



KENT CONTINUUM OF NEED AND PROVISION CASE STUDIES: PASTORAL



By Schools, For Schools

Contents

Mainstream Primary School Case Studies	2
Deal Parochial C.E.P. School- Supporting pupils with SEMH needs	2
Holy Trinity and St John’s Church of England Primary School- Embedding the Thrive approach: a whole-school Case Study.....	4
Mersham Primary School- Nurture provision: a whole-school Case Study.....	7
Mersham Primary School- Sports Therapy.....	11
More Park Catholic Primary School- Supporting children with EBSA.....	15
Selsted Primary School- Embedding Nurture UK: a whole-school Case Study	16
The Wells Free School- Embedding Nurture UK	19
Mainstream Secondary Case Studies	22
School of Science and Technology- Supporting students with EBSA	22
St. Anselm’s Catholic School- The Willows Centre:	25
a whole-school Case Study.....	25
The Marsh Academy- Creating a Well-Being Room	28
The Marsh Academy- Creating a Well-Being Hub: a whole-school Case Study	32
PRU Case Studies:	37
Enterprise Learning Alliance- Supporting pupils with SEMH Needs to improve self-regulation and resilience	37
Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision - Pastoral Provision: a whole- school Case Study	41
SRP Case Studies:	45
Marsh Academy- The Dommett Centre	45
Special School Case Studies	47
Goldwyn- Tackling EBSA in an SEMH School post-Covid	47
A summary of effective strategies evidenced in the Kent Case Studies for Pastoral	50

Mainstream Primary School Case Studies

Deal Parochial C.E.P. School- Supporting pupils with SEMH needs
Contact headteacher@deal-parochial.kent.sch.uk
Brief description/ overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Social Emotional and Mental Health needs of the whole school.● Daily afternoon activities to reduce cognitive overload,● Provide opportunities for social skills to be used with support,● Develop strategies for self-regulation● Improve engagement, self-esteem and confidence● Reduce anxieties and EBSA concerns.
An overview of what we did <ul style="list-style-type: none">● SENCo decided upon activities. Some research-based interventions, such as Zones of Regulation, Clever Hands, others around interest of children and activities that would engage children● SENCo discussion with LSAs to ascertain their skills and confidence in delivery of groups● Teachers inform SENCo of any specific children they feel would benefit● Activities, adults and location were timetabled.● Children selected depending upon need, interests, grouping, timetable and discussions with parents around children's worries and interests● Groups of children are changed each term● Activities may change depending upon time of year, other school activities and class timetable● Resources needed were gathered from staff collections and in school resources.
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">● EBSA concerns reduced in some children – soft starts and afternoon provision as a motivation to attend school● Majority of children engaging well with activities, other peers and other adults● Parents have feedback about children talking more about school and what they have done

- Improvement in some children's engagement with learning and peers
- Improvement in children's general well-being and this improving behaviours, dysregulation and anxieties
- Staff enthusiasm and engagement with different staff members and children
- Greater confidence and self-esteem in children and staff
- Sense of belonging within school and own voice being heard.

Holy Trinity and St John's Church of England Primary School- Embedding the Thrive approach: a whole-school Case Study

Contact

sroberts@htsj.school

Overview

Holy Trinity and St. John's Church of England Primary School in Margate exemplifies a comprehensive, inclusive approach to supporting vulnerable learners. With a student body comprising 60% Pupil Premium, 23% SEND, 30% EAL, and 20% children with a social worker, the school has proactively fostered a sense of belonging and community.

Inclusive Vision and Family Engagement

Central to the school's ethos is a whole-school vision that emphasises inclusion and collaboration among all stakeholders. The establishment of a Family Support Team, including Family Liaison and Safeguarding Officers, ensures highly effective relationships with parents and carers.

Strategic Deployment of Specialist Staff

Leaders have meticulously optimised staffing by deploying specialist support roles such as learning mentors, inclusion teaching assistants, behaviour mentors, and integrated therapy assistants. Clear job descriptions and targeted training empower these professionals to address the diverse needs of students effectively.

Specialist Resource Provision: The Hive

The school proudly hosts "The Hive," a Kent County Council Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This facility promotes fluid integration between the SRP and mainstream classrooms, allowing students to interact with peers while receiving tailored support. The SRP provides in-reach support for the rest of the school.

Additionally, "The Meadow," a school-run provision, offers six spaces following the Thrive Approach to support children with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

Embedding the Thrive Approach

Emphasising emotional well-being, the school has fully integrated the Thrive Approach, grounded in research on brain development and attachment theory. Certified Thrive practitioners conduct reparative sessions in one-on-one or small group settings, following initial screenings of all children. Daily "Thrive time" sessions

are tailored to each class's needs, promoting social skills and positive relationships. The school has fully embedded the Thrive approach and has a number of Thrive Practitioners in place. The Thrive programme has been utilised to ensure that children become ready to learn and self-regulate. Leaders have thought carefully about how to utilise their classroom environments to support this approach, with consistent displays in place to support zones of regulation to support transitions between different year groups and key stages. Thrive has also been used to support vulnerable families.

Comprehensive Staff Training

To ensure consistent support for students, the school has implemented a structured training program over several years. This includes trauma and attachment training, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on the Mainstream Core Standards, and training on Thrive assessments. Subsequent years saw further CPD on the Thrive approach, relational behavior policies, de-escalation techniques, and the implementation of the "Walk Thru" training program to enhance quality-first teaching.

Through these concerted efforts, Holy Trinity and St. John's has cultivated an environment where vulnerable learners are supported holistically, fostering their academic and personal growth.

An overview of what we did

The Meadow: A Nurturing Provision for Emotional and Social Development

Holy Trinity and St. John's Church of England Primary School in Margate has established "The Meadow," a series of six dedicated spaces designed to support students requiring additional emotional and social assistance. These provisions offer both drop-in opportunities and more intensive interventions, all grounded in the Thrive Approach, which emphasizes the development of secure relationships and positive experiences to foster emotional well-being .

Tailored Support and Reintegration

Each area within The Meadow provides a combination of one-to-one and small group support, catering to the specific needs of individual students. Highly skilled teaching assistants and mentors guide children through activities aimed at helping them regulate their behaviours. Regular reviews ensure that interventions remain effective and adapt to the evolving needs of the students.

To maintain a strong connection between students in The Meadow and their mainstream classes, the school has introduced the "Bear in My Chair" initiative. This approach places a teddy bear on the absent child's chair, symbolising their continued presence and importance within the class community. Such strategies facilitate

smoother reintegration, allowing students to transition back into their academic programs at a comfortable pace while still accessing their designated safe spaces as needed.

Consistent Application of the Thrive Approach

The school's commitment to the Thrive Approach ensures that all staff members are trained to support students' emotional and social development consistently. This uniform understanding across the school community aids in providing a stable and supportive environment for students as they navigate between The Meadow and their regular classrooms.

Through The Meadow, Holy Trinity and St. John's demonstrates a proactive and compassionate approach to inclusive education, recognising the importance of tailored emotional support in fostering students' overall well-being and academic success.

Impact

As a result of the implementation of 'The Meadow', leaders have reported significant improvements for individual children in terms of both their emotional regulation and learning. Many of the children have successfully reintegrated back into their mainstream classes and are making good progress.

Thrive case study examples

	Sept/Oct 23	Dec 24	% in class From Sept 24 to April 25
Child A	Being 27%	Being 65%	
Child B	Being 52%	Thinking 71%	From 0% to 40%
Child C	Being 67%	Power & Identity 48%	From 50% to 100%

In September 24, we had 5 (1.27%) children who accessed one of our provisions on a reduced timetable. In June 25, we have 2 (0.51%) children accessing our provisions on a reduced timetable. Monitoring of behaviour calls (significant incidents where SLT were called) have decreased from 29 in a week in November 2024 to 7 in a week in May 2025. Leaders are now looking to further develop specific curriculum pathways for 'The Meadow' provisions.

