



# Accelerate and Access Foundation

## Trustees' Annual Report, 2017

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### 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 Academies Partnership Programme. The Kent programme involves a group of six academy schools and their independent school partners which currently comprises three: Sevenoaks School, Tonbridge School and Benenden School.

The maintained schools involved in the network are: Folkestone Academy, Marsh Academy, Skinner's Kent Academy, Isle of Sheppey, Knole Academy and the John Wallis Academy.

The programmes are also supported by Fitzwilliam College and Queens' College, Cambridge, and Balliol College, Oxford, who

supply learning mentors for the pupils and host residential visits.

A second programme was added in 2017 through a partnership with United Learning with equal funding from each party. The same programme structure as in Kent has been adopted by UL for students from six of their academies: Totteridge Academy, Hurlingham Academy, Lambeth Academy, Midhurst Rother College, Wye School and Regis School.

Caterham School is the Independent sector partner and hosted the two residential for 18 students that took place during 2017. Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, will also be providing support to United Access in the way that it does for the Kent programme.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAMMES

Overall, the university access programmes are designed to support academically able students with a programme that 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 ongoing 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, coding, maths and science, alongside creative writing, philosophy, 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 programme 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, in addition to expanding its work into the second network of schools, has been to help the Kent programme reach sustainability.

The Foundation's aim is not to **run** individual programmes but rather to **nurture** and **empower** education sector parties to take on responsibility for executing the model.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The programmes have enjoyed a successful year, with the recruitment of its fifth cohort of students, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to date to **64** in Kent and the addition of a further **18** United Learning group students in UL's first cohort.



Most significantly in 2017, **Sevenoaks School** indicated that they would ensure the future of the programme at least to its 10th anniversary by becoming the lead partner and taking on responsibility for running and funding the programme, with in-kind support from other partner schools such as Tonbridge.

The Sevenoaks Foundation raised a total of **£250k** (£50k for each of the five years 2018-23) specifically to fund the Kent programme.

In addition, the AAF also secured approximately **£120k** in funding from the Buffini-Chao foundation, spread evenly over these five years, which will specifically fund the mentoring portion of the university access programme.

Sevenoaks have also committed to growing the programme in order to have greater impact and to benefit more pupils.



*Sevenoaks School, Kent*

**T**he residential elements of the Programmes have continued to take place at Tonbridge and Sevenoaks schools, as well as Fitzwilliam and Queens' Colleges at Cambridge.

Fitzwilliam College and Balliol College, Oxford provide access to the majority of undergraduate mentors who give support to the pupils during and after the residential weeks, but for this first time we have also employed mentors from other universities.

In addition, teachers from a range of schools within both the Kent and UL network are brought in to deliver specific lessons – most volunteer their time and do not accept any payment. The programmes also continue to make use of the expertise of other organisations working in the university access space.

**B**y way of example, **The Brilliant Club, The Access Project, Causeway Education & The Unreasonables** have all delivered bespoke sessions for the programme. In addition, we continue to draw in for both programmes a varied and interesting range of speakers, many of who are from similar backgrounds to the students we are supporting, and all give their time for free and who have given afternoon and evening enrichment sessions to boost aspirations and broaden horizons.

In between residential events the programmes continue to use 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.

Until 2017, the cost of the Brightside Trust platform was met by The Sutton Trust. However, this arrangement ceased in 2017 and the cost, approximately £4k per year is now part of the programme budget. We have gathered many written testimonials from students, parents, teachers and mentors which have been almost universally extremely positive.

## REACH AND IMPACT

**T**he aim of the programmes is twofold. Firstly, to 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. The first cohort received 9 Russell Group offers between them in 2017.

Of the **twelve** students in Class of 2013, **nine** have gone to university (including LSE, Loughborough, Swansea, and Cardiff), one left the programme to become a dancer, one took a gap year and will attend university in 2018 and one has left our network for personal reasons.

Initial offers received by the Class of 2014 are very promising with a number of Russell Group offers.

We also believe that we have had 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. Sevenoaks School hosted a half day seminar on Personal Statements for university advisors and Heads of Sixth Forms from the schools which was very well attended received universally positive feedback.

**A**dditionally, the Deputy Head at Folkstone Academy has started a 'Reach Your Peak' initiative which is a breakfast club for **twenty** Year 7s who the school hopes will ultimately be candidates for the 4-year university access programme. The success of this effort has encouraged other schools in the network to start similar initiatives for Year 7s.

In the medium term, the programmes have 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.



## PUBLIC BENEFIT

**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, 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 at an economic cost to the country.

### CONTEXT

*The twelve Academy schools taking part in the two programmes 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 (in the case of the Kent schools), 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 medium-term aim of the AAF is to work to seed fund and set up a network of programmes around the country, drawing on the resources and expertise developed by the charity, but eventually enabling those programmes to be financially independent and adapted to their local contexts.

The AAF is keen to build on the success of its work in Kent and with United Learning and to replicate the model elsewhere, in other areas of the country and in new networks of schools. A focus for 2018 is to create a smooth transition of programme control to **Sevenoaks School**, and to continue to support the UL cohort.

Unfortunately, United Learning no longer have the financial commitment they once did to their programme. Therefore our plan is to replicate the Kent model in Surrey, with Caterham as the lead Partner school along with other local independent schools, create a local network of academies from which to draw students for the UL-started programme but with funding raised from other sources.

## ONGOING SUPPORT INTO UNIVERSITY

We are currently working on organising a conference for access officers and others within leading UK Universities to showcase various programmes that are running in US **universities to support first generation students when they arrive on campus and throughout their first year.**

We believe that without advocating for specific interventions to support these students at university level, the chance that they might leave their studies without completing them is significant, and the work that we are doing at school level less impactful on social mobility.

The AAF will arrange and bear the cost of bringing experts in this area to the UK from the US to address the conference and act as a resource for universities in the UK.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

The costs of the first five 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. In addition, the Foundation's Trustees have made either very generous contributions or performed very significant services such as financial accounting and advising on safeguarding on a pro bono basis. We have also received significant legal services pro bono.

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 £6,000 per head, excluding the fixed costs of running the programme as a whole. The Charity has no fixed overheads such as an office or administrative staff.

### Reserves and Funding Policy

The charity has a policy of holding enough reserves to cover commitments for currently enrolled students to complete the four-year programme. This will strengthen further with the transition from the Foundation to Sevenoaks School for KAN programme leadership and ownership.



## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The programmes are overseen by an expert trustee group and with input from senior staff in the network of participating schools, as well as a dedicated programme 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 programme manager and in delivery and operational matters.

The current trustee body has been involved in the programmes since its inception, either as Trustees, employees of The Sutton Trust or senior management in partner schools. We also have professionals in the fields of law, education policy and fundraising upon whom we call.

Any prospective trustee has informal discussions with existing trustees and is given the chance to observe a board meeting before appointment.

They 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 safeguarding in particular which can be viewed on the charity's website.

## CONCLUSION

We are delighted with the progress of the programmes so far and the success of our students. We are also very happy to announce the new level of financial security attained thanks to both the Sevenoaks Foundation and one other Educational Foundation.

We are highly optimistic about the prospects for our current and future students and their schools, and in the impact that we are making.

*On behalf of the AAF Trustees  
30 April 2018*