, Karamat Iqbal, who has extensive knowledge and experience in education of disadvantaged groups, was appointed as a 'Critical Friend' throughout the life of the project.

Since 2000, Karamat has worked as a consultant-practitioner in education and equalities, including providing support for the government's Department for Education, commissioned by them to evaluate their Family Intervention Projects serving the most disadvantaged communities.

For Unlocking Gifts, Karamat supported dioceses during the bid-writing process and once funds were awarded, Karamat was available for grass roots support - monitoring progress, offering advice and comment, asking challenging questions, and gathering first hand data and insights through interviews and observation. He visited all the projects, up to three times each.

The graphic on p.7 shows the dioceses which received funding and how many schools were involved in utilising a grant.

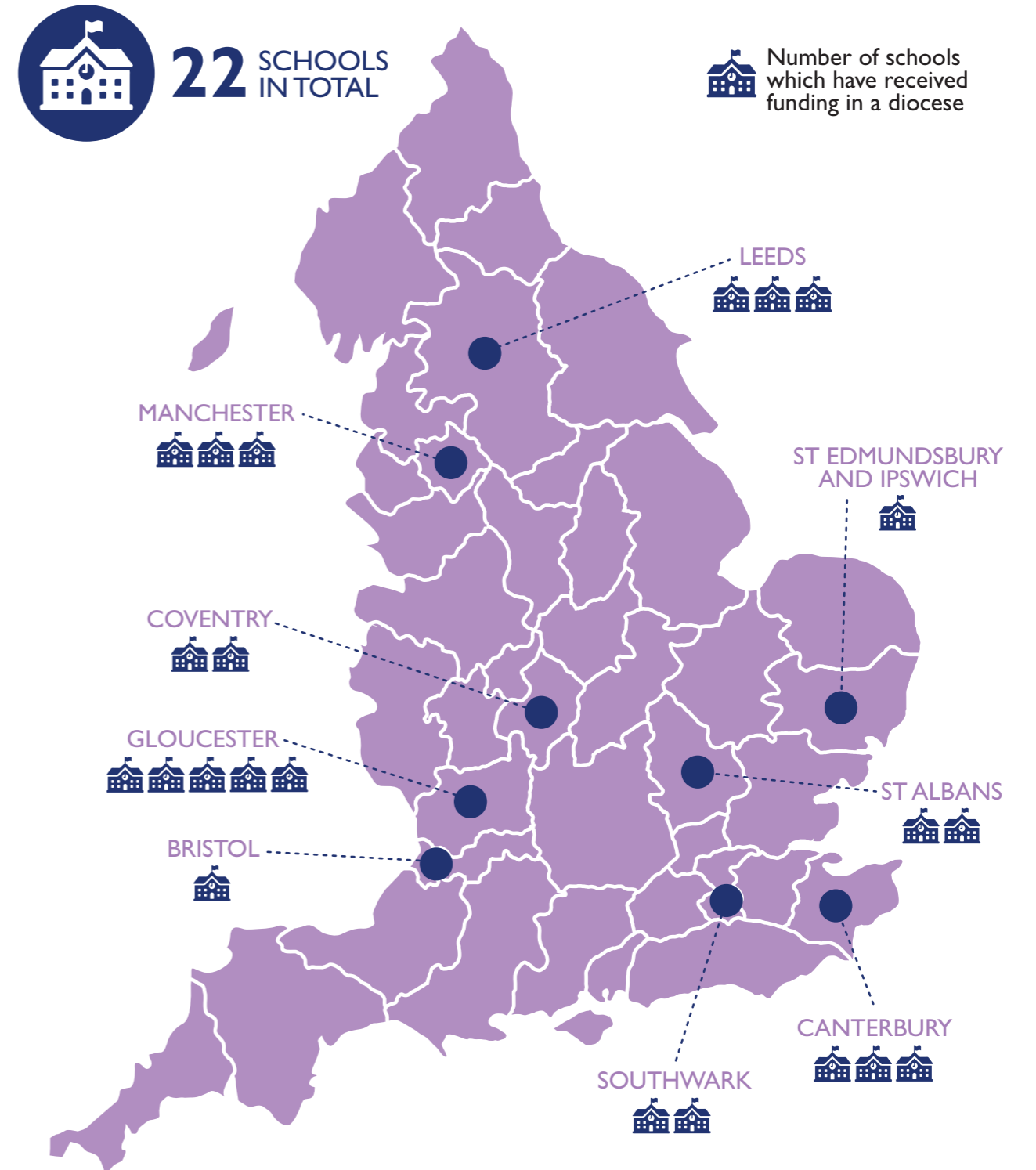
From p.8 onwards, an outline of how grant money was used in each diocese is outlined.

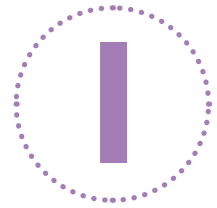
“One of the greatest principles of Christianity is the self-sacrificial service of others. It is also at the heart of great teaching. Unconditional acceptance of children as they are, absolute aspiration for them to be the best they can be, and unflinching personal commitment to each child to do everything possible to make that a reality. Great teaching is a service to others.”

EASTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY, BRISTOL

Where has Unlocking Gifts helped?

The map below shows the dioceses and number of schools which benefitted from Unlocking Gifts funding.





EASTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY,
BRISTOL DIOCESE

AMOUNT
AWARDED

£11,525

Vine grows links between home and school

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

Easton became sponsored academy in 2014, serving a mainly Somali Muslim community. The school has long recognized that academic achievement and behaviour is better when pupils enjoy and engage more with school, existing as a community with common core values.³

This means that with a higher than average number of pupils coming from a Somali background, the school faces the challenge of bringing different cultures together and fully appreciating the past experiences and beliefs of Somali children and their families.

Additionally, in Easton, (one of the three wards in Bristol where the highest proportions of Somalis are found) 4.1% of all residents cannot, or can barely, speak English.⁴

Despite these challenges, the school is resolute on maintaining a church school community and ethos which involves the support of all the children and their parents.

As part of their bid for the Unlocking Gifts funding, Easton held a vision to move the community forward and establish high levels of trust and respect, so there would be an increased sense of ownership of the school across teachers, pupils and parents. Unlocking Gifts provided the funds to help them find a way.

³ *The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes*, Leslie Morrison Gutman & John Vorhaus, Department for Education, 2012

⁴ *Somali Community in Bristol: Community Profile*, Jayne Mills, Bristol City Council, 2012, p36

“The response of the parents of the children involved in the art project was very positive.”



THE PROJECT

Easton's approach was creative and innovative. Their Unlocking Gifts grant bought in the services of Boomsatsuma, an arts organization based in Bristol. With their help, The Vine project was established - a colourful 2D representation of a vine that begins at the front doors of the school and works its way along the school walls.

But the key aspect of the Vine was that it had roots in the community. This is because to create it, children were loaned cameras to take photographs of their home environment to display along the Vine, bringing the children's thoughts to life and their lives onto the walls. The aim has been to weave different voices together and link the school with its wider community.

The response of the parents of the children involved in the art project was very positive. As it grew, the Vine helped to draw on the different cultures within the school and positively promote the value of each.

Respect, tolerance, difference, common aspiration and a celebration of simply being together were allowed expression on the Vine, and became a daily reminder to children, teachers and visiting parents about common goals and shared values.

In addition, during a staff training day, teachers visited parents so they could see first hand the children's world that existed outside the school gate. It was hoped that this would help to further develop trust and relationship.



WHAT WORKED

The Vine mural and the explanatory narrative has become a focus of discussion with the community and staff as it grows and develops. The children whose photographs have been included in the final design have shown great pride in their work and brought parents in to see the outcome.

