



*Let your light shine before others  
Matthew 5: 16*



## **The Beacon Project Pilot 2021 - 2023 Update on Year 1: 2021 – 2022**

### **Context:**

There are five schools participating in Coventry Diocesan Board of Education's (DBE) pilot of The Beacon Project <https://coventrydbe.org/resources/the-beacon-information-about-the-pilot-project/>. All pilot schools remain engaged and continue to collaborate with us including taking part in the project activities (see Appendix A) and contributing feedback / providing impact information.

In Spring 2021, we invited all 74 schools in the Coventry Church of England Diocese to express their interest in taking part – this timeline had been pushed back from September 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and associated pressures in schools. Twelve schools expressed interest; we applied eligibility criteria to identify participants.

The project launched in September 2021, following initial briefing meetings with Project Leads and Head Teachers of the participating schools during the previous Summer school term. We have subsequently kept in touch regularly with these two groups, together with the Project financed family workers and the link governors in the pilot schools.

The on-going impact of viral transmission (e.g. school closures, pupil absence and staff absence triggering changes in teaching arrangements due to positive test results) has adversely affected the reliability of quantitative data and therefore has undermined the relevance of our proxy indicators:

### **Termly measures**

- Increased attendance rate in targeted children.
- Reduction in reported behavioural incidents in targeted children
- Reduced fixed period exclusions of targeted children.
- No permanent exclusions of targeted children.
- Weekly family contact with family link worker.

### **Yearly measures**

- Each family engaged in at least one additional community activity.
- One new family activity started in local church and attended by targeted families.

### **Outcomes evidence from Year 1 of the pilot:**

Working with our external partner, the University of Sussex, we have collected and analysed qualitative evidence in the absence of reliable quantitative data:

1. All pilot schools report that the Project funded FSW role (Family Support Worker) is making a significantly positive difference to the rate and reach of their pastoral support for vulnerable pupils and/or their families.

The FSWs all have their own caseload of individual pupils with additional needs, some are anxious and withdrawn, other children have problems self-regulating as a result of trauma such as domestic violence or early attachment issues, others are impacted emotionally by their



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responsibilities as young carers. The FSWs are facilitating regular interventions to address these identified needs, aiming to reduce the barriers to pupil learning and personal development, this maybe on 1:1 basis or in a small group setting.

It is estimated that 240 pupils have received FSW support to date, for example:

- a. coordinating social care intervention to provide transport which has improved an individual pupil's attendance by 30%.
- b. facilitating 1:1 wellbeing activities for a pupil who has witnessed and been a victim of domestic violence by his non biological father.
- c. setting up and facilitating a small group lunchtime activity club to develop social skills of turn taking, conflict resolution and self-regulation with the result of no lunchtime exclusions.
- d. building a rapport with pupils and families, providing individual or small group support to process and manage anxiety to address school avoidance, *'We had five pupils who regularly refused to get out of bed and/or run off site before the start of school, all of them now consistently and independently come into their classroom.'*

FSWs have engaged with all the parents/ families of the identified pupils. Their involvement ranges from twice weekly 'phone calls to keep in touch, to daily support meetings reviewing events from the previous evening and morning at home in relation to planned intervention by schools and relevant external agencies.

Some of the contact has also generated direct domestic support, this is described as being earlier than usual intervention to address social, emotional issues, for example:

- a. sign posting to food and clothing supplies because of strained finances.
  - b. pre-empting the need to open Early Help cases by facilitating parental support combined with mentor support for pupils *'This is the first time in six years that we have no Early Help cases open in our school.'*
  - c. as Covid restrictions eased, schools described the process of 'opening our doors again to parents and families'; they all deploy FSWs at the start / end of the school day to engage with parents and start rebuilding working relationships *'You can see a change in parents. We've got families that speak to us a lot more now than they would have done before.'*
  - d. setting up an off-site coffee morning in the local church, wo which parents are now being joined by their friends who do not have children on roll in the school. This reach out into the community is something that the remaining schools all wish to build up.
2. Whole staff training has been complemented by opportunities for group reflection. The pilot schools tell us that the chance for new learning or refreshing existing knowledge has helped to ensure adults can respond consistently to pupils with vulnerabilities and/or complex needs.
- a. schools have chosen to use some of the reflective seminar times to develop their Team Around the Child approach, helping to refine approaches to meet pupil / family needs as well as contributing to staff wellbeing by reducing their stress. *'When you're in it, you don't recognize that you are making those little steps. We've got one child who was very shut down at the beginning of the year and expressed feeling suicidal at times and we were making referrals to CAMHS. We don't feel we need that anymore. This child is moving on to secondary school next year and this child's journey shows real progress.'*



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- b. all schools describe the positive influence of the whole school staff training, with one respondent expressing it as helping *'staff to mature their problem-solving skills'*; another school shared that *'Not everyone in school understands things in the same way. By discussing attachment or emotion coaching in relation to individual cases, we've brought the appropriate responses and scripts to the forefront in our interactions.'*
- c. all schools recognise that participating in the pilot is contributing to staff resilience, thereby helping to nourish their well-being *'Our response to our most challenging pupils has changed. It is intense and tiring work, but no-one is looking at suspension (sic referring to fixed term exclusion) or sanctions.'*
- d. two of the pilot schools have used the opportunity to review their safeguarding and behaviour approaches *'This year we've had several children come in with extremely challenging behaviour. They were potentially going to be high need going through the school. Currently, the situation is that none of those children need any additional adult support, which is remarkable'*; the school believes that fixed period exclusions were very likely, but it has not been necessary to exclude the pupils.

