

# Teaching pupils who experience barriers to engagement.

A science focussed project exploring how the PEP toolkit can support the teaching of pupils with barriers to engagement with learning.

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## **Introduction**

Over the past five years the Hampshire Leading Science Teacher group has been developing a model of planning and teaching that seeks to ensure every pupil learns what is essential to keep up, every lesson. This model has become known as Precise Learning. Whilst this model is proving to be a valuable tool in ensuring that pupils who may fall behind are able to keep up it does not effectively address the needs of pupils whose barriers to engagement are behavioural and emotional rather than knowledge or skills based.

Between September 2015 and July 2016 the Hampshire Leading Science Teachers investigated whether the Personal Education Plan (PEP) toolkit is a useful tool in planning for the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural barriers to engagement. The original purpose of the PEP toolkit was to support schools in planning to meet the needs of looked after children, however it is clear that many other pupils have similar needs.

## **The science project**

The original aim was to produce a matrix describing typical scenarios and setting in science lessons that could trigger negative emotional responses from pupils with specific need and offer tried strategies to alleviate the problem. Very quickly it became clear this would not be possible, because people, and especially these pupils, are far more complex than that. What worked on one day did not necessarily work the next. It was also difficult to ascribe any progress benefits directly to actions taken arising from the use of the PEP toolkit. For example, the analysis of the personal needs of these pupils and the time and effort put in to seeking to address them resulted in better relationships between the teachers and the pupils they were seeking to help in every case. As Hattie found (Visible Learning) positive relationships have a significant impact on pupil achievement.

Many of the group reached difficult personal conclusions, that working with pupils with significant barriers to engagement is slow and piecemeal and what we do in a science lesson will not solve these pupils problems. We realised that what we were seeking was for pupils to engage in the learning of more lessons than they otherwise would have done and through better engagement make better progress than they otherwise would have.

It was felt that working as part of a network was important for success. Not only did it provide regular opportunities to share ideas and reflect but involved an element of accountability. Knowing that progress had to be shared formally every couple of months made people less likely to forget and give up when times got tough.

The group felt strongly that using the PEP toolkit in a rigorous way was an extremely valuable tool and every member of the group intends to continue using it in their day-to-day work. They were asked to try and explain why they would continue to use it. Their responses largely fell into two categories those that described how they changed as professionals and those that described the toolkit as a practical tool. A selection of their responses is shown below.

Just by using it in its simplest form, it made me focus on the psychology behind exhibited behaviors. I invested time, which deepened my knowledge of the pupil, their situation and specific needs. This changed my patience, empathy and emotion towards them. This made my approach to lessons and their often-unstable emotional situation more effective than it had been before.

It has helped me remember why some pupils behaved in certain ways and allowed me to respond more appropriately and constructively when problems arose.

**Focus on the pupils needs more than respond to their behaviour.**

It made me more interactive reactive to their behavior and it enabled me have a more personal investment in the teacher-pupil relationship. I was more focused on reading their mood / emotional state as they came in and able to respond to it in a better way to try and keep them calm or confident that they could work.

It gives me a deeper understanding of the complex psychological needs of my students. For example, knowing there was an issue with self-regulation and sense of self-made me adjust my language, stance, eye contact and body language so that my student was able to connect with me through my modeling of appropriate behavior.

Although it cannot be treated like a flow chart for the diagnosis and treatment of students with barriers to engagement, it is an excellent starting point. It has become clear that the needs of each child change over time and it may be necessary to redo the assessment multiple times.

It gives me a structured way to use the behaviors of a student to identify the general area or areas of development that they find particularly difficult, i.e. to move from symptom to possible cause. The PEP toolkit then gives me strategies to use in the classroom that might help develop these areas.

**A practical tool**

It gives me a quick and easy source of information that allows me to identify the need and strategies I can use with the more vulnerable pupils in my classroom.

Whilst it wasn't a watertight solution to many of the barriers faced when teaching them it gave me several ways to get around it.

It takes some of the guesswork out of working. The analysis allows you to rule out strategies that you might have assumed would work. It is not magic but it means you are more likely to have a positive impact.

It has enabled me to ask more informed and pertinent questions about vulnerable children when speaking to the SENCO and other teachers

It is worth noting that the leading teachers invested a lot of time and energy in the project, but they were clear that these efforts did not just benefit the pupil or pupils they were focussing on. It changed their own attitudes to many pupils and the improved engagement of their target pupils improved the learning environment of the whole class.

