

BOWDEN HOUSE SCHOOL

Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium grant

Bowden House is a special, residential school for boys with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties. Attendance throughout the pandemic has been a split with a week in school and the alternate week of remote learning. The exception has been our most vulnerable students including LAC and the day students.

Many of our students have presented with high levels of anxiety with regards to COVID-19 – the fear of coming to school and leaving family members; vulnerable family members exposed to the risk of the virus and their own vulnerability. As a consequence, the school witnessed increased levels of SEMH needs/behaviour and therefore the desirability for additional therapeutic support for all students to improve their ability to engage more effectively in their learning during the school day, was seen as crucial in avoiding further gaps in their learning. Although guidance and financial support through this grant was primarily geared towards funding for external tutors, the students of Bowden House School respond to the familiarity and consistency of our staff team and over the years have made a conscious decision not to employ agency or temporary staff for that reason.

Bowden House has, therefore, followed the DfE guidance in utilising the catch-up premium grant ‘in a way that suits their cohort and circumstances’

Tranche 1:

Following the first lockdown in March 2020 and a short period of closure, the school implemented a remote learning programme. Alongside this, when the school re-opened, 50% of the student population attended school with the other 50% receiving remote learning and this system was alternated the following week and continued until the autumn half-term break when all students returned to school. All vulnerable/LAC students and day students attended full-time throughout.

In response to the 1st lockdown and the SEMH effects on our students, the school extended the Summer Term by 3 weeks and organised a series of overnight camps in the grounds of the school with a range of activities; BBQs, dry and wet sports to help relieve the anxiety around the virus and its impact on their well-being. The involvement and support of the staff team assisted considerably in the students being in a safer environment with familiar people; increased the opportunity to improve team building and co-operative play; learn new skills and ensure that their anxieties and concerns could be shared with trusted adults.

The remote learning programme resumed at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

When we moved into the 2nd lockdown in November 2020, it became increasingly evident that with the dark evenings and community activities closed, that it would be difficult to ensure effective social distancing in the residential unit. The school increased input from the Education Team and the Emotional Well-being (Therapeutic) Team each evening to work/support the students; reflect on the day; organise a range of activities within the school buildings and more importantly with the higher individual support, help put the students ‘in a good place’ for learning the next day. This programme of additional support covered the period 10 November 2020 – 16 December 2020 and offered a choice of 3 activities each evening.

The above programme of support for learning, enabled the school to extend the school day with a diverse approach to our students' ability to engage effectively in their education. The school building had to remain open; heating & lighting and the resources for the various activities, had to be funded.

Tranche 2 :

The Spring Term of 2021 brought the 3rd lockdown which was announced before Christmas. Bowden House School continued its combination of alternate week's remote learning and school attendance. Due to the time of year and the country again in lockdown, the school also continued with the programme detailed above to further sustain student well-being.

Tranche 3 :

Contributed and continues to contribute, significantly to our Career Development programme to enable students to look to their future which over the previous year with all the restrictions, remote learning and no access to Careers' Fairs; Colleges; work experience, etc., had resulted in a limited focus on this aspect of the curriculum. The desire of the school to raise the profile of Careers in line with statutory guidance and achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks, we had to be both resourceful and creative. The first task was to involve the students in the planning process via Annual Review meetings; use the support of the Care Team in completing forms, etc; help identify courses of learning for a range of career paths with their mentors; increase their knowledge of workplace opportunities and experience a variety of internal and external work experiences.

Project 1 – [Bowden Barista](#) - this was our first venture into a 'work experience' project in school. We were conscious that the activity should be accessible to all our students; be viewed as close to work experience as possible whilst covering a range of learning tools needed for the world of work. We purchased 2 'commercial style' coffee machines with all the features seen in High Street coffee shops, thanks to a successful bid for funding from the Mayor of London and Bowden Barista opened on Tuesday 15 June 2021!

The coffee shop opened initially to our staff every Tuesday and Thursday break-time serving a range of coffees/teas and cakes. Due to timetable changes, the coffee shop is now open every Thursday. The students have learned how to greet their 'customers' appropriately; take their orders; make the coffee and sell/serve the cakes; handle money giving the correct change and recording IOUs when staff do not have the money! observing good hygiene practice in the kitchen; working with others and looking after their customers with a smile.

The success of this project has exceeded our expectations with everyone involved enjoying the experience. The confidence shown by some of the students has spilled over into their lessons and we are hopeful that as more students become involved and enjoy a taste of what it might be like to work in such an environment, that Bowden Barista will develop into a successful element of learning with as high a profile as the academic aspects of school.

The students will over the next few weeks, contribute to the cake making where some will be sold in the Barista with others being donated to a local foodbank. Profits made from the project will allow us to be self-sufficient with a monthly donation to a chosen charity although there was a significant financial outlay at the beginning of the project. All students have their own Barista t-shirts; coffee cups detail the Bowden Barista logo and with the added attraction of loyalty cards, the operation presents as a very professional enterprise.



There have been up to 3 students participating (2 in Year 9 and 1 in Year 10) but this is expected to increase over-time. We held our Careers Day on 06 July when Bowden Barista was in operation and provided the opportunity for other students to learn the skills required for a coffee shop environment. A member of staff reported that even after the first session of Bowden Barista that 1 student who normally has a maths lesson after break and struggles with this subject, came into class so confident and having enjoyed the experience, that he engaged in the lesson, completed his work and went around the class helping others. He has been in every Bowden Barista session to date demonstrating his 'customer service' skills to great effect and contributing to making the session a fun experience for all.