Mersham Primary School- Nurture provision: a whole-school Case Study

Contact Details

headteacher@mersham.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

Mersham Primary School is a small, nurturing, and highly inclusive setting that serves a diverse cohort of pupils, including a higher-than-average proportion of children eligible for free school meals and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Despite its size, the school has developed a robust and innovative approach to inclusion, ensuring that every child is supported to flourish both academically and emotionally. Leaders place a strong emphasis on whole-child development, fostering a positive, supportive environment where pupils feel safe, valued, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

Inclusive Classroom Strategies

The school adopts a range of evidence-informed classroom strategies to promote inclusive practice and support pupils' self-regulation and independence. Key approaches include the consistent use of *Language through Colour* to aid communication and understanding, and *Zones of Regulation* to help students identify and manage their emotions. Each classroom includes a designated *calm corner*, offering a quiet, sensory-friendly space where pupils can self-regulate and refocus as needed.

Recent investments in the redesign of library and computing areas have prioritised accessibility and engagement, creating flexible learning spaces that accommodate a wide range of needs and learning styles. These enhancements ensure that all pupils are able to participate meaningfully in the full breadth of the curriculum.

Forest School Provision

Mersham Primary School provides all pupils with regular access to its on-site Forest School, a key element of the school's inclusive and therapeutic approach. Additional sessions are offered for pupils within the nurture pathway, ensuring those with greater needs benefit from extended time outdoors. Through experiential, nature-based learning, Forest School fosters the development of communication, collaboration, resilience, and problem-solving skills. Leaders have noted significant improvements in children's emotional regulation and self-confidence as a result of this provision.

Sports Therapy

The introduction of sports therapy has had a transformative impact on pupil engagement and well-being. While promoting physical fitness, this intervention also enhances focus, self-esteem, and motivation across the wider curriculum. Targeted sessions help pupils develop social skills, emotional resilience, and a sense of achievement, which translate into improved behaviour and learning outcomes in the classroom.

Pastoral Support and Nurture Provision

The school benefits from the expertise of two dedicated Pastoral Leads, who oversee the nurture provision and provide targeted interventions to support pupils with a range of social, emotional, and behavioural needs. Drawing on approaches such as Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA), the nurture provision offers personalised programmes with clear, individualised targets. Pupils are supported in small-group or one-to-one sessions designed to develop their emotional awareness, coping strategies, and self-regulation.

Professional Development and Inclusive Resources

Mersham Primary School places a strong emphasis on high-quality professional development for all staff. Teachers and support staff engage in ongoing CPD focused on adaptive teaching, inclusive pedagogy, and behaviour support strategies. This ensures that lessons are consistently responsive to pupil needs.

Classrooms are equipped with a variety of inclusive resources to aid focus and regulation, including wobble boards, chair bands, and other sensory tools. These strategies contribute to calm, purposeful learning environments where pupils feel empowered to manage their learning and behaviour effectively.

Parent and Community Engagement

Strong, trust-based relationships with parents and carers underpin the school's inclusive culture. Leaders actively promote a collaborative approach, working closely with families to understand pupils' needs and provide cohesive support between home and school. Regular communication, workshops, and family events help to ensure that parents are engaged partners in their children's education, contributing to improved outcomes and a strong sense of community.

Leaders have implemented a new Nurture Provision in order to better support the SEMH needs of small groups of vulnerable pupils across Key Stage 1 and 2.

An overview of what we did

Nurture Provision and Curriculum

Mersham Primary School has established a highly effective and thoughtfully designed nurture provision—Phoenix Class—which supports pupils with high levels of SEMH needs. The provision is grounded in the Six Principles of Nurture, creating a safe, predictable, and emotionally supportive environment where pupils can build trust, develop resilience, and re-engage with learning at a pace that suits their individual needs.

Phoenix Class offers pupils their own dedicated classroom space, fostering a strong sense of belonging and routine. This environment is complemented by access to a variety of well-designed outdoor areas, including a tranquil pond. Students are also able to regularly access the dedicated Forest School site. These natural spaces are used intentionally as part of the curriculum to support emotional regulation, sensory needs, and social skill development. The therapeutic benefits of outdoor learning play a central role in the school’s approach to holistic, child-centred support.

The Phoenix curriculum is highly individualised and adaptive, responding to each pupil’s specific emotional, behavioural, and learning needs. Pupils work towards personalised targets that focus not only on academic progress but also on emotional literacy, self-regulation, social interaction, and readiness for learning. A range of evidence-based strategies and interventions—such as Zones of Regulation, social stories, and structured routines—are embedded into daily practice to help pupils understand and manage their emotions.

The ultimate aim of the nurture provision is reintegration into mainstream learning. Pupils are supported to access targeted aspects of the wider curriculum and gradually transition into their mainstream class where appropriate, with staff providing bespoke support and clear pathways to ensure success. Close collaboration between nurture staff, class teachers, and pastoral leads ensures a joined-up approach that maintains consistency and continuity for each child.

Through the Phoenix Class, Mersham Primary School demonstrates a deep commitment to inclusive education, recognising that emotional well-being is the foundation for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

Impact

The successful reintegration of many of the Phoenix class students back into mainstream classes, either on a part-time or full-time basis. This has also resulted in improved attendance and engagement for these pupils.

Mersham Primary School- Sports Therapy

Contact

Cheryl Chalkley headteacher@mersham.kent.sch.uk

Katy Jackson senco@mersham.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

Mersham Primary School is a 1 form entry mainstream setting, that has just reduced its PAN to 20 from next academic year. KS1 is split into 2 classes (Year R/1 and Year 1/2) and KS2 is Years 3, 4, 5 & 6. We currently have 166 students on roll. 19.9% of our students have SEND and we currently have 2 students on roll with an EHCP. We have a further 23 students on our "AEN List".

At Mersham, we have a high level of students with Social, Emotional, Mental Health needs in school. Students who present with this need type often exhibit a range of behaviours, challenges, and symptoms that affect their ability to fully participate in school activities and interact with peers and staff. These students may experience difficulties in areas such as emotional regulation, social interactions, coping with stress or anxiety and can find competition extremely difficult to manage. They often have low self-esteem and have difficulty in persevering when a task is challenging.

An overview of what we did

We wanted to develop a non-classroom based intervention that supported our students with being better able to manage their emotions, increase self-confidence and improve their social skills.

Sports Education Team (SET) had been working with the school for several years to provide Sports coaching and to promote physical education, sports participation and overall student well-being in Mersham and other schools. Following conversations with the team at SET we worked with their lead coach to design and implement a physical education intervention program that aligned with national standards and best practices. The program was purposely designed to promote health and well-being initiatives focussing on:

- improving mental health through physical activity
- team-building sports
- personal challenges
- developing resilience
- improving leadership skills

- encouraging positive communications and interactions

SET worked closely with the SENCO to design and establish an additional programme, that they would provide (at a cost of £2,850 per year), based around an understanding of children’s sensory needs and profiles using Sensory Circuits to inform practice. The team at SET have provided Mersham with this integral service for the last 5 years and we have seen many individual successes in this time.

Students are identified through Boxall Profiling as to whether their needs are in line with what the SET team are able to offer. Students are then matched with an appropriate group. The group have a general, overall, over-riding need (self-esteem, resilience, team work, communication difficulty etc) and within this, individual targets can be set for each child.

Impact

We used Boxall Profile data to evidence the impact that has been made – see results provided below.

Boxall Profile Data:

KEY:

Red – Below

Orange – Expected

Green – Exceeding

Blue – Below but improvement made from previous score

GROUP 1						
	Boxall Profile 1		Boxall Profile 2		Boxall Profile 3	
	Dev	Diag	Dev	Diag	Dev	Diag
Student A	116	23	107	50	128	24
Student B	85	54	84	50	113	37
Student C	83	58	93	31	116	30
Student D	59	32				

*Student D is new to Group 1 since December 2024 (to early to assess impact)

Academic Data

KEY:

GDS= Greater Depth; **EXS/EXS+=** Expected/ Expected +; **EMG**= Emerging; **WTS**= Working Towards

Group 1	Summer 2024			Spring 2025		
	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing
Student A (Y6)	5 EXS+	5 EXS+	5 EXS	6 WTS	6 WTS+	6 EMG+
Student B (Y6)	2 GDS	3 EMG+	2 EXS	3 EMG+	3 WTS	2 EXS+
Student C (Y6)	5 WTS+	5 EXS	4 WTS	6 EMG	6 EMG+	4 EXS
Student D (Y4)	3 EXS+	3 EXS +	3 EXS	4 WTS	4 WTS	4 EMG+

All students involved have made progress in both their social development which has impacted upon their performance within the classroom.