Tolerance has been nurtured and an understanding of difference achieved through creating a piece of artwork that embodies these ideas.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have gained confidence and self-esteem through unlocking their creativity and having their ideas celebrated in art.

The staff visits to parents' homes as a part of their professional development provided invaluable insights for them. In addition, this helped to combat the perceived top-down approach of educational learning. It enabled the teachers to become the learners and the parents to assume the role of teachers.

The Headteacher said: "This has been the biggest success of the project. We have learnt that respect (for the school) is earned from experiencing the reality of its wider community."

"the school recorded a 58% drop in negative behaviour"

Behaviour of the children has also considerably improved. The data collected shows a significant reduction in incidents of negative behaviour. At the start of 2015 academic year, the school recorded a 58% drop in negative behaviour incidents with 82% less children involved. Fights were reported to be down by 76%.

The children developed a sense of ownership and pride in the school and having their artwork displayed in such a significant way is a huge part of this.

One teacher commented: "The Learning Vine has been the catalyst for the school to redouble its efforts to make school and learning matter to the children and their families, and make a positive contribution to family and community life."

The work of the project has been shared across the diocese at the diocesan schools' conference. In the presence of Baroness Estelle Morris, the keynote speaker, the Headteacher, the pupils and the artist in residence led a workshop, showcasing the project as an example of raising standards through raising community trust.

WHAT NEXT?

Deputy Head, Francesca Beers has since said that the impact of the artwork on the school had been "phenomenal" and one of the key advantages of working with an arts organization is how this continues to transform the school environment.

The Boomsatsuma artist has become an 'artist in residence' at the school working two days per week. With her help, art is used to enhance learning of children across many subjects, with spin-off projects such as a Reading Forest and a project inspired by Unicef's publication Children Just Like Me - one child at a time is given a shelf to display aspects about the story of their life, and parents get involved too.

Francesca said: "The initial investment in this outside agency has turned out to be transformative for us, but in a sustainable way. We continue with them because it is so beneficial to the school. We have a lovely environment to learn in, which is so important, and our staff and pupils continue to feel proud to welcome visitors and show them all that has been created and achieved here."



2

AMOUNT
AWARDED
£11,725

ARCHBISHOP COURTENAY CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL⁵, ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
INFANT SCHOOL, ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
JUNIOR SCHOOL, CANTERBURY DIOCESE

Boost to mental health for 4-11 year olds

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

“Our vision is to create an outstanding, flagship school serving our local community, unlocking and developing the potential of all our wonderful children.”

WENDY ROBINSON, HEADTEACHER,
ARCHBISHOP COURTENAY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY

Archbishop Courtenay Church of England Primary School is situated near to Maidstone town centre, catering for children between the ages of 3 – 11. With state-of-the-art buildings and substantial grounds, it provides an excellent environment for learning. Its latest SIAMS⁶ inspection judged it to be ‘Good’. The nearby St Michael’s Infant and Junior schools were given ‘Outstanding’ and ‘Good’ accreditation respectively by Ofsted.

However, the local context has a number of difficult issues:-

- Many parents live in social housing.
- Many of the families do not work. If they do work, they will be low wage earners.
- A number of the parents are quite young and consequently have their own needs.
- A large number of children at the school are on the child protection register.
- Quite a few of the children have domestic violence in their home contexts - there is a domestic violence refuge near the schools.
- A number of the children come from the bed & breakfast outlets in the neighbourhood.
- A small number of children have experienced trauma, including suicide within their family.

⁵ The school operates as part of a federation of schools. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with the greatest proportion being those from white British heritage. Most pupils speak English as their main language but the proportion that is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language has increased recently. There are an above average proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs identified at school action. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is twice the national average.

⁶ Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools. For more information visit www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies/siams-school-inspections.aspx.



“some children’s most basic needs for adequate nutrition and sense of safety/security at home were being left unmet”

School staff were concerned to observe that some children’s most basic needs for adequate nutrition and sense of safety/security at home were being left unmet. Consequently, these children were not able to take advantage of the usual opportunities for academic and spiritual development which were open to other children as a matter of course.

As a consequence of their lives, some children had become isolated from the world around them, leading to a disintegration of their behaviour. A number of the children were coming to school hungry and were given food by the school before they were able to participate in any learning activity.

Additionally, a reduction in government services led to an inevitable reduction in the support available to children and their families.

So Canterbury’s bid for Unlocking Gifts funding focused on providing support for 4-11 year olds suffering from emotional difficulties and mental ill-health.

THE PROJECT

Using the Unlocking Gifts grant, the schools decided to buy in the services of an external organisation, Place2Be and appointed a Project Manager. A number of volunteers and school staff were also trained to help.

Place2be provides school-based mental health support. It currently operates in 234 schools in 24 areas across the UK.

The project provided one-to-one counselling for children and parents, in its ‘Place2Talk’, a specially designated room in the school. It was initially 117 days (3 days per week for 39 weeks) of on-site services for the school year, shared as appropriate between Archbishop Courtenay and St Michael’s Infant and Junior Schools. There was an opportunity for children to self-refer if they wished.

The statistics for the Spring Term 2016 show that 71 different children from Year 2 to Year 6 accessed this service. In one term, 30% of the children in those years self-referred for counselling.

Eighteen children had individual visits and 37 children came in groups. The project also provided a ‘Place2Think’ for teachers, a confidential space to discuss any aspects of the children’s wellbeing. Excellent working relationships and trust between staff in the school and the Project Manager were established.

WHAT WORKED

The assessment of a project like this was necessarily qualitative, observing children day to day and taking note of any changes. With some children it was possible to see the improvements in their education or life generally as their counselling began. With others this was less the case. Sometimes the change was quite subtle, as one teacher put it: *“The child may smile more, may make more eye contact, may turn up for breakfast, may look better...”*.

Parents were also asked for feedback about Place2be. The following comments give a glimpse of the difference the project made:

“He thinks a bit more and is starting to take turns playing with his siblings”

“She was very anxious, that’s improved.”

“There’s been an improvement in her behaviour”

“She doesn’t seem to have tantrums so much”

“He thinks before he acts now”

“He’s not so feisty at home”

“There’s a massive improvement, fewer arguments at home and fewer grudges”

“School says she has really settled down”

“I can’t believe the difference in her, she’s changed so much.”

PARENTS FEEDBACK ABOUT PLACE2BE

The following case study also provides an illustration of the work delivered through Place2be as well as its impact:

Milly (not her real name), was referred for one-to-one counselling because of problems with behaviour at home and in school. The local council’s ‘Early Help’ support had been involved at home with setting boundaries. After meeting with the parents, the teacher and the child, low self-esteem emerged as a concern with the child who was starting to identify herself with the label ‘naughty’.

In the first few sessions Milly took everything at great speed in the Place2Be room and her play was fragmented. The counsellor worked with this by simply providing a narrative summary of the activities thus containing the work for the child.

An approach of Unconditional Positive Regard was offered by the counsellor towards any issues that Milly brought to the room. This meant that Milly started to calm down as the feeling of being valued sank in. Milly has been able to name feeling sad and angry and has used the sand to provide a physical release for her feelings of frustration.

One of the difficult points for any child in one to one work is managing a holiday break. October Half Term was a turning point in the work with Milly. Before and after the break she tested the boundaries on safety in the room in several ways but was gently reminded of the contract each time and was able to respect this. Once this period of testing was over her play had a different tempo and depth: there was a new sense of flow and purpose in the way she moved from one activity to the next. She also started to involve the counsellor more in her play.

Milly has made a strong attachment to her counsellor and to the room, and refers to the toy cupboard as ‘my cupboard’. Whereas Milly first came to the room with clenched fists, she now walks in happily with relaxed open hands and maintains good eye contact with her counsellor. Milly’s parents and teacher have reported an improvement in her overall behaviour since the start of the work and there has also been an improvement in her self-esteem.

