

Cedars ACADEMY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT Autumn 2021

For presentation at
Full Governing Body Meeting
Monday 18th October 2021



**Patron of Cedars
Academy Trust**

Paralympic Gold Medalist
Stephen Miller BSc(Hon), HON.DCL



Cedars ACADEMY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT: Autumn 2021

For presentation at Full Governing Body Meeting: Monday 18th October 2021

1 Pupils & Community

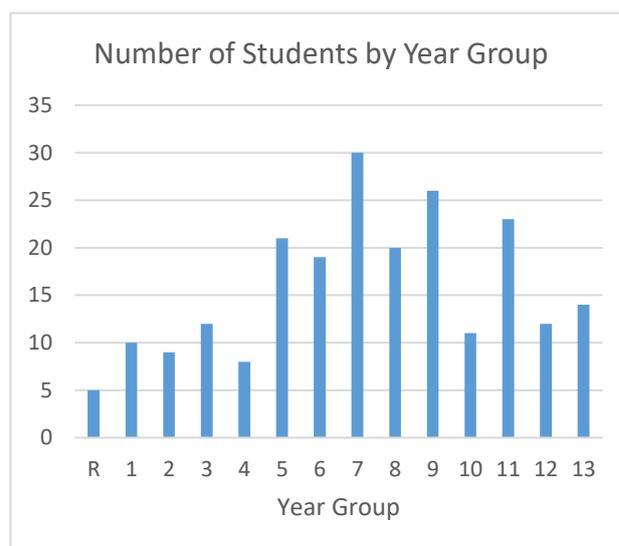
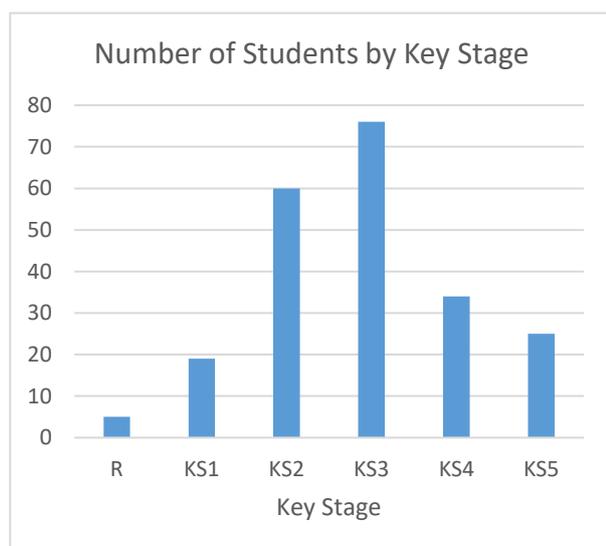
1.1 School Population Data

1.1.1 Students currently on roll

Out of the 222 pupils currently on roll, 24 in KSR/1 60 in KS2, 77 in KS3, 36 in KS4 and 25 in KS5

Distribution of pupils:

- X8 teaching groups in KS1&2, average class sizes of 10/11 children
- X9 class/bubbles in KS3, average class sizes for x4 groups of 11/12 children, x5 smaller groups of average size 6/7 pupils
- X10 teaching groups in KS4/5 (based at Walker Terrace and Ivy Lane) average size 6/7 students



1.1.2 Pressures due to rising population and referrals

Currently there are approximately 14 children on the LA waiting list to attend Cedars Academy. There have been 14 consultations since our return in September. Each consultation involves consideration of paperwork and observational visits. We are finding that Commissioning want a quick response to consultations. We are also seeing an increase in tribunal cases that require a considerable amount of time and resources to prepare for. The volume of workload and speed required is placing key members of staff under considerable pressure.