### **Risks and Mitigation**

The Project Manager communicates regularly with the pilot schools, including in person visits; there is a cycle for formally keeping in touch with schools leads, link governors, Family Support Workers and our external partners. In addition, the Project manager provides termly reports to a Project Board. We are confident these mitigations will positively impact to ensure the project has the best possible chance to meet our aims.

#### **Risk 1 - Achieving The Beacon Project aims**

**Mitigation:** the regular reporting cycle includes scrutiny of updates together with a progress review and risk register for each of the priority issues:

- i. safeguarding
- ii. refresh and/or increase staff knowledge regarding theoretical models for understanding child development, specifically in relation to pupil personal development and learning outcomes
- iii. enhance staff skills of professional reflection, through regular modelling and support, to respond to pupil need within their own school / MAT community
- iv. 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.
- v. financial management.

#### **Risk 2 - School staff do not fully engage with The Beacon Project**

**Mitigation:** some initial concerns expressed by schools regarding accessibility of whole staff training and support. We responded immediately and agreed solutions with our external provider. The feedback by schools is that they believe the activities are now *fully* relevant and accessible.



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**Risk 3 - Parents/families reluctant to engage with FSW/church:**

**Mitigation:** two schools have expressed a view that the role title 'family support worker' can be intimidating for some parents, it is reminiscent for them of statutory services. One school has changed it to 'Family Link Worker'. We have actively resourced all schools with guidance for FSW performance management, including consideration of the job title.

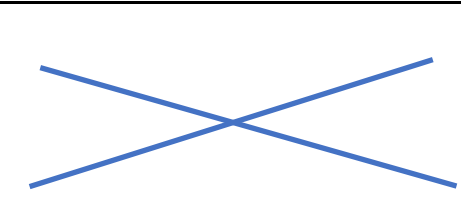
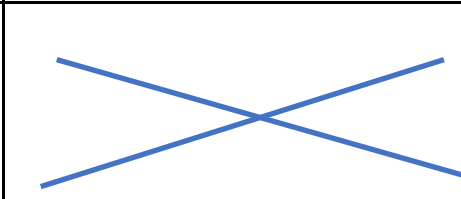
The pandemic adversely affected opportunities for schools to strengthen their connections with their parish churches. We are now seeing **all parishes** actively engage with schools in relation to The Beacon.

**Risk 4 - External providers fall short of their contract agreements:**

**Mitigation:** We invested time initially with external providers to ensure clarity and shared agreement regarding the Project aims and empathy for our Christian principles underpinning our objectives.

They have responded to our feedback, and willingly worked with us to 'tweak' aspects of the project plan e.g. Sussex arranged a virtual session to share the interim findings because they believed it important to engage personally as well as providing a formal written report; The Mulberry Bush School Outreach Team provided additional guidance for pilot schools outlining the aims, format and potential use of the reflective seminars in response to the first half term experiences of facilitating those seminars.

**APPENDIX A - The Beacon Pilot Project: Resourcing for Participating Schools in Year 1 (2021 – 2022)**

Summer 2021	2021 / 22 T1	T2	T3
Initial meeting with each school 0.5 day per school - HT, governor representative, school project lead, DBE project lead	Whole staff development: Attachment training; emotion coaching; neuro developmental impact of trauma; making sense of behaviour 2 days in total (four sessions)		
Recruitment of Family Support Worker	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour
Identify school project coordinator and agree their role / resourcing	Whole staff development: seminar technique/ reflective practice 1.75 hours whole staff monthly	Whole staff development: seminar technique/ reflective practice 1.75 hours whole staff monthly	Whole staff development: seminar technique/ reflective practice 1.75 hours whole staff monthly
Agree comms with key stakeholder, including parent/ carers and pupils	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for school project coordinators Monthly 1 hour
Negotiate and finalise dates for meeting schedule in Year 1	Group supervision for Family Support Worker Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for Family Support Worker Monthly 1 hour	Group supervision for Family Support Worker Monthly 1 hour
** external evaluation activities, TBC across Year 1	School improvement partner visits – ensuring that The Beacon contributes to school performance priorities as well as addressing staff development and addressing pupil / family needs Up to three hours x each half term	School improvement partner visits – ensuring that The Beacon contributes to school performance priorities as well as addressing staff development and addressing pupil / family needs Up to three hours x each half term	School improvement partner visits – ensuring that The Beacon contributes to school performance priorities as well as addressing staff development and addressing pupil / family needs Up to three hours x each half term

**APPENDIX B**  
**University of Sussex - Programme for Evaluation of The Beacon Project**

	<b>Evaluation activities</b>
<b>Autumn 1 (2021)</b>	<b>Questionnaires:</b> staff, pupils, parents/ carers in October/ November
<b>Autumn 2</b>	
<b>Spring 1 (2022)</b>	<b>Paired Interviews</b> part 1: February
<b>Spring 2</b>	<b>Questionnaires:</b> staff, pupils, parents/ carers in April-June
<b>Summer</b>	
<b>Autumn</b>	<b>Paired Interviews</b> part 2: October - November
<b>Spring (2023)</b>	<b>Questionnaires:</b> staff, pupils (pupils tracked from Yr4/5 now Yr5/6), parents/ carers <b>Penn Portrait</b> school visit including <b>Focus Groups</b> with staff, pupils, various stakeholders incl. parents/ carers