“The child may smile more, may make more eye contact, may turn up for breakfast, may look better...”

WHAT NEXT?

The project established links with a number of key partners in the wider community – the parish council, housing associations and GP surgeries. This was with a view to adding value to the project but also in order to help embed it for a much longer term.

Unfortunately, for now, there is no further funding to continue with counselling work at the school, but Archbishop Courtenay’s Headteacher, Wendy Robinson, still holds out on hope that the work which began with the Unlocking Gifts funding can continue one day.

She said: *“Place2be was a very good service which made a difference to children’s school life and their lives at home. It was money well spent! We learned what really worked for us and we’d love to have counselling available as part of the schools’ pastoral care for children who really need it. We’re hopeful that one day appropriate funding will be found.”*

3

PROVOST WILLIAMS AND WOLVEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS, COVENTRY DIOCESE

AMOUNT AWARDED
£2,500

Learning on the move helps children of travellers

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

Coventry's plans had a tight focus - to support pupils from Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) communities with their home learning, and to build and maintain effective relationships with the parents.

Many of the children in this group spend significant time away from school travelling around the UK or abroad. As a result, the children have an interrupted education and it is more challenging for parents to engage and support the children's learning. Consequently, traveller children are reported to be among the lowest achieving ethnic groups of all pupils.

Another factor which impacts on the children's education is the challenge of getting back to the traveller sites after school, especially in rural contexts. If the children stay behind to participate in Homework Club, they miss the regular bus and have difficulty in getting home. This means they are less likely to get involved in after-school activities.



THE PROJECT

Given that some of the children spend large periods of time away from the school, parents were given resources so they could continue the teaching while away from school. Using the grant money, the schools bought materials in order to create travelling packs. When the school knew a family was about to go travelling, teachers would go through the pack with them in the hope that the parents would use the resources while away on their travels. The packs include whiteboard, pen, pencil, ruler, and notebook.

Unlocking Gifts also helped the two schools⁷ involved in the project to deliver a number of small scale interventions. One school ran a number of parents' sessions on phonics/reading, IT, maths and on homework.

Resource handouts were provided if parents wished to take them. Every child that attended the sessions was given a folder with notebook, pen, wallet, whiteboard, whiteboard pen and pencil to encourage home learning. This was rolled out to all GRT children ready for the summer holiday as well as any travelling before then.

Provost Williams school also ran a parent workshop on the themes of E-Safety, E-Learning opportunities and basic use of a computer. The parents were introduced to the 'Community Computer' (bought with Unlocking Gifts grant money) and shown its potential benefits to them and their children.

"Using the grant money, the schools bought materials in order to create travelling packs"

Children demonstrated some of the Apps and E-Learning games that can be accessed out of school. Following this, a number of one to one sessions have been delivered to individual parents on a needs basis. The school also invited GRT pupils to attend weekly homework club sessions after school and provided transport home. This enabled the children who do not have internet at home to access the E-Learning materials.

A small library of books was also created which focused on travellers and their way of life. These resources can be accessed by early readers and more advanced KS2 readers.

⁷ Provost Williams: The large majority of the pupils are white British and a small minority are from Traveller and Romany/Gypsy backgrounds. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is around the national average. Wolvey Church of England Primary School: The school provides for broadly three different groups of pupils: children of traveller and Gypsy/Roma families; those with a parent in the armed services; and those from surrounding villages. Of those children of armed services families, about a third are Nepalese and are fluent English speakers, as are those from other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is very high.

WHAT WORKED

The impact of the funding in the two schools has been extraordinary, as they both used it to drive forward simple initiatives that have transformed the relationship between school and the GRT community.

More than 18 parents attended one or more of the after school sessions. In total 33 children (including pre-schoolers) have at some point had their mum/sister in school - dads did not attend, which could be a focus for the future. The school had 57 travellers on roll. This meant they had 58% of the children's female relations attend one or more workshops.

Some of the parents have been found to really enjoy learning alongside their children. In the schools' view this made a difference, and was a good way to engage the parents.

There has been an increase in the number of GRT pupils attaining the required standard in phonics - as a result of using the computer during lunch and play times. One pupil identified as having challenging behavior, who made use of the Community Computer, was much more settled and as a result his attendance significantly increased and he avoided exclusion.

The Community Computer has also been used by a number of GRT families for activities wider than teaching and learning. For example, making online applications, preparing for driving theory and online learning by older siblings.

The schools have reported improved performance by the children through attendance at lunchtime and after-school clubs as well as increased parental engagement.

“attendance for the whole year 2014/15 was 81% compared to 74.6% the previous year”

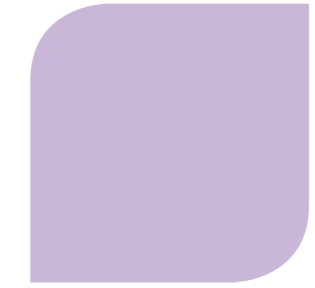
GRT pupils have made good progress in reading and maths, with four out of the six Year 2 pupils achieving level 2c. Three GRT pupils made good progress in reading, writing and maths after making use of the Community Computer during lunchtime homework club.

Attendance at after-school clubs has risen. Three GRT pupils regularly attend homework club after school, with school providing transport to get them home. One child attended after-school football club and was provided transport home. So increased attendance at homework club and extra-curricular activities has broadened the interests and experience of GRT pupils.

Attendance of GRT pupils in one school has risen significantly this year, from 78% to 88%, which was attributed to the greater engagement with school by parents, which helped to build stronger links with them.

And attendance of GRT children is increasing year on year (2013-2015) by about 1.5%, moving from 81% to 84%. GRT attendance for the whole year 2014/15 was 81% compared to 74.6% the previous year.

More broadly, teachers report that more GRT children are completing homework tasks than before as parents are more aware of expectations of learning when children are in school. Parents are more able to support the children with phonics and two GRT boys in one school represented their school in a football tournament.



WHAT NEXT?

Wolvey Headteacher, Tana Wood, said the initiatives would continue and more events were planned to engage with parents.

She said: “We were able to hold workshops on key areas such phonics, reading, maths and IT, where the parents were personally invited to come in, attend a short training session and then spend some time working with their own children.

“The uptake on these sessions was really good and positively viewed by parents (mainly mums) and children. It was a springboard to help raise educational aspirations for the children and their families but this is something we are constantly working on.

“Future plans are to continue to add in more of these sessions and try and encourage the dads to take part and work with their children within school time.”

4
AMOUNT AWARDED
£11,750

WINCHCOMBE ABBEY, DURSLEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY, MINCHINHAMPTON PRIMARY SCHOOL, HARDWICKE PAROCHIAL PRIMARY ACADEMY AND PRIMROSE HILL CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY GLOUCESTER DIOCESE

Creating a level playing field for the most vulnerable

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

This submission from one Gloucestershire school explains the situation in this diocese where rural poverty is of concern.

Large numbers of affluent parents and children surround a minority who are vulnerable. The gap between them is very large and offers the school a real challenge.

The rural poor are not linked up like some urban children may be; they cannot access resources and support in the same way. Quite often they don't have a car and they can't afford the bus pass.... So the challenge for the school is the massive disparity between the two sets of parents.

Everybody wants the Pupil Premium children to do as well as the rest. In some areas, the profile of the two groups of pupils may be similar, but not here. We have a huge gap. The difference in the confidence [between the children of these very different socio-economic groups] is so great, that it is detrimental...Here, they [the vulnerable children] are surrounded by so much confidence that they shrink further into themselves. They're a small fish in a big pond. They struggle because of it.

