



The Successful Lives Curriculum: Enabling Students to be Highly Successful in School and Life

Hartdown Academy

Using the Successful Lives Curriculum

Successful Lives was launched in 2013 to give teachers the resources needed to inspire students to be more independent and achieve their goals.

Students expressed positive outcomes from the curriculum - *“How to be more resilient,” “How to overcome fears,”* and *“That you can overcome anything life throws at you.”* But probably the most touching comment was, *“That they learned a new word, and how to ignore people (bullies).”*

Hartdown Academy is an inclusive co-educational college for students of all abilities, aged from 11-18, supporting a diverse range of students.

- Over 25% of its students do not have English as their first language.
- Many of the remaining students are classed as white working class and on average these students now tend to do less well across the UK.

In spite of these challenges, the School achieved a good Ofsted report in its last inspection in 2014 and has just delivered its best GCSE and A2 results (2014/15).

41% of students achieved 5 A* - C GCSEs, including English and Maths. The school wants to continue to build on these results and knows that a key part of this is to help students raise their aspirations and become more independent in knowing what they need to do.

The curriculum also helped us with literacy – reading and writing skills and punctuation. – Rachel (English Teacher)



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SUCCESSFUL LIVES CURRICULUM CASE STUDY

Challenges

Hartsdown Academy is located within Thanet, in one of the most deprived areas within Kent and in an area ranked in the top 2% of all deprived areas within England.

A number of Thanet schools are involved in a Headstart programme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, which is looking to build emotional wellbeing and other factors that will help students be better prepared to meet adversity and show resilience when needed.

As part of this project, the school used a number of lessons from the Successful Lives curriculum to help achieve these goals.

How the Curriculum Helped

Lessons on resilience, with objectives designed to teach students to understand what makes a resilient person and how to build skills to overcome adversity were the main focus. They were delivered to the whole of year 9, using 15 lessons from the curriculum.

Each lesson was delivered as part of a weekly literacy session, and the exercises also helped to build skills in this important area too.

Although the curriculum was only implemented in Spring Term 2015 with short preparation time, both teachers and students noted positive results before the end of the summer term.

A review session with a mixed ability sample of students demonstrated a very high knowledge in all the students of specific steps they could take when meeting challenges or adversity.

The success stories were a favourite. They were very explicit and encouraged students to go and do research and to find their own.

Teacher

Results

What students had to say?

- “The lessons helped me to understand what makes a resilient person and how I could become more resilient.”
- “They helped me understand that I can overcome anything life throws at me.”
- “There will be bad points in life, but there will be good points too. You have to never give up and keep on going.”



Common among students is their improved self-awareness about 'resilience'. Many didn't know what skills to build before starting.

What teachers had to say?

- “The lessons engaged the students as they had an interest in their own future careers. They helped them think about the options they had, and how they were going to get there. Previously students had ideas but hadn't thought through the journey they would take.”
- “The lessons helped us move away from the idea that success equals money. Students realised it was about being friendly, finding the right group, working hard and managing their behaviour.”
- “The resources are great, well laid out and easy to see and had a real impact for those that were up for it. For example one girl wants to get into films and she mapped out just what she would need to do and how she would overcome the obstacles she might face.”
- “The lessons were easy to use and it was really good to hear about what they (the students) wanted to do.”
- “Lessons helped students to believe, aspire and build their self-esteem. They realised the importance of finishing things off.”

