

Insight driving innovation and impact

Set for Success Case Study: Redwood Park Academy

Enhancing the employability skills of young people with special educational needs (SEN).

December 2021

Believing in every child's future

Introduction

Redwood Park Academy is a special school located in Portsmouth for pupils aged 11 to 16 who have complex learning difficulties. They are part of Solent Academies Trust. Some pupils have other needs associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, speech, language and communication difficulties and medical conditions.

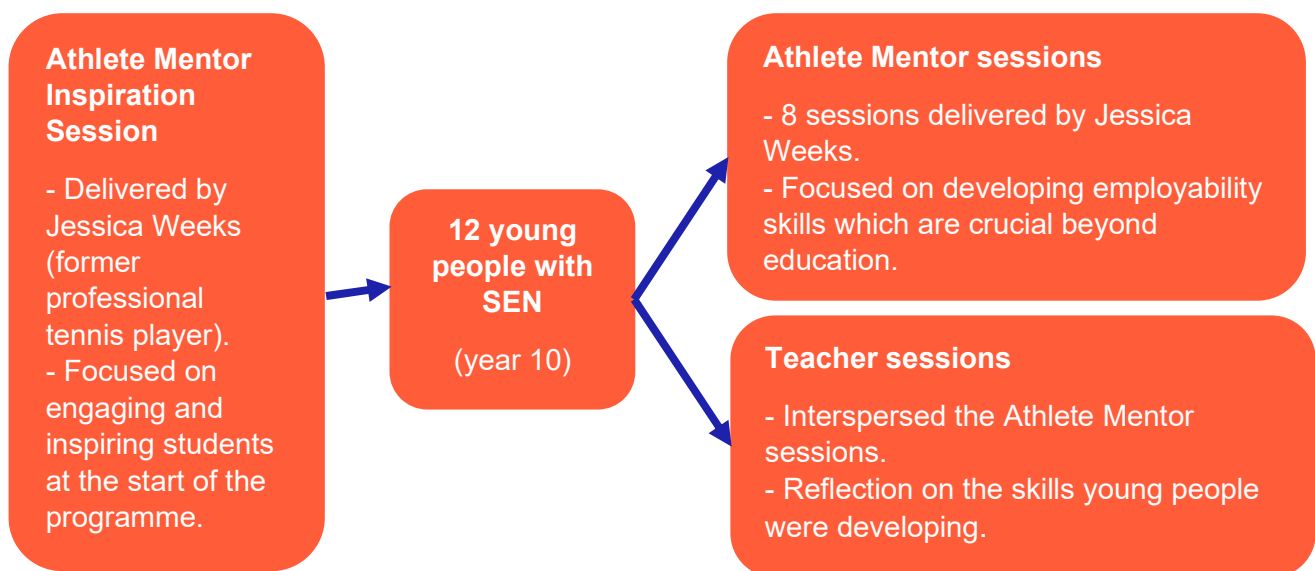
In 2020, Redwood Park Academy joined Set for Success, a two-year youth leadership initiative that aims to provide young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to develop valuable life and leadership skills through mentoring sessions delivered by inspirational athletes. Set for Success is funded by the Wimbledon Foundation and delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST).

Background

Set for Success offered a valuable opportunity for Redwood Park Academy to offer extra support to young people at risk. The Vice Principal at the school highlighted that not enough students with special educational needs (SEN) progress into full time employment¹, which is an area he is keen to improve. The Set for Success model also gave students the opportunity to develop leadership, resilience and independent skills, which supports the school vision.

Activities

Covid-19 led to delays to delivery at the start, so the programme activities were extended into the 2021/22 academic year. The key activities that had been delivered at the time of writing this case study are highlighted in the diagram below.



¹ In the 2019-20 financial year, 5.6% of adults with learning disabilities aged 18-64 who were receiving support from social services were in paid employment. (Source: Department for Education (2021) Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources)

The young people that were selected to take part in the programme were chosen on the basis that: they were engaged and could cope with a new person (the Athlete Mentor) coming into the school to deliver the programme; they had leadership potential; and they didn't normally have opportunities to participate in activities like this.

