

What difference has the PATH tool made at Bourne Community College?

Bourne Community College has been using a PATH tool to support its students. The PATH tool is a Person Centred Planning approach used to develop an understanding of a student's ideal future and how they can be best supported to achieve this. The following report is written to capture views of the SENCO and Learning Mentor on the difference the PATH approach has been making.

“A PATH meeting allows the students’ parents to see the relationship that school staff have with their child. The meeting is a great way to bridge the gap between home and school. Often a student’s attitude towards something can alter when they are in a different environment. For example, a student may be working well and quite content at school with their emotions and behaviour being managed through the structured environment, however, when a child returns home and homework is mentioned they have an outburst and the parent becomes concerned that they are unhappy and aren’t coping. The PATH provides a great tool for a structured meeting where these reactions can be explored.



Planning the PATH meeting with the young person and asking simple questions like “What does your mum / dad like to drink, what’s your favourite colour?” is so powerful. Having this discussion not only enables you to offer the family refreshments to help them relax when they arrive, but also sends out a clear personal message to the student saying “we care about you, this meeting is for you, you do have some control over your life.”



The visualisation part of the PATH is very important– it is useful for us all to take time to stop and think – this is something we do not typically do. Taking 2 minutes at the beginning of the session makes a big difference to being in a positive place to verbally express the dream.

Even if the young person’s dream appears unrealistic, it should still be captured on the paper in the young person’s words. The conversation that comes from the dream reveals what is important for the student and how this can be broken down into achievable goals.



A PATH is a great time saver over the course of the year. Although the actual meeting can take 2 hours, the steps that come out are so specific that you have student and family engagement straight away. It also clearly shows how academic outcomes are interlinked with all the other aspects of the young person’s life and why a partnership approach is so key.

Some of the students that attend Bourne are from neighbouring local authorities which tend to have more traditional SEN processes in place. Although these processes have improved since the new SEN Code of Practice came into force, there still seems to be a lot missing. Not using a person centred process such as a PATH simply feels wrong.

In these more traditional meetings we still sit around a table. We all end up looking at the young person which can cause them anxiety and they often find it very difficult to talk. The majority of Annual Review discussion also happens without the young person, by the time they arrive the support offer is just 'played back' and they are asked if the action plan that adults have come up with would work for them. They are not part of the action plans formation and their view has little effect on the support decision that has already been made.

In a PATH meeting the approach is so different, the young person is there at the start and has so much to share and say. We have a visual wall chart to focus on which captures the discussion and use the structured PATH process which asks for opinions of others – this is so much better as it dilutes anxiety and takes pressure off the young person. The SEN Code of Practice states that the views of the child / young person and parent carer are paramount – this is what the PATH tool helps us to do.



At school we run study sessions to encourage our students to learn the skills they need for their examinations and support them with their stress. This year we have taken a different, more PATH based approach in these session. During the group's first meeting we asked the students to imagine themselves where they wanted to be this time next year. We then asked each student to consider what specific steps each would need to take to get there. Each of our study session students now has their own achievable personalised plan to follow and the motivation that is required to move forward."

