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High-quality, varied alternative provision through partnership: Sir Bernard Lovell School

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Brief description

As part of the well-established Kingswood Partnership of four local secondary schools, Sir Bernard Lovell School has drawn on extensive links with business, education and training providers to offer its students a rich and diverse range of academic and vocational courses. The exceptional breadth of high-quality opportunities available for those students who benefit from alternative provision has a very positive impact on their motivation, attendance and qualifications.

Overview – the school's message



'Before we unified our provision, the four schools in the Kingswood Partnership tried to secure the same vocational placements for their students without coordination or enough control over quality.

With a commitment to a partnership approach and access to more funding through South Gloucestershire local authority's 'Work 2 Learn' programme, our schools were better able to tailor programmes to students' needs. The Partnership has broadened the range of opportunities available for students, helping them to achieve well, gain employability skills and make progress into occupational pathways when they leave school.

Even when 'Work 2 Learn' funding ended, the Partnership's schools have maintained their commitment to funding the central posts.

Our advice to other providers would be:

- provide a single point of contact for employers and training providers

- provide a key worker in each school to have oversight of the quality of alternative provision programmes
- continually evaluate the programmes you run and the outcomes you secure for your young people, and constantly be prepared to change and develop the programmes to best suit their evolving needs.'

Ben Rose, Coordinator, Kingswood Partnership

The good practice in detail

In 2011, Ofsted carried out a [survey](#) to find out how well schools were using alternative provision. Some schools were using alternative provision well, but others were not. In September 2012, Ofsted began a follow-up survey on this topic, which is due to last for three years. This case study is about one of the schools visited for the survey that has used alternative provision effectively to improve achievement and engagement.



Sir Bernard Lovell School won praise [from Ofsted in 2011](#) for developing an 'innovative and outstanding curriculum' through the Kingswood Partnership – a well-established consortium of four secondary schools. The Partnership was selected as one of 11 14–19 'Development Pathfinders' in the country to develop innovative approaches to the 14–19 curriculum. The school ran 14 diplomas through the partnership, initially drawing on additional 'pathfinder' funding from the Department for Education. This has enabled the Partnership to build up an excellent database of providers across a wide range of areas of employment.

Principal learning days



'Principal learning days' on each school's timetable permit considerable flexibility for students across the Partnership to travel off-site for study or training. During these days, students can follow academic or vocational courses in their own school or in partner colleges and schools. Those on an alternative curriculum can go off-site for placements or activities with businesses or training providers. Students' core curriculum subjects are delivered on the other days, leaving principal learning days for the scheduling of optional subjects, diploma learning and general off-site

provision. This means that students, including those on an alternative curriculum, do not miss lessons in their core subjects, and that there is no need for catch-up sessions or teaching by non-specialist staff.

For those students identified as likely to benefit from an alternative curriculum, a wide variety of vocational courses and activities is offered through businesses and training providers across the city. Some of these courses are formally accredited, while some are designed mainly to offer experience in students' areas of interest. Students usually attend an off-site programme for up to a day a week and, as the [pre-employment grid](#) shows, the blocks of time allocated to these programmes vary. The grid also identifies the range of opportunities available.

The nature of the provision and its costs are open and transparent to all, so that in choosing courses students and their advisers know exactly what is involved. The [wood construction document](#) shows the kind of information provided by each provider.

Getting the right students onto the right courses

The pre-employment grid allows students, school pastoral staff and the Partnership team to map out a programme over Key Stage 4 which:

- allows students to focus their learning on an area of specific interest
- develops students' skills for life and employability
- raises their awareness of occupational opportunities and pathways
- takes them into workplace settings to do real jobs alongside specialist trainers and practitioners.



Around 20 students at Sir Bernard Lovell School follow this alternative provision, alongside students from the partner schools. Participants are recognised through the following criteria:

- Those who the information, advice and guidance process identifies as being likely to benefit from an entry level or Level 1 course which is not offered on-site (some Level 1 courses are offered on-site, e.g. in engineering and humanities).
- Late entrants into Year 11 for whom there is discontinuity in the curriculum.
- Those at risk of permanent exclusion, as identified through progress review meetings.
- Students with very low or sporadic attendance.

Students are identified for this provision through a consultation system involving the student and the student's parents or carers together with his or her careers advisor and key worker. The key worker is the assistant head of year, a non-teaching member of staff who monitors all aspects of the student's success on the programme, and recommends changes where necessary.

An initial consultation identifies the student's specific needs and leads to an [individual learning plan](#) which may recommend off-site provision as part of the student's personalised curriculum. The costs of specific off-site provision are identified transparently through the learning plan and the plan must then be signed off by a senior manager in the school, which now funds this provision directly.



The individual learning plan is then shared with the training provider so that its managers and staff have a good understanding of the background of the student and the aims of the placement.

Getting students to the placements

Most students find their own way to their placements, using private or public transport. In some cases, for example where students have specific needs, taxi transport may be provided. Students are issued with identity cards to ensure that they can claim concessionary fares and to explain why they are out of school during regular school hours. Students and their parents or carers must sign a [consent form](#) to ensure that all are aware of the implications of engaging in off-site provision.

Assuring the quality and safety of provision

The providers used in the programme are of a very high standard. Many are work-based learning providers which have been judged either good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Economies of scale have enabled the Partnership to establish comprehensive structures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of alternative provision alongside that of the wider partnership curriculum.

Direct responsibility for the strategic development of the alternative offsite provision and its day-to-day operations is provided by the Partnership Coordinator. Other key staff are listed below.



- **The Off-Site Student Support Manager** has the key role in ensuring that placements are safe and fit for purpose. She carries out regular health and safety audits of providers on the database compiled in conjunction with the 'Work 2 Learn' programme and regularly drops in to placement activities to monitor provision and discuss progress with the provider and the student. She maintains regular contact with her counterparts elsewhere in her local authority as a means of evaluating provider quality.
- **Key Workers** are provided by every school in the partnership as the central point of contact for each student in each school. Students are given their contact details in the handbook of information they are given about off-site provision. They meet at least weekly with each student in school. In Sir Bernard Lovell School, the key workers are

non-teaching assistant heads of year who assume key pastoral responsibility for students following alternative provision. They monitor each student's progress against course aims and against the objectives of the individual learning plan. Although school-based, they also operate as a partnership team to deploy between providers and ensure that school staff are regularly in attendance.

- **The Kingswood Partnership Executive Group** is comprised of senior leaders from each school and is responsible for reviewing the quality, effectiveness and value for money of alternative provision. The Partnership Coordinator oversees all aspects of the quality assurance process for alternative provision and reports to the group. He passes on data analyses, financial reports and observations about the quality of provision gathered by the Off-site Student Support Manager.

The partnership operates a core team to lead, manage and administer its wider provision.

Impact

Students value the scope of choice in the programmes on offer. They also praise its



flexibility, noting that it is possible to change if the placement or the occupational area proves not to be of interest. The majority of placements lead to an appropriate level 1 qualification. There is a highly prestigious presentation ceremony for all recipients, both students from the school and other adults, attended by students and their parents and carers. A high proportion of those on alternative provision that completed courses in 2012 went on to train further in their chosen area, some gaining apprenticeships.

The school's background

Sir Bernard Lovell School is a larger-than-average secondary school on the outskirts of Bristol. It is a specialist language school and is a member of the **Kingswood Partnership**.



Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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