

Context

Hatfield Primary Academy became a partner school of the Family Advocacy School Toolkit from Gap Education. It is a larger than average Primary School in Sheffield. The school population is drawn from a local area that mostly ranks in the top 10% of wards for Indicators of Multiple Deprivation with some coming from top 5% IMD. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Approximately 40% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups while the majority is of White British heritage. Almost double the national average speaks English as an additional language with 23 different languages spoken by pupils in the school. A larger than average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities.



The school's motivation for engaging with the Family Advocacy School Toolkit was to close the gap for pupil premium children and build upon positive parental engagement. The school also commissioned a Parental Engagement Audit. This audit will soon be published on the school website. As part of the audit a Parent/Carer survey was conducted which saw around 70 parents and carers respond. The results of the audit enabled the school to understand how to use the toolkit effectively to improve outcomes for children and close the gap.

A+ Family Advocacy is a relatively 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

Hatfield Primary Academy already understood how important it is to involve parents and had good relationships with the parents of their pupils. The school identified 2 key staff that received the half-day training session from Gap Education. These newly trained 'Family Advocates' were coordinated by a non-teaching member of staff who became the Lead Advocate for the school. The training, resourcing and identification of the right member of staff to lead on the programme were all ingredients to its success.

After identifying students to target, the family advocates approached the families. Using the Gap training of how to deliver effective parental engagement, the school were very successful at getting buy-in with all the families that were approached. The advocates initially identified 5 families to work with. All 5 accepted a place on the programme. They ran twelve one-hour sessions (mostly in the family's home) to support and work with the parents as well as some work with the children. The A+ 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 leadership were kept involved by the Lead Advocate, through regular updates and a mid-point review. At the end of the programme the family, advocates and school colleagues reviewed the progress and measured the distance travelled of pupils and parents. The school was then able to evidence this to show impact of their pupil premium spending.

Impact

The impact for all 5 pupils was positive. 1 pupil left the school mid-programme having made good progress. The progress of the pupils and impact of the programme was evaluated by the School and Gap Education during the Quality Assurance visit that is included as part of the school toolkit. "The change in one of my students has been so dramatic I can't think of the words to sum up the impact" Hatfield Head Teacher

On average the programmes achieved a positive change of 33% across the main 5 measures of Pupil's Strength and Difficulties: Emotional, Conduct, Hyperactivity, Peer problems and Prosocial Behaviour. This change was measured over a 12 week period where 0-10% change is Minimal, 10-20% Evident, 20-30% Significant >30% is very significant.

"I was thinking of moving (my son) to a different school, but now he's coming home every day saying he's happy at school and I now want him to stay" (GAP parent)

School have reported positive changes to all pupils involved attitude to school, effort in class, behaviour and well-being. The programme had a significant change to one particular child (46%). Before GAP the child was excluded several times and continually out of class. The relationship with parents was in decline and as a result his academic progress was slowing. By carrying out the GAP programme school links became much stronger. Mum was able to access more school resources and became more positive about school. Mum took on board the strategies and tips given in the sessions and put them into place at home. This has benefitted her own relationship with her child as they now attend Mosque together whereas before the child shunned his mother's religion. The child's peer relationships have also transformed, before they would flitter between groups of children, without actually engaging any in positive play. Now he has formed strong bonds with several children. Inviting them to their house and attending activities on the weekend. This is something mum was frightened of before due to the child's unpredictable behaviour. "The change we've seen is staggering. *He is now a transformed young man*" (Senior Learning Mentor)

Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The Family Advocacy School Toolkit uses the standard SDQ assessment that is common in many schools. The 25 questions in the SDQ comprise 5 scales of measures 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. As we find the terminology not especially helpful in the context of our programmes, we encourage the use of the Traffic Light system where ‘Abnormal’ = Red, or ‘A great deal’, ‘Borderline’=Amber, or ‘Somewhat’ and ‘Normal’=Green, or ‘Not at all’.

The SDQ is carried out with the Parent and a Teacher at the beginning and end of the A+ programme. Here are the mean results from the 5 SDQ’s conducted before and after the programmes in Hatfield Primary Academy.

Teacher scores as follows.

BEFORE		AFTER
20	Total Difficulties:	12
3	Scale 1. Emotional Symptoms:	3
5	Scale 2. Conduct Problems:	2
10	Scale 3. Hyperactivity:	5
2	Scale 4. Peer Problems:	2
4	Scale 5. Prosocial behaviour:	5

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 level of difficulty in that area.

Scores for the impact supplement for how greatly the difficulties interfere with the child’s everyday life were as follows (Before and After):

Parent: **4** **1**
 Teacher: **7** **3**

Due to the huge success of this programme, Hatfield Primary Academy is increasing the number of Family Advocates for September and identifying 12-18 pupils and their families to work with over the Autumn and Spring terms.

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 behavior.
2. Brokering positive partnerships and mobilizing 3rd sector organizations to social action.
3. Finding holistic solutions; recognizing 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.