



WHAT WORKS? Analysis of The Challenge Model used at The Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Views from the students

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Why do this research?



- The RFHCS has had three successful years. Success defined by the cohort of students attending at higher rates, students achieving at least one grade of progress, 95% of children are still in post 16 study after leaving the school, and after one term, 60% are engaged in level three courses in 2018/19.
- The GCSE programme cohort may be moving site from within the hospital to another building.
- The RFHCS is also likely to have an increased cohort of young people.

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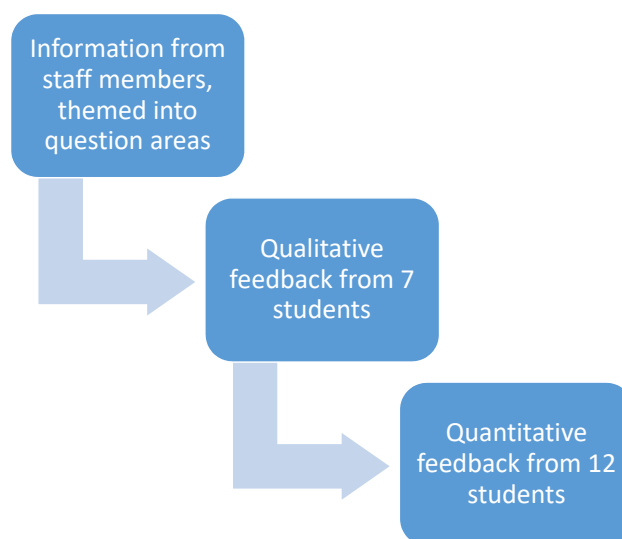
What did we want to find out?

Question 1: What are the elements that support success in the RFHCS?

Question 2: What are the threats to moving building?

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The structure of the analysis process



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Use three words to describe the RFHCS



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What is it about this school that you think is positive?

Everyone is understanding and caring to others despite overcoming their own challenges

They are more open minded when it comes to the subject of mental health and give support for everyone's individual needs.

That everyone is friendly and the staff are really kind and everyone is nice

A small environment that adapts to you're individual needs which in turn makes you feel safe. You learn how to keep a healthy school routine

The staff are really supportive and understanding.

I think the amount of support given by the staff is really positive and effective.

What is so positive about this school is the fact that everyone creates a friendly and positive environment.

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What analysis method was used?

- Data were analysed so that each statement was given a possible score out of a maximum 100. The statements could then be ranked in order to reflect the most useful to the majority of students. Q-sorting methodology was used as a model for the approach.



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The results

- The results revealed areas and aspects of the school that the students deemed as the most helpful.



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There is an expectation that there is no bullying

- This is significant because, much of the research indicates that bullying is an often-cited factor for 'pushing' young people away from school (Emmerson et al. 2004, Kearney et al. 2006, meta-analysis).

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Timeouts are allowed when needed

- There is likely a balance between supporting the students to manage emotions independently and allowing them some time away from group settings when it is needed.

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I know there are adults I can talk to when I need

- There is a lot of research to evidence this but it is perhaps summarised most succinctly by Paul Greenhalgh in his book Emotional Growth and Learning:

The factors affecting the capacity for learning are related to the capacity for relationship. In order to enable such children to improve learning, one has to pay particular attention to processes of relationship.



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Adults encourage positive friendships and relationships

- Within the research relating to the reasons for young people finding schools difficult to manage and feeling anxiety towards being there, often centering on difficulties in managing social interactions and the social aspects of school. Perhaps this might be related to social anxiety.



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We are treated like adults with responsibilities

- This aspect is something arguably unique about the RFHCS. The Challenge Model; a positive challenge to young people, which aims to result in increased attendance, punctuality and engagement in school for students.
- This links with the accepted fact that students presenting with EBSR often have a history of 'escaping' or 'avoiding' anxiety-provoking situations, which serves to reinforce negative thoughts about school and increasing feelings of anxiety. Being assertive and sensitively challenging students to develop strategies to manage their feelings of anxiety has been shown to be an effective strategy for intervention (Kearney and Bensaheb, 2006). This statement also provides insight into the students' thoughts about their capacity as young adults to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour.

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Adults focus on individual progress not our academic results

- Focusing on effort and the strategies used to progress towards their goals rather than on the goal/ outcome itself is likely to encourage a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset (Dweck). Dweck and her colleagues describe this as 'process praise', which shows students that they can develop their abilities and it suggests how this can be done. Research by Dweck indicates that process praise increases students likelihood of persisting when tasks become challenging. Perhaps meaningful and individualised process praise reduces the anxiety around academic pressures.

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Exam times are calmer than in other schools

- It is well evidenced that exam times provoke feelings of anxiety in students. For students who already experience strong feelings of anxiety, these times can be particularly challenging. The support put in place by the RFHCS during these times, which includes early preparation and personalised approaches, is evidently valued by the students.



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Adults know what will help me in my exams

- It is interesting that two statements linked to exams are rated within the top five for students. It is clear that students value the carefully planned and calm approach to exam times and this is important to maintain going forward.

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Smaller class sizes

- One of the significant factors to young people feeling unable to attend school is negotiating the multi-faceted aspects of the school system (Emmerson et al. 2004, Kearney et al. 2006, meta-analysis). Smaller class sizes are likely to increase feelings of safety and this is something that is valued by the students in this analysis.

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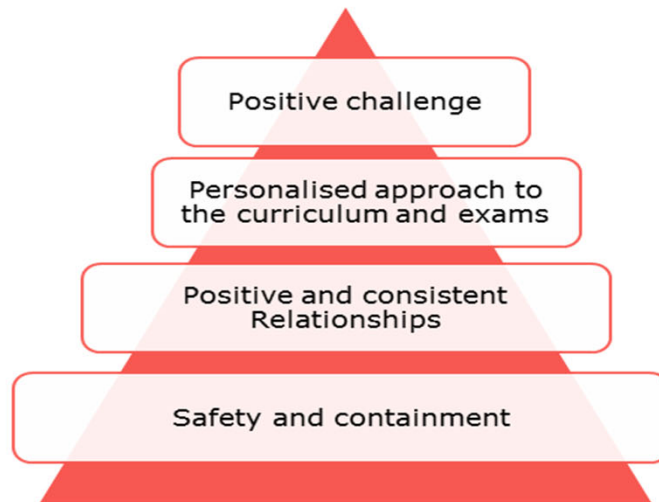
Lessons are interesting

- The motivation to learn and feel engaged within lessons is an important aspect to education. Students rated this statement as the fifth most important aspect to school. It makes sense, that if students are motivated to learn, they will feel more engaged in the process and achieve their potential.



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What does this tell us?



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Drawing by a student at the RFHCS

Thank you for listening!
Any questions...

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