



An Excellence Gateway case study

Published: 30th July 2012

Bolton Sixth Form College: Mentoring Pakistani-Heritage Boys

Contact person

Robert Hindle – email: rhindle@bolton-sfc.ac.uk

Outline the aim

The project aims to raise the attainment of Pakistani heritage boys by developing a mentor programme utilising the support and experience of two partner secondary schools. Pakistani heritage boys are the lowest achievers in the College at AS level, especially in Maths and Science. They under-achieve relative to other groups at GCSE in partner schools and the work of two- Ladybridge High School and Harper Green School- suggests mentor work that engages parents and higher education in raising aspirations can raise achievement.

An initiative begun in 2010/11 involved a small group of students and relied upon the good will of a volunteer mentor. This worked well and all bar one student achieved and remained in College. It had been hoped to use the funding to add at least one more mentor and to roll out the project to support 10 students. Finance was used to take students on a University visit, to bring in two successful, inspirational guest speakers (one from London) from the same heritage group. Funding will also support the expenses of the mentors and project co-ordination from in College.

The challenge

The project aims to:

1. Raise the attainment of each Pakistani heritage student by one grade, which would significantly improve the average points score per student of this cohort
2. Raise aspirations and provide a network of support and skills necessary for students to pass the January 2012 module exams at their minimum target grade or better

3. Engage parents in a better understanding of the nature of post-16 courses, in the support from home required and the entry routes available to HE
4. To retain all 10 students in College

Outcomes:

1. 100% success rate for this group of students
2. Improved parental understanding of post-16 qualifications and HE pathways
3. Students pass their January 2012 module exams at minimum target grade or better

Partnership organisations

One of our partner secondary schools- Ladybridge School- provided a mentor who had worked with Pakistani heritage boys to Year 11. Asif worked for us on a Monday afternoon/evening to support ex-Ladybridge students now at College but also those from other partner schools.

The outputs

5 students have been mentored since the project began; a wider pool of 10 has also been involved in ad hoc sessions aimed to raise aspirations and provide careers advice.

Asif, our mentor, was trained by his partner school but provided with some scope and background about the College and details of particular students extracted from their personal tutor.

Asif produced a selection of careers based resources and some on learning styles- these can be uploaded to the LSIS site.

The impacts and outcomes

The project outcomes were set out as:

- 100% success rate for this group of students
- Improved parental understanding of post-16 qualifications and HE pathways
- Students pass their January 2012 module exams at minimum target grade or better

It has been successful in keeping each of the students in College- retention is 100% for this cohort. Students are better informed of their career options and the mentor has been able to provide a further means of aspirational support in addition to the Senior Tutor.

Performance of the students has been mixed in the exam to date.

A final session to include each of the students in the cohort is to take place at the end of April.

Some contact has been made with parents- this came via the Senior Tutor rather than the mentor. The aim is to improve the success rate for this cohort of students, which we can measure in August 2012.

5 individual students were mentored on a one to one level; a wider pool of 10 took part in whole group sessions. These well received and attendance at each of the sessions was over 90%. All students were of Pakistani heritage.

Working relationship with LSIS

We have worked with LSIS before and so were aware of the support they can offer post-16 institutions.

Good value for money

The project allowed a joined up approach to mentoring, allowing two institutions to share and pool the cost of mentoring. The expertise, experience, resources and contacts brought by the mentor have supported gains in retention and hence funding.

Projects such as these support the life chances of the students involved through raising retention and attainment and contributing to wider social mobility.

Senior managers involvement

I led the project, supported by the mentor and by one of the Senior Tutors, Shahid Rizvi. The success of the project has been reported back to senior management meetings.

Stakeholder involvement

A local mentor partnership group was approached for support and the provision of an additional mentor but unable to provide one. A perennial problem! In recent weeks a former student, a female of Pakistani heritage, has also worked with groups of students on an ad hoc and virtual basis.

Learner involvement

Learners were involved in the types of activities completed by the mentor, including careers guidance and subject specific support.

Raising awareness

We identified the cohort of students we would target at the start of the year- marginally qualified Pakistani heritage boys from some of our key partner schools. Previous data collected by the College suggests these students have traditionally left College or underachieved in final exams.

Continuity of project, after LSIS funding

Yes, we can use the materials and find funding to continue Asif's role.

Did you experience any difficulties in implementing the project and how did you overcome these?

Learner engagement was more positive than in previous projects of this nature- in part because of the Senior Tutor contacting parents and students proactively to support the work of the mentor.

Whilst the mentor cannot always 'turn around' the performance of a student, it is pleasing to report the improvement in retention evident.

The lessons learned

The key issue remains being able to find sufficient mentors, particularly those of Pakistani heritage- some can give intermittent periods of time but a regular commitment proves difficult from all but a minority due to work and study commitments.

Sustainability – lasting legacy

We have asked Asif to continue in this role next year.

Demonstrating impact – evidence of short and long term impact

In the longer term, it is hoped further work between the College and the local Pakistani community (which began some years ago) can be sustained.

Additional comments

A useful exercise- we were able to engage Asif and support the sessions he ran for us through the grant that LSIS provided: thank you.

Disclaimer

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) support the development of educational e-practice. We may refer to specific products, processes or services. Such references are examples and are not endorsements or recommendations and should not be used for product endorsement purposes.