

The Difference INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP COURSE



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Developing the inclusion expertise of all staff to support our Internal AP

When I first started as headteacher at Marvel College, there were some initial challenges. It had received a 'good' grade from Ofsted and the school was moving in the right direction. But the school had been without a headteacher for a number of months and some of the relationships between staff and pupils in school were strained which had led to some questionable practice in certain areas.

One of the challenges was our Year 6 transition. There were pupils who presented significant issues centred around their behaviour and ability to cope in a busy mainstream secondary. In some instances, these students were being sent straight into alternative provision without being given a chance in mainstream.

It was at this stage - when we were seeking answers to emerging problems - that I joined The Difference's Inclusive Leadership Course along with James, AHT for Inclusion at our school.

One of the things myself and the senior team tried to do was to change the mindset on inclusion and really unpick some of the challenges our students face on a daily basis. The course was a real catalyst for a new approach.

We looked at the impact of deprivation and the use of relationships as a vehicle for engagement

We shamelessly replicated some of the ILC content and cascaded it to our wider staff team - with quick and impactful results. This was especially effective when utilising a number of highly emotive videos and stories including "the still face experiment", the story about brain development in children who had died in European orphanages, and images that explore the impact of trauma on the developing brain.

A real benefit of the course for us was that all content is treated as 'open-source' so we could make minor tweaks to cater for where we are in Hull and then pick up and run with upskilling the wider team.

To find out more about
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Practice and Systems to support staff interactions with students.

Once our staff understood emotionally, we applied a clear framework to work in - directly influenced by the Inclusion Framework from session 1 of the Inclusive Leadership Course.

We now focus on relational practices – on the importance of strong, caring, positive relationships with staff. A lot of kids have relationships with adults where one of three things happen: they are ignored, told what to do, or told off.

When you're going down a corridor and all you say to a kid is 'tuck your shirt in', you're probably yet another adult who does one of those three things. There has to be a caring and positive aspect for relational practices to work.

We also have a weekly focus session with staff on trauma in which we select a particular topic and explore it in a short staff CPD session. Content in these staff forum sessions has included contextual safeguarding, adverse childhood experiences, relational practice, and restorative practice.

We have also introduced restorative practice school, which has promoted a shared philosophy of trust. It is about giving everyone a voice and exploring not only the feeling of the "victim" but also understanding that there might be harm to the perpetrator which also needs addressing.

We did restorative training practice with everybody in the school, including the caretaker, the lunch staff, everyone. This helps ensure a consistency of approach from everyone.

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Setting up The ARC our Internal AP

Originally, we had intended to have our Internal AP in a building away from the main school. Then we met Mohamed at The Difference, who linked us up with Dunraven School in London. This completely changed our way of thinking about Internal AP.

We came to understand the huge impact of exclusion on young people's lives, and how important it was for them to feel they weren't being rejected - and that physical spaces play a part in this. Rather than excommunicating them to a far off building, the ARC had to take a central location right at the heart of things.

The ARC is part of our pastoral centre. It provides a base which supports students to access the curriculum at a time and pace which meets their needs. It is not a place of sanction but rather of support and understanding.

The team in the ARC work with students to identify and build on their strengths using an asset-based approach, before reintegrating them back into a full curriculum.

Every week, we have a triage meeting between our deputy head for pastoral, attendance officer and SENDCo. That meeting is about who might need support in The ARC.

It's been a real success, and the staff are very supportive of the provision. Attendance at the school is now surpassing national average. More importantly, we do everything we can to keep our students in mainstream. That means that when they do access alternative provision, we have the support of parents and carers, because they can see we've done everything we can to support that child.