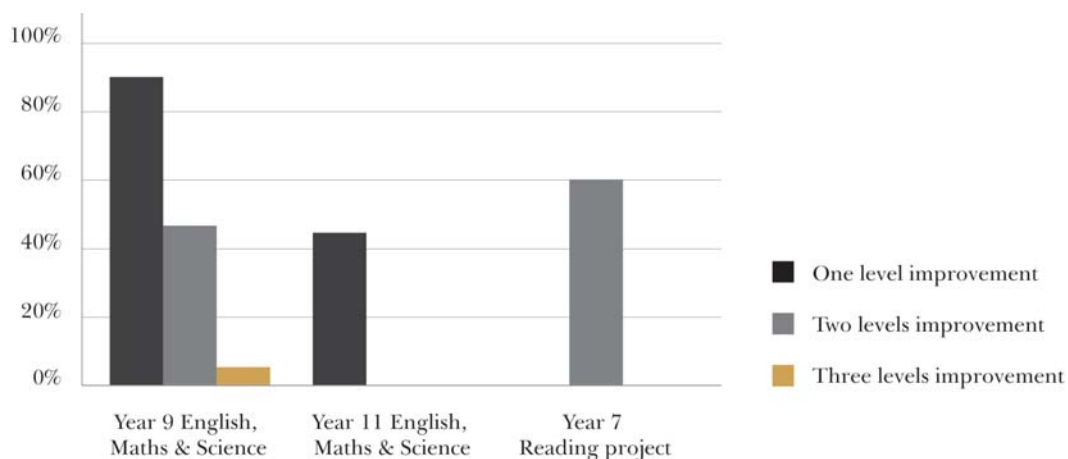


PARTICIPANT CASE STUDY GIVING SOMETHING BACK

Allison Moise-Dixon joined the Future Leaders programme having previously worked as an English teacher in Tower Hamlets, a support worker in Hertfordshire and a School Improvement Partner for Afro-Caribbean Achievement in Haringey. Having spent her own childhood in inner city London, and, as an Afro-Caribbean child, experienced issues of identity and achievement throughout school, it was a natural progression for her to return to where she had started education to make a difference. Spending her residency year at St Angela's Ursuline in Newham, Allison was responsible for improving the attainment of pupils across the school who were failing to make progress. Working intensively with pupils in year nine she achieved an outstanding result, with 90 per cent of pupils progressing at least one level at KS3. She also worked with year 11 students to help the less confident pupils achieve their English and Maths GCSEs, as well as developing and improving the induction process. She also worked on assemblies, improved year seven reading levels and was able to bring a considerable knowledge of Afro-Caribbean achievement issues to the leadership team.



“I have always wanted to work in urban schools because I have a fundamental belief that every child has a right to an excellent education, and their background and social situation simply shouldn't matter.”



For Allison Moise-Dixon undertaking her residency year at all girls school St Angela's Ursuline in Newham was like coming full circle. Having been educated in the area, and with numerous family still in residence, returning to Newham was very much a case of giving something back. "I had seen so many of my peers not achieve half of their potential because their education was simply not good enough. It seemed that it was all a case of luck and a postcode lottery, which just isn't acceptable. Every child has the right to a good education, not just some of them. I was lucky because some of my teachers were amazing; and I thought if I could just do that for one child, then what a difference it would make."

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It is clear, however, that Allison's work as a Future Leader has touched more than just one child. "Allison brought an immediate impact in her work with the pupils," explains Delia Smith OBE, head teacher of Allison's residency school, St Angela's Ursuline. "She has influenced everything from behaviour and teaching to attainment and leadership. She also had a great relationship with all our girls, and was a strong visual presence around the school."

Becoming a leader

Allison discovered the Future Leaders programme through a colleague and was immediately impressed by it, both because of its ethos and the kind of people attracted to the programme. "Future Leaders pushed all the right buttons for me. Everything I read about it, just felt like me. I really engaged with the concept of having a moral purpose, and a sense of social justice. Their belief that children did have a right to learn was bang on. It's a huge concern that in this day and age we still have only 50 per cent of our pupils achieving Eng and Maths; and every Future

Leader I met on the course was united in the feeling that this cannot go on. It was incredibly powerful to be working with people so geared for and committed towards change."

