

Secondary Teacher Training case study (Pilot): Impington Village College

Please note: the pilot phase of the Secondary Teacher Training Programme ran from July 2018 to July 2019. Individual schools were awarded a larger amount of funding than those participating in the national rollout. The intended programme outcomes were the same as those for the national rollout. Schools were selected to represent the diverse nature of schools across England.

Background to your school

Impington Village College is the lead Teaching School for the Morris Teaching School Alliance (MTSA) in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, with approximately 1,300 students. It is part of the global community of International Baccalaureate World Schools. The school has a state-of-the-art Sports Centre on site, which is at the heart of the local village community. The facility provides the college's students with wide ranging opportunities to independently pursue a healthy lifestyle, as well as allowing the PE faculty to offer a diverse and rich Physical Education curriculum which includes a wide range of extra-curricular sport. MTSA is also part of a wider network of Teaching School Alliances that has partnerships with secondaries from across the rural region of East Cambridgeshire & the Fens.

Intent: what did you want to change?

Despite their existing quality PE provision and facilities, Impington Village College identified that there was still more to do to ensure that every one of their students could engage with and benefit from physical activity. Several barriers to engagement for young people at their school were identified, including:

- Issues with body image amongst girls, and increasingly expressed by boys too.
- Mental health problems that create lethargy and lack of motivation to become involved.
- Increasing sense of pressure to study, especially for KS4 students, and giving up physical activities in the build up to exams.
- A lack of explicit focus in the KS3 PE curriculum to make the link between mental health and physical wellbeing.

As part of the pilot for the Secondary Teacher Training programme, Impington Village College was asked by Sport England to focus on raising the profile of PE and sport across their school to support whole school improvement. To do this, Impington identified two objectives to guide their work in this project:

1. Firstly, to strengthen cross-curricular connections between Sport and core subjects (English, Maths and Science) to optimise academic outcomes for a group of targeted Achievement through Sports Academy (ASA) students.
2. Secondly, to improve the physical and mental health of a targeted cohort of students to improve their whole school engagement.

Implementation: how did you do it?

Strengthening cross-curricular connections between sport and core subjects

An Achieving through Sport Academy (ASA) was developed to engage a group of Year 10 students who were disengaged with school but keen on sport – the aim being to use the hook of sport to engage them in other core lessons. This group of students were given a distinctive identity (for example, by wearing a different uniform) to build a sense of belonging and self-worth.

The Director of Sport worked with teachers from core subjects to explore how best to use sport as a context for learning in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, with regular meetings to develop tailored schemes of learning. Key elements of the programme were additional tutor support from the PE department and deeper engagement with parents. A residential visit focused on team-building skills and physical activities were run by the PE department but also involved a science teacher. Students also had the opportunity to learn new skills by shadowing PE teachers, and gain additional qualifications such as coaching certificates.

Improving the physical and mental wellbeing of students to support whole school engagement

Impington identified another targeted group of students to take part in a #TIM (This Is Me) curriculum consisting of 2 hours a fortnight, with sessions focused on improving mental health and wellbeing – with one hour as a discussion session and one hour as a physical session. The aim of this curriculum was to challenge physical and emotional gender stereotypes that were creating barriers to students' willingness to commit fully to their education and to reaching their full potential, and to promote positive mental and physical health &

well-being to support and motivate students' engagement with school. The group was split by gender, so the girls' group read 'Girl Up' by Laura Bates and the boys read 'Being Mum and Dad' by Rio Ferdinand and engaged in group discussions about the themes. Through their physical sessions, Impington provided opportunities for students to engage in a wide range of sports to help their students find a 'sport that fits'.

External sports organisations were brought in to provide 'taster' sessions for students, while at the same time, providing professional development for Physical Education teachers to broaden the range of activities they are able to offer to future cohorts of students. The College also drew widely on the skills and expertise within its own staff, in and beyond the Physical Education department.

Impact: did it work?

The interventions developed by Impington's PE department had a positive effect on the whole school. By providing their more disruptive students with a different curriculum through ASA, they reduced the amount of disruption in the classes that they had left and improved the learning experience for others. Core subject teachers reported anecdotally that the ASA students' progress in science and English benefitted from the programme. Across the school, 1 in 3 core subject teachers felt that they'd had a 'moderate amount' of success in using references to sports to help 'hook' ASA students into the subject, whereas 92% of ASA students felt that their English, Maths and Science teachers have successfully used references to sports to help 'hook' them into the subject.

The teambuilding activities on the residential trip were a huge success and staff reported seeing a different and more positive side to many students. A particularly positive relationship was built between the Science teacher and Sports Academy students. This was further complemented by the accelerated progress students made in this subject compared to the previous academic year. Feedback from ASA students included:

- "I enjoy lessons more."
- "I'm more willing to come into school."
- "This year I've learned more."

The targeted cohort of students who were given additional support to improve their whole school engagement responded positively to the approach. The groups responded well to the issues explored in the books they were set to read as part of the #TIM curriculum. Impington found that the girls were particularly receptive to the programme, and its positive impact is reflected in their increased engagement with school activities. The girls and boys agreed that the girls had got more out of the programme because they had invested more 'commitment' into extra-curricular activities. Over half of this cohort has had improved school attendance since beginning the programme, and 63% received a decreased number of detentions.

Learning and next steps

The project was co-designed between the project lead and Director of Sport so that there was a joint understanding of the purpose, rationale and scope of what they were trying to achieve. Creating discrete groups of students to work with allowed for targeted interventions and strategies to be used with them. On the back of the success of this project, Impington Village College will be running the Achievement through Sports Academy (ASA) project for the next cohort of Year 10s in 2019/20.

Top tips?

Engage senior leaders early in the programme. The support and 'permission to innovate' that the College leadership gave to the teachers involved provided real confidence to try something quite radical and ambitious.

Testimonial: *"The project gave me valuable insight using sport / physical activity as an enabler for our students. This project used sport and physical activity as a vehicle to forge an identity; an area that had caused these students issues both inside and outside of school. Creating and confirming an identity for this cohort had positive impacts in their; engagement with school sport, engagement within some lessons, general wellbeing and perhaps above all it assisted them in becoming increasingly well-rounded individuals. Personally, the project has also made me increasingly aware of the challenges that our students face and I now feel increasingly confident in supporting students with the challenges they face, self-imposed or otherwise."*