From their Boxall Profile, the practitioner focuses on at least one key area for development. Group 1 all had difficulty when faced with a competitive situation and Sport Therapy provided a great opportunity for the students to develop this area of need.

Group 1	Target from Boxall Learning Plan
Student A (Y6)	Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation
Student B (Y6)	Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation
Student C (Y6)	Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation

Student D (Y4)	Avoids, rejects or becomes upset when faced with a new and unfamiliar task, or a difficult or competitive situation
---------------------------	---

When discussing the individual students with the sport therapy practitioner, all students had made progress towards being able to manage a competitive situation with more ease. The practitioner also reported a noticeable improvement in the group dynamic, their acceptance of one another had improved greatly and their ability to communicate had improved. There was also a noted improvement in their ability to manage emotions in a more positive way.

More Park Catholic Primary School- Supporting children with EBSA

Contact

Katie.Symington@more-park-westmalling.kcsp.org.uk

Brief description/ overview

We had been experiencing an increasing number of pupils showing signs of emotional based school avoidance particularly after a weekend/ school holiday.

An overview of what we did

Scheduled emails to the children for the night before a return to school, offering suggestions for a soft start, but basically letting the child know that we know they are struggling and are here to help.

Alternative entrance points to school for those who can find the school gate overwhelming.

Soft starts to the day with quiet activities and regulatory activities before going into class.

Invitation to hot chocolate club at the beginning of each term to offer a positive start to the school term.

Impact

Reduction of Monday morning and new term reluctance.

Improved wellbeing for these pupils due to a positive start of the term.

More effective use of time by staff.

Selsted Primary School- Embedding Nurture UK: a whole-school Case Study

Contact

headteacher@selsted.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

A Culture of Inclusion and Belonging

Selsted Primary School is a small, nurturing community where inclusion is not an initiative but a deeply embedded ethos. Staff, pupils, and families describe the school as a place where “*children feel loved*”, and this sentiment permeates every aspect of school life. The inclusive culture is rooted in strong relationships, a clear moral purpose, and a commitment to ensuring that every child, regardless of need or background, is known, supported, and celebrated.

Embedding Inclusion in the Classroom

Each class benefits from the support of both a teacher and a teaching assistant (TA), with TAs taking an active role in the morning sessions and delivering targeted interventions in the afternoons. There is no use of one-to-one support – a deliberate choice that ensures support is inclusive, not isolating.

In Years 1 and 2, a mixed-age class benefits from a blended model of traditional and continuous provision. Mornings focus on Maths and English through direct instruction, while foundation subjects are taught in the afternoons through child-led, hands-on experiences. Children are encouraged to explore themed learning areas, including maths and writing zones. The ‘Leaders of Learning’ time gives children greater ownership over their choices, enabling them to choose how they present their work across five tasks each week. This model has had a significant impact on children with SEND and those with lower prior attainment, who are often more engaged and motivated to write in these informal, choice-driven environments than in structured lessons.

In Reception, the approach to early writing and motor skills development is similarly inclusive and creative. Three times a week, the class collaboratively writes stories, while daily sensory circuits and fine motor interventions (e.g., ‘Fizzy’) support children with additional needs. Staff maintain high expectations while offering personalised support that allows each child to thrive.

Quality First Teaching remains the foundation of SEND support. The school has a strong and skilled team of TAs, each with specialist responsibilities in areas such as Maths, Reading, and Speech and Language. Interventions are kept largely within the

classroom environment to preserve children's sense of belonging and avoid unnecessary withdrawal.

Outdoor Learning and Nurture Provision

Outdoor learning is a cornerstone of Selsted's inclusive offer. All children access Forest School for one afternoon per term throughout their time at the school, experiencing outdoor learning in all seasons. These sessions are carefully structured and progressive, building practical skills and confidence, from peeling carrots to using knives safely. Children are assessed using the Leuven Scales of well-being and engagement to track impact over time.

In addition to the universal offer, there are bespoke Forest School sessions for vulnerable and SEND pupils, run by a part-time TA with a specialist nurture and outdoor learning role. These small group sessions focus on social interaction, communication, and teamwork, particularly for pupils in Year 6, and are supported by some one-to-one adult input where needed.

Mentoring and Pastoral Support

A flexible and responsive mentoring programme ensures that every pupil who needs emotional or academic support can access it. All Pupil Premium pupils are offered weekly mentoring sessions with a TA or teacher, where they review their learning, set goals, and talk through any challenges. Non PP children can also access mentoring sessions based on individual, support needs. These sessions focus on using structured formats such as "Two Stars and a Wish" or informal book talks.

Crucially, mentoring is pupil-led and relational. Children can choose their mentor, and any pupil experiencing emotional challenges—such as bereavement or anxiety—can be referred by parents, or self-refer. Peer mentoring is also available, further embedding a culture of support and acceptance.

A much-loved school dog, Luna, is also part of the pastoral team, providing a calming presence during break times, the daily mile, and lunch periods.

Inclusive Ethos and Lasting Impact

Selsted's impact is clear. Attendance is strong, persistent absence is low, and pupils with SEND make progress in both academic and social-emotional domains. New pupils—especially those joining mid-year—settle quickly, a testament to the warmth and welcome of the school community. Inclusion is not a programme but a way of being: pupils are genuinely kind and accepting of one another, and staff consistently go the extra mile to ensure that no child is left behind.

Selsted Primary School offers a powerful example of what can be achieved when inclusion is viewed not as an intervention but as a deeply held value. It is a place

where every child is known, valued, and given the chance to flourish—inside and outside the classroom.

An overview of what we did

Nurture and SEND: A Bespoke, Relational Approach

Selsted has achieved the Nurture UK Accreditation, recognising its commitment to a tailored and holistic approach to SEND. Staff across the school demonstrate a deep understanding of pupils' individual needs and are empowered to adapt provision flexibly and creatively. Tools like headphones, fidget toys, and desk dividers are made available for any child, regardless of a SEND diagnosis, with resources being expanded into every classroom from September to further enhance access.

A clear emphasis on emotional well-being underpins the school's approach. Morning emotional check-ins allow staff to respond promptly to children's needs, while close communication with families ensures consistency between home and school. Meetings for children with SEND are held three times per year in addition to parents' evenings; these are always attended by both the class teacher and the SENDCO—a clear demonstration of commitment to inclusive partnership working.

At Selsted Primary School, nurture is embedded into the fabric of daily life, guided by the Six Principles of Nurture and supported through the use of the Boxall Profile. Initially introduced with small groups, the Boxall Profile is now used systematically to inform individual and group targets. This approach underpins a strong emphasis on social-emotional development, resilience, and self-efficacy, nurtured through leadership opportunities, PSHE, and outdoor learning. Transitions—both daily and across year groups—are carefully managed, especially for SEND pupils, ensuring children feel secure and supported. The school's commitment to wellbeing extends to staff, with flexible working practices, an open-door leadership culture, and a strong sense of community care and appreciation. The school environment, including calm spaces and sensory areas, reflects its nurturing ethos, and stakeholders consistently describe Selsted as a place where children feel safe, valued, and loved.

Impact

This approach has ensured that the whole school environment is inclusive and supportive. Pupils, parents and staff are part of one community, where everyone supports one another. As a result, attendance is high and behaviour is strong. Relationships between staff and parents are exceptional, with high levels of trust evident.

The Wells Free School- Embedding Nurture UK

Contact:

Anna-Marie Cheeseman(annamarie.cheeseman@thewellsfreeschool.co.uk) or Kate Le Page (headteacher@thewellsfreeschool.co.uk)

For more information about Nurture UK: [Helping every child become able to learn - The nurture approach](#)

Brief description/ overview

We recognise that we are a school with a significant number of children with needs, much of this need around neuro-divergence. Seeing the levels of anxiety and children who struggled with regulation, we were determined to address this in a kind, humane and understanding way. Our goal was to ensure inclusion in its truest sense where all pupils are accepted and able to integrate and access a curriculum and their learning with their entire peer group.

An overview of what we did

On this basis, we decided that a therapeutic approach was appropriate so we signed up for the Nurture UK accreditation. Later on, we added to this a dog therapist, play therapist and more recently an emotional resilience regulation coach.