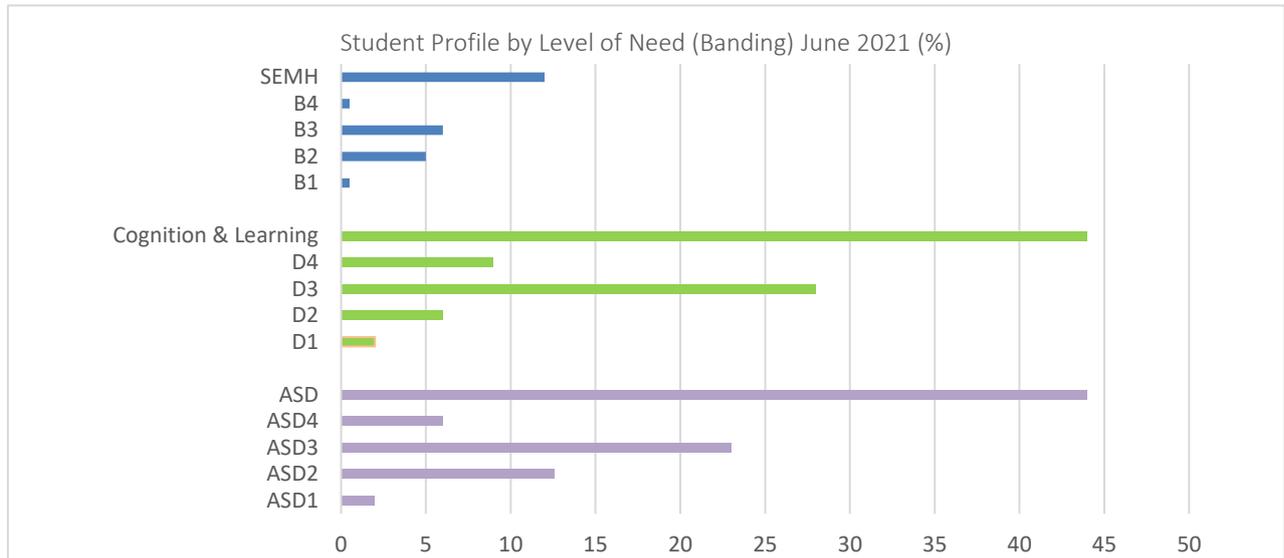
The process can also put the Academy in a difficult position in respect to our potential relationships with prospective parents. We are not the only special setting experiencing these pressures and SHIP (Special Head Teachers in Partnership) have requested clarity/refinement of process with the SEND team and Commissioning. They are awaiting a response.

At the recent F&S Committee meeting it was agreed for the Chair of Governors to write to S Horn and D Mason requesting a meeting to understand and help address our concerns.

1.1.3 Profile by Banding

Primary Need (Banding), remains quite static at:

- 44% ASD (1% AS1; 12.5% AS2; 23.5%AS3; 7%A4)
- 44% Cognition & Learning (1%D1; 8%D2; 27%D3; 8%D4)
- 12% Social, Emotional and Mental Health (1.5% B1; 4%B2; 6%B3; 0.5%B4)



1.2 Transition Arrangements for School children and College students

The new transition programme for new students was extremely successful; comprehensive transition materials and programmes were shared early in the summer term. Teaching teams worked with feeder schools and families to establish personalised transition pathways for each students according to need and the Year 7 transition activities in the summer holidays were a great introduction to Cedars. To date, we have welcomed 36 new students into the Academy:

- 7 in EYFS
- 5 at Key Stage 1,
- 6 at Key Stage 2,
- 14 at Year 7
- 1 at Year 8
- 1 at Year 10
- 1 at Year 11
- 1 at Year 12

1.3 College Developments

1.3.1 Walker Terrace Developments

Last term we submitted a planning application to obtain listed building consent to make minor alterations to the property. The submitted plans include: installing a ground floor accessible WC, altering the layout of the first floor WCs to add an additional cubicle, cast iron gates to be installed on number 13 Walker Terrace to enclose the courtyard.

As part of the planning application, there has also been an application made for change of use regarding changing the property from office use to education purposes. In listening to the parent voice over the summer and the student voices upon their return

this academic year, we have slowed down the works being carried out to the property and continue to provide any information as requested by the LA planning department or any of the externally appointed consultants working for them. We have paid for a transport planning statement to be carried out and have received two visits from the senior planners in respect of this.

Generally speaking, we have reduced the number of learners in groups across the College provision and increased staffing levels to ensure that young people have the academic and pastoral support that they require. Students experience a range of provision accommodation during the week. Some learners access Ivy Lane site for most of their week, others are based at Walker Terrace and some of our Year 12 and 13 students access off site provision, such as the Dryden Centre (SOTA) and Baltic Centre of Contemporary Art. Where appropriate learners also have access to the allotment/ garden facility as part of their vocational offer and Cedars School sports and therapy facilities and Gateshead Leisure Centre as part of their physical development and life skills programmes. A Key Stage 4/5 swimming session has also been added to the timetable for young people who would benefit from this as part of their weekly timetable.

After school club provision developed in a range of areas to promote social skills, independence, health and creativity; this provision operates on 4 nights per week across both the Walker Terrace and Ivy Lane sites. Key Stage 4/5 learners have access to both sites where appropriate.

1.3.2 Parent/Carer Concerns

A meeting for concerned parents was held in Summer Term 7th July and second meeting 14th September. At both meetings it was apparent that there was considerable misunderstanding and concern regarding parents'/carers' interpretation of proposals for KS4 students.