This particular school has a longstanding tradition of helping to create a level playing field, by providing more for those with the greatest need, and has tried to knock down some of the barriers which were there between different socio-economic groups of children.

A lack of confidence leading to low aspiration in vulnerable children is of continuous concern, so it was a natural decision in Gloucester that the Unlocking Gifts grant would be used to address this.

THE PROJECT

Schools worked in partnership with Achievement for All (AfA) an independent, not-for-profit charity which helps schools to focus on disadvantaged children and their families by raising educational aspirations and achievement. The grant money helped to meet the AfA costs.

AfA is a two year coaching programme for schools that focuses on the needs of children and young people vulnerable to underachievement. Trained Achievement Coaches work in partnership with a member of the leadership team to challenge and support the school in narrowing the attainment gap and improving progress in reading, writing and maths.

An initial needs analysis is created, supported by the coach. It is carried out across the AfA framework, (leadership, teaching and learning, wider outcomes and opportunities - including attendance and behavior and parent/carer engagement), which informs the shape of the programme, uniquely designed to suit that school. The programme is delivered through observation, coaching, staff training and ongoing review of school and pupil progress.

So the Gloucester schools were enabled firstly to set targets for vulnerable pupils. They then identified specific steps the school and the parents would take to enable the pupils to achieve their targets. The following is an example of the programme in practice for one pupil: -

	Support from School	Support from Home
1	Mrs Webb (pseudonym) to be involved in helping H to choose books.	Getting H to talk about the story he is reading, before, during and after.
2	Tutoring in writing one afternoon per week by CT in small group of 3.	Encouraging H to spot his own mistakes during writing – “think, say, write, check”.
3	Transition workshops will take place in summer term for Y6.	Positive feedback from older siblings.

The school held pupil progress meetings between staff and the principal or vice principal and the AfA coach. These were used to identify pupils who were a progress or attainment risk. They then allowed careful consideration of these children's needs, the impact of interventions they were receiving and what the next interventions were required. This information then fed into parents' meetings.



Parents' meetings played a key role in the process. Parents were offered either 15 minute slots or 'Structured Conversations' (a specific AfA approach to meetings) of 30 minutes plus. Times throughout the school day were offered, i.e. morning, afternoon, early and late evening as a way to help to reach all families. Feedback from staff, parents (usually via questionnaires) and pupils (via questionnaires or conferences) was used to inform future practice.

These two Gloucestershire schools made every effort to give parents the access they needed. For example, Winchcombe Abbey arranged a parent meeting at 7am. Another parent suffering from agoraphobia was met at home. Another parent with seven children (three at the school) had all meetings in one go.

Meetings took a structured, even scripted approach, with standard phrases and questions. The Structured Conversations were especially helpful for new teachers who may have felt insecure in the way they approached parents.

WHAT WORKED

At Minchinhampton, the Structured Conversations have been found to be a significant step forward in good practice and the impact has been marked - both in terms of the school's relationships with their more vulnerable parents and in turn on their children's levels of engagement and preparedness for school.

More important still has been the impact of AfA on the school ethos, which puts their more vulnerable pupils central to all the efforts invested. The school structures and systems have been overhauled to ensure there are fewer invisible adverse effects on vulnerable pupils. One report stated:

We have fine-tuned much of our provision, for example how we allocate places in clubs to ensure we best engineer some positive discrimination; we have transformed our teaching methods with a strong focus on formative assessment⁸.

Our attainment and progress scores were the best they have ever been this last summer, with progress of Pupil Premium pupils closing gap on others.

Winchcombe Abbey became a shining example of how the AfA model can impact on a school's success. The new approach for working with parents involving Structured Conversations was found to have contributed to increased attendance and active engagement in termly parents' meetings, from 70% to 100%.

In terms of the school's improvement measures, the results were the highest on record, from one of the weakest cohorts on entry, to these impressive scores:



⁸ Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. See edglossary.org/formative-assessment



“Each child made significant progress in reading, writing and mathematics.”

Winchcombe also attained a position in the top 5% of schools in the country in terms of phonics outcomes, which was acknowledged in a letter to the school from Nick Gibb MP. The icing on the cake for Winchcombe was a Quality Lead Award from the AfA, recognizing all their efforts in the partnership.

Another school, Dursley Church of England Primary, has also been awarded the AfA Quality Mark. The school has now become an Associate member of the programme for a year. The school targeted 36 vulnerable children through Unlocking Gifts. Each child made significant progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The average progress of the children can be seen below:

Year Group	Number of AfA children	Progress range
6	9	3-9 points
5	11	5-13 points
4	10	5-16 points
3	6	4-14 points

At Dursley, AfA has also been embedded into the school's approach. Analysis of clubs, pupil conferencing and strand teams has shown that AfA children took as full a role in school life as non-AfA children. AfA is now an integral part of the school's annual cycle of assessment for learning, target setting, delivery of learning, reviewing learning and adapting provision.

WHAT NEXT?

Once two years of the AfA Programme has been completed, there are a range of options to continue and develop across all age groups. Winchcombe Abbey has continued onto the 'Achieving More' programme and is now working with other schools within the diocese. Minchinhampton Primary school's staff have been trained in holding Structured Conversations with parents and these are becoming part of their established routines. Another four schools have also benefitted. They are on various stages of the journey in order to be awarded the Quality Mark.

5

MANSTON ST JAMES' PRIMARY ACADEMY, ROTHWELL
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY ACADEMY, DAVID
YOUNG COMMUNITY ACADEMY, DIOCESE OF LEEDS

AMOUNT
AWARDED
£11,725

Three-strand project fires up great minds

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

The project in the Diocese of Leeds was delivered by its 'Love, Enterprise, Aspiration, Faith Academy Trust' (LEAF), involving three schools⁹.

The nature of deprivation in the schools' communities is such that the children often lead restricted lives, rarely going away from their neighbourhood. They may have little cultural and enrichment opportunities, either because of limited finances or a limited outlook.

Using the Unlocking Gifts grant, LEAF aimed to give confidence and self-esteem to children who lacked it the most, and significantly improve their future life chances by improving their academic achievement.



“The project activities have been found to have an amazing impact on children’s academic work.”

⁹ The project involved identifying those pupils in Years 5, 6, and 7 in three academies (two primary and one secondary) that were classed as both vulnerable and falling behind their peers and implementing a programme of academic and self-esteem support.

THE PROJECT

The project was based on the idea of 'growth mind-set'¹⁰, which starts with the premise that intelligence is something that can be developed; it helps students and those who work with them to focus on improvement.

It had a three-strand approach, summarized as Raising Achievement through **Parental**, **Academic** and **Self-esteem** Support, and so became known as the PASS project.

1. Parental support

By focusing on the strengths of pupils and families, the project aimed to build trusting relationships with parents and help them understand that all the new efforts would be used to strengthen and further improve their child's academic achievement. This fitted well with the 'growth mind-set' approach. The team involved in the project worked with parents of identified pupils to:-

- Encourage their support for their child.
- Involve them in any visits or activities.
- Inform them regularly of their child's progress.
- Develop sessions to show how their child learns and how they can help.

2. Academic support

A qualified teacher worked up to one day a week individually and in groups with identified pupils. This enabled:-

- The identification of what skills and knowledge children needed to improve.
- The establishment of one curriculum area to be the main focus of activity (reading, writing or mathematics).
- The development programmes of study to accelerate progress.
- There to be support for class teachers to further this targeted work in a normal classroom setting.

¹⁰ www.mindsetworks.com/webnav/whatismindset.aspx

- The assessment of pupils and keeping a record of achievement.
- The motivation of pupils and further development their self-esteem.

Parent(s) or carers were continually informed and involved to create the synergy with the parent strand of work.