A whole school assembly was carried out to introduce all children to The Six Principles of Nurture and understand what we already do in school in line with the Nurture programme.

As part of our PSHE learning, each class has been introduced to each principle of Nurture and discussed what this looks like in our school. The six principles of Nurture posters were developed which show children in our setting demonstrating each principle in their daily lives. These were introduced into the classrooms for display and link with our behaviour policy steps.

Our Inclusion Leader tracks wellbeing and involvement levels across the school using the Leuven scales and ensures provision is in place on provision plans for those whose wellbeing and involvement is low. As a school, we also track children's friendships and social circles, using sociograms before putting appropriate interventions in place as needed.

A focus group was set up for the playground to address lunchtime playtimes. Children were vocal regarding the want for different zones and equipment. They have also requested music. In response to this the team have tried different zones and activities in the playground. This is not yet fully developed, and we will continue to listen to the children's ideas. We have engaged in pupil voice about what the children would like to see offered as clubs for the next academic year and are in the process of arranging this.

Our open plan, continuous provision-based learning between reception and year one, allows children to build relationships with staff and pupils across the zone throughout the year to aid the transition from R to 1.

The importance of transitions has also been an area of focus and through child voice we established that our original one-day transition to new classes was not enough. In response to this, it was decided that there would be an additional day in the summer term. Adults and children alike fed back that the two-day transition at the end of last term had really made a difference to the beginning of the academic year.

The school has been on a journey, moving from a more behaviourist approach to an individualised approach, not only for the children but also for the families. We explore the needs of every child to ensure that all pupils get the correct pastoral support that they need as individuals. An example of this is our 'stage not age' approach across the school, including provision within our EYFS zone for older children who are working at a foundation level.

The school is proactive in their approach to feedback given, for example when parent and child voice asked for more clubs, the school immediately found out the types of clubs that people were interested in and facilitated these and expanded their offer.

Impact

Children are more able to talk about Nurture and what the school does to support them. We have created a video to welcome people to the school which was narrated by two of our year six pupils. This has been shared on our website under the nurture page and was positively commented on by parents.

During their forest school and woodwork lessons, children take the lead in choosing projects and work together to forge ways forward. Examples of this include creating planters for our balconies, 'star of the day' chairs for the younger year groups and 'roads' for the Reception children's cars.

Our emotional resilience coach has also worked with families to create 'task boards' for transitions so that the children have a good understanding of what is happening at each point. This in turn keeps them safe and confident with the transition.

Feedback from parents and children has been positive with the following comments made:

'The attention and nurture given to my daughter has brought out her voice.'

'Our whole family feel welcome at the school.'

'There is a genuine open-door policy, which means I am able to speak to a member of staff whenever needed.'

'The school support has been phenomenal for the whole family.'

'The school is a safe place for the whole community.'



Mainstream Secondary School Case Studies

School of Science and Technology- Supporting students with EBSA

Contact:

sen@sst.viat.org.uk

Brief description/overview

The number of students with Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) has increased over the past few years. We have a number of students who want to attend school but feel too anxious to come in either on a part time or full-time basis. We wanted to help them to feel comfortable in the school setting with the ultimate aim to have them attend lessons full time, although we recognise that for some students this may be a very long and slow process to achieve.

Previously, we had a very labour-intensive model which was very reactive- trying to find staff to respond to an individual student's needs in the moment- and we needed to move to a more effective and strategic model, moving to a point where we recognised that meeting the needs of students with EBSA needed to be part of our whole-school provision and planning.

An overview of what we did

- Redeployed use of a classroom to use as a consistent base for the provision:
The room has multiple uses and is used as a Calm Room for those students who are overwhelmed by the 'public' areas during break time. This helps our students with EBSA to socialise with a wider group of peers and helps them to increase their awareness that others may also struggle at times in large social situations.
- Focused on developing understanding of the barriers to attending school:
Through focused training and development opportunities with all staff, we increased staff understanding about ways that we needed to be proactive in trying to recognise, understand and remove those barriers as much as possible.

Each individual barrier for each student was discussed and identified, with an individualised plan/ approach to address/ remove that barrier put in place.

This supported a change of mindset for all – students with EBSA, parents and school staff with everyone becoming much more understanding of the need for individualised and small step approaches to be taken.

- Building relationships and focusing on positive communications:
Focusing on taking time to build positive relationships and change the focus of communications into positive, regular and collaborative interactions with parents

using a solution-focused approach to being curious about finding out more and developing bespoke and original solutions.

- Structured timetable:

A consistent structured timetable has been developed and put in place to reduce anxiety. This is staffed by Learning Mentors, utilising their individual subject knowledge and skills. Consistent lesson structures are used to enable the students to become more familiar with what to expect in lessons.

- Ensure full staff engagement:

Class teachers ‘visit’ students in their learning room to build/ sustain relationships with them; provide specialist teaching support and feedback and help students to reintegrate into lessons.

SEND Snippets are used in All Staff briefings to provide regular updates about the students so that all staff are aware and can celebrate the small step progress that they are making.

- Changed the use of language:

Language is important – we therefore ensure that we use the phrase “students with EBSA” not “EBSAs” so that the student is valued as an individual. We have also purposefully focused on ensuring that language around “truanting” or “school refusers” is not used.

Impact

- Overall, there have been significant improvements in students’ attendance. Whilst this is really important and positive for the individual student, it also has an impact on whole school figures. For example:

	2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023
Child 1	84%	66%	37%
Child 2	60%	34%	7.8%
Child 3	58%	3%	16.7%
Child 4	65%	45%	0%

- All staff have a greater understanding of what EBSA is and are more willing to support students with these needs.

- Students with EBSA are more included in our school, have more of a voice and are enjoying school more. These students are enjoying their education.

- The students say:
 - *“The Learning Mentors are really kind and have helped me so much.”*
 - *“Taking small steps help, like staying a bit longer and encouraging each other.”*
 - *“Being in a classroom is good, it feels like part of the school but our safe space.”*

St. Anselm's Catholic School- The Willows Centre:
a whole-school Case Study

Contact

D.LAWRENCE-HEARN@st-anselms.org.uk

Brief description/ overview

St. Anselm's Catholic School employs a comprehensive, whole-school approach to inclusion, ensuring that all students, regardless of their needs, receive high-quality support. Leaders have taken a proactive stance on staff development, providing extensive training on TEACCH strategies to establish a shared understanding of inclusive practices and the school's universal provision plan. Additionally, all staff receive regular training on the Mainstream Core Standards, reinforcing their knowledge of practical strategies to ensure high-quality first teaching across the curriculum.

To enhance the effectiveness of support, leaders have introduced a structured system for intervention management and TA deployment. Recognising the challenge of students joining the school with low reading ages, all students benefit from the Thinking Reading programme, which has had a demonstrable impact on raising literacy standards. The school also utilises a team of Lead Teaching Assistants, each with specialist expertise aligned to one of the four areas of need. These Lead TAs are embedded within the school houses, strengthening collaboration between the pastoral and SEND teams. Teaching Assistants (TAs) deliver a range of evidence-based, well-monitored interventions for identified students, with many interventions delivered in-class to reduce the separation effect and maximise exposure to specialist teaching. Rather than assigning TAs to individual students on a 1:1 basis, the SENDCo strategically deploys TAs to work with groups, fostering student independence and resilience.

At Key Stage Four, leaders have introduced the Strive Curriculum, offering an alternative, non-GCSE pathway for approximately ten pupils with low prior attainment. This pathway provides a broad and balanced curriculum, enabling students to achieve entry-level qualifications in English, maths, science, and geography, alongside RE, the ECDL, outdoor learning, catering, and the Artsmark Award. The curriculum is flexible, allowing opportunities for reintegration into mainstream subjects and GCSEs where appropriate, ensuring that students can progress based on their achievements.

The school also hosts two Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) within the Student Support Centre—one for students with ASD and another for students with physical disabilities (PD). Students with PD are supported to attend mainstream lessons as independently as possible, with additional assistance provided by a team of Welfare Teaching Assistants to meet their physical needs effectively. This carefully structured provision ensures that all students can access a curriculum that promotes both academic progress and personal development.

