

Marlowe Academy

Redefining a school's place in the local community

Overview

The Marlowe Academy has transformed the aspirations of its students by creating an inspiring learning environment, reinventing the school day and opening up its facilities to the community.

The Marlowe Academy, a secondary school and sixth form with a dual specialism in performing arts and business enterprise, opened in 2005 as a replacement for the failing Ramsgate School. Located in one of the most socially and economically deprived wards in Kent, the school faced a number of major challenges including an extremely low level of good GCSE passes, poor attendance and high staff turnover.

Marlowe Academy has pioneered the concept of an extended day, opening up its facilities to the community from 6.30am to 10.00pm seven days a week. Students and staff can attend a breakfast club from 7.30am and the school day finishes at 5.00pm, giving students a safe place to be until their parents have finished work. The compulsory two-hour long study sessions which are a part of the extended school day enable students to go home having already finished their homework.

The school's modern, open-plan building includes a theatre, which is used for assemblies and events as well as performances of plays and dance productions. At the heart of the building is a café where staff and students have breaks and eat lunch together.

In 2008, 52 per cent of Marlowe Academy students achieved five good GCSEs and 19 students went on to higher education. The 2007 Ofsted report on the school commented, "the academy is successfully raising students' aspiration and has demonstrated that social circumstances are not an excuse for low ambition."

Summary

Marlowe Academy's extended school day runs from 6.30am to 5.00pm

In 2008, 52% of students gained at least five A*-C grade GCSEs

19 pupils went on to university courses in 2008

In two years, enrolment increased by 31% and staff numbers rose by 40%

Background

Tackling a failing school

Ofsted assessments had identified Ramsgate School as one of the poorest-performing schools in the country. In 2004, just 4 per cent of students achieved five GCSE passes, in comparison to a national average of around 50 per cent. A large number of students had been excluded from other schools and the school was also experiencing a high level of staff turnover, including four head teachers in five years. The local community saw the school as full of problems, with rude and obnoxious students. Very few parents wanted to send their children to the school.

Creating an academy

Ramsgate School closed in 2005 and The Marlowe Academy was created in September of that year. Marlowe Academy was initially located in the Ramsgate School building, before moving into new-build premises in 2006. Funding for the academy came from Kent County Council and local businessman Roger de Haan, former chairman of the Saga group of companies.

Marlowe Academy opened with a new principal and leadership team who knew that they'd need to make radical changes and win the support of the community in order to turn the school around. The school's catchment area takes in some of the most socially and economically deprived areas in Kent, with the proportion of students eligible for free school meals well above average. More than half of the school's students have a learning difficulty or disability, with around three per cent having a statement of special educational need.

The Impact

Reinventing the school day

Daily study sessions, supervised by learning mentors, form part of the extended school day. Running the sessions costs the school around £200 per child per year. "Our students have responded really well to the study sessions – they like being able to finish the school day having already completed their homework," explains Ian Johnson, Principal of The Marlowe Academy. "The extra two hours at school also gives working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and not 'roaming the streets'."

The open plan layout of the school fosters respect and understanding amongst students, teachers and the community groups that use the building. The 2007 Ofsted report on the school stated, "The quality of the environment and the excellently planned use of space combine to provide the students with many opportunities in the day to socialise and converse with the staff in a businesslike, yet friendly, manner."

Raising aspirations

Strong leadership and radical innovation has transformed the academic performance and behaviour of the school's students. Between 2006 and 2008, the number of students achieving at least five ASTAR-C passes at GCSE level rose by 35 per cent. In addition, attendance improved by 2 per cent and exclusions were down 23 per cent. Having established a new sixth form in 2005, the first group of students from the school went on to higher education in 2007. In 2008, 19 students took up university places and around 40 students are expected to go on to university in 2009

Good Practice

Marlowe Academy consulted staff, students and their families about the plans for an extended school day, and also sought the views of the local community. Through the consultation exercise, the school was able to clearly communicate the benefits that an extended school day would bring to each of these audiences and achieve widespread support for their plans.

Students complete their homework during the school day, at study sessions where they have access to teaching support, ICT facilities and other learning resources. When students finish school at 5.00pm, they are free to spend time with family and friends without the pressure of further study. Every student also takes part in two hours of extra-curricular enrichment each week. Enrichment activities can be run by teachers or support staff and have covered topics ranging from guitar-playing to forensic science.

The Marlowe Academy building has become an important part of the community. Its facilities, which include a theatre, meeting rooms and an adult education classroom, are regularly used by local organisations. The local public library is based at the Marlowe Academy and special events such as an annual Veterans Day help students to engage with the wider community.

The school has formed partnerships with a wide range of organisations, including Thanet Stage School, Charlton Athletic Football Club, East Kent Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Canterbury Christ Church University and the Royal Ballet. Partner organisations have been involved in delivering enrichment activities.

Reference

Contact details

Amanda Mulvihill
Administration & Community Manager
Tel: 01843 593326
Email: <mailto:amanda.mulvihill@marloweacademy.co.uk>

The Marlowe Academy
Stirling Way
Ramsgate
Kent
CT12 6NB

External links

<http://www.marloweacademy.co.uk/>

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