3. Self-esteem support

A learning Mentor team developed individualised programmes to develop self-esteem in the target group of pupils, which ultimately aimed to help them:-

- Act independently.
- Assume responsibility.
- Take pride in accomplishments.
- Tolerate frustration.
- Attempt new tasks and challenges.
- Handle positive and negative emotions.
- Offer assistance to others.

This would be achieved through group sessions, visits out of school and developing projects to encourage pupils to lead initiatives within their own schools.

As part of this strand of work, the schools decided to organise trips for the children, in order to provide stimulus for their academic work, build togetherness and provide for them unique and aspirational experiences.

Some examples of this were:

- Taking children to the 'Locked-In' centre where they were required to solve clues to escape a room within a certain time.
- They were also taken to an adventure centre and given an opportunity for train travel, to York. For many this was their first train journey.

WHAT WORKED

The project activities have been found to have an amazing impact on children’s academic work.

In one school, children made accelerated progress:



In the other school, children made accelerated or expected progress:



At one of the LEAF Academy Trust schools, Manston St James’, the pupils progress increased in writing by 1.5 points on average (compared to the 1 point progress expected). Every pupil gained at least 1 point with half of the pupils making accelerated progress of 2 points. The data analysis has contributed to the planning of the next phase of the project where maths would have a much stronger focus. At Rothwell, the school reported “exemplary” progress of the children. All children in Year 6 made progress and three of the four children made 3 or more points progress. The school reported:

“Two children in particular have made accelerated progress across all three subjects and have demonstrated a new confidence and self-belief that was not apparent before. This shows the long lasting and wide ranging effect the project has had because it has changed attitudes to learning as well as increasing knowledge.”

Across the three schools:

- Average points progress for the 12 primary school pupils in the Summer term was 1.33, a distinct improvement on an average of one point progress in the Spring term.
- At another LEAF school, the DYCA (secondary academy) children made an average of three points progress over the course of the project; one point more than expected for their year group.
- Mathematics is a subject that a lot of the children on the project found difficult and their confidence was a barrier to their learning. This was identified early and the teacher tried to create a Growth Mindset amongst these children, where challenge is embraced and mistakes are normal steps on the learning journey. This extra emphasis on challenging themselves in mathematics was demonstrated positively in the classroom and noticed by the children’s class teachers

Within the primary schools came this encouraging report:

“The Year 6 teacher has seen positive effects on all the children, in their attitude to learning and in their confidence in their ability. She feels all the children developed new found self-belief which is creating a determination to succeed and do well. In particular one boy has, ‘realised he could write and did so in his last piece of assessed work!!!’ She attributes much of this change in attitude to the project and believes that it is through the targeted support and trips out that this has been achieved.”

“...they are more willing to concentrate and have a go at tasks, which they would previously have drawn a blank face at, without any initial support.”

A COMMENT FROM A YEAR 5 TEACHER

“I feel like I have got better at making friends.”

“I have improved in writing and self-confidence. The project really helps. I have enjoyed meeting new friends and going to new places to do new things, I wouldn’t see in a regular life.”

“Climbing up high. My fear of heights might be over. A bit more confident.”

“In my writing, I have most improved on my description and using higher level words in my sentences. I have also improved on my confidence and speaking.”

“I think that I have got better with my confidence and English because I get more when the teacher is saying things what I wouldn’t normally know as well and I like reading my work out now.”

COMMENTS FROM SOME OF THE CHILDREN

The self-esteem co-ordinator on the project compiled a series of observations of the children at the start of the project and at key moments as the project progressed. He has seen a marked improvement in the confidence of the children as a whole. As a result of the monitoring, he has been able to provide more focused support to particular children. The result of these interventions have been ‘noticeably happier’ and ‘more confident and talkative’ children.

Testimonials from both teachers and support staff have concluded that the maturity and self-esteem of the pupils involved in the project has universally increased - ‘He is happier within himself’; ‘He is more confident and has developed better friendships’; ‘She is taking a more active role.’ A video has been produced as evidence, which shows the increase in confidence of these children. It is believed that this improvement in self-esteem and confidence will lead to better and higher levels of progress in the future as the children engage with school more readily.

WHAT NEXT?

Manston St James’ Head, Mark Edwards, reported the school was continuing to work with vulnerable boys in a similar ways. The original funding from Unlocking Gifts can’t be matched at this stage but St James’ aimed to find ways of continuing some funding on an ongoing basis.

“We have a focused enrichment and activity programme which targets Special Education Needs and Pupil Premium boys. They have a variety of trips to broaden the boys’ experiences and improve their self-confidence. These trips continue to be successful, and are appreciated by parents, but vitally, there’s a direct link between a real difference in the boys’ school work and these trips. They make a difference, and we’re committed to keeping that up.”

6

HOLY TRINITY, HURST KNOLL ST JAMES' AND ST JAMES',
ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE, MANCHESTER DIOCESE

AMOUNT
AWARDED
£11,075

'Astonishing' boost to learning goals through speech and language tuition

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

Each of the three schools above serve different and diverse communities. These communities have high levels of social deprivation in common, and have well below the national average take-up of education beyond 16 years of age.

They are all located within Tameside which is one of the most deprived areas in England, with 27% of children living in poverty. St James has 56% English as an Additional Language, (EAL) pupils, Holy Trinity 93%. Hurst Knoll has 22% EAL as it serves a mainly white working class community. The deprivation levels in all three schools are above average.

Socio-economic deprivation has a significant impact on health and wellbeing, which in turn impacts on children's education in a wide variety of ways.

Staff at the schools had become increasingly concerned about the number of children with extremely low levels of communication skills at the beginning of their schooling. Consequently, their attainment and progress and the pupils' social and emotional wellbeing were significantly affected.

The project was therefore focused on developing oracy in the early years.

"Staff at the schools had become increasingly concerned about the numbers of children with extremely low levels of communication skills"



THE PROJECT

A Speech and Language Therapist was appointed using the Unlocking Gifts money. Within each school, eight reception-age children were selected for speech and language therapy with her.

Each child was individually assessed and placed in a language group appropriate for their level. The language groups were run by the Speech and Language Therapist, with a teacher or teaching assistant observing or assisting. The groups varied from two to three children in size.

Within the groups the key focus was:

- Attention and Listening: being able to sit within a group, listen to others and wait for your turn.
- Vocabulary building: especially, though not only, for children for whom English was an additional language.
- Comprehension skills: developing understanding of more complex instructions e.g. where they have to make a choice, or where an instruction contains more abstract ideas.
- Expressive skills: developing use of language e.g. providing longer answers, producing their own ideas.

WHAT WORKED

All the schools found the intervention had astonishing results. In their interim report (3 June 2015) it was stated:

Hurst Knoll

Speaking was very much the key aspect for us, to help move these pupils forward, and this has been the area where the support has had the most impact. With this development in speaking, comes an increased confidence in the children to communicate with peers and adults. For some of these children this is having a real impact on progress in reading, writing and numbers. The role of the Speech Therapist – at times being observed by the Early Years staff – is helping these children make progress that would not have been as rapid. It is unlikely children would be working at ‘Expected’ or ‘Emerging’ levels, without the intervention.

Holy Trinity

Despite it being early days, assessments have shown that all the children have made significant progress in the area of ‘Listening and Attention’, when compared to the control group. Furthermore, 50% of the children have already attained Early Learning Goal in this area compared to 0% last year.

St James’

We are really pleased with the outcomes that we have observed in children. Children who were reluctant to speak have clearly gained in confidence and are now accessing the curriculum more fully, building positive relationships with their peers...The pupils at St. James’ have made the greatest improvements in the speaking strand. This aspect will have a significant impact across the curriculum, as the children engage in learning by equipping them with the skills to talk about their learning, what they know and understand.