Like many schools, St. Anselm's Catholic School has experienced a rise in the number of students presenting with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) since the pandemic, particularly among Year 9 girls and students with diagnosed or undiagnosed Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). In response, the school has implemented a range of targeted strategies to support students' attendance and emotional wellbeing, ensuring that vulnerable learners receive the appropriate interventions and pastoral care to re-engage with their education.

An overview of what we did

St. Anselm's Catholic School has established *The Willow Centre*, a discrete satellite provision designed to re-engage students with their education while complementing the school's existing support structures. Overseen by the SENDCo, a dedicated SEN Lead Teacher, and two experienced Teaching Assistants, The Willow Centre offers a range of tailored curriculum pathways to meet the diverse needs of individual students.

These pathways include:

- **Nurture Support:** Designed for students who are unable to access some or all of their mainstream lessons due to anxiety or other needs, this pathway provides a dedicated, nurturing classroom environment. Students typically spend an initial six weeks in the provision, gradually increasing their time in mainstream lessons as their confidence builds. During this period, students follow their normal timetables with the support of a qualified teacher and teaching assistants, while benefiting from a personalised reintegration plan to ensure a smooth and sustainable return to mainstream education.
- **Home/Blended Outreach Learning:** For students on the SEN register who are unable to attend school, this pathway offers a ten-week programme of outreach learning before transitioning to Nurture Support. The Willow Centre staff provide structured learning support, targeted interventions, and regular wellbeing check-ins via Microsoft Teams, ensuring that students remain connected to their subject learning and school community.

The effectiveness of these pathways is underpinned by strong, collaborative communication between the SEND and pastoral teams, who share a collective

responsibility for the progress and wellbeing of students accessing The Willow Centre. Additionally, the team works closely with parents and carers to facilitate smooth transitions between provisions and support students in successfully reintegrating into the wider school environment.

Impact

The Willow Centre has had a profound impact on both improving students' attendance and facilitating their successful reintegration into school and mainstream lessons. Students accessing the provision develop a strong sense of confidence and security, enabling them to manage their anxieties more effectively with the support of the dedicated team. As a result, these students are increasingly able to re-engage with their learning and make sustained progress.

The Marsh Academy- Creating a Well-Being Room

Contact

scartwright@marshacademy.org.uk

Brief description/ overview

Creation of a well-being room.

Target group: Year 7 – 11 with EBSA or students identified with barriers attendance

An overview of what we did

Working with the attendance team, year team and SEND through the academy weekly triage meeting, students were identified and discussed regarding their suitability.

Every student and parent / carer is met prior to them working in the well-being room to identify barriers in attending school.

A plan is drawn up for each individual depending on their needs.

All students have access to a laptop so if they are not in a lesson they will be completing the lesson in the well-being room.

Some students are supported with being taken to lessons due to heightened anxiety.

Success is celebrated.

Each student has a target for each day regarding their attendance to lessons.

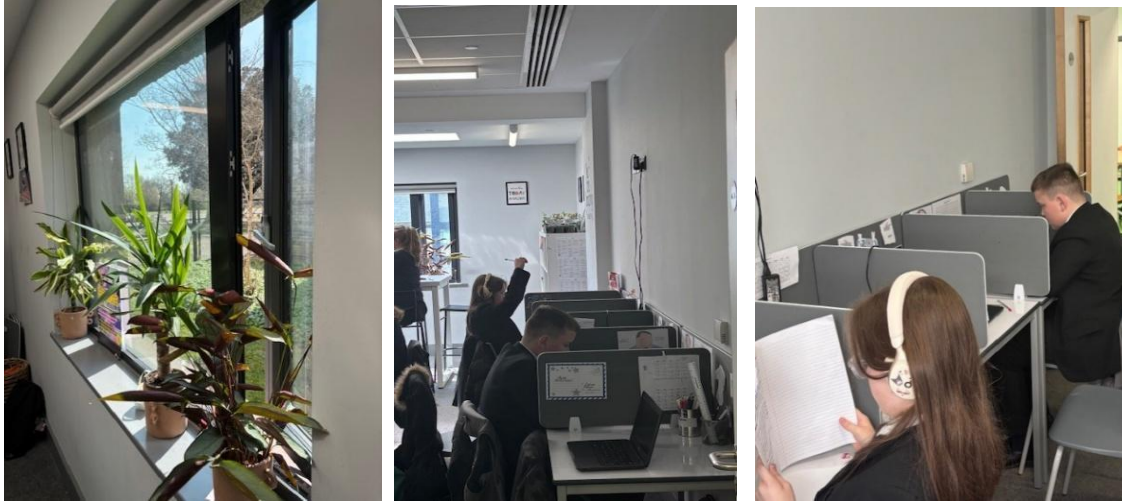
The well-being room is located next to SEND, attendance and our mental well-being team.

Breakfast is provided each day for any student that needs it.

Parents / Carers are updated weekly.

The well-being room is supported by a full time member of support staff and a part time member of staff.





Impact

Students have developed positive relationships with their peers and staff and have a sense of belonging.

Improved attendance for the students accessing the provision.

Example of one student

- Attendance in Year 10: 153 days of absence. (17.3% attendance)
- Early Help, Hub support, home visits from the attendance team and year team. Reduced timetable. Meetings with PIAS (PRU Inclusion and Attendance Service) EBSA Case Conference, Social Services.
- Current attendance: 13 days. (89.5% attendance)
- “I am really pleased with how XX is doing. I was really worried on Friday as I really thought we had hit a brick wall but thankfully she smashed it and dealt with it. We had a lovely email from Mr XX to say how well she is doing. Lets hope for another positive week. She said it is helping, she feels safe so that’s a positive. Thank you for all you have done.

Student feedback



Peaceful and calming. Somewhere to go to feel better



It's really good to do work and not having to punish myself to complete work. Working in the Wellbeing room is calmer and better.



Quiet, calm and can concentrate better.



Really like the room - encourages me to do full days and try lessons. Really nice place to be.



Really lovely, calm, encourages to make friends - Helpful when you're stressed, feeling down or anxious.



Made new friends - calm and therapeutic

The Marsh Academy- Creating a Well-Being Hub: a whole-school Case Study

Contact Details

eread@marshacademy.org.uk

Brief description/ overview

Inclusion at The Marsh Academy

The Marsh Academy, a non-selective secondary school in the Multi Academy Trust – Skinners Academies Trust, stands as a strong example of inclusive education in action. With 4.6% of its students holding an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 25.4% receiving SEND Support—the Academy is committed to ensuring all pupils, regardless of background or need, are supported to thrive. The school also serves a growing population of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL), including many unaccompanied minors.

A Whole-School Commitment to Inclusion

Inclusion at Marsh Academy is underpinned by a whole-school ethos that embraces every child. Staff at every level—from teachers and leaders to canteen and support staff—demonstrate an awareness of individual needs, including those of visually impaired pupils and those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), the most common areas of need in the school. Consistent terminology and a shared language across all teams ensures that inclusion is not siloed, but embedded into the culture of the school.

The school’s leadership team is reflective and responsive, continually learning and evolving to improve its provision. Teachers collaborate regularly with the SEND team, fostering a climate of trust and joint problem-solving. Teachers email for advice, seating plans are co-developed with pupils and support staff, and new diagnoses are swiftly shared with the Senior Leadership Team and Directors of Learning to ensure timely support.

Strategic SEND Infrastructure and Pastoral Integration

The SEND structure at Marsh Academy is well-resourced and strategically aligned. An Assistant Principal oversees both SEND and attendance, supported by a SENDCo, Assistant SENDCo (a qualified teacher), and a Lead SEND Support Officer. This leadership team coordinates a broader staff of SEND practitioners, learning mentors, and administrative staff who handle logistics such as access arrangements. The integration of SEND and attendance supports a holistic view of pupil needs.

A close partnership between the mainstream SEND team and the on-site Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) is another key feature. SRP staff not only support the students placed in the provision, but also provide in-reach to mainstream classes. This includes the delivery of targeted interventions such as Speech and Language Link, and ongoing support for children with ASD diagnoses in mainstream settings.

The use of data is a strength. Student profiles, including both general and personalised strategies, are uploaded to SIMS and regularly updated via briefings and bulletins. Transition planning is meticulous, often starting from Year 4 for students with the highest needs, and ensuring that by September, all staff are equipped with the right information to support new students effectively.

