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KYRA CASE STUDY

ST HUGHS RC ACADEMY

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St Hughs RC Academy

When St Hughs received an outstanding Ofsted judgment in February 2013, the inspection report commented that: “Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make progress in line with other pupils in the school. Pupil premium funding is used exceptionally well to provide additional support and opportunities and to narrow the gap in attainment in English and mathematics between this group of pupils and their classmates.”

Headteacher Greg Hughes believes that the schools’ success in achieving progress for cohort is based on a number of elements. “First of all” says Greg “it is crucial that governing bodies are aware of the policy, which children it covers, and the need to be able to secure improved outcomes for those children. There is a lot of autonomy in terms of how schools use their pupil premium funding – but the understanding of governors and their ability to challenge and support schools to ensure it is having the impact on Ever 6 children’s progress is essential in managing those freedoms well.”

The school has taken an approach whereby pupil premium funding can, in some instances, be used for whole school projects, but that those projects must have a clear and demonstrable benefit in terms of Ever 6 pupils’ progress. For example, the school has been able to subsidise employing additional staff to reduce class sizes in year 6. This has ensured that all children – but crucially Ever 6 children – benefit from more time from teachers which in turn complements the additional support they receive from teaching assistants. It is through teaching assistants that the school has also provided sufficiently bespoke and focused investment for supporting Ever 6 children. Additional teaching assistants have been employed and trained to provide one to one support in areas such as literacy and reading. There is an expectation that there is “no down time” for Ever 6 children – with teachers using their additional time to work in combination with teaching assistants and ensure teaching and learning is delivered at sufficient pace and challenge, with clear feedback and next steps.

In addition to teaching and learning resource, the school has used some of its funding to provide breakfast and after school clubs, with Ever 6 pupils accessing these for free. Greg is passionate about the provision of breakfast: “we all know how difficult it is to function if

we haven’t had a meal – particularly breakfast. If children aren’t having enough to eat it is inevitable that they will already be at a disadvantage right from the very beginning of the school day. We don’t want to leave that to chance – so the breakfast club takes away that barrier to learning and sets children up for the whole morning.” The after school clubs also offer a rich range of experiences – including dance and structured computer activities – which are free of charge to Ever 6 pupils. “It is inevitable” says Greg “that Ever 6 pupils don’t have access to some of those opportunities outside of school. Research tells us that they are less likely to have access to a computer and that computer literacy falls behind – so we have made sure those opportunities are on offer and that children do have access to laptops and are able to use the internet for research and learning.”

St Hughs has also used funding to engage specialist external learning support to diagnose particular needs such as dyslexia and autism and ensure pupils with needs are signposted to further support and have a clear plan for their learning.

One key area of focus for Greg and his team is the use of data and tracking to monitor pupil progress and identify children’s needs regularly – with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Achievement, progress, attendance and behaviour are all monitored closely and regularly, ensuring any changes or concerns are highlighted and, if necessary, new or additional strategies can be put in place.

Greg is clear that the investment in closing the gap and supporting disadvantaged pupils is not limited to that based on pupil premium funding. He considers the funding as providing an opportunity to make more significant investments. It also, he says, creates an even bigger focus on the impact that the school’s strategies have on pupil premium pupils: “everything we do must contribute to closing the achievement gap and raising achievement for all pupils.” Ensuring all children achieve their full potential is built into the very fibre of St Hughs.

Greg Hughes and the team at St Hughs would be delighted to connect with other schools and share strategies for closing the gap.



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