The schools also organized joint progress meetings to share good practice. The staff have used the networks not only to moderate assessment, but also to share what they have learnt, the resources they have made, and how they are maintaining their impact.

At the conclusion of the project, Holy Trinity, the lead school, reported:

All but one child made significant progress in the curriculum, particularly reading, writing and numbers. For reading, six of the target group were developing 40-60 months¹¹ and one achieved the Expected Learning Goal. Writing showed that seven of the children were developing 40-60 months. There was good progress made by all but one of the children in their number skills; two achieved the Expected Learning Goal and five were developing 40-60 months.

School staff who worked alongside the Speech and Language Therapist also reported:-

Now, we do ‘pre’ groups with parents; something we didn’t do before. It is to do with enabling parents so they can play their fullest role in the children’s education, so they don’t see learning as the sole responsibility of the school. It’s nothing fancy; just talking to [their children] when out shopping or going to the park...Some of our fantastic children start school not being able to speak English but they may be competent users of their mother tongue, Urdu, Bangla, Italian or Spanish. They can fly; they can quickly learn English, using their mother tongue as a ‘language’ foundation.

¹¹ All having started at 30-50 months

WHAT NEXT?

The schools have decided to continue with the speech and language tuition. One school has already identified the necessary funds from its Pupil Premium income. The other two schools are similarly likely to follow suit, finding the money from within their budget. Each have since reported:-

“The little bit of money helped to channel our ideas and led to a successful intervention.”

“It has worked; it’s had a sustained impact on the children. It’s also had an impact on the staff and their general practice within the school. The strength of it is that the intervention cost was quite small. So it is doable for us, from our own funds; three or four schools working together and learning as a group and from each other. Our budget is down next year but we are still able to do this project. **It’s a case of ‘little investment but massive impact’.**”

“The work will continue; in all three schools it’s seen as a worthwhile intervention. **Unlocking Gifts helped us to try it out. We found it worked; it made a difference.** So we will continue it. We will identify the most needy children and make appropriate intervention, early on in their schooling, something we wouldn’t have done in the past.”

HOLLY DALLMAN FROM THE MANCHESTER DIOCESE EDUCATION TEAM SAID SHE HOPED OTHER SCHOOLS WOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND INSPIRED BY THE RESULTS IN TAMESIDE

“The outcomes of this Unlocking Gifts funding are **astounding**, and all three schools will continue with the language tuition. St James’ and Holy Trinity will continue work in partnership too. It’s made such a huge difference to the children, we hope other schools with similar circumstances will consider investing in a Speech and Language Therapist in the early years.”

7

ST MARK'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY
AND ARCHBISHOP TENISON'S ACADEMY,
SOUTHWARK DIOCESE

AMOUNT
AWARDED
£11,400

Learning to love life, and live it

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

The Southwark Diocese project was focused in two schools. St Mark's, in Mitcham, identified a group of white British students in Year 10 who displayed poor attendance, who were not fully engaged in learning and were performing less well than their peers. At Archbishop Tenison's Academy, in Lambeth, the project involved a group of students who were vulnerable because of their difficult home situations.

All targeted pupils lacked in self-confidence and did not have the wider opportunities and experience which were available to most others. A number of the pupils had also been in trouble at school.

The Project co-ordinator had observed: "They lack confidence and hide behind the bravado. Often their behaviour is a way to deflect from what else is going on in their lives. A high percentage of the children are fostered within the family, by an uncle, an aunt or a grandparent. Consequently, they do not appear on the Looked After Children's register or government statistics.

"The reasons for their troubles can be various. It could be a parent with substance abuse or parent who has died, a parent who has deserted them or a parent who is incarcerated. They may have a brother who has had trouble such as gang involvement. So, one way or another they have a difficult family situation."

Many of the families served by the schools are on low incomes, although they are not quite eligible for free school meals and Pupil Premium. It is normal for families to have two or three jobs - a cleaning job in the morning, a second job in the day and maybe even a third one in the evening.

One teacher reflected: "We have a lot of boys who have parents who just about survive, doing multiple jobs. So there is never any money to do those extra things; all the money goes on the basics."

As a consequence of these challenging backgrounds, many of the pupils tended to come to school with a negative perspective on life. The schools aimed to change that to a more positive and hopeful outlook with the Unlocking Gifts money.

THE PROJECT

Students at both schools have taken part in activities that have exposed them to new experiences. They were asked to keep diaries to reflect on these experiences and look back on them later.

The group from Archbishop Tenison's have taken part in three different activities:

- go-karting
- a driving lesson and tour of Mercedes World
- a trip to see the Lion King with dinner in a restaurant - for many in the group, this was their first time going to see a live show or eating out.

Students from both schools attended a formal launch of the project at the Diocesan Offices and were welcomed by the Director of Education. The project was explained to them, and they were also given a brief overview of the other Church of England schools in the diocese.

Students were encouraged to reflect on the importance of their education and were asked about their hopes from being involved in the project.

At St Mark's, students attended a one week "Adventure and Challenge" course in North Wales in the second half of the Spring term. The students took part in a wide range of activities that pushed them beyond their comfort zones.

One night was spent under canvas; none of the students had experienced this before. All had to adapt and learn the importance of being part of a team, encouraging others and accepting help.

Again, students kept a diary during the week to reflect on the experiences.



"...pupils tended to come to school with a negative perspective on life."



WHAT WORKED

At the start of the project it was noted that the boys' immediate reaction to anything new was that they weren't going to like it. But this began to change as the boys experienced more.

"We went to a pizza restaurant before the Lion King. The boys wanted to go to Papa John's and it was hard to persuade them to stick with the plan. One of the boys didn't want to order any food until he had seen what it was going to be like. He wanted to know what size the pizza would be, what it looked like...He then wanted a tub of garlic sauce. We then realised this was what he was used to getting with his take-away order, and it suddenly occurred to us: he's never eaten out. They don't know how to sit in a restaurant, or how to use their cutlery. Later, the boy came to me and said he was glad we had taken them to the restaurant."

ONE TEACHER REFLECTING ON THE MEAL EXPERIENCE

"Pupils thought we were going to the cinema. They are our 12 most challenging pupils. But we found they sat in complete silence at the theatre and were completely awestruck by the performance. They could not believe what they were experiencing. The looks on their faces said it all. They had never experienced such a thing in their lives, and they are near-adults. The feedback from the boys (in their own slang) was: "Lion King was sick!"

ANOTHER REFLECTION FROM THE LION KING SHOW

As the boys journeyed through these new experiences, their attitude towards staff began to change at the school. They were more co-operative and would acknowledge staff in the corridor whereas before they would not. One particular boy involved in the project has sought advice from a staff member regarding a problem in school, whereas before this would not have happened.

In the students' diaries, journals and reflections, it was clear that they were responding to the encouragement, reassurance, mentoring and coaching from staff, and each other. Their attitudes, confidence and self-esteem were beginning to change.

ONE YEAR 10 BOY'S DIARY ENTRY READ:

The second day included a canoeing trip up the estuary of the River Dovey (something which I had never done before). We paddled for almost three hours, which was so much fun. On the third day we prepared and took a hike and camp for nearly eight hours on the mountain near Aberdovey.

This expedition took me beyond what I thought I was capable of and an eye-opener to help me understand my limits. This trip proved to me that I could lead a group of people by myself in the middle of nowhere.

There were more encouraging results: -

- At Archbishop Tenison's, all the students who were part of the Unlocking Gifts project remained in school despite having previously being identified as at risk of permanent exclusion.
- At St Mark's they have reported a reduction in exclusions and an increase in attendance and attainment; with Unlocking Gifts students showing higher levels of attendance when compared to their peers.
- Students were interviewed at the mid-project review meeting and talked about what they had learnt from being involved in the project so far. All spoke about facing new challenges and overcoming fears. They have said that by being part of the project, they are getting some new experiences that they will never forget.