Trauma-Informed and Responsive Practice

The Marsh Academy embraces a trauma-informed approach as part of its wider pastoral support system. Year Teams—including Heads of Year and Student Development Leaders—play a pivotal role in identifying Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and offering informed support. Weekly Monday morning triage meetings bring together pastoral, SEND, safeguarding, and attendance leads to review student needs through a School-Based Review model. This collaborative problem-solving process ensures that pupils receive timely, adaptive interventions, and that progress is monitored closely.

This model fosters a sense of shared ownership and empowers staff through effective information sharing. This has led to a cultural shift: rather than lowering expectations, the school has raised its understanding. Behaviour is now interpreted through a lens of need, and reasonable adjustments are made in consultation with the SENDCo to ensure fair and supportive responses.

EAL and New Arrivals: A Proactive Model

The school has seen a sharp increase in new arrivals, many of whom are unaccompanied minors with EAL. The Academy's proactive response includes the introduction of a structured EAL support programme, the use of Bell Foundation assessments to categorise language proficiency, and the integration of Flash Academy, funded through the Virtual School Kent (VSK).

A buddy system, safeguarding check-ins, and tailored pastoral support ensure that these students feel welcomed and safe. Access to technology, including laptops and language support software such as DocsPlus, further levels the playing field. The school's approach balances academic, social, and emotional support to enable successful integration into the school community.

Academic Support and Interventions

The Academy ensures that inclusion is academic as well as social. Students access a wide range of targeted interventions, including:

Literacy: Read Write Inc Fresh Start, Rapid Plus, Catch Up Literacy, and Bedrock, supported by sixth form mentors and led in collaboration with the English team.

Numeracy: Catch Up Numeracy, White Rose maths curriculum for lower-level learners, and individualised support via IDL.

Language and Communication: Lego Therapy, Talkabout, Social Communication interventions, and Speech and Language Link.

Emotional Support: ELSA, emotional check-ins, sensory circuits, and nurture-based interventions informed by Boxall profiling.

Access to laptops and iPads are carefully managed through referrals, medical evidence, and SEND need. This centralised system ensures equitable and appropriate provision. Adapted homework platforms such as IDL help support learners with dyslexia or dyscalculia.

The 'G Band'—for students working significantly below age-related expectations—is timetabled with primary-trained teachers and highly experienced staff, ensuring the most vulnerable students receive the highest quality teaching.

Parent Partnership and External Collaboration

The school prioritises honest, open communication with parents. From transition planning through to coffee mornings and parents' evenings, the SENDCo is highly visible and accessible. A centralised SEND email system ensures continuity of contact, while the school actively involves parents in decisions about medical needs, interventions, and external agency involvement. The school's 'Team Around the Child' approach includes parents as equal partners, building confidence and transparency in the provision on offer.

Conclusion

The Marsh Academy exemplifies inclusive practice through its systemic, compassionate, and collaborative approach. From early identification and strong transition planning to trauma-informed care and high-quality teaching, the school demonstrates that inclusion is not just a department, but a culture. Its consistent commitment to understanding and supporting every learner ensures that all students—regardless of need—can feel safe, known, and ready to succeed.

Leaders identified a group of children who were experiencing EBSA; this was impacting on their attendance, progress and sense of belonging within the school. Many of these students also have ASD.

An overview of what we did

At the heart of Marsh Academy's inclusive offer is a deeply embedded, compassionate approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing. Recognising that mental health is fundamental to learning and personal growth, the school has developed a multi-layered, trauma-informed support system that meets pupils where they are—emotionally, socially, and cognitively. As a result, leaders implemented the Wellbeing Hub in order to meet the needs of the identified group.

The Wellbeing Hub: A Sanctuary for Recovery and Growth

The Wellbeing Hub—often referred to simply as “the Hub”—is a dedicated, thoughtfully designed space that supports pupils recovering from mental health crises or struggling with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). Far more than just a quiet room, the Hub is a carefully curated environment that offers safety, structure, and belonging. It supports students in transitioning back into mainstream education at a pace that is right for them.

Pupils accessing the Hub often work independently in individualised workspaces, each adapted to reduce stress and enhance concentration. The desks are writeable, allowing pupils to express thoughts freely and engage with learning in non-traditional ways. Staff working in the Hub—including a Wellbeing Lead and an additional support professional—know the pupils exceptionally well and use this knowledge to tailor interventions and interactions.

Interventions within the Hub include a mix of 1:1 and group sessions. Activities such as gardening, floral design, and creative group work are used to re-engage pupils and support emotional regulation. Importantly, there is no one-size-fits-all model—each plan is bespoke, reflecting the student's needs, interests, and readiness for re-engagement.

A key feature is the school's innovative "red lesson" system—a pupil-led mechanism for identifying lessons that may trigger anxiety or stress. When a red lesson is flagged, staff proactively support the pupil in navigating or temporarily stepping away from the session. This system empowers pupils to self-regulate while keeping them engaged in their education.

Weekly communication logs between the Hub staff and parents help maintain transparency and ensure home and school are aligned in supporting each child's journey. These logs include updates on attendance, engagement, wellbeing, and re-integration targets. Over time, many pupils move from reduced timetables to fuller

engagement, with confidence built through gentle, structured exposure to lessons alongside trusted peers.

Structured Reintegration and Peer Support

Reintegration is carefully planned. Where possible, students are grouped with their peers to ease the return to mainstream classes, and some begin the day with meet-and-greet support or slightly delayed starts to reduce early-morning stress. Staff in the Hub coordinate closely with year teams and subject teachers to ensure smooth transitions.

Peer relationships are nurtured through group work focused on social skills and trust-building. Programmes such as Circle of Friends help rebuild confidence and a sense of belonging. These structured interventions foster community among students who may feel isolated or anxious and have proven particularly beneficial for pupils with ASD, who make up a significant proportion of the Hub cohort.

A unique and much-loved addition to the wellbeing offer is Lola, the therapy dog, whose calming presence supports emotional regulation and helps build relationships, particularly with pupils who struggle to express themselves in conventional ways.

Impact

Leaders have had significant success with the reintegration of pupils into school and lessons. The attendance and engagement of this group has improved significantly. Students in the Hub have begun to establish strong connections and friendships, further supporting their sense of belonging, both in and out of school, boosting their self-esteem and confidence.

PRU Case Studies:

Enterprise Learning Alliance- Supporting pupils with SEMH Needs to improve self-regulation and resilience

Contact

mclay@ela.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

The identified cohort consisted of secondary-aged pupils attending the PRU who presented with a wide range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, often linked to disrupted educational histories, adverse childhood experiences (ACES), difficulties with emotional regulation and trauma. Many students had experienced exclusion from mainstream provision and arrived with significant gaps in their learning, low self-esteem, and limited trust in adults and peers.

Key themes included supporting pupils to develop secure attachments, improving self-regulation, resilience, school attendance and fostering positive relationships with staff and peers and helping pupils bridge the gaps that trauma left behind. The Thrive approach was implemented to provide a structured framework for assessing pupils' emotional needs, guiding group and 1-1 interventions and to create a safe and engaging environment to thrive.

This focus ensured that provision was not only reactive to behaviour but also proactive in meeting the underlying developmental and emotional needs of the individual pupils, supporting improved engagement, attendance, and readiness for learning.

Yr 10 Boy

Referred to me due to being very disengaged in school, withdrawn, having poor relationships with adults and peers (lack of trust), past trauma that he has never spoken about, poor attendance at school and a drug user.

An overview of what you did

Overview of Actions / Key Strategies

Targeted 1:1 intervention was delivered using the Thrive approach, guided by each pupil's individual Thrive Action Plan. Action plans were developed following a comprehensive Thrive assessment, which highlighted specific areas of interrupted development and priority strands for support.

Sessions are structured to provide pupils with a safe, consistent space to explore and express their emotions, build trust with a key adult, and practise strategies for emotional regulation. Interventions included a blend of relational activities, creative and sensory-based tasks linked to each pupils' interests and hobbies and reflective conversations tailored to the developmental stage identified through the Thrive profile.