## The student (referred to as Z)

### **Brief factual description of student**

Z is a Year 11 Student in mixed ability Additional Science Group. Throughout year 10 she had 82% attendance. Her poor attendance was primarily due to unauthorised family holidays but also sickness. She has no IEP and is not classed as Pupil Premium.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

From the PEP Toolkit analysis I identified Executive functioning and locus of control as initial area to address. Suggested approaches were to encourage metacognitive thinking, aid with transition points in the lesson, helping to recognise the strategies that lead to success and seating at front of class. Subsequent review of the toolkit after several interventions still led to the same area to address – executive functioning and locus of control.

### **Other information.**

Throughout years 9 and 10 she was increasingly unfocused and regularly disrupted in class, becoming confrontational when challenged. In many subjects, including science, she completed very little work independently, backing away from even the most trivial task. Her target for Additional Science was a C grade but her exam and test scores were consistently E grade or lower. Out of class, she socialised with a “difficult” gang and regularly found herself in conflict with staff.

Beyond the science class, she had had no interventions beyond tutor mentoring. Her head of year reported that she had great difficulties with perseverance, so that whilst targets were set with her and she might agree with targets in principle she found it very difficult to achieve them. When she was on report it took her a whole term to achieve one week with no 3s to come off report. This was with very frequent detentions in which Z was usually the first to admit where she'd gone wrong. Z exhibited a distinct lack of motivation in all subjects. She had an unremarkable start in year 7 and for some reason did not get awards as the other students did. Her head of year felt that this lack of recognition might have triggered some of her behaviour that she reacts well to consistent discipline and can be quite positive about learning on a one to one level. She felt that she benefited from praise and building on relationships with teachers over time.

Observing Z in the only subject (mathematics) in which she was doing well, I saw that working in silence had a big impact, and looking at the PEP toolkit suggested that having a zone of quiet around her was helping her self-control.

At home, she lives with both parents, although her father works away in the week. Her mother was very worried about Z's general behaviour. She wants to get into the local college on a sports scholarship. She is a strong sportswoman but has very negative mood swings when criticised by coaches.

## Strategies tried and their impact

Below is a summary of some of the strategies that I employed. Bold typeface indicates strategy from the toolkit.

- Try to help **encourage metacognitive thinking** with the student. I did this by meeting with her before each lesson, identifying with her the key thing in each lesson that she would need to be doing to lead to success. She then had a log to record how successful she felt she was with this. In the 1-1 meetings Z indicated that this approach would be helpful to her, and for the first couple of sessions it did help – not unfortunately throughout the lesson but it did when reminded by me during the lesson. After a few sessions however the approach seemed to be losing effectiveness. I think that Z initially found the attention positive but then became bored of the approach. It did though help her to recognize strategies that she used that lead to success – I continued to discuss these with her throughout the year and she was able to list strategies that she had used at the end of lessons. Over time this seemed to have a significant impact on his resilience.
- **Welcome with hello as comes in.** This made a big difference (why didn't I do it before?). Specifically, my initial interaction with Z became a positive one and perhaps as a consequence I started to see her arrive on time more often and with a more positive attitude
- **Identify which parts of the lesson could be troublesome and why** – transitions between tasks/activities are particularly difficult for Z so I adopted the strategy below
  - **Provide regular reassurance to ease transitions.** I chunked tasks and with Z decided appropriate timings. Z became more cooperative and completed more in his books. I provided the student with a stopwatch and **structured tasks** (for example word searches) to complete if the task was completed before time. This significantly reduced the times in which Z out of her seat and distracted others in the class. The impact of this did drop off over time
- **Establish routines for beginning and end of lesson.** Adopted “Famous five and last three policy” – first 5 into class leave the lesson first, last three leave last. This made a continued and approving difference to the student's punctuality – she even started arriving separately from his “gang”.
- **Sit near the front to improve focus – I used a** new seating plan for the class and sat Z at front of class not back, and by herself. I discussed the reason for this with the student before the lesson – she happily agreed (previously, I would have expected argument). She stayed in this position for the rest of the year, and was able to verbalise that it did help his focus. Following the observations in mathematics, we built in times of silent working. These did result in productive effort.
- **Get to talk about thinking and learning – student was part of an** ISA intervention group, running 2 evenings after school for 3 hours each session. This gave the immediacy of a deadline and the opportunity to discuss metacognitive strategies. The student went from an E grade to A grade in her repeat ISA (highest improvement of the group of 7) and this success seemed to trigger a **shift in how she perceived her performance** and a recognition of **what is meant by productive effort**, with significant change in attitude and motivation.
- **Praise and reinforcement** all of the strategies above really served to give the student more confidence in his abilities and worth, and to understand what she needed to do to be successful.

