

VLSP case-study report specification 2002-3

Institution Name: Wadham School

Address: Mount Pleasant, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7NT

E-Mail: cjackson@wadham.somerset.sch.uk

Telephone 01460 73481

Fax Number: 01460 77482

Name of Contact: Chris Jackson

Position: Deputy Headteacher

Other information

Report title:

How 'The Possibilities Project' will contribute to recruitment and retention of Post-16 leavers.

Part 1 Overview of institution/consortium

Wadham School is an Upper School serving the communities of Ilminster, Crewkerne and surrounding villages in South Somerset. There are 750 students on roll of which 87 are Year 12 and 67 are Year 13 students. Because our students are aged 13–19 we feel we have an important strategic position in the current 14–19 phase of educational development. In addition we submitted a bid in October to secure Specialist School Status in Business and Enterprise. The bid enshrines our commitment to vocational courses pre- and post-16, to contributing to the drive for rural regeneration in our area by transforming our Business and ICT provision and, key to this case study, developing the work begun with the Possibilities Project into courses in self-determination and leadership for all.

Our post-16 programme offers 23 choices including 16 AS/A2 courses and 7 vocational courses. We are proud that in such a small institution we are able to offer combined programmes to individual students and currently 42 students are benefiting from these arrangements. Students normally choose four subjects to study in Year 12 and three in Year 13 and receive 11x50-minute periods in each subject during every 60-period fortnight. Additionally 3 further periods of teaching our Enrichment programme are provided for all students. During this time students prepare for AS/A2 General Studies, Key Skills ICT level 2 or 3 and receive careers/vocational support delivered by a team of dedicated Sixth Form Tutors.

Level 2 capabilities in the Key Skills of Numeracy and Literacy have been achieved by most students on entry to the Sixth Form through the nature of GCSE Grade C or above in English and maths. Where this is not the case students follow a compulsory one-year GCSE Maths/English course. GCSE Double Science is also available. Physical Education is an optional extra offered for 2 periods per fortnight and the Sixth Form, known as Wadham Sixth, has a thriving extra-curricular programme which involves local social trips, international study visits, the Annual Sixth Form Dinner, charity fundraising and a number of opportunities for working with younger students. Students will expect to receive a minimum of 78% taught time.

Progression is an important issue for school. At KS4 our curriculum requires the majority of students to take 10 GCSE courses. These include two compulsory half GCSEs in ICT and Religion and Philosophy. We are proud to be able to offer all our KS4 subjects at KS5 except Physical Education. Having just introduced GCSE Engineering in Y10, we will be looking at both this and PE as possible Sixth Form Courses. New courses in Business, Sociology and Psychology are introduced under current arrangements. We have an established and growing relationship with Yeovil College regarding both pre- and post-16 courses and we are nurturing developments with Plymouth University and Wadham College, Oxford in the 18+ phase.

Part 2 A description of the Possibilities Project

- The Possibilities Project aims to widen the horizons of young people by developing their self-belief, and their skills of self-determination and leadership. It is currently targeted at students who are at risk of dropping out from education at the end of KS4 or earlier.
- Students are selected by their teachers for involvement. Factors contributing to their vulnerability include 'poor learning backgrounds' under achievement, disengagement with schooling and peer group pressure.
- In addition to the above, the project addresses issues of employability and connects school-based learning with vocational planning.
- The teachers, parents and support workers of targeted students are offered opportunities for involvement in the project. For the adults this is entirely optional.

The project centres on the delivery of courses designed by The Pacific Institute. Courses use cognitive psychology and recent developments in neuroscience to put participants in more control of their lives.

Project structure

Courses will be delivered as outlined below.