Key strategies included:

- Building relationships: Establishing safety and trust through predictable routines, relational responses, and non-judgemental listening. Initially this begins within the classroom and during lunch, then progresses to intervention when the pupils feel ready.
- Regulation activities: Using grounding, sensory, breathing and movement-based activities to support self-regulation
- Creative expression: Providing opportunities for pupils to explore feelings and experiences through play, art, drama, or story-based activities.
- Skills development: Supporting pupils to practise problem-solving, and communication within a relational context. STEM activities have been very popular.
- Linking to learning: Helping pupils connect the emotional regulation strategies developed in Thrive sessions to classroom and wider school experiences.
- Progress was monitored and reviewed regularly against each pupil's action plan, with updates shared with teaching staff to ensure consistency of approach across the wider provision.

Yr 10 Boy

Following referral, I initially began by getting to know him at breakfast club, lunch times and time in corridor when out of lesson, this interaction was relaxed, calm, playful and with no big demands or expectations.

Over the next few weeks he asked me why I was always so happy to see him.

I then started to sit in on some of his lessons and our interaction became then playful and supportive.

He then became curious about my role I school and asked about the lodge and why pupils come with me, I used this then to explain Thrive and the days and times I was at his school and made it clear he was always welcome to come in if he felt he needed some time out/in.

After a month he would walk past the lodge and look inside to see what was going on and I would always wave or smile.

After a couple of months on a day he was particularly unsettled, I walked past and he asked me if he can sit in the lodge.

Our sessions then began initially, there was very little engagement, sitting on bean bags quietly then each week the interaction grew and we had a regular time slot. Our sessions were 1-1 2x weekly for between 30/50 min sessions.

Our sessions always included a card game and calming music. We discussed triggers/strategies to help support with emotional dysregulation, we talked about friendships (what he looks for in friends and what makes a good friend), worked on what he can and cant control and strategies to support him.

Impact

As a Thrive practitioner and following regular well engaged sessions, we would carry out Thrive assessments every 6 weeks to monitor progress.

Things we are likely to see

- Increased attendance and engagement.
- Reduced fixed-term exclusions and behaviour incidents.
- Positive pupil voice feedback (feeling safe, listened to, and understood).
- Staff reporting stronger relationships with pupils.
- Families noticing improved behaviour at home.
- Greater readiness for reintegration into mainstream or post-16 pathways.

Yr 10 Pupil

Over the course of 9 months our year 10 boy went from attending 2/3 days a week to full time by the end of the year.

- *Initially refusing to engage with adults to having regular Thrive sessions, engaging with form tutor and form TA, FLOs and outside agencies.*
- *From refusing to talk about his trauma, to initiating conversations and wanting to talk about some aspects of his trauma, this was often with out detail but he was starting to address it.*
- *Attending lessons and engagement improved*
- *Attendance improved*
- *Thrive assessment April 2025 Being 59%*
- *Thrive assessment July 2025 Being 65 %*
- *End of year awards Yr 10 pupil won Best attendance and Most improved student.*

- *At the end of term he acknowledged that he was worried about the school holidays and who he would talk if he needed to. He asked for regular check ins with our wellbeing lead.*

Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision - Pastoral Provision: a whole- school Case Study

Contact

SSmith@mmap.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

Maidstone and Malling Alternative Provision (MMAP) is driven by an unshakable belief in the potential of every young person. The provision supports ten mainstream schools with 50 places for Key Stage 4 pupils, alongside a growing Key Stage 3 offer. Pupils attend for both short- and long-term placements, depending on individual needs, with a structured review process that enables reintegration where appropriate.

The curriculum is robust and diverse, balancing academic qualifications such as GCSEs in English, Maths, Biology, and Art with vocational pathways including Construction BTEC, Health and Fitness NCFE, Functional Skills, and personalised routes such as the LEAP qualifications at Level 1 and 2. Careers education is woven into daily learning, with students accessing work experience, college taster sessions, and practical qualifications such as the CSCS card. These opportunities ensure pupils leave with clear progression routes aligned with their interests and ambitions.

Literacy is a central priority at MMAP, with a dedicated daily programme designed to build confidence, fluency, and a love of reading. Every day, pupils engage in an hour-long literacy session: 30 minutes focused on reading and 30 minutes on phonics, quizzes, and the exploration of wider themes such as British Values. The *Read Write Inc. Fresh Start* phonics programme ensures that gaps in foundational skills are addressed, while carefully chosen texts—ranging from diary entries and articles to topics such as Remembrance and Ramadan—provide relevance and resonance. By tailoring reading stimuli to pupils' interests, staff have secured significant gains in reading ages and nurtured greater engagement with literacy across the curriculum.

Above all, MMAP places relationships at the heart of its work. Staff champion pupil voice, listen without judgement, and set clear, consistent boundaries. The culture is open, honest, and compassionate, ensuring pupils feel safe, supported, and respected. All staff share a passion for making a meaningful difference to the lives of the children they serve.

An overview of what we did

Pastoral Provision

Pastoral care at MMAP is deeply personalised, with the focus always on the individual child—recognising their needs, interests, and aspirations. On entry, pupils and families are welcomed through a carefully designed induction process beginning with home visits, where staff learn about the young person’s strengths, challenges, and goals. Assessments, including Boxall Profiling and self-evaluations, help to shape personalised targets and support plans. Pupils also meet the full MMAP team and complete a range of GL assessments alongside SEBDA (a social and emotional self-assessment tool). These baseline assessments enable staff to respond quickly and effectively to each child’s needs and context.

Many students arrive with low self-esteem and fractured trust in education. MMAP addresses these barriers immediately by prioritising basic needs and creating a sense of belonging. Free school meals, simple uniform, minibus transport, and even access to showers ensure equity and dignity for all. A “reverse information” model ensures the focus is firmly on understanding the child as a person rather than defining them by past difficulties. Students are also provided with a *Welcome Guide*—written in pupil-friendly language and illustrated—which explains routines, expectations, wellbeing support, and wider opportunities.

The pastoral team is a significant strength of the provision, with two dedicated pastoral managers forming the backbone of support for both pupils and families. They organise counselling, support groups, and coffee mornings, ensuring parents feel part of the community. Where needed, they also secure access to Food Banks, emergency food parcels, and food vouchers.

MMAP works closely with a wide range of external agencies, including We Are with You, Dandelion Time, Hera, and the local policing team. The school’s dedicated police officer is a trusted presence, supporting complex safeguarding issues such as gang involvement, drugs, and exploitation. This external expertise ensures pupils and families receive the right support at the right time.

Wellbeing and enrichment are integral to the timetable. Activities such as horse riding, farm work, axe throwing, fishing, skiing, and escape rooms broaden horizons and build resilience. Targeted nurture programmes, including speech and language interventions, provide bespoke support for pupils with additional needs. Initiatives like the Bike Project, barber mentoring, and practical life skills also embed a strong sense of achievement and pride.

Behaviour and relationships are managed through a restorative approach, underpinned by respect and consistency. Staff use “Ask, Remind, Explain” to reinforce expectations, while restorative conversations and reflective tasks help

pupils learn from their mistakes. Rewards and positive reinforcement outweigh sanctions, with weekly tutor phone calls home celebrating success. Leaders have embedded a clear points-based system to reward attendance and positive attitudes to learning, with a daily reset point at lunchtime. Crucially, every day is seen as a fresh start.

Leaders are proactive in using pastoral systems and the PSHE curriculum to respond to contextual safeguarding issues, a particular challenge in alternative provision where cohorts change frequently. Their openness, responsiveness, and strong relationships with pupils, families, and external partners underpin highly effective safeguarding and pastoral practice.

Attendance is also supported through a wide range of strategies, including rewards, minibus pick-up points, home visits, bus passes, and mentoring to address punctuality. The school also deploys an external attendance service to support parental meetings, ensuring a consistent and joined-up approach.

Impact-

The impact of MMAP's inclusive and pastoral approach is both significant and sustained. Attendance is consistently well above the national average for PRUs, with a three-year upward trend. Current figures stand at 68%, reflecting the success of MMAP's focus on relationships, trust, and engagement. Pupils who once struggled to engage in mainstream education now attend regularly and sit their exams with confidence.

