

The Beacon - Pilot Project

Background

The Beacon pilot has been planned in consultation with the Headteachers of DBE schools. It has also been informed by current good practice across our family of schools together with effective providers nationally.

At its heart is our Christian understanding of the world and the place of humanity within it, characterised by love, care and respect. The DBE's values underpin The Beacon:

- love, forgiveness and reconciliation at the heart of all relationships;
- all members of the school community valued equally;
- needs of the child at the heart of decision making;
- leadership guided by integrity, courage, humility and service;
- highest moral and ethical standards;

These values position the pilot project's contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of our DBE school communities.

The finalised model of The Beacon focuses on enhancing reflective skills and supporting staff to respond to pupil need within their own school / MAT community.

Aims

The finalised model of The Beacon, devised in partnership with [The Mulberry Bush School](#), aims to:

- refresh and/or increase staff knowledge regarding theoretical models for understanding child development, specifically in relation to the personal development and learning outcomes of pupils;
- enhance staff skills in professional reflection, through regular modelling and support, to respond to pupil need within their own school / MAT community;
- appoint and provide quality reflective supervision for 'family link workers' in each school (probably 0.7) offering social and emotional well-being support as well as signposting and possibly advocating with relevant public services such as housing, social services, mental health care, etc.

We believe this model, worked across two school years starting in summer term 2021, to be more purposeful and sustainable compared to approaches for therapeutic intervention where solutions are often sought externally.

The three key aims are influenced by:

- recognising the existing commitment, skills and hard work by whole school communities to respond to the educational, emotional, social and physical needs of pupils and their families;
- responding to the feedback by school leaders, pre Covid-19, about the strains on school provision and finance for an identified group of pupils; even with considerable intervention, their needs are not met as effectively as desired by professionals and parent/carers;
- understanding that schools now face the largely unknown challenges of managing Covid-19 implications whilst planning and implementing quality education and opportunities for personal development;

- working diligently to fulfil the DBE's duty of care for all staff, resourcing a variety of initiatives to empower and support adults in schools.

Governance and Accountability

The Beacon pilot project is funded by a combination of diocesan grant funding and successful funding bids to external organisations. Funders do expect the project sponsor, Diocesan Board of Education, to exercise probity and work transparently.

The pilot project is accountable to a Project Board that meets three times each year to scrutinise and evaluate The Beacon. There is a part time project lead who has responsibility for day to day management and coordination, together with an Advisory Group to support and challenge the project lead. The underpinning function for both the Project Board and Advisory Group is to maximise the positive impact of The Beacon for participating schools.

The Beacon pilot project will be externally evaluated to ensure that there is a rubric for a transferable model that delivers impact. Consideration has been given to shaping an approach that ultimately can be relevant to, and accessed by, every DBE school – anticipating the emerging challenges for schools linked to the pandemic, this equality is important.

Participation

Clearly this is a period of immeasurable strain and stress in school communities due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the emerging consequences of repeated lockdowns. Since its inception, The Beacon has been shaped to enhance and extend existing effective practice in schools rather than being an additional workload for school leaders and their colleagues.

For the pilot project we sought a geographical and demographic spread of schools. The essential criteria was for schools to demonstrate how The Beacon can develop and extend their current provision, strengthening their Christian ethos and whole school culture together with developing/refining their current systems and approaches. School leaders were also asked to share their expectations of their governing body/local committee being actively supportive with the aims and processes of the project.

Resourcing

The DBE entered into a contractual partnership with Mulberry Bush Outreach (as part of the Mulberry Bush Organisation) to provide the whole staff development and whole staff support elements of The Beacon; we have also commissioned the University of Sussex to undertake the external evaluation. The DBE is resourcing the delivery, external evaluation, project management and Family Support Worker staffing during the course of the project pilot.

Participating schools receive an annual grant from the DBE to cover the full costs of:

- The Mulberry Bush Outreach staff training and on-going staff support
- Part time Family Support Worker role (likely to be 0.5 - 0.7 depending on NOR)