A particular memory Allison took away from training was the idea of 'building aeroplanes in the sky.' "It was something a tutor mentioned, and I really responded to that idea of working at a high altitude, doing something that won't be easy, but is vital if you want to survive. It really reconnected me with why I came into education."

Learning from experience

Allison's motivation has always been in areas where she felt she could make the most impact, with a key focus on Afro-Caribbean achievement, something which meant St Angela's Ursuline School suited her very well.

The school has a 90 per cent African demographic, with numerous languages spoken and 20 per cent free school meals. Forest Gate and Newham is a deprived area, with some high percentages of poverty, as well as a number of issues connected to the local gang culture. Despite these many challenges, the school is very successful: rated Outstanding by Ofsted, and lead by a headteacher who received an OBE in the 2008 Honours list. It currently has 80 per cent of pupils achieving Eng and Maths and a solid ethos centred on high standards of achievement.

"It is such an exciting place to work," says Allison. "From the moment I visited it I was immediately immersed in the school, and it was clear on my first day what a unique and inspiring environment I was coming into. During a morning meeting the headteacher, Delia Smith, was going through the school's results, and all the departments were getting 90 or 100 per cent; and those who got 65 or 70 were being encouraged to get into the 80s the next term. I remember Delia was





saying that there are no secret gardens, nowhere to hide, at St Angela's, just extremely high expectations. Achievement is everything. It was a really powerful reality check about where Delia expected the school to be - and the kind of environment I wanted to work in.”

Intensive interventions

Allison's key focus during her year at St Angela's was working with groups of pupils across all years who needed extra support to ensure they achieved their best, specifically those known as 'coasting students'. While interventions were already in place for struggling students and gifted and talented pupils, it was often those who were achieving satisfactory grades, but not actually progressing, who sometimes fell under the radar.

“I started working with year nines and identified 35 pupils who needed some form of intervention, to help them progress further. I wanted to move them up at least one, if not two levels of achievement, over the year.” As always, resources and time was a pressure and Allison was clear that her challenge was to find a way to not replicate, but to harness the expertise of the existing staff involved in

ensuring the right child received the right type of intervention.

“The results were very impressive, with 90 per cent improving at least one level.”

The project focused on using the time of some 'underweighted' teachers and TAs or Gap students. “The Gap students were past pupils brought back into school to work in trios with the year nines. They actually worked really well, as they knew the school and provided a strong role model for the girls. It also meant we were supporting the community and ensuring the school had an enduring position in the lives of its pupils.”

The year nines were divided into trios, with one TA or a teacher, and the interventions were delivered during their main lesson, but outside of the classroom. The intensiveness of the programme meant all interventions were scheduled to take place at least once a week, but could take place up to three times a week.

The results were very impressive, with 90 per cent improving at least one level; 17 pupils made two levels of progress, and of that 17, a further two made three levels of progress. Students reported that they felt special as a result of receiving intervention and commented that they felt that they were able to learn more during the course of the intervention sessions. The effect of the extra work also meant that where they'd improved in one subject, 60 per cent also improved in another subject as well. “Their progress even made a difference to their self-confidence, and in turn their learning in all subjects, because they felt surer of themselves and more invested in their education,” explains Allison. Teachers also enjoyed the dynamic of smaller group teaching and felt that they could see a clear acceleration of learning and engagement taking place.

Allison also did some work with a group of



year 11 students who were unlikely to achieve their Eng and Maths GCSEs. “I worked with the Head of Maths and together we taught lunchtime classes to 11 pupils we’d identified as needing extra help.” Nearly half of the pupils she worked with subsequently achieved their English and Maths grades. Additional literacy intervention was also targeted for 15 year ten students, based on their prior attainment and rates of progress, and as part of their study support programme.

Literacy learning

In year seven Allison piloted a reading project, using a programme called Renaissance Learning, which saw the 25 year sevens undertake extra reading, subsequently improving their understanding of numerous subjects; 15 of the 25 improved their reading skills by two levels.