Actions from meeting in Summer Term included:

- Meet early in Autumn term to air questions
- Andrew Thompson (governor) and Lisa Miller (parent) to create large working group to tackle any issues raised and parental opposition to the new provision

Key Conclusions from meeting 14th Sept.:

That pupils will move to Walker Terrace at a time that is appropriate to them. At a time that is ready and timely for individual pupils

- We are still at the early stages and responding to a need that is changing; Cedars is moving towards a more semi-formal curriculum and senior managers need to modify what they do at both sites
- The way forward is to look at individual options for each pupil and find the best way to meet their needs. Individual meetings will take place with current Year 9 pupils being the priority. Subsequent individual meetings with Year 9 parents to start dialogue and planning of individual pathways have been positively received by all parents/carers. Process to continue throughout year and planned into all subsequent EHCP meetings

Senior Leaders are working with Andrew Thompson and Lisa Miller to plan subsequent actions as we continue to respond to questions and concerns about our KS4/5 provision.

1.4 COVID-19 Update

The Academy continues to adopt the Covid-19 Risk Assessment as outlined from Public Health Gateshead. In practical terms, this means we are no longer operating a 'strict' Bubble system but are minimising gathering in formal groups such as dining together in the dining hall or groups coming together for assemblies or large meetings.

There are no longer any close contact isolation restrictions for young people under 18 years of age. We have been recommending, but not suggesting that students complete Lateral Flow Testing before returning to the Academy.

1.5 Community Voice

1.5.1 Student Voice

School and College Councils have restarted; these are seen as very important to the successful running of student events, activities and wider Academy developments. We pride ourselves that our student voice is very strong and we will do all we can to support its further development. School Council is supported by R Lane; College Council supported by L Richardson.

We have four working groups where smaller groups of students work with members of staff to make decisions about specific areas:

- Environment
- Rights respecting Schools
- School Life
- Fundraising and Events

The Student Councils meet termly with the Parent/Carer group to share ideas and plan activities and improvements.

1.5.2 Parent/Carer Group

The Parents/Carers group have met twice this half term. Out of those who attended the meeting last month some were very complimentary of the Walker Terrace provision. The group are planning a Christmas fair on 27th November, and a Christmas party the week after at the Ravensworth Golf club. They have also started to discuss doing a larger fundraising event next year, possibly a 12hr dance-athon) but we will revisit this idea after Christmas.

Some parents fed back about the transition booklet and are keen to form a working group to revisit the booklet and help ensure everything is in it that needs to be. Parents were happy with Bloomz and requested that timetables be shared (this has now been done). Parents were also very complimentary of the summer Brighten the Day Scheme, saying that it really helped increase student's confidence and social skills and have a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing.

1.5.3 Staff Voice (Wellbeing)

We have an established a Staff Wellbeing group. The general feedback is that there is a positive feeling across both sites, this despite the particularly difficult year and the extended transition of students and staff to Walker Terrace. Termly staff breakfast is supplied by Caron and her team and termly events themed for fun and social activity. A small number of staff have recently raised concerns regarding a lack of tea and coffee making facilities. Two rooms for tea & coffee making have recently been provided and the development of the Lodge as a staffroom is also being discussed.

Other ideas that the group plan to explore to promote wellbeing and to boost staff health and enhance morale:

- Encouraging staff to connect by developing relationships with trusting colleagues. This can be developed through offering social events, planned breakfast, taking part in wellbeing activities like mindfulness, cookery sessions, and informal drop-ins
- Developing others to be physically active for both health and fitness, taking a lunchtime walk (Heidi), join in with exercise classes or take part in virtual physical challenges
- Support staff to learning new skills something that could be done both at school and home; signpost and sharing links to training/webinars
- Give to others – open door policy, Whatsapp for information sharing, advice and sharing good practise to ease workload, PPA from home, book swap and random acts of kindness
- Mindfulness – training the mind, and recognising its helpful and unhelpful habits, enables us to respond more skilfully to whatever the present moment throws at us through listening to others, breathing exercises, yoga, activities that take account of our thoughts and feelings

The Staff Wellbeing Team works closely with the Senior Leadership Group to have responsibility for promoting the well-being of all staff, and are available to be approached at any time if someone is feeling anxious, stressed or depressed and if they have concerns about a colleague and signposting to relevant support.

