



Case Study: Working with Schools

BISHOP STOPFORD SCHOOL, KETTERING



INTRODUCTION

Tutor Doctor Cambridge was initially approached by Bishop Stopford School via a Pupil Premium conference in December 2013, which had been attended by a wide range of schools and local authorities. Bishop Stopford School is based in Kettering, Northamptonshire which, although being well outside Tutor Doctor Cambridge's catchment area, was an opportunity that the office was keen to explore. Cambridge was the nearest Tutor Doctor office to the school at the time.

The Pupil Premium grant was a relatively new initiative and provided Tutor Doctor Cambridge an opportunity to explore the viability of the service within a school setting. The Cambridge tutoring business was started by Rob and his wife Lynne in August 2010 and had seen extraordinary levels of growth based on their core business of 1:1 in-home tutoring, and they were keen to see how transferable the service would be when working directly with schools themselves.

BISHOP STOPFORD SCHOOL

Bishop Stopford School is a CofE Voluntary Aided Secondary School, becoming an academy in 2011 and providing education for 1450 students, including 400 in the Sixth Form. With their latest Ofsted visit, the school received "Outstanding" across the board. The inspector's letter quotes him saying that the school has **"extremely positive attitudes to learning. It is because of these positive attitudes and your hard work and determination, as well as because of what your school does, that you achieve such high standards."**

The school has benefitted from having very strong leadership from their Head Teacher, Mrs Margaret Holman who has provided direction and continuity for many years now. The school outwardly states its Christian ethos and values of Faith, Responsibility, Compassion, Truth and Justice, seeking to provide their students with "Excellence In All Things".

Academically, the school is very strong and in 2014 80 percent of students achieved the key requirement of 5 GCSE's A*-C, including English and Maths, which is well beyond the national average of 55%. Academically, the school has a strong focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

The approach to Tutor Doctor was to help support the children on Free School Meals with their learning. This is certainly a relatively small percentage at Bishop Stopford School, with the school being in the lowest quintile for FSM: just 5.7% in 2014 compared to a 28.5% national average. As such, using a professional third party to help deliver the programme was a more appropriate solution than having a dedicated in-house team.

SETTING UP THE PROGRAMME

With all the families that Tutor Doctor works with around Cambridge, the in-home consultation with the student and the parent is a crucial step in gathering all the necessary information, which also reassures the family that they are in very good hands. It was important to conduct something similar for the school, recognising that it may require multiple meetings to do this successfully.

The first step was to outline the service provided in more detail to Mr Wesley Lewis, who was responsible for the school's Pupil Premium. With the school being a 90-minute drive from the Tutor Doctor office, it posed a logistical challenge and a temptation to do things over the phone or via Skype. However, we strongly believe in-person always works best and had a very positive first meeting with Mr Lewis where the Education Consultant confirmed the process in getting things set up, how things would be managed over time, and reviewed the costs. After the meeting, Mr Lewis noted that **“Despite the distance between the central office of Tutor Doctor and Bishop Stopford School, I was reassured that our needs, with regards to tuition, could be met”**.

The following week, the Education Consultant returned to Bishop Stopford and individually met with a stream of students who had been recommended to the programme. Each student spoke with the Education Consultant one-on-one for about 15 minutes each. This helped us pull together a summary brief on each student, which was then circulated to the tutors who were to be assigned to the programme.

GETTING STARTED

The plan was to keep the total number of tutors we were using to a minimum, enabling them to get to know the school better and for logistical efficiency. We needed tutors for Maths, English, French and Science and we were able to assign one tutor for each subject.

Mr Lewis had also provided contact details for the children's parents/guardians so that the Tutor Doctor Cambridge office could get in touch with them directly. With the parents, we reconfirmed the plan and secured their support to encourage the student to really take advantage of this opportunity.

The tutors for Tutor Doctor all must adhere to our stated policy for references and DBS checks. Once all the necessary processes were completed and the various times and locations were confirmed, just a few weeks after the first meeting, we commenced with the programme in March 2014.



THE ONGOING FIRST PROGRAMME

In the Spring term of 2014, we worked with 17 students from Bishop Stopford. There were nine students for Maths, two for French, three for Science, and three for English. The students were mainly Year 11 with a few Year 10's. The focus was largely filling in learning gaps and getting students exam-ready for their GCSEs in Summer 2014. The sessions took place at school and were mainly individual sessions, although there were a few small groups for Maths.

The school had provided us with important background information about the students, including school reports and predicted grades. A key part of our regular service is to produce session reports that go back to the parents after each session. In this case, for the schools, we sent monthly summaries to Mr Lewis, with three or four lines from the tutor from each session which explained how things had gone and any specific points that would be noteworthy for the school and for the subject teacher.

Whenever we were advised by tutors of any issues with attendance or application, inevitably the shape of the programme evolved a little with some students leaving the programme and being replaced by others.

Looking back on the first year working with Tutor Doctor, Mr Lewis stated:

“Tutor Doctor provide good quality tutors and tuition sessions which enabled students to progress significantly. Often it is the one-to-one experience that is needed to push a student in the right direction. The organisation of the tutors and their commitment never faltered, as well as their patience and reassurance when some students were reluctant of extra help. We have seen a significant improvement of GCSE results as an impact of Tutor Doctor’s involvement at our school.”

CONTINUING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BISHOP STOPFORD AND TUTOR DOCTOR

Tutor Doctor was delighted to be invited back to provide further tuition support for following academic years and the programme continued to evolve. In our second year, we carried out more tutoring work outside of school and in the family home. We were able to combine students working together when necessary, and also worked with some students at a local library. We further trialled group work at school for Maths, which had been outlined by Mr Lewis to have been a “very successful” programme. Most of the students had made “very clear progress” as a result of the tuition received from Tutor Doctor. In later years, Tutor Doctor provided support for daily after-school groups as well as the 1:1 work, similar to previous years for the Year 10’s and 11’s.

IN SUMMARY

We are very grateful to Bishop Stopford School for entrusting us with this programme over the past few years.

Whilst, purely due to the distances involved between Cambridge and Kettering, a logistically challenging project, the programme has been successful and a strong partnership has formed. The Tutor Doctor Cambridge business continues to grow, and each year we are able to learn and adjust things to better meet the demands of our clients, whether that is with private families or with schools.

“Every year we explore new options with regard to tuition. The original plan was for just one-to-one tuition, which then evolved into group sessions; some with same ability students but others without. This year we hope to work together on an even bigger project that sees after school sessions provided for up to 10 students at a time. With the previous good track record of Tutor Doctor and their delivery of all that has been asked, I have no doubt this will succeed and as a result, the students will benefit significantly.”

– MR LEWIS