“Running the interventions was an excellent experience,” says Allison. “It meant I was immediately working with core subject departments, and could really start to make a difference. After planning in September, we then had the year nine programme in place by October. It was a case of being thrown in at the deep end, but it helped me to get to grips with what was happening on the ground. The heads of department that I was working with are excellent leaders and role models, and being exposed to such exemplary leadership has been invaluable.”

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Allison now has plans to develop the scheme further, as she has just accepted an assistant headship role at St Angela's. “I want to develop the way we assess which pupils need extra attention so we can be sure that the right students are on the right interventions and that these are closely monitored. I also want to expand the literacy programme that I



piloted with the year sevens and ensure that it is available to all departments.”

A good start

Another key aspect of Allison's residency year was her work on inductions, both for year seven and year ten.

At St Angela's year sevens usually have a four day induction period, with various classes and sessions to help them prepare for secondary school. “They would focus on things such as the school culture, how we learn at St Angela's and our standards and expectations. I added an extra day and focused on the school's Latin motto, 'Serviam' - to serve - and looked at what that meant for a pupil at St Angela's: how they could serve their school, their peers and their teachers. It worked well and will be running next year.”

For year ten Allison also piloted an induction day, something new for the school. “It was a day off-timetable where pupils looked at the step change from KS3 to KS4. We encouraged the girls to consider thinking differently about their subjects, ran a treasure hunt with questions about the school, provided advice and guidance about



planning, revision, exams, target setting and target getting, as well as running a yoga session to help them understand about the need to manage stress, control their emotions, and get enough sleep. Evaluations have been very positive, and it's something else that we're keen to keep as a standard for the coming years.”

Learning from leaders

Allison's experience so far at St Angela's Ursuline has been very positive. She worked closely with the deputy head on a number of projects, was fully integrated into the leadership team, and shared an office with her mentor, which gave her someone invaluable to work with and bounce ideas off. “I was also very lucky to have a headteacher who was keen to share ideas. She gave me hours of her time when I first arrived to discuss things and learn from her, especially working through how she improved and developed the school.”

For headteacher, Delia Smith, it has clear it's also been a positive experience, and one that the school was well suited to. “Future Leaders is well-researched and the training is excellent. I knew we could offer a Future Leader something very useful, as we have a strong SLT here with lots of experience, and we also do a lot of outreach leadership work with other schools in the area, so have a good understanding of how to communicate and share good leadership.”

“By the nature of the scheme, Future Leaders are natural risk takers, which you need if you want to improve something.”

Having Allison in the school meant that key areas which needed improvement could get a committed focus. “Allison's insight on interventions was really enlightening; we'd done work on them already, but she really

looked at the whole concept, developed strategies and overhauled the system,” says Delia.

Having a Future Leader in the school also provided a new dynamic, and fresh perspective from someone not already embedded in the school's culture. “A future leader livens the whole place up again,” explains Delia. “By the nature of the scheme, future leaders are natural risk takers, which you need if you want to improve something. They're also ambitious and dynamic. And it allows you to have some freedom to develop your SLT; members of the team can try different roles, and you can talent spot and develop their skills and try to combat some of the issues that inner city schools have with recruitment.”

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Moving forward

Working with Delia formed a key part of Alison's experience at St Angela's, and the headteacher even accompanied Allison on a trip to America to see leadership strategies in urban schools in New York. The US trip was excellent and we brought back numerous ideas which we've worked on together,” says Delia. “I actually feel that I have been on a learning journey with Future Leaders and learnt a number of things myself over this year. Allison was key part of the journey.”

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Allison is clear that the past year has given her a solid understanding of what headship entails. “A good leader needs to work in a sustainable way, because ultimately, it's about passing on your knowledge and developing heads of the future. And that should be the legacy you leave.”

Having recently become a mother for the first time, Allison is now aware how much her new role as a leader has become both a personal and professional journey. “It really made me face the kind of society we have now, and the one I want my baby to grow up in. Getting involved at this level is about trying to make a better community. The bottom line is that the whole idea of headship is not about one thing you aim for in your career, it's about being a leader, and making a permanent difference for a whole generation.”

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