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**All Saints Catholic Centre
for Learning
Using Mental Toughness
& the MTQ48 in the
Deep Support Pilot
Programme**

All Saints Catholic Centre for Learning is a larger than average mixed secondary school, providing education for approximately 1300 learners aged between 11 and 18 years old. It is a voluntary aided school, which serves the Catholic community of Kirkby but is a popular choice for non-Catholic families too. A high proportion of learners come from an economically disadvantaged background and the number of students entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Nearly all of the learners are of White British ethnicity, and many have difficulties with literacy or present emotional and behavioural challenges. Learners' attainment when they join the Centre for Learning is generally below that expected for their age.

Probably like all schools All Saints has always wanted happiness and success for its learners, enabling them to mature into rounded adults who will take a positive and active role in our society. In 2000 as part of our ongoing commitment to raising standards in the classroom we felt that it was no longer possible to ignore feelings in school, as emotions affect our personal learning experience and can act as either motivators or barriers to the learning process. We felt that students needed to have a goal and a reason to learn. They needed to believe that they were able to learn and might need to accept help and support from others to be able to do this.

Since 2004 The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and Professor David Hargreaves have been working to chart the progress of personalisation and innovation in schools. During 2007 they initiated innovative developments in primary and secondary schools in two local authorities. They believed that "students in the 21st century needed much greater support than ever before to achieve their potential as learners." To help schools to establish a more coordinated approach to personalised learning, the trust identified "four deeps" that they believed were integral to the success of this agenda: Deep Learning; Deep Experience; Deep Leadership; and Deep Support. Knowsley was one of the two local authorities working on this initiative and All Saints was successful in its bid to become one of the North-West's hub schools to pilot "Deep Support" based upon the good practice that was already being demonstrated in the fields of mentoring, care, support and guidance and through its work on Emotional Literacy.

To be a success in life a child needs to possess self-awareness and self-esteem to encourage motivation and creativity. To interact with their peers and socialise, they need to be able to demonstrate empathy. These had been some of the basic beliefs that our school committed to for the previous seven years but the Deep Support Pilot Programme enabled All Saints to take its work on emotional literacy and mentoring to another level by providing more opportunities for students to learn how to build strengths that protect and promote well-being. Through the introduction of the MTQ 48, staff were provided with a quick and easy assessment and evaluation tool, which was used to identify those learners most in need of support and measure the impact of any intervention work.

Initially 180 Year 7 learners, their Form Tutors, the Deputy Principal with responsibility for Key Stage 3 and the Learning Mentors all completed the questionnaire. Following an analysis of the results, 36 students were identified to form the control group and were chosen specifically because they were not already receiving support from the Learning Mentors, SEN Department or any external agencies and had scored low for confidence, either 3 or 4. All of the children's parents/carers were then invited to complete the questionnaire in order to establish their own levels of resilience, as children can learn to



be more mentally tough if the significant adults around them model resilient behaviours and help to promote resilience through their words, actions and the environment they raise their children in. 29 parents eventually completed the questionnaire after several attempts to engage them through a Parents Evening, letters home and home visits. The questionnaire engendered a wealth of information by creating four different reports for each child – assessors, coaching, development and candidate – each following the 4Cs model of confidence, commitment, challenge and control.

To support the assessment process and use the information to enhance the 4Cs model, All Saints developed a two-tier programme organised to enable personal growth and active experience. Firstly the learners were offered in-depth one-to-one sessions on a fortnightly basis. These were conducted by the Learning Mentors who were trained in counselling skills to enable the learners to experience empathy and active listening. Session content began with the Confidence aspect of the 4Cs model and started with a motivational interview in order to elicit and reinforce the learners' own motivational statements and express acceptance and affirmation. Sessions then went on to include work on:

- I am special. What is self-esteem?
- Who am I? My unique self; what do others think of me.
- Friends and relationships; who do I trust?
- My favourite things and successes.

Challenge

- Positive thoughts; self talk
- Comfort zones; "Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway"
- Tough Decisions; steps to problem solving
- Willpower; coping strategies

Commitment

- Mental muscle; independent thinking
- Inner strength; resilience
- Well-being; where will I be in the future?

Control

- Self-management of own world
- School; work organisation
- Home
- Peers

Every term the learners' latest progress reports were used in sessions with the children so that educational attainment remained an integral part of the programme. The Learning Mentors also produced individual Pupil Profiles for teaching staff from the coaching reports and liaised closely with them to facilitate cohesive academic progress in tandem with the personal growth sessions.

In addition, there was a range of motivational activities that flowed alongside the one-to-one sessions, which were all linked to the 4Cs model. Learners were given the opportunity to try canoeing, indoor climbing, dry-slope skiing and a Junior Master Chefs course, as a positive school experience and participation in a range of extra-curricular activities have been known to contribute to the growth of resilience. The PE Department also developed a programme called “Heroes” for the group, which involved the learners using teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills and attempting individual as well as team challenges.

The programme culminated in a Personal Development Course at PGL Boreatton Park, Shropshire. Over the course of the weekend the learners worked on the 4Cs, which were specifically linked to the activities they undertook. The course encouraged the young people to strengthen their relationships with their peers through teamwork, promoted respect between students, provided motivation for learning new skills and improved confidence and self-esteem.

The first session that the young people took part in was initiative exercises in Puzzle Park. These included placing letters of the alphabet on a wooden spider’s web ensuring that consecutive letters were not connected by any of the strands; balancing “human scales” by distributing equal amounts of their body weight at either end of a wooden see-saw; and rope exercises where learners had to support each other in order to transport the whole group from a large platform to a much smaller one without touching the ground. All of the activities required the young people to work as a team to achieve success, challenged them to find solutions to the puzzles and tested their ability to stick to the tasks despite obstacles arising.