Behavioural data demonstrates clear, positive trends:

- Racism: 64% reduction in incidents
- Friendship/bullying issues: 20% reduction in the last year, with a three-year downward trend
- Physical incidents: 55% reduction over three years
- Verbal incidents: 40% reduction over three years
- Sexual harassment: 28% reduction over three years
- Suspensions: 19% reduction over three years, including an 8% reduction in days lost
- The school's literacy strategy has also delivered measurable improvements, with pupils' reading ages increasing significantly as a result of the daily literacy programme and carefully tailored interventions (KS3: 12-week programme: Start average 2024 - 2025: On entry average reading age 10.04 – End of 12 weeks 12.06 and KS4: On entry average reading age: 11.06 End of 12 weeks 15:07)

Beyond the data, MMAP transforms lives. Pupils leave with meaningful qualifications, enriched experiences, and the confidence to take their next steps. Many progress successfully to college, apprenticeships, or employment, supported by staff who go above and beyond to ensure smooth and sustained transitions.

This ethos is summed up by the consistent message from pupils, families, and staff alike: at MMAP, children are never written off. Every decision is rooted in compassion, resilience, and the unwavering belief that every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed.

SRP Case Studies:

Marsh Academy- The Dommatt Centre
Contact scartwright@marshacademy.org.uk
Brief description/ overview SRP Students years 7-11
An overview of what we did <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Using EHCP section F we highlighted key areas that our cohort had in common.● We used this information to create a timetable of interventions as our SRP tutorial programme.● Students have a ‘soft landing’ approach on arrival in the mornings, followed by check-ins then 15-20 minutes of interventions.● These include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>All About Me (Autism)</i>○ <i>6-Minute Social Skills</i>○ <i>Mindfulness and Outdoor Gardening</i>○ <i>Life Skills</i>○ <i>Fizzy/Clever Hands (Fine and Gross Motor Skills work)</i>○ <i>Sensory Circuits</i>○ <i>Lego Therapy</i>○ <i>Card or Board Games</i>● The students are then dismissed to lessons in the mainstream school● These interventions are monitored using the graduated approach and are fed back to parents and carers in the three review meetings each year (and at other times where appropriate).
Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students have developed positive relationships with the SRP team and their peers within the SRP.● Staff leading these interventions are given ownership of them and are guided to create their own mini targets for the students to help them work towards meeting their EHCP outcomes.● There has been a more positive effect on attending mainstream lessons.

- Students who are not reaching their mini targets are reviewed more frequently and provision adjusted if necessary.

Special School Case Studies

Goldwyn- Tackling EBSA in an SEMH School post-Covid

Contact details

Kerry.greene@goldwyn.kent.sch.uk

Brief description/ overview

Case Study for Change: Tackling EBSA in an SEMH School Post-Covid

Context

- Our is a specialist SEMH provision, working with students who experience significant social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Post-Covid, national trends showed sharp rises in **EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance)**. The Department for Education (2023) reported that children with a **mental health need** were absent at rates more than double their peers (persistent absence among pupils with an EHCP was **40.1%** in 2021/22 vs **22.3%** for all pupils).
- These challenges were **amplified** within SEMH schools, where attendance was already fragile pre-pandemic.

The Challenge

- Many of our learners faced intensified anxiety about returning to structured settings after long periods of disruption.
- Students from inpatient facilities needing a supportive Bridge back to school
- Parental anxiety was at an all-time high, with families often mirroring or reinforcing their child's fears of school attendance.
- Students with SEMH needs are recognised as having **protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010** in terms of disability (where mental health constitutes a substantial and long-term barrier to day-to-day activity). This placed a legal duty on the school to make **reasonable adjustments** to support access to education.
- Traditional attendance strategies (e.g., penalty notices, rigid routines) proved ineffective, sometimes worsening anxieties. These also are in conflict with the schools values and culture of 'no significant learning without a significant relationship.

Evidence from National Picture

- NHS Digital (2022) found that **1 in 6 children aged 7–16** had a probable mental health disorder.
- Post-pandemic, **absence rates for pupils with social, emotional and mental health as a primary need** increased significantly, with nearly half identified as persistently absent in national data.
- Research from the Centre for Mental Health and DfE noted that EBSA is now one of the leading issues driving persistent absence nationally.

Response and Change Process

- **Review of Practice:** Attendance was re-framed not as a compliance issue but as a **wellbeing and inclusion priority**.
- **Specialist Engagement officer** role established – to outreach to homes and support families and disengaged students
- **Parental Partnership:** Increased outreach to families, offering workshops, signposting, and home-school liaison to address parental anxieties.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Flexible timetables, supported re-integration, and safe spaces offsite and on site created to reduce barriers to attendance.
- **Staff Training:** Whole-staff CPD Trauma Informed Practice and on EBSA, , and strategies to de-escalate anxiety.
- **Student Voice:** Actively involving students in co-planning their pathways back into school, creating ownership and reducing fear.
- **Multi-Agency Work:** Strengthened partnerships with CAMHS, social care, KPAS and educational psychology to build holistic support plans.

An overview of what we did

The Engagement Curriculum was developed for entrenched EBSA

- Home visits
- Virtual school
- Personalised learning
- Relationship building- trauma informed practice
- SEO Specialist Engagement Officer role created
- Weekly monitoring of attendance and termly forensic dive
- Families confidence built

Impact

Impact (Emerging Outcomes)

- Improved attendance for targeted EBSA students compared with baseline data in 100% of cases

- For the hardest to reach the change can take a significant amount of time but the long lasting impact have been profound. (Family quotes from internal partners)
- Increased parental engagement and confidence in school partnerships.
- Reduced long term absences where EBSA had been the stated barrier.
- Greater consistency across sites through shared SEMH/EBSA/TIS strategy.

Next Steps

- Embed EBSA strategy into whole-school attendance policy, aligning with DfE expectations (2024).
- Build peer-support networks for parents and carers. School training offer.
- Contribute to national dialogue on SEMH attendance barriers by sharing practice through SEND networks.
- Lobby for Virtual School Live lessons to be considered as DfE attendance.

A summary of effective strategies evidenced in the Kent Case Studies for Pastoral

1. Build Strong, Trust-Based Relationships

- Prioritise consistent, positive relationships between staff, pupils, and families to foster belonging and trust.
- Ensure every child has access to a trusted adult who knows them well and advocates for their needs.
- Use relational approaches to address behaviour, seeing it as communication and responding with empathy.

2. Create Accessible and Nurturing Support Structures

- Establish clear pastoral systems such as wellbeing hubs, inclusion teams, or nurture groups to provide safe spaces.
- Use structured daily routines, calm zones, and low-arousal environments to promote emotional regulation.
- Offer flexible provision that allows pupils to step in and out of mainstream classrooms while maintaining inclusion.

3. Prioritise Early Intervention and Transition Support

- Identify vulnerable pupils early through data, teacher insight, and family voice, and plan targeted support.
- Provide thoughtful, personalised transition arrangements between year groups, key stages, or schools.
- Use tools such as social stories, phased returns, and induction programmes to reduce anxiety and support smooth adjustment.

4. Strengthen Family Partnerships

- Maintain proactive, open communication with parents/carers, using regular check-ins, home-school books, or digital platforms.

- Provide opportunities for families to engage in school life, including coffee mornings, workshops, and open-door access to staff.
- Involve families in decision-making, ensuring consistency of support between home and school.

5. Embed Holistic and Inclusive Practices

- Integrate pastoral care into whole-school culture, ensuring inclusion is everyone’s responsibility.
- Use approaches such as Zones of Regulation, Boxall Profiles, and restorative practice to embed wellbeing into daily routines.
- Address social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs alongside academic learning to promote the “whole child.”

6. Utilise Specialist Expertise and External Partnerships

- Collaborate with external agencies (e.g., CAMHS, NHS, Early Help) to widen support networks for pupils and families.
- Train staff in trauma-informed practice, attachment theory, and mental health first aid to build internal expertise.
- Ensure clear referral pathways exist so that pupils access timely specialist support when needed.

7. Monitor, Review, and Celebrate Impact

- Track attendance, behaviour, and wellbeing data to measure the effectiveness of pastoral interventions.
- Gather pupil and parent voice to understand lived experiences and refine support approaches.
- Celebrate progress in wellbeing and social development alongside academic outcomes to value holistic growth.