

RE-SHAPING THE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN WIRRAL

REPORT FOR SCHOOLS FORUM NOVEMBER 2020

PART 1: WIRRAL COMMISSIONED ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

The academic year 2019/20 heralded a new way of managing the education of permanently excluded students in Wirral; the closure of Emslie Morgan Academy enabled us to pilot a range of provisions commissioned through Progress – Schools Ltd. in order to further investigate and innovate educational provision for students who are permanently excluded and who, for whatever reason, cannot be reintegrated back into mainstream school.

Obviously, the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown for schools had an impact on numbers being permanently excluded as well as student attendance and engagement with education; despite the inhibiting factors faced, there are a number of positive aspects to have emerged during 2019/20 including:

1. 24 rescinded permanent exclusions during the academic year.
2. The proactive engagement by the Local Authority in recognising the potential negative consequences of young people being disengaged from education for a prolonged period and the positive work undertaken with schools to try to mitigate these circumstances.
3. Considerable resource expended to try to reduce the potential impact of young people becoming NEET at age 16
4. An overall reduction in number of young people being permanently excluded during a 'like for like' period (March 2019 compared with March 2020 – see below).

Progress – Schools Ltd now operates from three bases within the Birkenhead area, delivering a range provision including:

Key Stage 3 Reintegration Programme: continuing to develop and embed the 12 week reintegration programme for KS3 students, as preparation for students to re-join mainstream school. Over 77% of KS3 students who have been reintegrated back into mainstream education since 2018 have done so successfully; thanks are due to our secondary schools who have worked in collaboration with Progress-Schools to secure the success of this project.

Progress - Pathways: continuing to offer a vocationally based curriculum for permanently excluded KS4 students in conjunction with high quality local providers including Cornerstone and Tranmere Rovers FC. Many students who have accessed Progress Pathways this year have achieved some success as evidenced both by their achievement in qualifications and the destination data currently being collated (see attached report).

A Nurture and Wellbeing Centre: the development of a provision for permanently excluded children in crisis, requiring a strongly therapeutic approach. The curriculum is aimed at building resilience, self-regulation and anger management, with opportunities for practical and creative activities, as well as core subjects.

An Assessment Centre: the creation of a small assessment facility aimed at rapid assessment of students who present as having undiagnosed SEND, leading to EHCPs where appropriate. On conclusion of assessment, students who demonstrate that their needs would be best met through special school placement would be facilitated; students who do not meet the threshold would be supported through strategies identified during the assessment process to either re-integrate back into mainstream school or allocated a place at Progress Pathways, if deemed to be more appropriate. During this year a student for whom an EHCP assessment was completed has subsequently transferred to Kilgarth School.

Progress – Futures programmes: aimed at students in both Key Stages 3 & 4 who are not ready for reintegration, or who may have already experienced the KS3 Reintegration Programme/ Progress - Pathways and not responded positively to the opportunities presented. These students require continuing educational programmes with the effective delivery of English and Maths at an appropriate level, a curriculum with a strong practical bias, and interventions designed to help them to become ready to access education either through re-integration back to mainstream or to progress on to the Progress Pathways programme. For Y11 students there is a strong emphasis on the need for intensive, high quality IAG, with progression opportunities for post 16 education/ training clearly signposted to avoid young people becoming NEET.

These facilities have just begun Year 2 of the pilot project. We shall continue to assess their impact, both in terms of educational outcomes for young people but also the value for money they provide.

PART 2: SCHOOL COMMISSIONED ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Despite the pandemic, during the academic year 2019/20, there were **275 referrals** to Alternative Educational provision through the Portal, of which:

200 were boys

75 were girls

93 have some form of SEND

145 were Pupil Premium and

16 were CLA

This remains fairly typical of the picture nationally.

In terms of secondary school permanent exclusions, the following three year trend has emerged:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 (until March '20)
43	46	18

Of course, whilst the reduced number of permanent exclusions in the last academic year could be attributed to the period of lockdown, this is not necessarily the case. As noted above, the number of permanent exclusions from September to March in the previous academic year (2018/19) was actually 36. Therefore, it would be fair to suggest that we were actually on track to reduce permanent exclusions significantly last year. This has been achieved through the development of close collaborative working arrangements with schools, challenging permanent exclusion and offering high quality alternative educational opportunities, identifying students at risk of permanent exclusion and assisting schools to put effective interventions into place.

Primary schools have been accessing Evolve Enterprise, based at the site of Hillside Primary School, who offer a purely therapeutic package for children in Years 4, 5 and 6, in order to build resilience, and support self regulation, self calming and anger management in younger children, especially in readiness for secondary school transfer. Early indications suggest some positive impact. We are currently developing a pilot for Primary aged children who have been identified with SEMH in collaboration with WRAP.

Other Providers who continue to support Wirral schools and who are affiliated to the Wirral Guild of Alternative Education are as follows:

Cornerstone Training (Construction)
Horizons Education (English and Maths tuition)
Impact Northwest (English, Maths, therapeutic intervention, SEN support, Arts Award)
Liviva (Hair and Beauty)
Reaseheath College (outdoor educational experiences for young people with SEN Year 9 and land-based qualifications KS4)
WRAP (Educational support, therapeutic intervention, vocational qualifications, KS4 study support)
Utopia Project (KS4 study support plus vocational qualifications and GCSE Eng and Maths)
Stride (English, Maths, vocational qualifications)
Tranmere Rovers Football Club (vocational qualifications through Progress Pathways)
Wirral Riding School (re-engagement of disaffected young people through equine activities including related qualifications through the British Horse Society)

The challenge for the next academic year is to continue to develop the growth of safe, high quality provision in Wirral, enhancing the breadth and range of our offer.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN WIRRAL: FUTURE PLANS

Moving forward, the key objectives for 2020/21 are as follows:

1. Continuing to review and evaluate the success of the pilot commissioned provisions replacing Emslie Morgan Academy; completing tendering arrangements in regard to the provision for young people who have been permanently excluded from school from September 2021
2. Continuing to work collaboratively with schools in order to further develop the Alternative Education landscape and broaden the offer currently available for schools to commission
3. Ensuring that students who access the bulk of their education through Alternative Provision are not disadvantaged in any way, establishing better coordinated services with health, social care, and other relevant agencies.

Jan Levenson
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