

Evaluation of Bents Green at Westfield hub provision

September 2016

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of the provision which was set up during the 2015/16 academic year for students with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Westfield school in Sheffield in collaboration with Bents Green special school. The report aims to explain how the provision has been designed and presents views of students, staff and parents.

About the author

This report has been written by Jessica Miller, using material provided by staff at Bents Green and Westfield schools. The report was commissioned by Sheffield local authority; although the author of the report works as a statistician at the Department for Education, this evaluation has not been sponsored by the Department.

Executive summary

Background

Westfield at Bents Green hub was initially set up in September 2015 to cope with an increase in demand for provision at Bents Green special school. The hub started off with a small number of Bents Green students who, in discussions between staff, students and parents, it was felt could cope with exposure to the mainstream environment and achieve better outcomes as a result.

The hub environment has enabled these students to access mainstream lessons where appropriate but also have the security of the hub environment where necessary. The set up of the hub also ensures these learners can continue with the vital 'Life Skills' curriculum they had at Bents Green school.

The design of the hub enables a person centred approach and the timetables are reviewed regularly meaning the hub students can expand or reduce the number of lessons spent in the mainstream environment as appropriate.

Progression

Hub students have made excellent progress during their short time in this environment. Attainment data for the case studies presented in this report shows that for these students progress since entering the hub has exceeded expectations.

Students have also seen progression in other areas both socially and independently.

Testimonies

Students, staff and parents have all provided excellent feedback on the hub environment and as a result the hub has expanded during the academic year. It is set to expand further in the 2016/17 academic year.

Conclusion

The hub environment provides an opportunity for students with ASD special educational needs to receive the specific support they need to progress but also be challenged academically. This environment means that parents do not have to choose between either a special school which would provide the protection their child needs and a school which would provide access to the mainstream curriculum.

Staff at Bents Green and Westfield have worked together to make the hub environment a success. They have also worked closely with parents to ensure the timetables are designed to meet the needs of their child and this is reviewed regularly.

Despite the hub being originally set up to cope with a sharp rise in demand at Bents Green special school it has had a positive impact on the hub students and is something their parents feel others should have the opportunity to benefit from.

Background

Overall rates for special educational needs (SEN)

The latest school census data shows that 1.2 million pupils in England (14.4%) were identified with special educational needs in January 2016, although this number has been falling since 2010. 991,980 pupils (11.6%) were on SEN support and 236,805 (2.8%) had a statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

In Sheffield schools there were 13,390 pupils in England (16.4%) identified with SEN in January 2016. 11,380 (13.9%) of these were on SEN support and 2,005 (2.5%) of these had a statement of SEN or an EHC plan.

Autistic spectrum disorder rates

Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is the most common primary type of need for pupils with a statement of SEN or EHC plan in England – 25.9% of these pupils had ASD as their primary type of need in January 2016 and this percentage has been increasing in recent years. In Sheffield 35.1% of pupils with a statement or EHC plan had ASD as their primary type of need in January 2016.

Bents Green school

URN: 107169, LAESTAB: 3737010

[Bents Green school](#) is an 11-19 community (LA maintained) special school located in south west Sheffield. Based on the January 2016 school census it had 162 pupils all of which had a statement of SEN or EHC plan. 136 pupils had Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as their primary type of need. Its [latest Ofsted rating](#) (from July 2014) was 'good'. The school has links with Sheaf Specialist vocational college and since September 2015 has also had links with Westfield school.

Bents Green philosophy

Bents Green put an emphasis on the learning of the 'seven C's':

Confidence, Curiosity, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Commitment and Craftsmanship.

Westfield school

URN: 107135, LAESTAB: 3734252

[Westfield school](#) is an 11-16 mainstream, foundation, comprehensive (LA maintained) school based in south east Sheffield. Based on the January 2016 school census it had 1,291 pupils of which 28 (2.2%) had a statement of SEN or EHC plan and 133 (10.3%) were on SEN support. 12 pupils had ASD as their primary type of need. The [latest Ofsted rating](#) for the school (from December 2014) was 'requires improvement'. The school was formerly a specialist sports school and because of this has excellent sporting facilities including an indoor swimming pool and a gym.

