



January 1998

# **Action**

or

## **Ethos**

## "Reach for the Stars"

This case study outlines one strategy

St. Ninian's High School used to raise standards.

In the aims of the school we highlight the importance of the individual which is in keeping with the Catholic ethos we promote. We aim to encourage all children to achieve as much as they are capable of academically and at the same time to develop as confident, well rounded citizens.



# St. Ninian's High School

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## 1

## **Background**

St. Ninian's High School has a roll of 740 pupils and serves the town of Kirkintilloch and the surrounding area including Lenzie and the villages of Lennoxtown, Milton of Campsie and Twechar.

We achieved "Investors In People" in January 1997. This underlined the importance we place on the contribution of every individual member of staff, pupil and parent to the pursuit of quality. We aim to provide the conditions for continual improvement while respecting the dignity, individuality and worth of every member of our community. We want to motivate pupils by recognising and rewarding their efforts and by encouraging them to value themselves.

In May 1995 an audit of all types of motivators used in classes/departments indicated that there were many different types of reward system operating in the school. At the same time the Discipline Team produced a school code of conduct, a set of simple expectations. All staff expressed a need for a whole school reward system in order to formalise ways of recognising pupils who followed the code.

After investigating different ways of recording information about pupils and after much heart searching it was agreed to run a pilot in S1.

"Reach for the Stars" was born!



### **Pilot Scheme**

The scheme ran in eight week blocks with a mid-block update.

At the end of 4 weeks S1 pupils were given 'appropriate' star points by their teachers for being Caring, Responsible, Positive and Prepared. (These are the headings in our Code of Conduct.)

These were collated for each pupil and class. Points were taken off pupils for recorded bad behaviour.

At the Mid-block Assembly the pupils were given parental letters indicating their Star total together with the Star totals required for Distinction and Merit Awards. The year group average was also included.

The class attaining the highest star average became

The class attaining the highest star average became Class of the Month and held the 'Class of the Month

Notes	
1votes	Shield' donated by local business. Earreceived a small prize.
	After the second 4 weeks the pupils w
	and their final Star totals collated.
	At the end of the Block Assembly, tho targets set for Distinction and Merit re and rewards donated by local busines included vouchers for local shops, T-s tickets, membership of a snooker club Those just missing out on the targets awards.
	Those improving substantially during received Improvement Awards. The
	Shield was again presented.  The assemblies were awards in them did well music, games and prizes were not, the assemblies were low key.
	There were 5 blocks throughout the y the Class of the Year Award.
	<b>Evaluation</b>
	The scheme was met by some initial has been a gradual acceptance that pare effective but staff were concerned amount of work that might be involved returns requested.
	At the end of the year questionnaires staff and pupils. 96% of the staff and felt that Reach for the Stars encourag better. There was a general improver
	Year 2
	There was a general agreement that to be continued. A 'Rewards Team' was
	scheme into S2 and beyond. At the s was made available to allow department rewards for any year group.
	In the light of comments from staff and observations the Rewards Team made streamline the system.
	The points system was simplified. All
	points and they could only lose them.

ach pupil also

vere again assessed

se achieving the eceived their awards sses. These shirts, cinema etc.

received 'near miss'

the second half Class of the Month

selves - if the pupils re in abundance. If

ear culminating in

scepticism. There ositive approaches at first about the d in filling in the

were distributed to 77% of the pupils ed pupils to do ment in behaviour.

the initiative should s set up to take the same time money ents to issue

d their own de some changes to

pupils were given This made the

> Case Study 10 ST. NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL

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returns less time consuming for staff. However, it did raise a very important issue. Had we inadvertently made the whole system negative rather than positive? Certainly in terms of streamlining the work for staff it is helpful but we are still monitoring to see whether this is an acceptable system. It would seem, so far, that the vast majority of pupils still have a positive experience, but it would be most unfortunate, if for some, the emphasis was on losing points. This must be reviewed.

S2 "All Stars" was introduced with the same basic system. An end of block ceremony was held to issue parental letters and to present rewards.

### 1997-1998

This session "Reach for the Stars" operates in S1, "All Stars" in S2 and "Success Makers" in S3. In addition a 'Gold' Reward Letter is available for all pupils. A budget has been allocated to the team to buy rewards. In S3 points are allocated for attendance, punctuality, uniform, homework, bringing equipment and attitude to work. Mid block updates are given and awards are presented at the end of the block ceremony. One sub-group of the Rewards Team manages S1 and S2. Another sub-group manages S3. Each member is responsible for a number of subjects, distributing and collecting class record sheets and each is responsible for collating the totals for a number of classes. In addition each member has a detailed remit covering all areas of preparation for the ceremonies, preparing the parental letters and the rewards. Our ceremonies are very lively occasions with music and games as well as the distribution of rewards. They provide an opportunity for highlighting positive aspects and for encouraging pupils to keep striving for improvement. The Head Teacher and the Assistant Head Teacher present the certificates and prizes.

### General

Although we felt strongly that we wanted to progress into S3, the level at whic the scheme and the reward ceremonies is pitched has had to be considered carefully. As expected the boys in S3 are not doing as well as the girls and the team is looking at ways of motivating the boys.

Finding time for the organisation is a constant problem. Although it has been streamlined, the administration is still a mammoth task for the team. All the data is entered

> Case Study 10 ST. NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL



on a spreadsheet in order to produce the letters for parents and there is a lot of work involved in deciding on the various awards, Distinction, Merit, Near Miss, Improvement etc. as well as in preparing the ceremonies. The members of the team do have to do some chasing up of returns but certainly not as much as they had to do at the beginning.

#### Conclusion

Although we would not claim to have solved every discipline problem, we do feel that "Reach for the Stars" has had a substantial impact on the behaviour of our pupils. We believe that it contributes to the positive atmosphere we are trying to create. Many staff now use a range of strategies to praise and motivate pupils. We still issue punishment exercises, cards etc. but not as many. Positive aspects are highlighted and recognition is given to the vast majority of our pupils who do attend, who do their homework, who do try their best. It is heartening to see the number of departments who are nominating pupils for individual awards, often pupils who would never have received any recognition in the past. The Principal Teachers come along to the ceremonies to present the rewards in person.

The summary of the data is now being used as the basis of all planned one-to-one interviews by guidance staff to ensure that the focus of the interview is on pupil progress and raising achievement.

We are grateful to local businesses for providing many of the most tangible rewards. A few months ago two of our pupils had a helicopter trip and recently two were entertained to dinner in a local hotel!

Our award ceremonies are becoming social occasions not to be missed - our sixth year who help at them demand to know why they never got any of the fun when they were in the Lower School. We have had a large number of visitors from other schools and have appeared in the local press on several occasions.

None of it would be possible without the commitment of our Rewards Team, in particular, the team leader who has taken the original idea and developed it into an amazing scheme which impresses everyone who comes into contact with it. The members of the team, teaching and non-teaching, are a dedicated and enthusiastic group who give a lot of time and thought to the project. They exemplify what St. Ninian's is about, building a community where the contribution of every individual is recognised and valued.