- At Wadham this year they are targeted as follows:

| Course Title | Target Group | No of Participants | Timescale | Details |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Go for It! | Y9 | 12 | Sept 02 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot project • Used as a transitional activity between Middle and Upper School. |
| Go for It! | Y11 Y11 | 12 12 | Oct 02 Nov 02 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-female group • All-male group • Carefully targeted at students at risk of dropping out from learning post-16. |
| Breakthrough | Y12 | 12 12 12 12 | Nov 02 Nov 02 Dec 02 Dec 02 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All courses targeted at students who have found the transition from Y11 to Y12 challenging, whose circumstances suggest they may not continue with study or who have a poor self-image. |
| Steps to Excellence | Adults not teachers | 12 | Jan 03 T B A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be offered on a voluntary basis to parents of students outlined above and to support staff in school. • Takes place during evenings. |
| Investors in Excellence | Teachers at Wadham | 12 | Dec 02 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive 3 + 2-day training dealing with both personal and professional issues. • Offered to volunteers who teach any of the students involved in the project. |
| Facilitator Training | Teachers at Wadham | 1 or 2 | Feb 03 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-day intensive training to enable number of staff to qualify to deliver Investors in Excellence programme. |

Key personnel

- The Pacific Institute require their curriculum to be overseen by a Project Director. Ours is Malcolm Hass, Project Director South West, with responsibility for Education. Malcolm has been involved in writing much of the Youth Programme material.
- Jo Morgan is a Learning Support Assistant at the school who has trained with the Pacific Institute to Facilitator level and who will deliver much of the Youth (student-focused) Programme.
- Carol Littleboy is our SENCO and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project.

- Chris Jackson is deputy headteacher and has overall responsibility for the project in school.

Funding and resources

- A grant of approximately £20,000 has been given by Somerset LSC to support the Widening Participation focus of the project and represents an investment to enable Wadham School to contribute to the LSC's target number of post-16 learners for 2003.
- The school has committed £2,000 of its supply budget to support teachers who wish to take part in the courses.
- The Pacific Institute provide a manual for each participant at all levels. Costs are as follows.
Go for It: £45, Breakthrough: £45, Investors in Excellence: £240, Steps: £80. Delivery of courses is video-based and these are provided by TPI.
- TPI have provided promotional material free of charge.
- Venue and refreshment costs are a significant feature. Wadham has tried to minimise here while still providing a special experience for all concerned.
- The major outlay is for the services of the Project Director and his expertise in delivering Investors in Excellence.

2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of current development/innovation

Strengths

- The pilot project with Year 9 enabled us to engage with the materials and to try out some attitudinal monitoring questionnaires that we were able to refine before 'going live'.
- Anecdotal evidence tells us that the 12 pilot students have made a very positive start to their learning at Wadham. A key feature is an unexpectedly high level of participation in lessons during 'hands-up' type Question and Answer activities.
- All teaching staff have had the opportunity to nominate students for courses.
- Jo Morgan, our LSA, provides not only delivery of courses, but also formal and informal support meetings for student participants.
- Involvement in the project has provided inspirational professional development for her.
- The school has just submitted its bid for Specialist School Status in Business and Enterprise. The sustainability of the project is secured not only as part of the bid but also by means of our plan to gain a Facilitator who will deliver future Investors in Excellence courses and enable us to be less dependent on the services of a Project Director.

- The high-profile nature of the work ensures that staff awareness of some of our most vulnerable but less visible learners is heightened.
- Parental response so far has been entirely supportive. Students who decided not to join the course (2 x Year 12 and 1 x Year 11 from a total of 48 students to date) did so in spite of positive encouragement from home.
- Arising from this project, close monitoring of all Year 11 and Year 12 student involvement in Progression events and processes is taking place. We hope to be able to draw some conclusions about Post-16 Recruitment and retention when final destinations are looked at.

2.2 Weaknesses and learning points

- The launch of the project had two strands. Firstly over a period of six months, information and plans were drip-fed to staff and students. Secondly a launch date was arranged involving the Project Director. We gave it a twilight INSET slot in October. It should have come earlier in the term and not during an after-school session.
- A great deal of attention was paid to involving staff in the selection of students. Some of the students themselves, however, felt that they were inadequately briefed before receiving an invitation to join the course. This was particularly evident with the first cohort of Year 12 students and steps were immediately put in place involving the Head of Sixth Form and the course presenter and student participants to rectify this.
- After close scrutiny of the nominated course members joining the Year11 'Go For It!', it was decided that we would experiment with an all-female and an all-male group. To date only the female group has run, but predictably, they believe they were benefiting from the single set approach. This is a strategy which we will consider building in to future programmes.
- Two Year 11 groups are running where we had planned to run only one, because of high hopes invested by teachers and parents and enthusiasm amongst students. Selecting 12 vulnerable students from 200+ was unrealistic and future plans will need to take account of this.