Westfield school inclusive ethos

Westfield is an inclusive school where everyone is a learner. All individuals in Westfield school are valued for who they are and what they bring. We are dedicated to promoting high quality learning opportunities for everyone in an environment that is safe, secure and happy. Westfield school strives to encourage all to reach their fullest potential and develop the well-being, aspirations and community belonging of all its unique individuals.

Need for new provision

Mirroring the national trend in increasing numbers of pupils identified with ASD, in recent years Sheffield LA has had a need to create additional places at Bents Green school and 2015 in particular saw an oversubscribed year group at Bents Green.

Satellite provision student scoping exercise

To design an alternative to Bents Green, the leadership team looked at the profiles of students on roll at Bents Green, the different profiles of students with ASD across Sheffield and the different pathways of education needed to support each student to fulfil their potential.

It became apparent that there was a gap between the full time specialist provision on offer at Bents Green school and the existing integrated resource provision currently on offer in Sheffield, which exists on an 80% minimum mainstream access. These resourced provision settings are in high demand and are extremely successful for many students but there were identifiable gaps in the provision available.

A profiling exercise took place to consider options and two key questions arose:

1. How can we create a provision that would offer ASD students with academic strengths the opportunity to achieve their full potential in an environment in which they could continue to flourish, be happy and be successful?
2. How can we develop a provision which would enable our students with the ability to access mainstream social opportunities the chance to do so whilst ensuring the additional support to meet their ASD learning needs?

The answer to this question was: **To create a hub which caters for students able to successfully work towards integration into mainstream opportunities in an entirely bespoke and personalised manner** – thus the Westfield satellite hub was born.

Design of approach

Once the notion of a hub had been established, leadership teams from both Westfield and Bents Green, together with the local authority, have worked together to create a vision and put in place the stepping stones that would enable the vision to become a reality.

Location The location of the hub within the main body of the school helped hub students to establish a sense of belonging (further enhanced by hub students wearing the Westfield uniform). The location also enables students to move easily between the hub and the main body of the school. However, the location of the hub on a lower floor allows for some separation and having a separate entrance means hub students can avoid the busier areas of the main body of the school. This separation creates a discrete space for the hub students which is calm and quiet. More specifically the hub has relaxation areas, sensory spaces, muffled bell tones and a highly structured and visual environment.

Staffing The staff team in the hub were selected as they had experience in both mainstream and ASD settings and were also willing to adapt their teaching methods to the ways their students learn. Specifically the lead teacher and one teaching assistant joined the hub from Bents Green school and two further members of staff joined the hub from Westfield school. The staff team had a comprehensive ASD induction and Team Teach training at Bents Green school. The hubs lead teacher also provided training in ASD to Westfield mainstream staff and staff in feeder primary schools. These links have grown across the year and staff from both settings now benefit from mutual training opportunities. Expertise is also shared through daily liaison with regard to meeting the needs of the hub students accessing mainstream lessons. There has also been a secondary positive impact of this training and shared expertise on the provision, support and outcomes for Westfield's own ASD students.

Education All hub students have bespoke pathways to access teaching and learning in the best form for them; integration into mainstream, mainstream work delivered in the hub or hub delivered curriculum. All students are additionally able to access other key curriculum areas offered within Bents Green such as life skills and outdoor curriculum. Through this students learn to access a range of community places and experiences and become more adept at skills involved in travel, money, management and communication. This curriculum provides accreditation opportunities through the ASDAN life skills challenges.

Students: The hub began its life with 8 students ranging from year 7 to year 9; 1 teacher and 2 full-time equivalent teaching assistants. Staffing numbers had to be enhanced partly to respond to the needs of one particular student but also to reflect the success of some of the students with their ability to build increasing amounts of time in mainstream lessons.

Student confidence is built through gradual adaptations in their timetables. Mainstream opportunities are decided upon through person-centred collaboration with the student, hub staff, parents and mainstream staff. Integration continually builds upon success, adapts to reduce barriers and is flexible to allow for student's mood and anxiety levels on a day to day basis. Skilled staff support is essential to ensure students are able to effectively participate and benefit from mainstream lessons. With this level of support and guidance some students have been able to develop their confidence and independence to access some sessions independently; an achievement which will stand them in good stead for future college experience.