Over the year, I saw a significant improvement in her attitude, behaviour and motivation. She came of her own initiative to collect extra work and it became evident that she was revising at home. Her final assessments suggest that she may well achieve his target C grade in the GCSE.

**Isabelle Parkes: The Arnewood School, New Milton.**

## The student (referred to as Joe)

### **Brief factual description of student**

Joe seemed happy in year 7, 8 and 9 and was often chatty with staff and other pupils. He was not a high flyer and never really pushed himself. At the beginning of year 10, he became more withdrawn. He seemed sleepy and uncommunicative at the start of every lesson and appeared to have no interest in any of the content we were learning. When challenged about this, he became sulky at best, argumentative at worst. He was making no progress and was, according to reported grades, seen to be regressing. He is a Pupil Premium pupil.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

The PEP analysis showed clearly that Joe was having difficulties with motivation and locus of control. He needed to identify the relationship between his own effort and his own success and feel in control of the process. Looking through feedback from myself and other teachers, Joe was not getting many direct comments on his effort levels and his green pen responses were limited. When observed in lessons where teachers challenged his lack of effort, he would invariably blame others for distracting him.

### **Other information.**

When speaking to other staff, they did not have a lot of information about Joe. There are many pupils in the school with more pressing needs and he seemed to have escaped the attention of other teachers. When speaking to Joe directly, particularly regarding the marking policy (red for teachers, green for pupil responses), it transpired that Joe is red-green colour-blind. This was causing him to experience repeated frustration whenever he was given feedback as he could not clearly see the difference between his own work and the teacher's writing.

### **Strategies tried and their impact**

The PEP toolkit suggests the following for pupils with motivation and locus of control issues (all linked to “Attribution feedback”):

- Teach the pupil what “effort” actually means
- Take the magic out of success
- Show that ability can be developed through practice
- Get peers to explain skills and strategies used in solving tasks
- Praise effort and link it to the success achieved
- Help pupil identify how they are responsible for success
- Help pupil notice the difference between productive and non-productive effort
- Show pupil how to compare performance to their own previous performance, not the performance of others

To begin with, I spoke to Joe about how he felt about his own performance in school, in general and specifically in Science. He used the phrase “I don’t see the point in…” quite often in our discussion. It came across that he had low self-esteem when it came to his ability in academic subjects. It also seemed that he rarely got any positive comments from teachers, either verbally or in his book. When he *did* get positive comments, he did not assimilate them; he seemed only to take notice of comments/ questions that required him to “do more” and felt that this meant he was not good enough.

I also found out that he was really excited about the new Star Wars film. He became very animated (unlike his usual behaviour in lessons) when talking about this.

It became clear to me that in order for me to help Joe link his own effort and control to his own successes and failures, I would first need to get him to really read/ hear every piece of feedback he was given in my lessons.

I started with the written comments. This was because it gave both Joe and me time to consider what would be conveyed to each other.

My first step was to get Joe to actually read every comment and be forced to take in both positive and “negative” feedback. I decided to play on his love of Star Wars and his sense of humour.

I highlighted my feedback in his book so he could see it more easily. I wrote a terrible joke in his book each time I marked it (e.g. After marking some work on “Reflection” in physics: “I’d like to have a job cleaning mirrors; it’s something I can really see myself doing”). I corrected spelling errors with pictures to help him remember (e.g. “which” and “witch”- I drew a picture of a witch and labelled it). I bought Chewbacca stickers and stuck them in his book with speech bubbles saying “Eaaargh!\*” and “translated” from Wookie below with my actual marking comment (e.g. \*I’m proud of you for completing all of the work).

The first time Joe got his book back with these new, personalised comments, he seemed thrilled. He showed off his book to other members of the class. He even wrote back in green pen to answer the questions I had asked him to extend his work. He was not yet linking his success to his effort, but he was starting to care about his book and actually read what I had written to make sure he hadn’t missed a joke or picture. He was more energetic and smiled more when I said “I’ve marked your books” at the start of a lesson.

My next step was to change the way I gave feedback so that I made links between Joe’s effort and his success. This would begin to hand over the control of the success to Joe. I had to do this in such a way that he was not given an opportunity

to blame others and had to consider what *he* had done to get to the level of success he had achieved.