The members of the Wellbeing Team:

- Key Stage 1 – Rachel Lane
- Key Stage 2 – Amanda Pickering
- Key Stage 3 - Ali Meek
- Key Stage 4 - Naomi Parkin
- Key Stage 5 – Joe MacCabe

1.5.4 A Framework for Staff Wellbeing

Our Framework for Staff Wellbeing has been agreed and implemented. Our 5-point plan for teacher wellbeing:

Hold all staff to account

Make all staff accountable, but ensure support is retained through constructive feedback and flexibility. Keep expectations high, yet stay flexible by removing unnecessary checklists and letting staff teach in a style that suits their students.

Reduce unnecessary workload

Get rid of meetings for meetings sake, tick-box proformas and use of the phrase: ‘Ofsted will be coming this year’. Trust staff to do their job and if they can’t meet expectations, adapt and refine what is expected; be flexible.

Invest in staff professional development

All professional development activities should be chosen by the member of staff, and should be relevant, applicable and need led.

Share more

To challenge the preconceptions cast by the media and promote positivity, increase the amount of good news stories within the profession shared by teachers, bloggers and school leaders.

Praise and recognise every member of staff

Promote staff wellbeing as a school priority as it is the key to Academy success.

1.6 Summer Activity Club

Over the recent summer holidays Cedars Academy worked in partnership with the Gateshead Neighbourhood Team (GNT) to deliver a 6 week Brighten the Day Summer Activity Scheme across both Cedars School and Cedars College. Each scheme ran 3 days a week, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, between 11am and 3pm. The Academy received £10656 from the GNT team that covered the entire cost of the scheme. This included all staffing costs and funding for taxis for 20 student places across the 6 weeks.



A significant number staff volunteered to work the scheme and we were able to provide a total of 88 places during the programme. 38 staff members volunteered and delivered the programme, and 4 volunteers supported the scheme. The level of support from our staff reflects the outstanding commitment and care that they are willing and able to provide, throughout the year, including holiday periods.

Keith Vincent and 3 students participated in the Department of Education Virtual visit meeting on 11th of August 2021, after which they received a very positive letter from Susan Acland-Hood (Permanent Secretary) thanking all parties for their involvement and programme delivery. We have also created the following video to showcase our scheme and help support the GNT to gain future funding: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc7YFFkgPME>

1.7 Cedars Charitable Trust (CCT)

On September 9th the CCT held it's Inaugural Annual Golf Day at Beamish Golf Club. This was a was hugely successful event, enjoyed by all participants, and raised £650 for the CCT. Our thanks to Ian Smith at FIS Limited for organising the event.

All future Cedars Academy events/fundraising activities will be directed to, and supported by the CCT. The CCT will be meeting soon to evaluate staff scoping exercise and formulate future approach to leading activities and events through the CCT.

Memorandum of Understandings now exist between the CCT and our four key partners; Gateshead Kestrels, Be Inspired to..., Re:SEND and SEN Support.

2 Achievement and Progress 2020-21

2.1 Assessment Process

We assess using the B Squared framework at one point during the year (May/June), unless it is a new student who requires a baseline assessment in September or within the month they join the school.

All students have a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) which is made of learning intentions from a range of sources and is evidenced on the Evidence for Learning app. PLP learning intentions are updated as and when achieved. The PLP directs the individual pathway for each child. The class may be following a curriculum topic or theme as laid out in the long term planning, but each child works on individual curricula within that. There is less 'whole class' teaching across school now, most learning is done in small groups within the class.

Progress is measured through a RAG system recorded on a Pupil Progress Report each term. Teachers RAG rate the PLP intentions for each child to show whether the child, in their judgement, has exceeded, met or working towards expected progress using a range of evidence to make these judgements.

School leaders sample the RAG rated reports, looking at one pupil with each teacher. This is an in-depth discussion looking at the judgements teachers have made and asking them to justify their decisions using all the evidence at their disposal. The moderation discussion will highlight if there are any significant discrepancies in judgements. If there are, the teacher and leader will work together to look at the judgements made for all of the children in the class to ensure a consistent approach.

2.2 Key Findings from our Assessments

2.2.1 English & Maths

81% of students overall have met or exceeded expected progress in English and 87% in maths despite the disruption of Covid-19 this academic year.

The small variation between the two disciplines is attributed to that teachers reporting that it was easier to teach maths remotely, as there were wider range of online resources that consolidate mathematical skills. In addition, we know that daily reading is of paramount importance for our children. During lockdown, not all families will have been able to support students with daily reading opportunities. In addition, many of our students have significant speech, language and communication difficulties; it may be that disruption to consistent language and communication activities have impacted language development. Individual Pupil Progress reports support this finding.