Part 3 Other information relating to this development and our institution

- Although there has been some cynicism, adult response to the project in school is positive.
- In order to alleviate disruption to the curriculum during the Teachers' Investment in Excellence course, 2 strategies have been employed.
 - a) One day of the first 3-day unit will be run on a Saturday.
 - b) The other 2 days take place during Year 11 Mock Examinations when extra non-teaching staff will be employed to cover invigilation.

- Facilitator training is crucial to the sustainability of this project. Once we have someone on the teaching staff who is able to train teachers and other adults, the high costs of the project are reduced in that our member of staff will be paid at current teacher rate, not at the Pacific Institute rate. Additionally there is local interest from Health and Social Services in our work and we hope to generate both income and interest in 'Possibilities'. With our LSA and Teacher Facilitator we intend to run courses for other agencies. Selecting the right Teacher Facilitator will be crucial.

Part 4 Key issues

Key issue 1 – Delivering an improved vocational entitlement for all

- The Possibilities Project is seen here as a pilot and we plan to root our vocational entitlement for KS4 students in the curriculum devised by the Pacific Institute. We are not able, however, to deliver the courses as TPI designed them. We need a customised version and there is a huge issue in terms of school organisation regarding 'immersion' and 'drip feed' models. There will need to be a significant investment of teacher time if the materials are to be adapted and an important debate regarding who best delivers the courses remains to be had.

Key issue 2 – Developing our shared teacher partnership with Yeovil College

- Our involvement with GCSE Engineering is both enriching and challenging. We have 50 students on the course (we had planned for 35!) and it is the focus of our relationship with Yeovil College. We need to work with the college to provide continuity (progression in this area for post-16 students and we must begin discussion and planning in Sept 2003 if the Shared Delivery model currently in place pre-16 is to continue post-16. The college does not yet have a shared understanding of the Possibilities Project and how aspects of self-determination taught on the courses will benefit both institutions notion of self-belief and leadership into practical demonstration of these skills.

Key issue 3 – Introduction of GCSE Business

- We are learning from our involvement with the LSC's Increased Flexibility Learning Project and the delivery of GCSE Engineering about strategies for collaboration with local Industry and developing Schemes of Work with real-life business contexts. We need to be able to provide opportunities for both teachers and students involved on the course to experience at least part of the appropriate TPI course. This we believe will enhance their GCSE Business experience.

Key issue 4 – Business and Enterprise College Status

- Business education will be transformed when we achieve Specialist School Status. The Enterprise element of our plans at this stage is only theoretically connected to the Possibilities Project. Our KS4 vocational curriculum needs to make explicit links between the leadership content of courses and the

enterprise aspect of Business education. In the first instance we will need to ensure that all those teachers delivering Business Education are trained to TPI Investors in Excellence level before this planning can begin. Later it is envisaged that all teachers and support staff who wish to do so will have access to Investors in Excellence courses. The planning and resource issue here is significant.

Key issue 5 – Linking Possibilities with Young Enterprise

- A further issue is how do we convert theoretical engagement in the notions of self-belief and leadership into practical opportunities for their demonstration. In the past we had some involvement with Young Enterprise. Next year we must regenerate this aspect of learning. An important opportunity for student progression provided by Possibilities is to build on the leadership skills developed on the course, but who will take on this responsibility and how it will happen are as yet unresolved.

Part 5 Proposal for further action research relating to Post-16 Curriculum development

- We are tracking all students and staff involved in TPI work and monitoring attitudinal changes by the use of detailed questionnaires. To inform future investment and planning we would like to have the opportunity to track a group of students who are not taking part in these events and to compare outcomes in terms of Post-16 and Post-18 destinations/plans.
- We are keen to build on the enthusiasm of students currently involved in the Possibilities Project and to help widen participation by offering a Peer Learning Mentor to study the impact of such a programme over time.