This was more difficult. Even though I used comments as suggested by the PEP toolkit (e.g. “You did really well this lesson because you listened to the instructions and included 2 new key words”), I didn’t see a lot of change in Joe’s attitude and behaviour. I thought this might have been because in writing, the comments sounded a bit forced and unnatural. I tried switching things around and writing comments such as “Why do you think you did well this lesson?” and “Why didn’t you get the work completed this lesson?”, but Joe was not engaging with this in a very meaningful way. He wrote comments back, such as “because it was easy” or “because it was hard”, rather than commenting on his own level of effort.

By this stage, Joe was happier in Science lessons and his progress was better, so I moved on to tackle another difficult pupil. However, on reflection, there was a lot more I could have done had I revisited the PEP toolkit at this stage and reminded myself of the strategies and underlying issues for pupils with lack of motivation and locus of control.

Moving forward, I should actually teach Joe what “effort” means. Before that happens, I will need to work out exactly what it means myself! “Effort” is a word used a lot in schools, but perhaps the importance of it is not always understood. In particular, I need to get Joe (and other pupils and teachers) to break the mind-set that our success is relative to others and not our own prior achievement. There is also a link here to Carol Dweck’s “Growth Mindsets” and the idea that ability is not a fixed quantity, but something that can be developed with practice, learning and feedback.

The main issue I had with using the PEP toolkit this year was that once a pupil had stopped being obviously problematic in the classroom, I automatically reduced my intervention without checking that all of the child’s needs had been met. I also failed to share good practice with other teachers to ensure that the pupil’s needs were met across the school. When using the PEP toolkit in future, I will:

- Identify the problems a pupil has
- Complete initial PEP analysis
- Specify the actions I will take and record them
- Carry out the actions
- Measure and record the success of these actions
- Perform a follow up PEP analysis to see if issues have been fully addressed
- Specify any further actions required and share successful strategies with other teachers
- Continue this process until all of the pupil’s needs are met

**Grace Plant: The Connaught School, Aldershot**



## The student

### **Brief factual description of student**

Year 11, chosen as she appeared to be on an emotional roller-coaster with home and social life. This frequently had a detrimental impact on her progress; the lessons she attended and I was spending large amounts of time dealing with incidents or emotional outbursts.

Info from SIMS as of late Oct 2015: 4 interventions & behaviour points for smoking and truancy. Attendance 96.9%, 'lates' = 15. No SEN recorded but is pupil premium. Achievement points 30 - mainly in Media. Underachieving in most subjects.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

Scores highly in most areas but particularly in self-regulation, motivation & locus of control and sense of self. Initially overwhelmed by the list of suggestions I went with just a few to try out that I thought would be the easiest to implement.

Structure, positivity, consistency & routine, an empathetic approach and familiarity all came through as a priority – you think these are built in to lessons already but as I found out her background I realised they were not even close to the level needed.

I made myself have a real emphasis on these things; starters of 5 low stakes testing questions **every** lesson, **Always** saying something positive to her as she came through the door (even 10 mins late 'causing a fuss'), **Always** making myself stop and think that I **have** to speak to her / approach things differently and **calmly**. These help take the threat out of coming to a lesson and provide routine.

Listening and **sitting down** next to her and **working with her** using phrases like 'what do you think about that?' or, 'talk me through how you've got on so far?'. When she was off task I would have previously just tried to direct her back. Instead I sat and listened to what she was talking about – her diet, giving up smoking etc, I gave her a small amount of my time, showed an interest and then came back to the work to see where she was at and was she ok with what to do next. This showed that I care about her and took the threat out of the work if it was challenging.

Celebrating her success in an understated way, using her as a point of help for others, showing faith in her by putting her on a higher tier table – both aimed at raising her self-esteem.

Knowing more of the supporting psychology changed my patience, empathy and emotion towards her. Having some sort of conversation when she came through the door was really important. It helped me to gauge her mood and therefore gave me an idea of where she was at and how much support / time she might need during the lesson.

### **Other information.**

The information I found most powerful came from talking to the PSM (pastoral support) and observing the student in another lesson.

The student has a difficult home life. She lives with dad & they are not well off. She has younger siblings who live with mum. They have a different father. The student has suggested that mum isn't always a responsible parent and that she is concerned about the welfare of her siblings. So much so that she has had cause to involve the police. This causes a big rift between student and her mum. Dad is supportive of student and of school but impact varies as student is quite headstrong.

Observing her in another lesson (a chosen option) was eye-opening. The setting was controlled assessment so work was independent. Initially coping well, she was quiet, calm and focussed. I slowly watched the frustration due to absence and consequent gaps in knowledge and preparation bubble up. She became fidgety, easily distracted even when put back on track, and was beginning to try and distract others. They didn't respond so she had no one to bounce off, she was frustrated and disappointed in herself that she was struggling.