2.2.2 Pupil Premium and LAC students

Pupil Premium (93 students) and LAC (7 students) pupils have made favourable progress, much in line with the whole school cohort. A higher proportion of these students will have remained in school for the duration of the lockdown periods and had more access to daily reading and communication opportunities.

2.2.3 Physical, Emotional and Social Wellbeing

The levels of expected progress reached in Physical, Emotional and Social Wellbeing (PESW) are lower than in previous years. The Pupil Progress interviews with teachers have told us that our children were impacted significantly by the events of the last 18 months. The disruption to their daily routines, estrangement from friends and family, and lack of access to resources has meant that many of our students required a substantial Recovery Curriculum, rich with opportunity to explore their emotional health and build social bonds again.

The PESW Development Team are now tasked with looking at the individual progress of students who have been identified during assessment and working with teachers, parents, carers and other professionals to ensure that these children have access to the necessary resources, interventions and therapies to enable them to build their confidence and emotional resilience. The introduction of the Thrive Programme and the Wellness Award will help to facilitate these aims.

2.2.4 Digital Literacy

Another area showing slightly more students at 'working towards' expected progress is Digital Literacy. Teacher conversations have shown that Online Safety is taught well through the comprehensive PESW and Project Evolve curriculum, however it has highlighted a lack of confidence in teaching some areas of the Computing Skills Curriculum. There have also been ongoing difficulties in having access to the range of fully-functional hardware (laptops, iPads) and necessary software packages to facilitate some aspects of the curriculum. The Digital Literacy Lead is working with the SLG support and Omnicom to remedy the resources issues and address the training needs of staff.

2.3 Accreditation and Exit Routes

2.3.1 Learner Achievements

Of the 34 learners that were based at Walker Terrace in academic year 2020-21:

- 88% learners achieved a pass in qualification in Functional English reading at the level that they had been entered
- 94% learners achieved a pass in qualification in Functional English writing at the level that they had been entered
- 76% learners achieved a qualification in Functional Maths at the level that they had been entered
- 21 College learners achieved a portfolio-based qualification in Skills for Employment, Training and Personal Development
- 11 College learners achieved a portfolio-based qualification in Independent Living Skills
- Key Stage 4 learners accessed a WJEC Pathways qualification at Pass level

Across Key stages 4&5, learners achieved GCSE pass grades in: Citizenship and Maths from grades 2-7, passed Level 2 certificates in Mental Health Awareness and a Level 2 CACHE Early Years Practitioner qualification

3 learners accessed successful work experience placements last academic year in spite of Covid-19. From the placements, 2 young people gained paid employment which is an extremely positive achievement.

2.3.2 Learner Destinations

Of the 16 learners that left Cedars College in summer 2021:

- 6 progressed to a supported placement at the Dryden Centre within Gateshead Council Adult Learning skills
- 7 learners progressed to a vocational course within a mainstream College environment (Gateshead/Newcastle/New College Durham)
- 3 learners accessed a supported learning course at a College (e.g Project Choice Stage 2, Gateshead College/ Kirkley Hall)

Of the young people that left Cedars School in July 2021 and did not progress to Cedars College, 4 young people progressed to another specialist provision (Dryden School/ Durham Trinity), 3 young people accessed mainstream vocational courses at local Colleges (Gateshead, Newcastle and New College Durham) and 1 young person accessed a supported course at Kirkley Hall College.

2.3.3 Accreditation 2021-2022

There are currently 61 learners accessing a Key stage 4/5 curriculum between Cedars College and Cedars School sites. Current programmes of study include:

- Functional or GCSE English (Language and Literature)
- Functional or GCSE Maths
- Employability skills including horticulture, customer service and enterprise
- Independent living skills including independent travel where appropriate
- Creativity – Arts Award
- Physical development (including swimming if desired)
- GCSE in Sociology, Psychology, History (AS level for one student), Physics, Business studies, Computer Science
- Duke of Edinburgh Award or similar (some learners will undertake the theory/skill-based sessions but will not undertake the residential element of the programme)

3 Academy Development Updates & Plans

3.1 Developing our Therapeutic Approach

3.1.1 Therapy Centre Update

The completion of our new Therapy Centre provides us with the facilities to ensure that our full, holistic curriculum can be delivered. Our plans to provide sensory integrated therapy and speech and language therapy fulfils our commitment to providing a multi-disciplinary team with a strong emphasis on an integrated therapeutic approach; meaning that all pupils have access to regular, personalised and high quality interventions and therapies to support their emotional regulation and other barriers to learning. We have staff trained in school to deliver therapies such as Rebound Therapy and sensory sessions in the sensory hydrotherapy pool.