The Project Co-ordinator reported on staff reflections too:

- Staff gave feedback on changes seen in student attitudes. Students were learning to trust the staff.
- Staff were conscious of how much they were learning from the project and this was an unexpected outcome. They shared this with the students involved and also thought about how this might be shared more widely with staff at the school and across the diocese.
- Staff were appreciating that sometimes it is not that the students were just behaving inappropriately, but they were simply not aware of the expected way to behave.
- Staff were seeing the reality of the students' lives and daily experiences, through the eyes of the students.
- It transpired from working with the students at both schools how low their aspirations, hopes and dreams had been.

WHAT NEXT?

The next stage of the project is for the boys to start planning their own trips including managing the budget. It has transpired that the boys don't do anything educational at weekends or in the holidays and have no ideas of what they could do, or how they would go about planning a trip, so this will become the major focus of the next steps for this project.



ALL SAINTS' ACADEMY, ST MARY'S HIGH,
DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

AMOUNT
AWARDED
£11,000

School leavers encouraged to think bigger

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

All Saints became an Academy in 2008, having been a “failing” school before. In Years 12 and 13, 81% of the boys are white British. The school Head of Sixth Form, Julie Baldwin, had noted a repeating pattern - while a high proportion of the young men applied for university, only a small proportion actually took up places. In 2014, only 14% of boys from this ethnic group went to university.

The issue of financing university is very pertinent for these youngsters. They generally cannot rely on any parental financial support and most parents have no experience of university. The youngsters most often opt to take paid work with a view to saving up for university and then don't actually take up a deferred place.

There was a similar trend at St Mary's. In 2014, 49% of the young men in the sixth form were white British. While 82% of Sixth Formers went on to university, the proportion of white British boys in that group was only 17%. If this group were to be performing in line with other groups, it would have been 25%.

Low aspiration was therefore identified as a problem for some white British boys here.

Both schools were certain that group work and one-to-one support could make a real difference to these young boys' choices and decisions as they embarked on life after school. This was to be the focus of how the Unlocking Gifts grant was used in St Albans.

THE PROJECT

The main aim was to enable the students to make informed choices and be encouraged to think actively about their futures as they approached leaving school.

At one school, students were given an opportunity to be interviewed by a tutor who helped them to consider their future plans. Here they explored their strengths, aspirations and their areas of development after A levels.

At the other school, steps have been taken to engage the students, through mentoring sessions, to enable them to explore university as an option for them. They were then supported with additional tutoring, in order for them to achieve their required grades. In one instance, a more able student was employed as a tutor, so he could help a fellow pupil with his maths.

“Low aspiration was therefore identified as a problem...”

The Unlocking Gifts grant enabled the schools to help deliver the following activities:

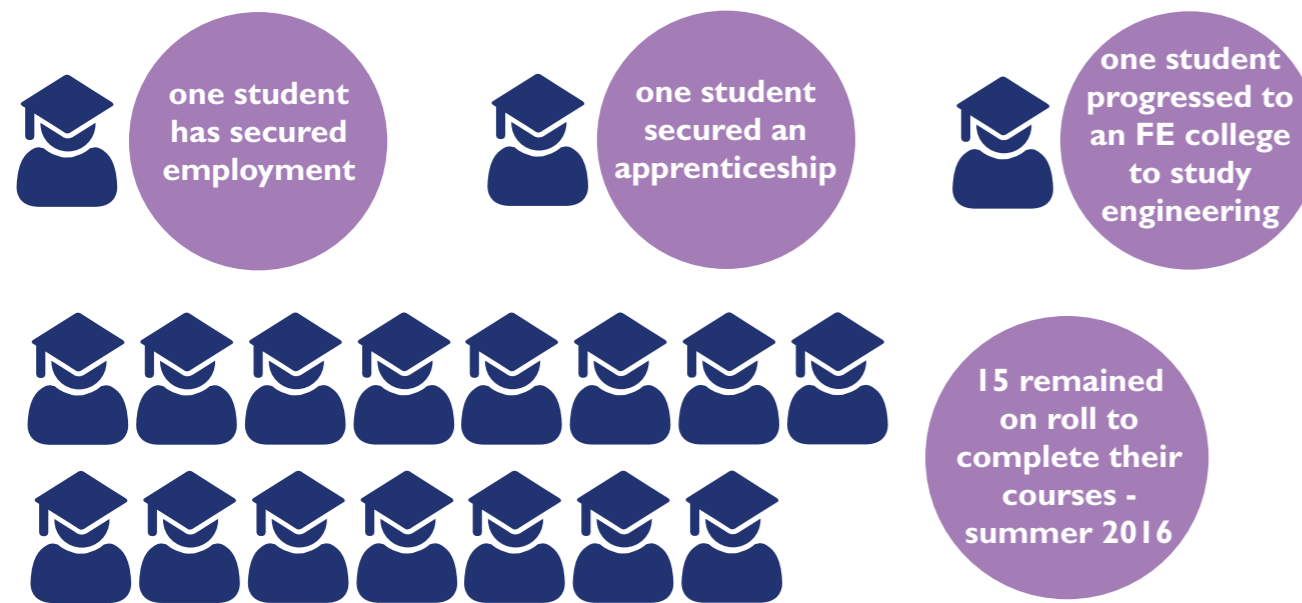
- Organisation of trips to university open days including funding transportation - otherwise this would have been a barrier for many of the students.
- Refund of travel expenses and provision of appropriate dress for the students when accessing related work experience opportunities.
- Organisation of motivational speakers including past pupils with successful careers.
- Paying for extra tuition for a number of the students.
- Meeting the costs of books and school equipment, provision of reward vouchers.
- Provision of mentoring support for students, bearing in mind that in many instances the students were the first in their family to go to university.



WHAT WORKED

For one school, all five of the Year 13 students identified at the start of the project continued with their education and secured places at Higher or Further Education. Four went on to university and one went to a specialist FE college ahead of taking up a place on a basketball scholarship programme overseas.

OF THE 18 YEAR 12 STUDENTS:



At the other school, the focus of the project was similar. In 2014, only 14% of the white British boys had secured a place at university. This has gone up to 76%, due mainly to work done through the Unlocking Gifts project.

Of the 13 white working class boys identified at the start of the project, ten have secured places at university.

The students were reported to have appreciated the one-to-one meetings with a consultant and academic mentor and have responded positively to having a deeper understanding and a helping hand towards achieving their future plans.

They enjoyed and responded positively to the time and attention afforded to them as a result of the project. Participation in Unlocking Gifts

prompted students to be more proactive and to reflect on their own aspirations, abilities, skills gaps and opportunities and to make more informed decisions as a result e.g. early application to university; or deciding that university was not an appropriate route to achieve their chosen progression route.

The project also enabled some students to reconsider their plans. After shadowing university students, a number changed direction and decided that a university course was not appropriate for them.

For the schools and the diocese, this provided another opportunity for partnership working, which the following case study, following Jack's journey, demonstrates.

Case study: Jack B 2013-15

The Professional Learning Placement programme is designed for students in post-16 education who are studying advanced level courses and are making decisions about professional working life and higher and further levels of study. The programme offers long-term work placements alongside the students' courses of study. This is an example of a student who has participated in the programme throughout his two years in the sixth form.

Jack joined the school as a Year 12 student in 2013. He gained 8 GCSEs at his previous school, which included 3 A – C grades in Physical Education, Spanish and a Certificate in Digital Applications. He had a grade D in Mathematics and E in English Language, which he planned to re-sit in Year 12. Although an able sportsperson, Jack lacked confidence academically and in certain skill areas. He chose to study Sports Studies BTEC Double Award and BTEC WorkSkills both at Level 3.

