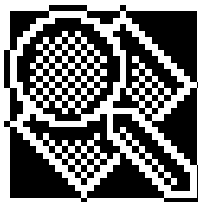




Talking about
problem- solving in
the technical
department

Action on Ethos

This Case Study describes one way in which Kirkland High School and Community College is tackling the problems of demotivation, disaffection and difficulties in learning which can arise in a school when its local community experiences acute economic depression and sustained high levels of unemployment. The account describes just one aspect of the school's endeavours, the after-school club. 25-30 pupils meet once a week and, working with committed volunteer staff, enjoy a mixed work and leisure programme in which pupils' views and efforts contribute greatly to the success of the club. Pupils' interest has been sustained and there are clear signs of enthusiasm, enhanced learning and greater self-esteem.



Kirkland High School & Community College

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1 Background Building Hope and Improving Skills by 'Clubbing'

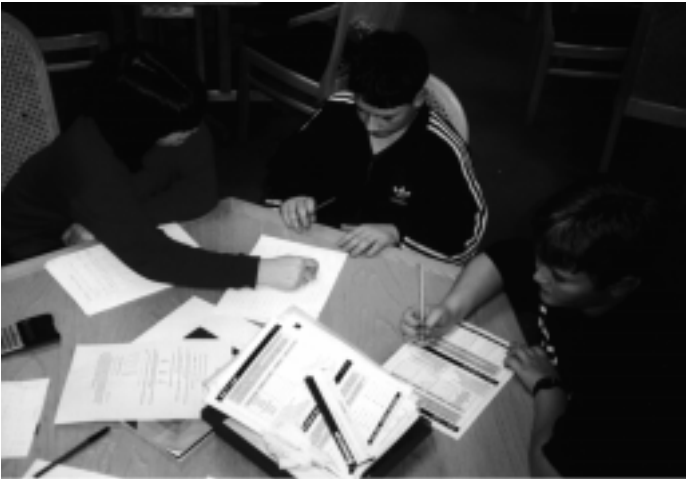
Kirkland High School and Community College is situated in Methil, Fife. The area in the past was an integral part of the Scottish Mining Industry and today that legacy has left derelict mines and large gaps in employment opportunities. In fact, within the school catchment area there are pockets of exceptionally high unemployment with up to 90% of pupils representing a third generation without work.

It is not surprising therefore that many pupils within the school system are disillusioned about the value of an education and all that this entails. Motivation and self worth can be very low and a variety of different school initiatives have been implemented in an attempt to tackle the problems of demotivation and disaffection in a positive way. The initiatives aim to enhance ethos and build achievement and hope for the future.

Working groups have been set up throughout the school to consider many different policies which are integral to the running of the school and to develop positive school ethos. Initiatives include Positive Assertive Management, Recognising Achievement, Effective Teaching and Learning, and Raising Attainment. Other less 'formal' measures are also being developed to improve school dress, punctuality and attendance. A Pupil Council has been set up and so have several Study Clubs. Every effort is being made to encourage the pupils of Kirkland High School and Community College to take a really active part in learning and studying and to take pride in their school. The school motto encapsulates the ethos of this school. 'Kirkland High School and Community College - Learning for Life'. We hope that by using positive methods that we can begin to live up to the motto.



Finishing homework at school can be fun, and help is at hand.



'They get by with a little help from their friends...'

2 Start-up

Our After School Club was set up in 1997, using money awarded by the Prince's Trust Project. A steering group was set up consisting of the Rector, an Assistant Rector and APT Guidance. The basic ideas were discussed in this forum and budget and ordering was all done through this group.

Publicising the work of the group was done through Social Education classes, the daily school bulletin and posters throughout the school.

The staff who volunteered to organise the club met and discussed how best to run the club for the benefit of our youngsters.

3 Beginning with S1

It was decided to run the club weekly for First and Second Year pupils. Because initial numbers indicated that over 100 pupils were interested it was felt that it would be better to run the club for First Year on one week and then for Second Year on the following week. The consensus of opinion was that gradually the club numbers would stabilise and anyone who wanted to come each week could. This is eventually what happened, and the club now runs with a steady 25-30 S1, S2, and S3 pupils.

The evening was to be divided into two sessions. The first 45-minute session was set for each group. A variety of studies were on offer.



Learning about mind-mapping and acquiring better study habits

Adventure games on computers – more problem-solving



Session 1

1. Computing which offers a problem solving approach to computers.
2. Geography/Science project on the local area.
3. Running and managing a tuck shop for the pupils of the After School Club.
4. A reading group and working with CD ROMS in the Flexible Learning Unit with the librarian.
5. Technical Education - problem solving and practical building with Lego, art straws and Computer Aided Design.
6. A study group - any homework or extension exercises to be done with staff support.

A variety of interesting and educational opportunities was provided in order to maintain the pupils' interest and to improve learning.

After the forty-five minute session the groups all met in the senior dining room to have a fifteen-minute break. It is during this time that the pupils can buy juice, crisps, chocolate etc. The group which organised this proved to be one of the most popular. The pupils took a survey of what products were wanted, they then ordered and sold them. They keep a balance sheet of money outgoing and incoming and they keep a balance. The Tuck Shop has to be set up, and tidied up.

Session 2

The second part of the evening encourages the pupils to take part in a variety of leisure pursuits.

Badminton is held in the assembly hall, board games are played, Monopoly, Cluedo, Draughts, Scrabble etc.

The pupils have made friendship bracelets, watched videos, taken part in quizzes and made many art and craft items.

The atmosphere and attitude of the pupils of the club create a pleasant and friendly working environment for both pupils and staff. An air of informality is present and on most Wednesday evenings a member of staff can be found sitting with two or three pupils round a table enjoying a game of Scrabble or Chess together. At other tables you will find a mixture of S1, S2 and S3 pupils enjoying themselves over Draughts or Cluedo.

Case Study 19

Kirkland High School & Community College



Checking out a construction design in the technical department



Big business – the tuckshop management group takes its responsibilities very seriously



For any queries please contact:
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Many of the pupils who attend the After School Club have had, or are having, difficulties in the classroom situation. These pupils are encouraged to attend the club so that they can socialise in a more informal setting. It has been especially encouraging that many of these pupils return regularly to the club.

4 Extending the Membership

After the first year the Second Year pupils wanted to return so the club was extended to include the new S3. Senior pupils help at the club and the younger pupils in particular respond well to this. A further development being planned is to ask GSVQ students (Leisure and Tourism) to run a badminton tournament for the club members.

The main reasons for the success of the club is the variety of subjects on offer, and the enthusiasm of the staff who run the club. The variety of the subjects and working at appropriate levels has encouraged pupils to learn in an informal environment. Pupils are asked to work in a calm manner and to be considerate to each other and to staff at all times. There have been very few times when pupils have had to be reprimanded.

Much is to be gained by allowing young people to mix socially and informally. The second session of the evening is always fun and is very popular with the pupils.

I hope the club will continue to run in years to come. I am regularly stopped in the corridor and asked, "Is the club on tonight?". I feel that the attendance and the enthusiasm of both staff and pupils are positive pointers to a valuable school project which we hope is giving a clear message to pupils about positive value and about the fun associated with learning. In this way we hope our pupils will be better placed to take any opportunities which come to them, and to have the confidence to persevere in the face of disadvantage.

Case Study 19

Kirkland High School & Community College