

Starting School/Moving On Session Case Study

Lever Park School Bolton

Background

Lever Park is a special school for 50 students with social emotional and behavioural difficulties, this is an increase on last year when the school offered 42 places and closely reflects the national trend; that of SEBD statements being the fastest growing of all statements of special educational needs. Usually the school have an intake at year 7 of 3 or 4 new pupils, however this year the intake is 14 new pupils. Obviously, on such a small school, this size of intake has the potential to impact significantly on the school community and the school are mindful to make the transition period as successful as possible and to ensure that this impact is positive.

The school have contacted new parents and asked them what would best help them with the transition to a special secondary school. There were a number of options but the most popular were;

1. Spending time in school with their children and with other parents.
2. Specialist training for dealing with challenging children.

The most significant marker of both these options is that they both allow school to share its ethos and behaviour strategies with the parents, ensuring that the children get the same messages at home and in school. Option one would also allow the parents and carers to develop relationships within school before moving on to the more demanding option of specialist training.

The school is hoping to develop specialist status and provide a resource for students up to the age of eighteen; plans for this development are underway.

Planning

The Starting School/Moving On local co-ordinator made contact with the school to explore how the community might benefit from taking part in the project. The school submitted a detailed delivery plan which included the following description of funded activity;

The school wanted to provide new parents with the opportunity to develop positive relationships with school and with their children and other parents and carers by spending time in school. They would be working with their children on practical, physical and social activities:

Social Activities
Social Skills Games

Physical Activities
Football

Family day out
Mentoring/Buddies

Swimming
Hiking
Fishing

Practical Activities

Motor mechanic classes
Brick Laying classes
Painting and decorating classes
Horticulture classes
Cooking

The Event

The event took place on a weekday evening all parents, carers and children were invited to the session. Nearly all of the schools students and their parents attended.

The session was opened by the chair of governors who presented awards to the pupils on a range of achievements; this had a very positive affect and allowed the parents to see how hard their children had been working.

A bonfire was organized in the school grounds and a hot supper was provided, parents visited classrooms and chatted to staff. The evening was used to promote other activities scheduled for the year these included, Healthy Cooking, Supporting your Child with ADHD and Family Outdoor activity days. A range of information was displayed and available for parents to take home with them.

There was a great atmosphere at the event, parents and students clearly felt comfortable and well supported by the school staff and community.

The Head teacher said;

‘We communicate with our parents on a daily basis, a good relationship with parents, grandparents and carers helps us provide the best provision for the young people.’

Outcome

The school staff team feels that the sessions will benefit the whole school community in developing a ‘Nurture School’. They see the benefits as;

Parents and carers: Given the opportunity to complete structured activity with their children will develop sustainable relationships within families and between school and home. There will also be the added benefit of skills acquisition.

The School Community: Links between school, staff and parents/carers will develop to improve communication and participation, enabling a smooth transition period.

Children Working closely with parents/carers and staff will develop a social and behavioural strategy that is consistent and will produce robust boundaries for children both at home and at school. This is shown to have considerable positive impact on self esteem and confidence.