From Puzzle Park the group moved onto the 45ft indoor climbing wall. Some of the young people had taken part in climbing before but hadn’t scaled a wall of this height and others had been too anxious to attempt it previously. However, after three attempts and lots of encouragement from the “Anchor Men” and everyone on the ground, most of the pupils managed to conquer any fears they may have had and exceeded their own expectations of themselves and some even managed to reach the dizzy heights of the very top of the wall.

They then went to the High Ropes Course, an obstacle course suspended in mid air, linked together only by ropes and wires and designed to develop trust and co-operation. This was a real test of nerve and learners had to control their emotions, keeping anxieties in check and had to believe that they could complete the task successfully using balancing techniques and skill. Initially this activity proved to be too much of a daunting challenge for some of the students to complete. However, with lots support from each other, most of them managed to negotiate their way right around the course at least once and some of them even managed a smile too whilst they were doing it!

After High Ropes the students went on to try the Challenge Course, an assault course with all of the usual challenges except this one also included an element of surprise at the end! This activity really involved agility and pupils pulling together and working as a team to help each other over, under and through various obstacles. However, waiting for them at the end was a dark underground tunnel, filled with water, which became narrower and narrower the deeper you went inside. Certainly not a tunnel

for the faint-hearted or those who suffer from Claustrophobia! Despite this, nearly all of the students attempted to go through the tunnel, scrambling out of the other end on their elbows, soaking wet, covered in mud, but couldn't have been happier with their achievement!

The group started the following day with an archery session and then from there they went onto the Giant Swing where they had to work together to elevate the swing. The harder they pulled together, the higher the swing was raised and the greater the thrill their two peers experienced when the ropes were released.

Finally, the pupils moved on to the Zip wire, which started off in a wooded area up a steep slope, traversed a river and then finished in the middle of even more trees. Again during this activity the pupils had to work together in two teams in order to ensure that the wire was returned across the river and back up the slope to the launching platform after each young person had descended the zip wire. By the time the last person had come down the wire the group was soaking wet and exhausted yet buzzing with excitement, proud of their achievements and wanted to stay another day to challenge themselves even more, proof that our aim was most definitely achieved.

Although as yet we do not have evidence to show the impact of the pilot programme on examination results as the learners involved are only in Year 10, we can say that throughout the duration of the programme the behaviour of some the more challenging learners in the group improved and improvements relating to the students' attitude to learning were noted on their termly progress reports. Also, the group were re-tested at the end of the programme using the MTQ 48 (27 out of 29 were present on the day the questionnaire was completed) and in terms of confidence 70.5% of the group had an improved confidence score, 18.5% had stayed the same and 11% had decreased.

Current Mental Toughness Work

Our target group is in Year 11 and is made up of 17 young people who are all entitled to Free School Meals. According to data predictions, they are capable of achieving grades C in English and Maths but are currently underachieving. On analysis of the MTQ 48 results, the average score for the learners' overall mental toughness is 3.2, with their lowest scores being for commitment at 2.7.

Parental support has been a vital ingredient in ensuring the success of our work with this group and this was initially secured during a visit to each learner's home where the parents/carers were asked to sign a contract agreeing to support their child and work closely with the Learning Mentors and CFL's staff. Regular telephone contact has been maintained with parents/carers, on at least a fortnightly basis but generally more frequently, in order to keep them informed of their child's progress. Additional home visits have been carried out when it has been necessary and some pupils have even been picked up and brought into school by their mentor to ensure they maintain regular attendance. The Learning Mentors

have also attended all of the Year 11 parents' events that have been delivered by the English and Maths Departments.

Group members have been allocated with a Learning Mentor who facilitated a motivational interview during their first one-to-one mentoring session and then discussed the feedback generated from the MTQ 48 with him or her in the following session. The fortnightly feedback from departments that tracks the learners' progress has also been linked to the MTQ feedback and examined in sessions. All of the mentors have worked on empowering the young people with information concerning their own learning styles. The learners now have a greater awareness of how they learn in classrooms, and if they experience difficulties, how they can help themselves. They have also been supported in drawing up a realistic revision timetable, copies of which have also been sent to parents/carers. To encourage parents to take a more active role in their child's revision a booklet entitled 'Shared Learning', written by the Learning Mentors, has been sent out to all the parents/carers to help them to understand that a more Emotionally Literate approach to education might offer a more supportive way of enabling their children during exam revision. Over the past few weeks the Learning Mentors have also been delivering a different workshop each week to the target group during R2L. Topics covered during these sessions include study skills, exam techniques, relaxation techniques, motivation, perseverance and optimism.

Learners will be re-tested using the MTQ 48 in May, just prior to their final exams, to see if the work undertaken with them has had any impact on their mental toughness scores and an analysis of the impact on GCSE results will be done in August/September once the examination results have been released.

42% of Year 7 learners scored 3 or 4 for confidence when they completed the MTQ 48 following their transition from primary school. For these learners feedback from the MTQ 48 is being linked to IAG Days when Form Tutors set targets for the next term with the learners. They are also being encouraged to actively participate in the All Saints Pledge, "15 things to do before you're 15..." The Pledge is a Key Stage 3 initiative, which takes the format of tiered building blocks, allowing learners to be rewarded for the exploration of a range of extra-curricular activities. The Pledge allows Form Tutors to explore a range of activities, which can all be linked to the 4Cs model, possibly finding and facilitating skills and passions outside of the regular curriculum. The five things Year 7s are being encouraged to undertake are:

- Attend an after school activity on a regular basis.
- Take part in a physically challenging event.
- Represent the school in a sporting activity or event.
- Read a book each term from the pledge list.
- Visit a Liverpool landmark or museum.