



Accelerate and Access Foundation

Report of the Trustees, 2016

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Accelerate and Access Foundation's (AAF) aim is to promote social mobility by increasing the number of students from poorer backgrounds accessing leading universities. AAF does this by providing a multi-year programme of support to low and middle income students focussed on raising aspirations, providing advice and guidance, academic support and enrichment.

The charity has been working with the Kent Academies Network since 2012 to develop its flagship University Access Project. The Kent project involves a group of six academy schools and their independent school partners.

The schools involved in the network are: Folkestone Academy (linked with the King's School, Canterbury); Marsh Academy (Tonbridge School); Skinner's Kent Academy (the Skinners' Company); Isle of Sheppey Academy (Dulwich College); Knole Academy (Sevenoaks); and the John Wallis Academy (Benenden).

The project is also supported by Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge and Balliol College, Oxford, which supply learning mentors for the pupils and host visits.



The project supports academically able students with a programme which extends over four years, from the end of year 9 (age 13/14) to year 13 (age 16/17) and includes two residential weeks a year (during the Easter and summer holidays) and on-going input from

learning mentors, as well as bespoke activities, such as university visits and cultural trips. The residential sessions include academic events, but also motivational talks, aspiration-raising activities and enrichment. They provide an opportunity for pupils to strengthen knowledge of core subjects, but also provide the chance to experience a range of subjects and activities that will help the pupils develop in other ways. The residential weeks have so far covered English, drama, music, maths and science, alongside creative writing, outdoor education, and history of art.

As students move into the sixth form they are also given specific help in making applications to university and intensive subject specific revision sessions. The ultimate goal is to ensure that a high proportion of the students go on to study at leading universities – and that this acts as a beacon for others in their schools and communities to do the same. The project is innovative in providing such sustained support around university access to a single group of students over a number of years.

Over the last year, a priority for AAF has been to expand its work into a second network of schools and to help the Kent project reach sustainability (please see future plans section for more detail).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The project has enjoyed a successful year, with the recruitment of its fourth cohort of students, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to date to **50**.

The residential elements of the Project have continued to take place at Tonbridge and Sevenoaks schools, as well as Fitzwilliam and Queens' Colleges at the University of Cambridge. Fitzwilliam and Balliol, Oxford, provide undergraduate mentors who give support to the pupils during and after the residential weeks, and teachers from a range of schools within the network are brought in to deliver specific lessons. The project also makes use of the expertise of other organisations working in the university access space: for example, The Brilliant Club, The Access Project and the Higher Education Access Network have all delivered bespoke sessions for the programme.



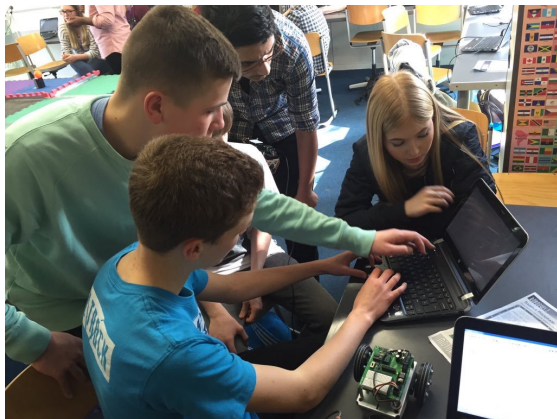
In addition a range of speakers – from the curator of the Natural History Museum and the Political Editor of Sky TV, to a lawyer from a City firm – have given afternoon and evening enrichment sessions to boost aspirations and broaden horizons. A good proportion of these speakers are from similar backgrounds to the students we are supporting and all give their time for free.

In between residential events the project uses an e-mentoring system, currently provided by the Brightside Trust, to enable students to stay in touch with learning mentors. Specific homework tasks are set by the mentors and progress is closely monitored to ensure continued engagement.

REACH AND IMPACT

The aim of the project is twofold. First, we hope it will have a direct impact on the students involved, as they will receive significant support throughout their GCSEs, in making decisions about further education and university, and throughout the UCAS application process. We also believe that it will have a wider impact on the teachers in the academies involved, putting them in a better position to help raise aspirations and support their pupils' decisions about higher education in future.

Second, and in the medium term, the project has tremendous potential to act as a beacon for other pupils in the participating schools, helping to demonstrate that higher education, including the most competitive universities, are not 'out of reach'. Finally, roughly half of the learning mentors employed are embarking on teaching careers themselves in part having been inspired by their work with the programme.