Westfield satellite hub summary

Ethos

To provide an inclusive and personalised provision which enables ASD students an opportunity to successfully access mainstream learning and social opportunities.

Curriculum

- Broad balanced curriculum, delivered in hub or mainstream as appropriate to the individual
- Access to life skills curriculum for all students
- Access to communication and social skills sessions
- Access to therapeutic curriculum to support and reduce levels of anxiety
- Collaborative planning and delivery between Bents Green and mainstream staff
- Supported access to mainstream teaching and learning opportunities
- ASDAN life skill challenge qualifications
- Incorporates outcomes from EHC plans
- Individualised student timetables, planned in a person-centred manner, to build on student strengths, through collaboration between students, staff and parents
- Enrichment opportunities, for example lunch time clubs

Staffing

- Teacher and teaching assistants with high levels of ASD awareness and experience (formerly based at Bents Green main site)
- ASD induction of hub staff
- ASD awareness CPD provided for all mainstream staff
- Mutual access between schools for access appropriate training
- All staff TEAM TEACH training
- Permanent, expanded staffing structure recruited for September 2016
- Regular links with health and social care professionals

Environment

- Highly structured, visual environment
- Visual supports to aid student learning and understanding
- Safe retreats for students
- Hub based curriculum available 100%
- Separate entrance and exit points for hub students to ensure calm, settled start to each day
- Sensory area and resources used to support sensory and emotional needs

Expansion

The 2015/16 pilot year for the hub has proved successful for students, staff and parents and an agreement has been reached with Sheffield local authority for permanency and an increase in student numbers.

Students: In 2015/16 there were 9 students in the hub (3 x year 9, 2 x year 8 and 4 x year 7), the proposed picture for 2016/17 would be to increase this to 20 students (3 x year 10, 2 x year 9, 4 x year 8 plus up to 8 x year 7 and a further 3 places for year 8 or year 9 students.) The additional students should not all be year 7 as this would limit future intakes by stiling student flow – ideally the yearly intake for the hub would be 5 students.

A maximum of 25 students has been agreed based on the size of accommodation and staffing structure in place. To go above this number would need careful consideration to avoid a negative impact on other children in the group. Furthermore, some students have additional requirements and need additional funding beyond the standard package in order to provide an appropriate person-centred approach.

Staff: In order for an expanded hub to operate successfully a review of staffing structure was required. This ensured that where students have the ability to be included in mainstream lessons their needs can be appropriately supported. This is essential for building students' confidence, self-esteem and ultimately their independence. It is also necessary to ensure mainstream staff delivering lessons to children – including hub-based students - have sufficient understanding of individual children to provide appropriate learning experiences and support strategies.

The staffing structure will need to be reviewed regularly and adapted as needed to suit the requirements of the group which will be affected by:

- Amount and breadth of mainstream inclusion
- Profiles of individual students placed in the provision.

Premises and classroom set up: the increase in provision will require an additional two spaces within the school; 1 classroom and 1 additional calm room area. This will require change of use for rooms within Westfield school (currently a library and office space). The new classroom will need fully furnishing to include ICT equipment, desktops and interactive whiteboard as well as general classroom furniture and storage.

The hub will also need to be equipped with relevant teaching and learning/ curriculum resources to meet the needs of the different abilities and year groups within the hub. This will include the need for online access to GCSE and equivalent teaching packages.

Therapy: During 2015/16 it was recognised that a number of hub students have high levels of anxiety and for many this has been the biggest barrier to success within Westfield. For those about to embark on GCSE courses in September 2016 there is a need to continue to develop a therapeutic hub-based curriculum, designed to reduce academic related stress and anxiety. This is one of the key priorities for 2016/17 and is being supported by Bents Green sensory team.

Case studies

Case study 1

Background

CS1 is a student who joined the hub in September 2015 in year 9 having previously attended Bents Green school and prior to that a special primary school. In addition to their SEN diagnosis of ASD, CS1 also has associated additional needs relating to social communication, anxiety and specific learning difficulties (dyslexia).