Jack participated in the Professional Learning Programme from 2013 - 2015. He had placements at an electrical company, and also supported the PE Department at his own school, as well as completing voluntary work with another school, which led to him completing the Sports Leaders Award. He had the opportunity to do varied work tasks and develop his personal and work skills on these placements.

He made a very positive impression during his placements. The feedback from his employers' evaluations was extremely encouraging to him

and his skills review at the end of each placement block indicated that the placements helped him to develop his professional competencies, particularly around interpersonal communication and organisational skills. Comments such as; "he was reliable, used his initiative and acted as an exemplary role model to younger children at Woodside School" and "he is willing to share his skills and love of sport as well as to broaden his experiences more generally in the classroom" show how highly he was thought of.

Jack gained confidence through the programme improving his communication skills and being able to present more clearly and concisely verbally. He has had the opportunity at his placements to talk to audiences of varying sizes and develop confidence in his presentational skills. He also developed his interview skills and was able to answer questions in-depth in the interviews for his placements using some good examples of previous experience.

Jack successfully completed his placement programme in July 2015 and gained a BTEC WorkSkills Level 3 qualification alongside it. He gained confidence in his academic studies, although his literacy skills were weak, and gained a Pass in his BTEC Sports Studies Double Award course. He has now moved on to FE College to further his studies and take an extended diploma in Sports Studies to support his career ambitions within sport.

WHAT NEXT?

Georgette Mathews, Director of Sixth Form at St Mary's, reported that the work begun through Unlocking Gifts has continued: "As you can see, Unlocking Gifts had positive outcomes. A number of the gentlemen that were involved in the project as Year 12 students left us in summer 2016 to move on to university; some opting for establishments that were a little further afield than usual. We have continued to target white males in our mentoring and engaged them in activities that allow them to widen their experiences; for example visits to London galleries and museums. We have also expanded the mentoring to include the more able students - we need to adjust our approach to help them achieve their full potential too. Overall there is still some work to do with encouraging aspirations and we will continue to develop this with the help of a new member of the team. Our hope is his work will help to move the group on to achieve great things."

9

ST MATTHEW'S, IPSWICH CENTRE,
DIOCESE OF ST EDMUNDSBURY & IPSWICHAMOUNT
AWARDED

£11,075

'Maths with Jesus' project gets Ofsted thumbs up

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

St. Matthew's is a large primary which aims to "develop children who are articulate and literate, confident and competent in English and Mathematics, with a growing independence and self discipline in all areas of study....".

This is no mean feat in a school that is so diverse and multicultural that 'being different is the norm'. A high proportion of pupils, (34%), have English as a second language and around 36 different languages are represented among pupils.

The school also experiences a higher than average number of children arriving at the school at different stages of their education. For example one group of Year 6 children arrived at the school part-way through an academic year. Many had not had much, or in some cases, no education. One child did not know what a school was, never having set foot inside one.

But despite these kinds of challenges, the school has built a reputation in the community for being a model of inclusion; everyone is made to feel welcome and everyone is valued. International days, for example, when local people come in to share things about their language and culture, is one way in which the school celebrates diversity, fostering understanding between people with different backgrounds.

St Matthew's also commits to ensuring English is taught to those who need it, so that the rest of the child's education is not held back unduly because of language difficulties. This too has earned the school a reputation in the community for supporting every child's educational needs.

In striving for its goals in numeracy, the school identified some pupils who, due to their specific circumstances, had significant disadvantages compared to most in relation to progress in maths. This was to be St Matthew's focus for the Unlocking Gifts funding.

*"...around 36
different languages
are represented
among pupils."*



THE PROJECT

The aim of the project was to create small focus groups, outside the usual classroom at a regular time each week, led by a qualified and experienced classroom teacher with a particular strength in teaching maths. These small groups were made up of identified children from different classes. Some were able to 'dip into' the group for a short, fixed lengths of time eg. 6 weeks/6 sessions for maximum impact.

By guaranteeing that the group ran weekly at a regular time, the school was able to fund (using the Unlocking Gifts grant) a qualified teacher to teach the remainder of the class as normal. This regular arrangement ensured continuity for the remaining children.

The school did not have space to accommodate the groups, however the church next door provided a room which gave the children an opportunity to go offsite. This made them feel special - one child explained that she enjoyed going next door to do maths because 'Jesus was there', and that helped her.

WHAT WORKED

In June 2015, the school's use of its Unlocking Gifts grant was acknowledged by Ofsted as having made a significant impact on raising standards in mathematics.

The school's data tracking had showed that there was significant improvement for the target group of pupils.

In KS2 mathematics, 94% of disadvantaged pupils involved in the project (compared with 64% of the school's other pupils) achieved expected progress. And, 25% of disadvantaged pupils involved in the project (compared with 22% of the school's other pupils) achieved more than expected progress.

The Ofsted report stated:

"The school is always looking to improve pupils' achievement. For example, disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress using a scheme designed to raise their numeracy skills. School information shows these pupils typically make progress at three times the expected rate during the programme."

This improvement is because extra well-trained staff go over specific gaps in their learning identified in the pupil progress meetings."

Ofsted, June 2015

WHAT NEXT?

"...given the success of the intervention, the school has decided to roll it out to all year groups."

The original focus of the project was to address the educational needs of upper KS2 pupils. However, given the success of the intervention, the school has decided to roll it out to all year groups, so the approach has now become properly embedded and fully part of what the school offers its pupils; in other words, part of a whole-school approach.

The school has committed to maintaining the tuition for the longer term, reporting: "The Unlocking Gifts grant gave us an opportunity to try something new. We did. It worked. We will now fund the same activity from our own funds".

The school is also exploring whether to try other similar withdrawal groups for different subjects, such as literacy.

Conclusion



Coming in to the Unlocking Gifts process almost at the end, I have been amazed to learn all that has been achieved during the course of this work, instigated and managed by my predecessor, Nicola Sylvester. From the original bids, right through to final reporting, Unlocking Gifts has been an eye-opener.

It's a privilege to share those learnings and achievements through this report, which I hope will be a source of inspiration for schools and the diocesan teams who support them.

The Church of England Education Office has a vision that all pupils in our schools should be able to flourish and have 'life in all its fullness' that includes those for whom life is more challenging than most, whose futures are likely to have reduced opportunities, due to economic, social or other reasons. We must find ways to help pupils overcome this.

There's a temptation to think that some of the problems we encounter are simply too big and that large amounts of funding would be required to just scratch the surface in the quest to find ways to help and make a difference.

My hope is that the report you have read shows how relatively modest budgets, along with courage and innovation, can significantly impact on the lives of disadvantaged children. In fact, the impact of some of the projects go well beyond the school walls – the reach extends into children's families, in particular the parents, to gain their support for the children's education. Local communities have been touched by schools' creative ways of supporting vulnerable children too.

It's so encouraging to see, that with the impetus of the Unlocking Gifts funding, many schools are keen to continue with the projects they were enabled to begin, supported by their own funds, or funding from elsewhere. They have learned valuable things through trialing interventions, and in many cases, have been surprised and overwhelmed by the success.

"...Unlocking Gifts has been an eye-opener."

We must also remember that the God we serve can do so much with our talents and effort. The God who uses a few loaves and fish to feed thousands is the same God who upholds and magnifies every move we make to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with him, in the daily graft of school life.

My closing sentiments are best expressed in the words (below) of Archbishop Justin Welby, (taken from his speech at a schools leaders' conference in Birmingham Diocese, 2014).

“Thank you, because church schools shape their pupils and their communities, and shape us all for the future, and without you to lead them as chairs of governors, as head-teachers, as people working in education departments of dioceses, or as teachers, that simply wouldn't be possible.”

WORDS OF ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN WELBY

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