Bowden Barista has only been in operation since June but we believe its success is down to the excellent planning in presenting a working environment with high class equipment; confident staff training the students to make a range of coffees; ensuring students know how to greet their 'customers' and take their orders, etc; the opportunity for students to handle money/give change and serve a range of cakes professionally displayed; advertising – team work!

This work experience opportunity will be even better when it is extended to other students and a 'rolling rota' reflecting what would be seen in a high street coffee shop.

We designed/introduced a customer feedback form to ensure performance is always high and that the project continues to develop going forward.

Project 2 – [Zoo Keeper for the Day at Drusillas Park](#)

After the success of our in-school work experience – Bowden Barista where there is access to guidance and support from the staff team, our next step was to secure work experience beyond school and with less staff support. The school used the second part of the Mayor of London's award to purchase 8 tickets to Drusillas Zoo which offers young people the opportunity to work alongside Zoo Keepers for a day. Due to the pandemic, our students could not be accommodated for the Zoo Keeper for the Day experience until the beginning of the new academic year 2021. The Zoo was extremely supportive towards our students whilst ensuring they gained maximum benefit from the experience. The 8 students had to submit their reasons for wanting to be included, to the Careers' Co-ordinator

As mentioned, the students were divided into either a morning or afternoon session. Each session began with a briefing by the Zoo Keepers on the expectations for the day. Our students were exposed to working with others and needed to follow instructions particularly where the health and safety of the animals was concerned. One member of staff accompanied the students for each session so were on hand if there were any problems.

There is a wide range of both domestic and wild animals in the Zoo so the students learned about the care, feeding routine and natural habitat of all the animals. They fed and groomed the domestic animals – donkeys and goats but had easy access to wallabies, penguins, meerkats, snakes, tropical birds and many others and were able to handle some of them. The students also cleaned out the animals' living areas. They went into the animals' kitchen to see where all the food is stored and prepared. They followed the hygiene rules of changing gloves for every enclosure to avoid contamination.

The students behaved extremely well and thoroughly enjoyed the experience – they were genuinely grateful for the opportunity to work with animals and learn of other areas of the world of work where working with animals is a possibility.

The students who attended in the afternoons were treated to lunch (fish & chips) which went down particularly well!

Students groups were : 2 in Year 8; 1 in Year 9; 1 in Year 10 & 4 in Year 11. The verbal feedback from the staff after each session; the photos and the wide smiles from the students were testament to their

enjoyment of this experience. One student has a love of horses and whilst he is happy working with horses, this experience opened his eyes to the chance to work with other animals, too.

All of the students engaged well; listened to the instructions; worked hard as a team; had the experience of work and how such experiences can lead to employment which is both rewarding and enjoyable.

The students shared their experiences with their peers who have expressed an interest in such an opportunity.

The organisation of the sessions and the full understanding of the staff team at Drusillas as to the difficulties our students might present was of great benefit. However, there were no concerns – our students were a credit to themselves and to the school.

As this experience went so well, we would like to explore similar opportunities in other settings but on a regular basis so that our students can experience working life where there might be good days and not so good days.

Careers Day – 06 July 2021

As has already been mentioned, during the whole of the lockdown periods it was difficult to include any career planning; careers fairs, visits to colleges/employers, etc. Despite these restrictions, the school was anxious to explore methods and events that might achieve some focus on life beyond school being particularly aware of the students leaving school in June 2021. The students of Bowden House School are vulnerable and many lack confidence. Staff support is of a high ratio and involving the students and families in planning their future, is key to any measurable success.

Earlier reports detail the organising of 2 projects around work experience. One in school where there is a high level of support (Bowden Barista!) and the second an external experience (Drusillas Park) where support is more discreet and reflected more of an experience in a workplace.

Planning had also been a feature for a Careers Day for many months and to hold this in the middle of a pandemic was a challenge! Nevertheless, with all the safety measures in place, we held an amazing event with every student participating.

Contributors to the event:

1. Bowden Barista!
2. Army
3. Drone demonstration
4. Mobile Crepe making
5. Film camera crew
6. Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club

The varied range of contributors and based on the interests of the students, came from as far away as Hertfordshire to local entrepreneurs local to the school. There was a significant cost implication to the school helped greatly by the Catch-up Grant Premium.

Each of the contributors held a 30 minute session running them 6 times to cover all student groups. There was a mixture of professions – the drone and crepe guys had set up their own businesses and gave opportunities for the students to learn how to make crepes; the students observed the drone in action and the camera ‘crew’ were linked to the BBC wildlife team; Brighton & Hove Football Club

covered the range of trades within the football world and likewise representatives from the Army, planned activities as well as introducing the students to the range of employment opportunities in the armed forces.

Summary

The COVID-19 catch-up premium grant has enabled this very special school to keep our students safe by remaining open for the majority of the school year in line with Government guidance for special schools with vulnerable children; continuing with teaching and learning in its broadest sense and allowing our staff team to meet the students' mental health needs during a time of great anxiety.

The increased support for learning from the whole school team with extended school days; increased staff hours through the whole of the period of the pandemic providing activities during the evenings during lockdown and during the periods when lockdowns were eased, greater access to external activities through an extended school year.

Our Careers Programme has benefited from work experience opportunities and now has the impetus to build further into the whole school curriculum.

The school demonstrated that through its determination to remain fully operational for the whole of the COVID-19 period in responding to the students' learning and mental health needs and ensure that our students would keep an element of momentum with their learning programmes either in school or remotely. The impact of the dedication of staff aided by this grant, resulted in all students returning to school in September 2021 emerging stronger and more engaged with their learning due in no small measure to the consistency, care and support they received.

October 2021

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