I kept a diary of actions and impacts throughout the project to help me reflect objectively

Date	Action	Evidence if impact / comments	Next steps
Jan '16	Student has been suspended or in internal this week – smoking / truanting with others		Read her mood on return
11/1	Sit with and take time to bring up to speed on ISA – so doesn't feel as lost (missed 3 prep lessons)	Checked in with her during and after lesson – was loud at beginning of lesson but calmer towards end	Check in with how she feels at the beginning of next lesson
12/1	Paired with another student for prac – checked in before start of this to 'rehearse' the process - confidence	She ended up setting up extra agar plates for the group. Quietly on task the whole time. ☺	Keep 'checking in' TLC
15/1	In response to loudly protesting 'can I go to the toilet?' – I walked over & replied, 'not yet, that's really a lunch time activity but let's get some case study work done and ask me again in 10 minutes'	The comments stopped and she worked, asked again quietly 15 mins later.	Speaking quietly to her and explaining things fairly and clearly seemed to work – will try again Exam next – reassurance needed
19/1	Exam for ISA – quick rehearsal beforehand – specifically asked her a question.	Started confidently – gradually lost it, didn't complete the last 2 questions – independent work so couldn't help further ☹	Rebuild confidence
Absent for a week			
1/2	Sat on table with higher tier girls. Clearly very upset and tearful – gave timeout when crying with a time limit – bit of a discussion outside.	Came back in after discussion. Appreciated the TLC, chat and tissues.	Check in at start of next lesson
2/2	Calmer, checked knew how to start a task. Sat next to when going through task – also talked about how her diet was going and what meals she could make and eat this week.	Settled quickly. Worked throughout, on task most of time.	
4/2	Checked in when she started wandering – met her half way across room and guided her to sit down by asking her how diet was. Repeated a few times, less effective as went on	Unsettled – not much work done but not rude or impolite	Firm but short consequence given worked well toward the end rather than a nicey nicey approach – she needs to know where the line is
9/2	Played kahoot as part of lesson – she was very quiet, like she didn't want to be shown up even though you don't see who's who.		
11/2	Gave her a higher tier past paper as a confidence boost to work through – just starting with bugging the questions – once bugged she can ask for help if needed. – take threat out of work		
22/2	Noticed that she is copying a fair		Sit with and get her to talk

	amount from the two other students – not sure how to reduce this yet.		through how she reads the question and creates an answer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since end of feb – seems more settled. Has parted company with boyfriend. In class discussion about higher / foundation we agreed to review at end March – feels lost on higher but wants to do it. Wants to do mechanics course at college / apprenticeship.</li> <li>• Given revision aids to use as self-testing tool.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April – practice papers – adamant she wants to do higher. I see her focus increasing but still looking at others for answers or checking – encouraging it to be checking what she thinks is similar to their answers and that they might not always be right.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given target date to revise for a chem paper and do it on own to see how she gets on and then we can discuss and make a decision about H/F</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She did not attend school (unauthorised) when paper was due to be taken.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion that the deadline had arrived and that she should be entered for F – explosion! Fallout was swearing and huge outburst. Maybe a different approach from me would have gone down better. Pick up pieces next time when dust settled.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and review from both parties. Proof she has been working – entered for H tier. Calmer end to revision lessons just before exams.</li> </ul>		

### **Summary**

The strategies I chose to focus on gave us a much calmer working environment over time, but weren't always successful. When she did get it wrong, I would wait for a calmer moment and then quietly explain why I didn't appreciate the choice of behaviour and suggest an alternative. My language was careful to take anything personal out of it. I also didn't get it right all of the time and there were lessons where I forgot to implement the specific approaches and it did have a negative effect / response.

Just by using it in its simplest form, the PEP made me focus on the psychology behind exhibited behaviours. However, the PEP isn't a stand-alone, but the back bone of a general overarching approach. It gave me specific strategies that I might apply in response to the particular set of needs of that student. The sharing of information about a challenging student was also a vital part in this process.

I invested time, it deepened my knowledge of the pupil, their situation and specific needs. Knowing the detail of the supporting psychology changed my patience, empathy and emotion towards them. This made my approach to lessons and their often unstable emotional situation more effective than it had been before.

I can use it again to pick an underperformer / vulnerable child to seek a possible way in and approach in response to their needs which I will understand much better. It made me more interactive than reactive to this students behaviour and it enabled me have a more personal investment in the teacher-pupil relationship. I was focussed on reading their mood / emotional state as they came in and able to respond to it in a better way to try and keep them calm or confident that they could work. For the next student it will probably be completely different.