The decision for CS1 to join the hub was a collaborative decision made between staff, CS1's mother and CS1 themselves. It was felt that CS1 was not currently being stretched academically and the hub would help with this as well as providing the support required to cope with their high levels of anxiety.

Timetables

In September 2015, at the start of the hub, CS1 was in the hub full time to reduce anxiety levels caused by the transition to the new location. However, the transition proved successful and CS1 built good relationships with hub staff and requested access to mainstream lessons. The flexible set up of the hub meant that the student's requests were listened to and accommodated and by week three CS1 was accessing a number of subjects in the mainstream setting (mathematics, English, science, Art and ICT).

CS1 has recently commenced KS4 courses and is taking part in 7 GCSE courses. The majority of their timetable is in mainstream lessons, although with support from designated hub staff. The lessons CS1 has within the hub provide the nurture and support needed to succeed as well as help CS1 manage their anxieties.

Progression

CS1 has made excellent progress academically and socially. Since joining the hub their attainment in English, mathematics and science has significantly improved. The hub set up also gives CS1 access to life skills curriculum as they would have done at Bents Green school, which is a particularly important aspect to their parents. CS1 has completed a number of ASDAN life skills modules at entry level 3 and has made good progress with independence and social skills. For example, on joining the hub CS1 would need adult support for out of school excursions but CS1 can now travel independently by public transport with a small group of peers.

Case study 2

Background

CS2 joined the hub in September 2015 as a year 8 student. Prior to joining the hub, CS2 had been home schooled until year 5, had spent a year in a primary resourced provision setting and had been at Bents Green school during year 7. Whilst at Bents Green school CS2 was identified as being more socially and academically able than her peers. However, their ASD diagnosis meant CS2 required support, specifically as they were liable to social misunderstanding. CS2 also required access to the nurturing support of a specialist environment. The hub could provide the ideal environment for CS2 and the decision for CS2 to join the hub was made in collaboration between staff and CS2's parents.

Timetables

CS2 has successfully integrated both socially and academically into the Westfield school setting. CS2 has made friends from the mainstream community and socialises with these without adult support. From the start of their time in the hub CS2 accessed some mainstream lessons (mathematics, English and science) and by the end of the 2015/16 academic year CS2 was able to access mainstream lessons 80% of the time. In addition, CS2 is able to access mathematics and English lessons in mainstream settings without TA support.

Although CS2 is able to spend the majority of their time in mainstream settings, they have required the support of hub staff to succeed. Specifically, CS2 has needed PSHE/ ASD work around friendships and social interactions. CS2 has also had 1:1 support focusing on maturity to bring them in line with their mainstream peers.

Progression

In addition to their ASD diagnosis, CS2 has recently being diagnosed with ADHD which has meant support of the hub has been crucial. These attention difficulties have had an impact on academic progress (CS2 is currently unmedicated) however CS2 has made expected progress this year and exceeded targets in a number of subjects (English, mathematics, ICT and Spanish).

The important factor in CS2's success in the hub environment has been the communication and collaboration between hub staff, CS2's parents and particularly CS2 themselves. The communication and collaboration between hub staff and mainstream staff has also been vital in ensuring this set up is successful.

Case study 3

Background

CS3 joined the hub as a year 7 student in September 2015. Prior to joining the hub, CS3 had been in specialist ASD provision in the primary phase of their education. However, CS3's parents chose the hub for the secondary phase of CS3's education as they felt there was some academic ability which may have remained untapped at Bents Green school. In addition CS3's parents wanted CS3 exposed to a range of social situations and lessen their dependence on routine.

Timetables

In September 2015 CS3 completed all their lessons in the hub environment; however they did complete technology and PE in the mainstream environment in a class consisting of other hub students and students in Westfield's nurture group which gave them an introduction to the new school. CS3 was able to gradually introduce and increase the number of lessons within the mainstream environment – from end October 2015 they were accessing mathematics and from February they were also accessing English, ICT and Art in mainstream setting.

Progression

By the end of the 2015/16 academic year CS3 had exceeded almost all of their target grades and the combination of the Westfield and Bents Green timetables and ethos has been a real benefit to them. CS3 has access to mainstream lessons which aids social and academic progress whilst also having access to life skills and ASD curriculum of Bents Green. CS3 has had access to ASDAN life skills challenges in following directions, road safety, basic laundry activities and making a snack using a microwave.