The facilities currently have been timetabled in the following ways:

- Sensory - Mouse, Bat and Hedgehog (reception, year 1 and year 2) have 2 daily 30 minute sessions (am & pm)
- Soft-play - each class has a 45 minute timeslot weekly; there are also daily 'drop in' sessions available to enable us to support students at behavioural/emotional trigger times
- Immersion Room - each class has a 55 minute timeslot weekly; there are also daily 'drop in' sessions available to enable us to support students at behavioural and emotional trigger times
- Creative Arts Room - each class has a 45 minute timeslot weekly. The room has also been used by Cedars College students on Monday and Tuesday afternoons

3.1.2 Sensory Room

“The sensory room has been a great space for encouraging our children to pause, especially those who are overwhelmed or have become dysregulated. The bubble tube, and the range of textures and turning toys has helped captivate their interest, distracting them and ultimately having a calming effect.” Bat Class, September 2021



“SW uses the sensory room on a morning and afternoon. This helps to improve his visual, auditory and tactile processing, as well as fine and gross motor skills, which SW’s, Curriculum and PLP targets require. This also provides a sense of calm and comfort. After he has used the sensory room, SW finds this very stimulating and will have some down time and sleep for up to 30 minutes.” Hedgehog Class, September 2021

3.1.3 Soft-Play

“The soft play is all of our children’s favourite place to go, and whilst we usually have small groups in there, the unity they have in such a wide ranging class of needs, it’s lovely to see them enjoy themselves as a group and share an interest. There are so many opportunities for social interactions, and, as they are all enjoying themselves so much, they choose to engage with one another, when often in the classroom they might choose not to. They help each other to move from section to section, such as up to the slide or through the tunnel, and they often do this in pairs. It’s the perfect opportunity for those early social skills to develop!” Bat Class, 2021.



“It has allowed some students to begin extending their social skills - turn taking, initiating games and interactions with their peers. Others are developing in confidence to be more independent and try new things.” Mouse Class, September 2021

“C attends soft play on a daily basis after lunch for a approx. 15-20 minutes. This helps to provide a stimuli such as different textures and an opportunity for him to explore and provide focus for when he returns to the classroom for his learning environment This has been a huge success and we will continue to do this throughout the year, as we have noticed a decrease in his deregulation and an increase in his willingness to learn in the classroom.”

Hedgehog Class, September 2021

3.1.4 Immersion Room

“The immersion room has supported students in developing their communication - both verbally and non-verbally- making requests and expressing likes/dislikes. We see an increase in eye contact, smiling and reaction to a range of stimuli when accessing the therapy center.” Fox Class, October 2021



“All the children have loved the immersion room, however our non-verbal children particularly so. During our time in there, they were significantly more vocal than usual - making a range of different noises and were delighted at the interactive capabilities of the lights and images.” Bat Class, October 2021

3.2 Services Medium Term Plans

3.2.1 Behaviour & Attitude

Commitment to creating a safe, calm, orderly and positive environment in the Academy and understanding the impact this has on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils:

- Use National College for all staff to carry out online training to develop staff awareness and skills to develop strategies: implement ‘Zones of Regulation’ and the ‘Peers Curriculum’ Social skills Intervention across the Academy
- Adaptation and implementation of the Weaving Wellbeing programme to support Thrive and Wellbeing priorities across the Academy
- Provide a wider range of therapeutic intervention programmes as part of a wide, holistic curriculum: develop a range of Targeted Physical Activity Interventions for use either in therapy areas or teaching rooms: Teaching Teams to work with Services to identify individuals for therapeutic intervention
- Development of the ‘Hidden (Values Based) Curriculum’ – Cedars Assessment without Levels or Cedars Friendship Awards – linked to Personal Learning Plans: Impact measures in place: pupils’ motivation and positive attitudes to learning as important predictors of attainment. The development of positive attitudes can also have a longer-term impact on how pupils approach learning tasks in later stages of education

3.2.2 Personal Development

- To offer of a wider range of therapeutic intervention programmes as part of a wide, holistic curriculum: establish action research project to evaluate impact of therapeutic offer on mental health and educational outcomes
- To provide students to a wide, rich set of experiences: opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality: To provide these rich experiences in a coherently planned way, in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities to strengthen the Academy’s offer
- To develop and refine our understanding of, and response to, family needs: plan for a series of specialist focus opportunities where pupils, staff and families can engage in shared learning opportunities and support structures

3.3 Monitoring the Curriculum

Curriculum Leads have begun monitoring the curriculum implementation by examining Medium Term Planning, checking for curriculum coverage and sequencing. They have identified areas to focus on to support colleagues in their curriculum delivery and will be following a calendar of coaching activities throughout the term to assist teacher development.