**Caroline Cool: Priestlands School, Lymington**

## The student (referred to as LA )

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

LA is a complicated student with a difficult background compounded by ASD tendencies and low ability. He was abused and abandoned by his mum and now lives with his disabled dad.

### **What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

The PEP toolkit analysis suggested LA had multiple needs:

- Self regulation problems.
- Has difficulty managing his anger.
- He has difficulties trusting others, particularly adults.
- He has low self-esteem and a poor sense of self.

Observations of LA also showed that he lacks focus and suffers a lot from 'tiredness', and on the days when he complained he was tired the above issues were always amplified. He exhibits behavioural problems across the school.

Fundamental to trying to reach LA (as with all children) was to develop and build a strong relationship. By undertaking the PEP analysis and reading his SEN profile I felt I had a good understanding of where I could start to make progress.

### **Other information.**

Detailed observations of LA in mine and other lessons highlighted that LA had the following difficulties:

- Motivation to get started.
- Motivation to stay on track and focused without the teacher's support.
- Problems with resilience,
- He struggles to not bring problems from outside the classroom into the classroom.
- He has huge problems with transitions between activities and lessons.
- He struggles to remain focused during practical work.

## **Strategies employed and their impact**

### **Building a strong relationship:**

Showing that I care about each and every child, listening to their interests and what makes them tick. For example, once I overheard LA talking about littering in the oceans and how terrible it is, so we had a really nice discussion during which I was able to make good eye contact, smile and develop a good rapport. I tried to use this strong moral compass of LA in future discussions.

Successful? Yes, mostly! Good relationships underpin so much however sometimes 'outside' was just too big and LA could not be 'reached' however hard I tried.

### **Improving his motivation:**

LA's biggest barrier to learning was motivation; to tackle this I tried to make the lessons not only as engaging as possible but built around success criteria that were attainable and explicit.

Successful? Yes, but unpredictably. Sometimes LA was the first to start commenting on the starter activity and remain fully engaged for the whole lesson, sometimes the 'outside' was too big and he just couldn't begin; he would behave poorly and end up being removed from the room

### **Adjustment of language, body positioning, eye contact etc.**

I learned that to reach LA I had to make adjustments to my body language. When I gave a specific instruction to the whole class e.g. 'take off your coat please' I would need to provide additional and personal instructions to LA e.g. approach his desk, maybe crouch a little to establish good eye contact and then say 'would you mind taking your coat off for me please?'

Successful? Yes, hugely. Even on 'bad' days I could get LA to work and complete chunked up tasks. The 'for me' seemed to be the critical part of this to engage him. As he began to complete more tasks he became more confident and pleased about his success.

### **Warnings of transitions:**

Practical work would often end badly because LA struggled making transitions between activities. Michelle Cain spoke to the group of Leading Teachers and explained how the many transitions vulnerable children have to make cause them many problems. I took her advice and gave much more explanation of the reasons for the change in activity, I warned that a change was coming up and gave times for each practical activity to LA.

Successful? Yes, again to a degree though. If the work involved burning he was always very reluctant to move on, but this may not be that unusual!

### **Contact with home:**

I contacted home every week for each child in the class to engage parents in their learning. This would be a quick 'congratulations on a great week in Science' group text or a longer email for those who had struggled.

Successful? Not particularly for LA. For the rest of the class it was hugely successful and the parents loved it. I did not get a reply to an email from LA's Dad except towards the end of the year when he was being removed from lessons permanently. This was a pleasant email thanking me for all my work with LA but it was a pity that the engagement hadn't come earlier as I feel this would have helped LA.

**Building self esteem:**

I tried to build LA's self-esteem through a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning, 360 marking and a focus on feeling successful.

Successful? Again with the majority of the class this worked like a dream but less so with LA. This may be due to his home environment becoming significantly worse over the course of the year. On some days I would feel a breakthrough and on others it felt like back to square one.

## **Conclusions and evaluation**

**Did the PEP toolkit help make this child's experience of Science better?**

Absolutely, by investing a little time in understanding LA is was able to make very easy adjustments that although did not work every time the small and erratic improvements where well worth the time that it cost me.

**Has LA done better in Science because of this project?** Yes, even if we are talking marginal gains.

**Will any of the needs identified in the PEP have been improved?** This is the tricky one! I like to think that one day he will remember some of our conversations in which I told him I believed in him and he believed in himself. This may be wishful thinking but without hope why would we teach and invest so much in our young people? What came to light was that our vulnerable children are just so complicated and affected that one science teacher just can't undo all that hurt, but will I do it again? Absolutely.