Observations

During my visit to Westfield school to understand how the hub operated, I had the opportunity to experience a range of environments and see what the school had to offer. A benefit to the hub set up is that hub pupils have the opportunity to use a range of facilities within the school which would not have been possible at Bents Green school. This includes the excellent sport facilities including the swimming pool, gym and tennis courts and other activities such as science laboratories, design and technology room and food technology – where the hub students are able to wear chef's whites just like the mainstream pupils.

Westfield school occupies a large site in south east Sheffield, this gives the opportunity for a range of sporting activities including an area the hub students can use away from the mainstream pupils at lunch time and has also meant Westfield have been able to set up a garden for hub students to use to gain further skills. The design of the building has meant the hub has some separation from the rest of the school and its separate entrance means hub students can arrive at school without the usual hustle and bustle of the start of the school day.

Westfield school has a clear uniform policy and hub students attending mainstream lessons are required to comply with this – however this can be relaxed when within the hub environment.

The presence of the hub in the mainstream setting has also enabled some hub students to get involved in extracurricular activities with mainstream pupils; this has included rugby and choir.

Lesson in hub environment

I observed a maths lesson within the hub environment. Only a few students were present as a number of hub students were attending mainstream lessons at the same time. This meant the hub staff were able to provide the hub students with more attention, there were 6 children, 1 teacher and 4 teaching assistants present. This lesson covered a range of abilities (some of the students were quite quick with their mathematics!) and the hub staff adapted teaching and learning accordingly. There was recall of previous lessons and the tasks were broken down. Relevant equipment was provided to ease things for the pupils such as white boards, rubbers and pens.

Following the task students were asked to rate it to help the teacher understand how they had coped: red meant they really didn't understand, amber meant they understood but needed help and green meant they understood without help. Each pupil had a reward chart on their desk which was either pictorial or word based with bespoke objectives for each child e.g. x should always stay in their chair during lesson time; or y should always have a kind voice. If a child has five ticks and no crosses then they are allowed 'reward time' at the end of lessons which is something the child can choose - either a game or some time using the computer.

Lesson in mainstream environment

I observed a Y10 science lesson which 2 hub students attended with one hub teaching assistant. The TA explained the task required to 1 hub student but the other was able to work independently. During this integrated lesson and the potential distraction of other pupils, the hub students were able to sit quietly and and focus on their learning

Swimming lesson

I observed a swimming lesson within Westfield school which a number of hub students attended together with some students from the Westfield Endeavour Group (students with similar needs to the Bents Green students but on the Westfield School roll). The students have swimming lessons from sports centre staff and play team games with hub staff. All the students seemed more relaxed in the water; they seemed happier to follow instructions and were less likely to get upset about losing a game than is often the case when not in the water. This seemed to be an extremely positive experience for the students – they had lots of fun! The pool being on site meant that this activity took much less time than it would have done to travel to a swimming pool elsewhere which means students could include this within their timetable more often.

Other observations

At the end of the day hub students all take part in 'review time'. This is a time for reflection on the day's events. There is the opportunity to describe what has been good or bad about their day. Each student takes it in turns to rate the day using symbols then gives a reason for the rating. If the student is stressed or unhappy there is the opportunity to have a 1:1 discussion with a member of hub staff. Hub students each have a 'positivity jar' where other students can add a note about something good that student has done. These jars are emptied regularly to help everyone remember these occasions.

Testimonies

Parents

“I always felt before that I had to make a choice between x feeling looked after or developing his academic ability, so I chose for x to be looked after at Bents Green. Now I don't have to make that choice. This is perfect because he can develop academically but still be nurtured and if he needs that time out he can have it.”

“It's the first time x has looked happy returning from school and that she's relishing the challenge.”

At a parents' evening other parents stated they thought their child was thriving and the hub environment was perfect for them.

Students

“I like the fact that sometimes you can stay in the hub and sometimes go into lessons because you can see other people but you still get a break”

“I really like being able to choose which lessons I do and there's no pressure. I'm really enjoying this school for the challenge, the opportunity and the clubs. I can still get the support I really really need.”