The programme offered flexibility to allow the school to effectively tailor delivery to meet the needs of its pupils. For example, the school took time to adapt the programme's written materials to ensure accessibility for all students (e.g. use of pictures instead of writing). All sessions were delivered face to face, rather than virtually, as they were seen to be more effective at engaging the students.

The students were positive about the Athlete Mentor sessions, which was supported by the Vice Principal who commented that the young people were really engaged and responded well to the sessions.

“The pupils like that it is someone else delivering it - Jess (the Athlete Mentor) is very energetic and personable.”

DAVE TURNER, VICE PRINCIPAL AT REDWOOD PARK ACADEMY

The Vice Principal highlighted a positive synergy between the programme's aspirations and the school's values; a lot of the school's values are promoted by the Wimbledon Foundation, which enabled cross-curricula benefits. Set for Success gave pupils at Redwood Park Academy an opportunity to engage with their school's values in a new format through working with an Athlete Mentor. This complemented and reinforced what they do at Redwood, especially as it was delivered by another person and in a new context.

“The values that Wimbledon are promoting - resilience, communication and independence – is what underpins our whole curriculum, to get them ready for adulthood and employment.”

DAVE TURNER, VICE PRINCIPAL AT REDWOOD PARK ACADEMY

Benefits

Benefits to young people

The key benefits to the young people are as follows.



**Increased
enjoyment and
engagement**

The young people were excited by the Athlete Mentor coming in and they valued the sessions. They were excited about receiving some kit as part of it, and it created a sense of being part of something bigger. The teachers recognise that the pupils' engagement and enjoyment levels have increased, however, more can be done to reinforce this understanding among the pupils themselves.

“She (the Athlete Mentor) came from being a normal ordinary person to a tennis player; inspires me that you can achieve something.”

YOUNG PERSON

The young people highlighted that Set for Success had helped them to reinforce and develop their communication skills, particularly learning to listen to others and how to interact with others. They also improved their team-working skills. The physical activities that were led by the Athlete Mentor played a key role in helping to build these skills.



**Improved
communication
and team-work
skills**

“The first session was a challenge because it was different, but over time the pupils got more resilient to being challenged and led by someone different. That’s a life skill, working with new people.”

DAVE TURNER, VICE PRINCIPAL AT REDWOOD PARK ACADEMY



Increased resilience

Set for Success also helped the young people to build resilience in terms of meeting new people and working in groups that they wouldn't normally.

Benefits to the school

The Vice Principal emphasised that the programme would support the development of further opportunities on-site and enable them to have more opportunities for social action at the school. The project has also helped to improve their PE and wider school curriculum.

There was also a level of excitement due to Wimbledon being an established brand and associated with tennis stars such as Andy Murray and Emma Raducanu. The Athlete Mentor visits helped to raise the profile of the programme across the school.

Future

The next step for Set for Success at Redwood Park Academy is for the young people to design and deliver an event as part of a social action project that enables them to put their new skills into practice. From the start of 2022, Redwood Park Academy is also delivering Set for Success with a new cohort of young people.

Top Tips

- ✓ Be flexible and, if necessary, adapt the delivery style and the resources appropriately to ensure engagement and accessibility for all students.
- ✓ Ensure that there is sufficient teacher time allocated to support the programme.
- ✓ Carefully consider the young people that take part in the programme to maximise the potential benefits.
- ✓ Build in opportunities for cross-curricula benefits by applying the programme values or new skills across other areas of school.
- ✓ If required, consider alternative ways to record young people's progress, such as using photos or teacher feedback.

"It's (Set for Success) fun, you have a good time, and you keep active."

YOUNG PERSON



Youth Sport Trust
SportPark
Loughborough University
3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3QF

01509 226600
research@youthsporttrust.org
www.youthsporttrust.org



Registered Charity Number 1086915
Registered Company Number 4180163