**Kelly Underdown, The Costello school**

## The student (referred to as OB)

### Brief factual description of student

Female - Year 10 , Alopecia ,SEN- slow processing.

Main issue for OB is attachment.

### What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

Identified two main areas: Self-Regulation and Sense of Self.

Self-regulation - Pointers from the toolkit that apply to OB:

- remember a defiant front can be masking fear the student is hiding
- ensure the student knows that when they behave inappropriately that it is their behaviour that is unacceptable – not them
- OB needs structure, consistent rules and routines and an empathetic approach
- OB may misread adult intentions as a personal attack or persecution – such as a raised voice or pointing out an error in their work
- Encourage OB to use her “inner voice” to self-regulate – see Qs on pg 44/45 of PEP

Sense of Self – Pointers from the toolkit that apply to OB:

- Strong feelings of inadequacy/ may be feel unlovable/incapable.
- May be loud and disruptive and boastful- other peers will consider then confident – they are not – they are masking insecurity/trying to prove themselves to others
- Consider how praise is shared with OB – she may feel it threatens her sense of self
- Student will crave praise so it must be given – just consider how it is done.
- Develop relationship with OB – talking to her inside/outside of the classroom

### Other information.

There are five children at home, one older brother, OB, twins and baby. Single Mother. There is a “father figure” of baby about but he is a negative figure. Mum is an alcoholic and is in and out of hospital regularly. OB runs the household. She cooks, cleans, looks after the younger siblings, drops them off and picks them up from school.

The school treats her as PP and buys her everything she needs, she should be PP but mum will not complete the forms.

She has an on/off boyfriend, this is not a positive relationship as the boyfriend cheats on her and she takes him back every time as he is the “only one who cares and still makes her feel happy”. She is sexually active. Mood is very dependent on previous night/friendship issues.

There are a couple of teachers she feels comfortable around. She dislikes many teachers and can refuse to work for no apparent reason. She gets very stropky if not allowed to do something she wants to do. She has a fear of failure in relation to school work and will not write anything until she is sure it is correct.

I started this project by keeping a diary of things I tried and the result of these actions. See a snippet of this diary below:

Date	Action	Evidence of impact and comments	Next Steps
6/1/16	Provide Water	removed need to leave the room/chance of stropping. Benefitted all students in the room. Helped to build on positive relationship.	Ensure water jug and cups available EVERY lesson - including cover.
8/1/16	Give pink card with blue glitter writing with rules on.	Sat down and discussed lesson rules with OB. She chose colour paper and glitter pen. She comes in and gets it off my pin board and puts it in front of her every lesson. Whenever she needs reminding of the rules I either point or just briefly remind her to look at her rules. She likes the fact they are personalised and no one else has them.	Keep rules available for OB to collect/see easily in the lesson.
13/1/16	Let OB run the "go through" on the board. She does all the writing.	Great. She was engaged, the other students responded positively to her.	Week later - she now asks to do all the writing, no other student minds, so it happens every lesson now.
22/1/16	Play keyword bingo either as starter or plenary in lesson	week 1 - they loved it! Over the next few weeks played at least once a week - students asked for it. They recall the words they want to use - given guidance to choose certain units. They have to remember key facts in order to cross it off. OB LOVES this game - she has to be encouraged to not shout out.	Continue as building positive relationship AND working on revision of prior topics.
5/2/16	Provide OB with a choice of Pass, Merit or Distinction work.	Chose Distinction, asks for Pass to use as hint sheets. Completed the work - felt more able as she stuck the D task in her book - but got it all correct due to extra clues on pass sheet.	Always offer OB the choice of tasks.
Date	Action	Evidence of impact and comments	Next Steps
10/2/16	Very clear sanctions for misbehaviour.	Failed to follow instructions/broke the rules.. removed from lesson. In post lesson chat she decided her own punishment - set herself an after school detention for after half term.	Remind OB of detention, after the lesson, on the day. Do not do it before/during the lesson!
12/2/16	Read exam paper to OB.	She sat the entire paper for the first time and due to me confirming her answers she got a great score. I know it is not realistic for real exams but boosted her confidence massively - which is more important at the moment.	Read next couple of test papers to her. Ween her off me eventually!
24/2/16	Provided OB with extra copies of the sheets used in lessons.	Meant that when she got something wrong/messy she had another sheet ready to complete.	Always have extra sheets ready, just in case!
26/2/16	Arrived late to lesson - ignored until the end of lesson	no comment during the lesson and was calm enough by break to realise punishment was needed	Kept for mins late at break and ensured she knew this would continue to happen

After a while it became evident the strategies that I put in place – many of them would only work for a short time or were best used on a rotation. Some actions became essential for every lesson though – such as the provision of water or the correct felt pens for OB to use. At the end of the project I compiled a “top tips” sheet for teaching OB from my knowledge of teaching her all year. My intention as part of my Assistant Head of Year job next year, is to share info like this with teachers of OB (and other vulnerable pupils). I have to consider how this will be done carefully but, amongst other things, will probably involve meeting with a handful of the most vulnerable pupils teachers and sharing this info with them.