Senior Leaders have begun daily walks to gather information on the strengths and areas for development. We have been pleased to see how settled and purposeful the classes are in light of the challenges we have faced with staffing in current weeks.

Our Leadership triad with Sunningdale and Columbia Grange schools to begin again this term – in addition to other Quality of Education projects, we will be working together across the three schools to carry out Progress Interviews with colleagues to allow for moderation and quality assurance.

The B Squared Regional Group (Sunningdale School, Gibside Schools, Cedars School, Columbia Grange School, Woodlawn School, KTS Academy) continue to work together to moderate and improve practice – we met on Friday 25th June to moderate English work and on Wed 6th October to moderate maths.

The Academy Development Teams are headed by our middle leaders and linked to a member of the SLG and Governing body. Team leads will be contacting their link Governor this half term to begin discussions around plans for this academic year.

3.4 School Medium Term Plans

- Create an ethos of an accessible and inclusive reading approach throughout school: to develop a blended reading programme (phonics and whole-word) and a culture of reading for pleasure using high quality texts
- To develop oracy, language and vocabulary pedagogy across the school – to become a Total Communication School
- Revisit and strengthen established partnerships with local special schools; look for opportunities for moderation, share of resources, research, CPD and personnel
- Forge stronger links with Portage, Hint, Lint and Sensory teams
- Pursue Autism Mark & NFER Research Mark
- Establish action research project to evaluate impact of therapeutic offer on mental health and educational outcomes
- Develop the outdoor space to enhance and deliver experiences across all curriculum and therapeutic areas. Review training and support needs and develop a sustainable plan to ensure outdoor learning environments are available all-year round
- Support the development of a research engaged community in Development Teams and Teaching Teams through professional discussion processes: projects to be relevant and need led

3.5 School Long Term Aims

- Provide consistently good to outstanding specialist classroom practice and curriculum delivery
- Become a Research Engaged Learning Community to be at the forefront of pedagogical and curriculum development in Specialist Education
- To have a fully integrated therapeutic offer that will maximise outcomes and opportunities for all students
- The School setting and curriculum will be fully inclusive and accessible for all children whatever their preferred method of communication
- The School will be a centre of excellence for communication development
- Work closely with partner schools to provide a wide range of integrated services for children with complex needs and their families

- To develop our offer of specialised wrap around care (inc. holiday programmes) for children with complex needs
- To provide upgraded outdoor spaces to accommodate a wide range of play, learning and sensory activities
- To provide a purpose build EYFS Unit for children aged 3+ with complex needs

3.6 College Facilities

Since July 2021, we have:

- Added kitchen facilities to both buildings to allow us to further develop our independent living skills curriculum for young people
- Created common room areas that can support the development of vital social skills but that can also create much needed break out spaces for our young people to regulate their emotions or work independently such they want/ need to
- Increased the number of laptops available for learners to underpin ICT knowledge and skills as a vital employability tool for the future
- Installed LED lighting throughout the property in Number 11 Walker Terrace to improve energy efficiency, reduce longer term running costs and create an environment more conducive to learning
- Replaced the flooring throughout the hall and kitchenette at Number 11 Walker Terrace, replaced carpet with waterproof flooring to the creative arts spec at Number 11 Walker Terrace
- Purchased single desks for the classrooms within number 11 to accommodate the additional students within Key Stages 4 and 5
- Purchased additional TV's for each of the classroom learning environments in Number 11
- Further secured the site with the addition of CCTV across both buildings, fobbed exits and internal doors to restrict exits for learners throughout the College day
- Liaised with Gateshead LA transport and parents to establish a one-way system for drop offs and collection of learners at Walker Terrace to maintain safety of the young people despite growing in size as a provision

3.7 College Medium Term Plans

- Develop partnerships with community organisations that can complement the curriculum offer of the College
- As curriculum is established, identify specific staffing roles that have emerged, specifically around mental health and pastoral support required as the primary needs of the young people evolve
- Establish a social enterprise to develop a support network and advocacy arrangements for young adults and their families to access a wider community offer

3.8 College Long term Aims

- Development of a Post 19 provision that is widely accessed and caters for a range of young adults with additional needs
- Establish a reputation within Gateshead for high quality provision for young people and adults with additional needs
- The College curriculum will be fully inclusive and accessible for all children whatever their preferred method of communication
- Work closely with partner providers to develop a wide range of integrated services for young adults with complex needs and their families
- Provide consistently good to outstanding specialist practice and curriculum delivery
- Become a Research Engaged Learning Community to be at the forefront of pedagogical and curriculum development in Specialist Education

3.9 Professional Development

3.9.1 Re:SEND

Professional Development in Cedars will be driven by our Re:SEND team as we work to develop Cedars into a research engaged learning community. Re:SEND will be at the forefront of promoting evidence-based practice as an essential and integral approach to school improvement in specialist schools in the North East.

