

## SCHOOL NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2024



## The benefits of an Independent School Review

All teachers and school leaders understand the importance of providing meaningful feedback. Done well it supports progress, building learning, addressing misunderstandings, and thereby closing the gap between where you are and where you want to be. This is as equally true for our school staff as it is for our students. Without reflection, groups and individuals can get stuck at a particular stage of development without realising that, with a few minor changes, they can do better. A fresh pair of eyes can be all that is needed.

Excel and Exceed has been the last of our 3 CAMHS schools to welcome an independent reviewer to assess the quality of learning on offer. Nicola Wells from Meraki Education Group spent two days at our school observing, questioning and diving deep into all aspects of our educational offer, to produce an independent review regarding the quality of our teaching and learning. I am delighted to say Nicola confirmed what we thought; that we work hard to provide a broad based, personalised educational plan for every young person in the school and our very experienced teachers and support staff deliver it well, whether in the school or on the ward - wherever our young people can engage best.

Here are a few statements from the report:



Phoenix School (Sheffield), Excel & Exceed Centre (Bury) and The Summit (Coventry) are DfE registered special schools, providing education for young people admitted to their co-located hospital services.

Our schools are regulated by OFSTED and were all rated GOOD at their last inspection.



**Excel & Exceed Centre** 

**Phoenix School** 

**Summit School** 



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"The staff are exceptionally talented, as a result the young people give the impression that they are less complex than they really are"

"Staff have high expectations and demonstrate high levels of skills when delivering the curriculum both in the Centre and on the wards"

"There are good systems in place to accurately assess the young people's levels of engagement and confidence levels linked to learning"

"The focus on careers is appropriate and provides the young people the knowledge and skills needed for their next steps".

Of course, Nicola also provided a range of ideas for consideration and development in order to make the Excel and Exceed Centre an even stronger educational provider. Our school vision of "learning to be all you can be" is key to moving forward on the road to recovery. Celebrating the successes of our professional practices and acknowledging where improvements can be made is how we continue to achieve that vision for our staff and our students.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

## What we've been up to this month......

At Excel and Exceed, **Time to Talk Day** was held on February 1<sup>st</sup> in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), Cat.

Students were invited to take part in the "nation's biggest mental health conversation" in school, whereby they were offered a range of activities in order to encourage them to talk about how they really feel and engage in conversations that matter.



Activities included making characters for stories, engaging in a quiz answering whether statements relating to mental health are true or false and creating stories for characters such as Bob and Sarah.

The day was met with enthusiasm, as students shared experiences through storytelling and raised awareness of mental health, meanwhile offering insightful advice as to how help can be sought when a person is struggling.





This month at Summit we have been **challenging the young people both physically and artistically as a way to re-engage**. Every day the young people have begun education with a range of physical challenges such as bouncing a ball on a book or hula-hooping. The artistic challenge has been based on 'February Faces'- the young people have designed and created a range of faces from the use of paper quilling, icing a face on a biscuit to 'wicked Wednesday' faces! For each challenge they complete they get a star on their chart- a complete card will result in an Amazon voucher!

Jayne from Excel and Exceed delivered a **lecture to trainee primary school teacher students at Manchester Metropolitan University.** The lecture was part of the inclusion week, some of the key points being:-



- -What we know currently about Children Looked After (CLA) and what it means to be CLA student, along with some statistics.
- -The comorbid existence of mental health and attachment.
- -How we need to consider these students are not homogenous and the need to consider intersectionality.
- -What the term 'mental health' and the often negative connotation of this—Jayne talked about the different weight given to mental and physical health.
- -Explored the most common mental health diagnoses with a focus on what might be seen in primary aged children.
- -The impact of trauma on the brain and how this reduces capacity to learn.
- -Ways in which we could support students who were both CLA and experiencing attachment and mental illness.
- -Challenging fixed mind-sets and personal bias was considered along with the use of language and how this may be a barrier if not considered carefully.

Following the session, Jayne received some great feedback from the programme lead:- Your input was excellent and it would be great if you could come back next year.

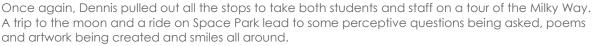


Monica, the new science teacher at the Phoenix School, has hit the ground running – bringing her 25+ years of experience to our learning environment. She held her **first science practical**, ensuring that our young people followed strict health and safety protocols throughout.

Our young people were able to learn in a practical and meaningful way, whilst having lots of fun (and sweets) in the process! They learned about osmosis and diffusion using Skittles and Jelly Babies before writing it up in their books using the correct scientific terminology.



Excel and Exceed are proud that they welcomed back Dennis, 'the Godfather of **mobile planetariums,**' in February 9<sup>th.</sup>





Additionally, Dennis later contacted Excel and Exceed to thank the students and staff and noted that 'the welfare and progress of the students is obviously at the forefront of what everyone does.' A big thanks goes out to Dennis also, who has set himself the task of providing Excel and Exceed with a copy of his book for our library!

The Phoenix School was fortunate to be visited by Molly from the **Lived Experience Network** this month. Her key focus was around how the school supports students to gain confidence in their learning and feel comfortable in the school environment. During her visit, Molly spoke with various members of school staff as well as four of our students.



Molly was impressed by the efforts made at the Phoenix School to support young people in a calm and pleasant environment. She sent us over a glowing report following her visit, two of the guotes are included on the school website.