

Sales Improvement Services



Sir William Borlase's Grammar School Case Study

About Sir William Borlase's Grammar School

Sir William Borlase's Grammar School (SWBGS) in Buckinghamshire is one of the highest achieving co-educational grammar schools in the country.

The schools' specialist status both in performing arts and sport is apparent through the vast range of outstanding opportunities and their excellent achievements at inter-school, national and international level. Accomplishments which are testament to the determination and talent of our pupils and staff.

SWBGS has around 1,100 pupils, with almost 400 in the Sixth Form. Pupils join the school in Years 7, 9 or 12. The school has an excellent academic record and pupils often progress to Russell Group Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College London, Durham and the top schools of medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry.

Equally many of the arts students have gained places in the most competitive conservatoires including the Royal Academy of Music, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London Contemporary Dance and the Slade School of Fine Art.

Graded Outstanding by OFSTED in 2012 and achieving the Challenge Award set by the National Association for Able Children in Education in 2014, the school is regularly placed towards the top of National League tables for A Level and GCSE.

Teaching and Learning

The school has developed its Quality of Learning initiative based on Building Learning Power - an approach to teaching and learning focusing on pedagogy where teachers plan and deliver lessons to develop students' learning through independence, reflection, resilience, collaboration and creativity.

This is recognised as the best way to provide appropriate challenge and stimulation to able students. Every department also offers additional opportunities for the most able. They extend the level of challenge inside and outside the classroom through a wide range of activities and experiences. The success of the strategy is reflected in their consistently outstanding examination results.

"The best thing about Borlase is the fact that it is not a school, but a community and you can make friends with anyone from any year group. Plus, the teachers are always more than happy to help inside a classroom or outside."

Isabel Murray - Year 7 2013-14

Widening the coaching usage

Much work has been carried out to illustrate the use of coaching methods to improve teacher performance, for example, where a teacher works with a colleague who has specialist knowledge, such as an advanced skills teacher (AST) or National Strategy consultant. By virtue of their experience and expertise, a specialist coach can support development in a specific area of practice i.e. in assessment for learning or classroom behaviour.



Jenny Hopper, Associate Assistant Head and Head of Modern Foreign Languages was placed in charge of a national project relating to the 'Embedding Formative Assessment' programme, run by SSAT. Within this role, Jenny identified that coaching can support this project and SWBGS through:

- Team coaching; where coaching is used to help the formation and development of the project team.
- 1:1 coaching; where leadership support can be provided to individuals within the project team.
- Peer to peer coaching; where team members might support each other in specific development areas.
- Skills coaching: where specific areas relating to formative assessment might be used for both staff and pupils.

Over the next two years, relating to this national project, Jenny's vision is to use coaching as a key management tool to support the project's success.

Background to the coaching approach

Sir William Borlase's is a National Teaching School, and as such has a responsibility for school-based improvement, including in the areas of CPD, bespoke school-to-school support, teaching training, and action research.

In June 2015, Dr Ben Parsons was appointed to lead the Marlow & Maidenhead Learning Alliance (MMLA) and along with Head Teacher, Dr Peter Holding, they approached Tim Anderson to investigate how coaching might be used.

While the Alliance was at the planning stage in developing a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) plan, Dr Parsons and Dr Holding sought out advice from Tim Anderson to see if coaching could be used to support their ongoing development activities.

A decision was taken to engage his services and to run a number of interactive coaching skills workshops at the school.

Eight of the schools' senior leadership team were included in the workshops, some of whom have also attended coaching training sessions.

Other areas where coaching can support

Other areas where the school can use coaching will be established over the coming months, and the school will work on building useful case studies they intend to share with the schools they support locally.