Our core purpose is to:

- share and disseminate the very best of evidence-based practice in SEND to specialist and mainstream schools and teachers across the North East.
- provide evidence-based training for SEND
- support schools and other educational organisations across the region
- develop a community of learners engaging in collaborative enquiry and using learning from research and enquiry in all decision-making

3.9.2 RE:SEND Short - Medium Term objectives

- Use Performance Management, monitoring activities and assessment outcomes to provide a systematic needs analysis to provide information on where we want to increase impact for specific cohorts
- Staff performance management focused on research engagement
- Develop a CPD programme built around results of needs analysis, pertinent research and staff sharing action research. Share with external partners
- Review the opportunities that colleagues have to engage with research and inquiry, encouraging colleagues to extend their pedagogic (teaching) repertoire and taking evidence-informed risks
- Produce a half-termly research digest, distilling key findings internally, locally and nationally, in SEND practice and pedagogy
- Explore opportunities for collaborative working across within the Academy initially and begin to build links in order to identify shared needs of partner schools and colleges
- Register for the NFER Research Mark and begin action plan for award
- Develop an effective system to capture and share knowledge from research and enquiry with the Re:SEND remit, building in opportunities for colleagues and partners to discuss and act upon the learning from research and enquiry activities
- Identify and establish school based and research based partnerships including: The Dales Teaching School Alliance, B Squared NE Regional Group, Gateshead Specialist schools, Newcastle University, Durham University and the IEE
- Identify sources of funding for research projects to increase capacity for training, collaboration, resource development and evaluation needs of Re:SEND team and colleagues involved
- Apply for funding for an Academy based project
- Apply for funding for a collaborative partnership working on a larger, cross-centre project
- Develop marketing strategy to highlight work of Re:SEND

4 Staffing

4.1 Recent Appointments

- Kickstart: x 3 appointed
 - The Kickstart Scheme offers six-month jobs for young people aged 16 to 24 years old who are currently claiming Universal Credit and are at risk of long-term unemployment. We have 3 young people working for us (2 educated to degree level) funded by the Government, and will be supporting them to develop transferable skills that are aimed at increasing their chances of sustained employment.

- Funding includes:
 - 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months
 - associated employer National Insurance contributions
 - minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions
 - a grant of £1,500 per job to cover setup costs and employability support
- Apprentice Level 3: x 4 appointed
- TAL2: x3 appointed
- Teachers: x5 appointed/post change
- Admin Assistant: Michelle Klitzke

4.2 COVID and Staffing

The Academy continues to adopt the Covid-19 risk assessment as outlined from Public Health Gateshead. In practical terms, this means we are no longer operating a 'strict' Bubble system but are minimising gathering in formal groups such as dining together in the dinner hall or groups coming together for assemblies or meetings. There are no longer any close contact, isolation restrictions for young people under 18 years of age. This means we have been recommending, but not suggesting, that students complete Lateral Flow Testing before returning to the Academy.

The effects of Covid-19 are still very much being felt across school and college. In the month of September, we have lost 100 days of work across the Academy. College has lost 49 days with 10 staff taking sick leave and School has lost 51 days with 15 staff taking sick leave. Not all of the sickness is Covid-19 related, some staff have been affected by other viruses that are inevitably spread when people come together.

These absences cannot be helped, but it has meant that we have had to rely heavily on the goodwill and flexibility of our Teaching Teams. Many staff have not been able to receive their full allocation of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time or have adequate breaks during the day. Senior Leaders cover where possible, meaning that, understandably, other areas of school development or monitoring must go on hold.

Other schools locally and nationally are reporting that they are under the same pressures with staffing levels. We continue to wait for clear guidance from the Local Authority and the DfE on how we will keep our Academy working for our children over the difficult winter months predicted.

It has been a difficult start to the academic year, however, our teams have been amazingly resilient and professional, and doing whatever they can to help us keep running and providing our students with an undisrupted education. We are very lucky to have such outstanding staff!

M.f 

MF October 2021