As part of its initial commitment to the programme, the Sutton Trust met the costs of an independent evaluation of the first year of the programme from Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring. The evaluation found a number of promising signs, particularly that the project was reaching the right target schools – those with high levels of deprivation, low levels of attainment and low progression to university. The interim evaluation concluded:

“The programme is a complex intervention, with many elements but a clear focus on removing the barriers to university access for bright, disadvantaged students in the UK who might otherwise be unlikely to embark on this journey. Its ultimate outcomes are quantifiable and will be followed up in due course. In the meantime, qualitative feedback suggests that the programme has promise and relevance, and is of benefit to participants and the wider school cohorts, not least due to the hard work and commitment of programme staff.”

In addition, an analysis of the first cohort's GCSE results also suggests that the students on the programme performed above the grades predicted by their schools, particularly in subject areas (such as Maths and English) which were covered during the Easter and Summer residential sessions.

The first group of AAF students will begin university in September 2017 and the charity will be closely monitoring the offers and acceptances they receive.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The AAF is mindful of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and confident that it works for the public benefit by increasing the educational opportunities available to young people from low and middle income homes and improving and promoting social mobility. The charity's work is targeted at those from socio-economically deprived and non-privileged backgrounds – those which the data shows are less likely than their peers to go to university. AAF believes this represents a waste of talent that is not only unfair to the individual, but also of economic cost to the country.

The six Academy schools taking part in the project face significant educational and social challenges. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals averages over 40% (against a national average of 28% for 2013), and on average fewer than 46% of pupils gain five GCSEs at A*-C (placing these schools in the fourth quintile nationally). IDACI and POLAR 3 measurements place these academies in areas of deprivation and low participation rates. The pupil population includes students who have not passed the 11-plus and gained access to selective grammar schools in the county, as well as other students who did not sit the tests. Within each of the schools, there are high ability students who have enormous potential; however the schools send relatively few students on to higher education and particularly to the most highly-ranked universities.

FUTURE PLANS

The AAF is keen to build on the success of its work in Kent and to replicate the model elsewhere, in other areas of the country and in new networks of schools.

During the year, AAF brokered a partnership with a significant Multi-Academy Trust to deliver the programme in a second network of independent and state schools on the South Coast. Planning is underway and provision will begin in the 2017/18 academic year. The partnership with United Learning is starting with 20 students from 6 of their 55 schools, with Caterham as the residential host school. ULT envision using the AAF model for more of their schools in the future.

In Kent, AAF in February 2017 recruited its fifth cohort of students to the programme and its first group of students will complete the programme in 2016/17. The charity is working

with the local independent and state schools in the Kent network to ensure there is a sustainable model for the future and that further cohorts of students from the area can benefit from the programme. The charity is also investing more in the development of its mentor training and support model and in the online mentoring and learning environment it uses to support students between face-to-face sessions.



The medium term aim of the AAF is to work to seed-corn fund and set up a network of projects around the country, drawing on the resources and expertise developed by the charity, but eventually enabling those projects to be financially independent and adapted to their local contexts.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The costs of the first three cohorts have been met through generous grants from the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Sutton Trust, private donors and in-kind contributions from the participating schools and universities.

During the course of the year, AAF received a second generous donation from the Garfield Weston Foundation and generous contributions from a number of its trustees. Much of the AAF work has been conducted through and in co-operation with Tonbridge School and therefore AAF's accounts reflect only a part of its activities.

While an intensive programme, we believe there are benefits to long term investment in the students if we are to have maximum impact, and we are continually reviewing the programme to identify efficiencies and savings. The approximate cost of providing support over four years is £5,000 per head, excluding the fixed costs of running the programme as a whole.

Reserves Policy

The charity has a policy of holding enough reserves to cover commitments for currently enrolled students to complete the four-year programme.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The project is overseen by an expert trustee group and with input from senior staff in the network of participating schools, as well as a dedicated project manager who works part time on the programme and part time teaching.

The trustees are responsible for decision-making on long-term strategic direction and governance. Day-to day-running of the charity lies in the hands of the member of staff but, as a small charity, the trustees also have a key role in supporting the project

manager and in delivery and operational matters.

The current trustee body have been involved in the project since its inception. The trustees are now looking to expand and diversify the board, particularly with further expertise in school leadership, higher education access and law. New trustees will have informal discussions with existing trustees and be offered the chance to observe a board meeting before appointment. They will also have access to the charity's governing documents, minutes of past meetings and other key materials as part of their induction process.



RISK MANAGEMENT

The AAF board consider as part of their regular meetings the major risks facing the charity and the steps in place to mitigate those risks. These risks cover financial, legal and operational areas. The charity is developing a risk management framework which will be implemented in the coming year

The Trustees personally have the professional expertise to ensure they manage actively the risks that the charity faces and have implemented a robust policy regarding safe guarding in particular which can be viewed on the charity's website.

AAF Trustees, December 2016