#

# **Wellbeing Award for Schools Case Study**

# **School name:** Churchill Special School

# **Location:** Haverhill, Suffolk

# **Brief summary of your school:**

Churchill Special Free School is a day special school for children aged 8-18 with Speech, Language and Communication difficulties including those with Autism or who are on the Autistic Spectrum. All pupils have significant barriers to their learning and many have previously had very negative experiences at school.

Many of the students who attend Churchill come to the school after long histories of low attendance, underachievement and exclusions, which in many cases led to a high proportion having had many months of very limited education. In addition, their difficulties with language and communication skills mean that many students arrive at the school without the most basic skills in place that are necessary for them to begin engaging in a learning process. This is evident in the students’ limited concentration spans, their inability to cope with issues around differences, their low tolerance levels and their inability to take turns.

Their attainment is mostly low, as seen in scores achieved in KS2 SATs or indeed in the fact that they were not entered for SATs. Students therefore require high levels of input and support so as to help them move to a position where they are able to start to engage in learning and in many cases these include reading, writing and numeracy skills.

We are an approachable school where everyone is valued as an individual and where parents and the wider community are invited to share in school life. We aim to instil in all our learners a sense of pride. Pupils at Churchill school are at the centre of everything we do. We have high expectations for both behaviour and achievement and ensure that everyone celebrates that every learner has a unique personality and talents to be developed.

While at the school pupils are offered a curriculum, which is not only broad and balanced but also exciting and challenging. Values and skills are taught together in a language-rich environment which is supportive and safe but also inspiring and exciting. Our school encourages students to begin to take responsibility for their own learning while recognising and respecting the needs of others

# **Why did your school decide to take the Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)?**

As a relatively new school there are many accreditations which can be sought. The leadership strongly believes that accreditation should be meaningful and support or enhance the work of the school.

Much of what we do at Churchill aims to engage students with education and to make their experience of education a positive one. For our school it is important that we gain recognition for the work which we are doing with the students and wider stakeholders, but also that we look for ways in which we might improve our work further.

Much of our work is validated e.g. Ofsted, Exam Outcomes, Trust Reviews and moderated lesson observations.

Over the past three years we have worked towards external accreditation by the National Autistic Society and World Class Education.

Recognition of the work done to support the wellbeing, is for us, the essential final strand.

**What particular issue(s) did the WAS help you to identify?**

The PSHE schemes of work were already in the process of being rewritten but WAS helped identify further strengths and areas for development.

Sending out more information via the App about wellbeing raised its profile further and offered parents enhanced support.

It was useful to reflect on the whole culture of the school in relation to wellbeing. The external assessor was really useful in helping to highlight more strengths than we had recognised.

Some suggestions e.g. use of pupil champions are not appropriate due to the nature of the students but re-visiting our views on this and our reasoning was a useful exercise.

**What changes did you make as a result of this?**

* Sending out more information via the App.
* Consulting with parents on the PSHE scheme of work.
* Celebrating and acknowledging our strengths particularly within the staff team.
* As part of a Trust wide group re-writing the core offer for wellbeing. The wellbeing group have focused on staff this year and will be extended to focus on pupil wellbeing next year. Many activities have been undertaken including looking at each school’s core offer, sharing resources and producing a survey.

**What impact did this have?**

* Improved offers of support for parents.
* Improved communication with parents regarding curriculum content.
* Enhanced staff support.
* An improved core offer for staff across the Trust.

# **Since achieving the Award, what direct impact(s) has the WAS had on developing parent partnerships and pupil achievement?**

* Parents often send in information to post on the App, important as our pupils are geographically far apart.
* Pupils will have an improved PSHE offer

# **What are your next steps?**

* To continue to work as part of the Trust group with a focus on wellbeing particularly for pupils.
* To continue to communicate effectively with parents via the school App.
* To incorporate key recommendations from the report into the school development plan for the next academic year.

# **How would you describe the whole experience from start to finish and achieving the award?**

Most of the objectives were easy to evidence although some required more thought. The assessor led process reduced some of the workload for the school and the assessor was extremely helpful in helping us to identify all of the strengths, the things we usually take for granted.

# **How would you recommend this award to a school thinking about undertaking the process?**

If your pupil and staff wellbeing is a high priority I would strongly recommend undertaking the accreditation. Incorporate it into your School Development Plan so that it has a high priority and is embedded in the work you do. Make sure you allocate a senior member of staff to lead the process who has time to allocate to it.

**Lastly, please provide a short testimonial from your headteacher.**

At Churchill we understand that the wellbeing of our whole community is vital. For many of our students their past experiences and outlook can impact on their attitudes and expectations. By addressing wellbeing, we enable our students to overcome difficulties and achieve. As a new school we have worked hard to develop a culture where wellbeing is at the heart of what we do. This award will help us acknowledge the progress we have made but also help us maintain the high-status wellbeing needs to have.