

Context

Goring Primary School was the first Partner School for the A+ Family Advocacy Pilot a programme from Gap Education Social Enterprise. It is a little smaller than the average Primary and set in a rural Village in Oxfordshire. It has only a few pupils that qualify for the pupil premium and in the 2012-13 academic year received £5400 of premium. Goring-on-Thames is situated in a largely affluent area with 1 main pocket where there is a contrasting level of deprivation and social housing.

One of the challenges faced by the school is that the low numbers and corresponding amount of funding from pupil premium means that it is quite difficult to afford many solutions or interventions for pupils that would then evidence impact upon the pupils outcomes and meet the expectations placed upon the school by Ofsted and the Department of Education.

The school's motivation for engaging with the A+ Family Advocacy programme was to target a family where it was felt that there were a number of risk factors that required intervention in the family home to overcome. As this was a Pilot, it has been delivered free of charge without using any of the Pupil Premium.

A+ Family Advocacy is a new approach to helping children. It enables schools to use the Pupil Premium to maximum effect by working intensively with families to help achieve stability and improve educational outcomes for their children.

Approach

Goring Primary clearly already understood how important it is to involve parents and had good relationships with the parents of their pupils. After an initial meeting with the Head and Deputy Head teachers, a family was identified to work with. The school were able to use their good relationship with the family to positively engage them through an initial meeting with the A+ family advocates.

The family advocates, in partnership with the school, offer twelve one hour sessions (mostly in the family home) to support and work with the parent(s)/carer(s) as well as some work with the children. The bespoke programme covers a number of key areas such as Communication, Routine and Habits, Setting Boundaries, Play and Learning, Health and Nutrition, Managing debt, as well as tailored sessions that tackle particular needs within a family that have been identified in the early stages through some simple diagnostics.

The school are kept involved by the advocates, through regular updates and a mid-point review. At the end of the programme the family, advocates and school colleagues review the progress and measure the distance travelled. The school are then able to evidence this to show impact of their pupil premium spending.

Eventually A+ will be delivered by trained volunteers, identified within the local community, mainly through partnerships with local Church and third sector organisations. Therefore, any on-going support and building of networks to support the family will be sourced via this route.

Impact

The pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved at school. In the previous academic year her attendance was 90%. So far this academic year (after 2 terms) it has risen to 97%, with the majority of improvement coming since the start of the January.

School have reported a big positive change in the pupil's attitude to school, especially in what was her weakest area: Maths. Their data shows that she has made 19 months progress with Maths in the Autumn and Spring Terms of the current academic year. The school have said:

"There has been such a huge improvement, especially with Maths since she started the A+ programme and it's mainly been due to her new-found willingness to have a go and the boost in her confidence and self-esteem."

The school have also reported much more confidence and engagement with the parent. The parent herself has described the impact on their lives as follows:

"The atmosphere in the house is much less stressful, especially in the morning. I've really benefitted from the programme and both my children are now doing really well in school."



Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

A+ Family Advocacy uses the standard SDQ process that is common in many schools. The 25 questions in the SDQ comprise 5 scales of 5 items that indicate areas of behavioural strength or difficulty. It is usually easiest to score all 5 scales first before working out the total difficulties score. Scores are classified as Normal, Borderline and Abnormal. Using the scale bandings shown below, an abnormal score on one or both of the total difficulties scores can be used to identify likely cases with mental health disorders.

The SDQ is carried out with the Parent and a Teacher at the beginning and end of the A+ programme. Here are the results from the SDQ that was conducted before and after the A+ Family Advocacy Pilot in Goring Primary.

Aggregated scores of teacher and parent as follows.

	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
Total Difficulties:	Abnormal	Normal
Scale 1. Emotional Symptoms:	Abnormal	Normal
Scale 2. Conduct Problems:	Abnormal	Normal
Scale 3. Hyperactivity:	Abnormal	Normal
Scale 4. Peer Problems:	Abnormal	Normal
Scale 5. Prosocial behaviour:	Borderline	Normal

The “Impact Supplement” collates feedback from both teacher and parent upon overall distress and social impairment, and was recorded at the beginning and end of the programme. The Parent score is out of 10, and the teacher score out of 6. The higher the number, the greater the impact of the difficulty.

Scores for the impact supplement for how greatly the difficulties interfere with the child’s everyday life were as follows:

Parent:	2 (a little)	0 (not at all)
Teacher:	5 (quite a lot)	0 (not at all)

Due to the huge success of this pilot, Gap Education will be working with another family from the school very soon.

Next steps

Gap Education is seeking funding to scale-up its A+ Family Advocacy programme, to offer this transformational programme to schools all over the UK. Gap Education is developing partnerships with various Schools, Local Authorities as well as Churches, Charities and third sector groups to recruit and train Family Advocates to deliver the programme. Gap Education is looking for schools that would be interested in implementing an A+ programme with one of their families whose children qualify for the pupil premium.

Visit www.narrowthegap.net for more details.



Aims of Gap Education

Gap aims to close the gap between the achievement of children and young people from challenging backgrounds to enable everyone in the UK to achieve their potential whatever their starting point.

Gap Education will close the achievement gap for children in the UK by:

1. Raising self-esteem and bringing hope to families and communities struggling with unemployment and anti-social behaviour.
2. Brokering positive partnerships and mobilising the Church and Voluntary groups to social action.
3. Finding holistic solutions; recognising that complex problems require a number of effective strategies.
4. Being there for the long haul; understanding that there is no quick fix to bringing about lasting change.