“I get a better education here, it's more up to my level, I'm enjoying everything.”

“I like that I don't have to go to mainstream lessons that I think are absolutely evil. The Discovery Room mean I have somewhere to go if I am stressed in lessons.”

“The other people (students) are more sociable so I can make more friends. The work is harder so I'll be able to take GCSEs.”

“I like school because I've made new friends and the teachers are really nice and helpful”

“I like the hub and I like this school because any problems I have the staff will help us in any way possible. There are many reasons why I like school; like the mainstream lessons are enjoyable in a strange way. Also the many different but nice and friendly people I can talk and make friends with. The hub is probably the best bit about the school, for example if we're too stressed or tired to go into mainstream lessons you can just go back into the hub and do as much work as you can or you can simply relax and wait to cool off your stress. Another great thing is that people from mainstream can come down to the hub during morning or dinner break, there are also a bunch of activities at dinner break for fun.”

“The thing that is brilliant about the hub is that you get more help and the school is just brilliant indeed. I really enjoy coming to school because I just love school in general and all the staff give you respect and I can choose what lessons I can go to and a member of staff goes with you and all the teachers listen to you.”

“I like mainstream because I have made many many many friends and most people are nice. In lessons you get to do lots of different things.”

“I like computers and I like the school because I can go to the swimming pool.”

“I like the swimming pool. I like making new friends at lunch time, like playing bingo and watching a film. I like ICT because we get to do fun work.”

Staff

“...this has been an incredibly positive journey for all involved in this exciting experience...I feel we work as one unit where experience and knowledge are shared on a regular basis. This has had a positive impact on the progress of all students.” Jo Tyler HLTA

“...It has been a privilege working with these students as I have seen them develop not just socially but academically. I can see the hub going from strength to strength in the future. As there will be another ten students joining the hub in September. Unfortunately it will be full to capacity and I know of parents who have heard of the Hub’s success wanting their children to attend in September.” G Briggs.

“ I feel the hub has been a great success for everyone involved...we have all worked collaboratively, shared ideas and supported one another...I have found it quite endearing to see how the Westfield students have welcomed the new students and supported them in and around school.”

“The hub has been a massive learning experience for myself. I have met some extremely positive and complex individuals and I feel richer for the experience...I think the partnership with Bents Green and Westfield school has been nothing but positive.” Jane Ryan HLTA

“As headteacher of Westfield school I consider it a privilege for us to host the Bents Green hub...it has been an absolute pleasure and a highlight of the year to see just how these young people have integrated and developed through the hub provision...it is particularly satisfying to see these young people wear their Westfield uniforms with real pride and feel part of our learning community.

Locating the hub at Westfield has enabled our students to work and socialise alongside young people with a diverse range of need. It opens the minds of Westfield students to the diversity of people in society and supports our efforts to instil good values, tolerance and understanding...We are excited and looking forward to the expanding provision next year and beyond.” Andy Ireland, Headteacher, Westfield school.

Other information

Pupil premium information

A number of hub students are eligible for pupil premium funding, and these students benefit from a range of support such as:

- 1:1 anxiety management
- Support in hub with homework
- Access to therapeutic curriculum
- Personalised visual resourced

Future developments for 2016/17

- Continue to develop a therapeutic and sensory curriculum appropriate to the needs of all students entering the hub.
- Develop further enrichment opportunities
- Identify and plan work experience opportunities, initially for Y10 students
- Plan for alternative accreditation routes (functional skills)
- Establish new staff teams
- Embed new hub timings (due to success of hub a number of students are spending more time in mainstream settings which means they need to start their day at same time to enable them to attend).
- Embed baseline for all new students coming into hub.

Data sources

This publication uses data from the school census which is collected termly from schools. Data from this source on pupils with special educational needs is published annually by the Department of Education. Their latest Statistical First Release, 'Special educational needs in England: January 2016' is available [here](#).

A range of other data on children and young people with special educational needs is summarised in the Department for Education's publication 'SEN: analysis and summary of data sources' which is available [here](#).

Acknowledgements

This report has been produced using a range of materials provided by staff at Westfield and Bents Green schools. This material has proved vital in the production of a range of sections of this report specifically the case studies and testimonies.