### **Top Tips for Teaching OB**

- Never shout at her as she sees this as a very personal attack and responds very negatively - has broken relationships with other teachers
- Careful use of language used towards her - avoid negative phrases like “you have disappointed me” as she feels like she disappoints everyone. Change saying to “what could you have done differently” or “why might I feel upset OB?” - she always knows what she has done wrong and what she should have done (not always immediately). REMIND HER IT’S HER BEHAVIOUR/ACTIONS THAT HAVE UPSET YOU, NOT HER!
- Give her time before punishing some incidents - eg lateness - leave until the end of the lesson to remove the issue of dealing with her response to the punishment
- ANYTHING I can do to be personal with her will benefit our relationship and therefore her engagement in my lessons. Bumping into her around school and in tutor room I make a concerted effort to ask how she is and have a bit of a joke with her. Find common ground. Discuss her career goal (working as a Vet Nurse) - can act as a reminder to help her focus.
- If OB has a “bad” lesson inform her tutor who has an excellent relationship with her. Often the info of a detention is received better from her than me at the time.
- Every lesson reset - do not mention previous bad behaviour - always be optimistic the lesson will go well
- Have the stationary she requires ready
- Have water available
- Be prepared to relax some rules (e.g. drinking in class)
- Do not tell her there is a test in advance - she does not revise anyway - so just stresses her out.
- Be positive as often as possible - reward - initially on the quiet, as she gets more confident in the class, can be more open. Do not reward for “insignificant” things - has to feel the rewards are genuine and not just done to keep her on side!

**Steff Turnbull, Robert Mays School, Odiham**

## The student (referred to as Tom)

### **Brief factual description of student**

Tom is a year 10 student who entered secondary school with a 4b in both Maths and English. He currently has a reading age of 17.03 and a spelling age of 16.07. Despite his base line data he is underperforming in all subjects. His current attainment is either a D or E across the board. Tom has Asperger's and his mother has been ill with cancer. He is refusing to do any work in most lessons, especially when tests are involved. He dislikes any group work but will independently complete practical work. He is very dismissive of work saying he has not been shown how to do it. He will not complete any questions on tests.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

After completing the PEP Analysis, Adult relationships and Executive functioning were identified as areas Tom would need support with.

### **Other information.**

Tom had scheduled meetings with the school counsellor; looking at his SEN notes I believed this was due to his Asperger's. It was not until I spoke to the counsellor that I learnt of his mother's illness, his parent's separation and the death of his dog. Suddenly it all made sense; I had tried to persuade him to come on a school trip to a local hospital, he refused to take part. It was not until this moment I realised some of the true reasons why he did not wish to take part. I felt terrible about what I had been asking of him, something that if I had of known of this information I would have never have asked twice.

## **Actions arising from PEP analysis and discussions with school counselor and SENCO**

- Create a seating plan
- To form a better student-teacher relationship using praise and communicating with home.
- Growth mindset- using thunks, encouraging effort rather than attainment
- Working in the same group to establish routine- even if this needs to be fixed
- Describe the lesson as he enters the classroom so he knows what to expect and repeat to the whole class after the starter. Tell William in advance if there is going to be a change to the lesson.
- Pre assessment assessments- to practice exam techniques before each 3 weekly test
- Repeat instructions and leave specific instructions on the whiteboard
- Self reflective- ask if everything is going to plan

## **Impact of strategies**

A PEP analysis in November 2015 identified executive functioning as an area that Tom struggled with. To improve his growth mindset, I introduced thunks as starters to lessons. This would enable increased self-confidence due to the lack of right or wrong answers with this type of activity. Tom, however, did not engage with the task and commented that it was a stupid idea because there was no right answer, and so did not see the point in the exercise. The other students were engaged and the thunks were a good way to start discussions and debates within the classroom.

The PEP analysis also identified that Tom found Adult Relationships difficult, after reading the suggested strategies I immediately moved Tom from a seat at the back, to a seat at the front next to a wall so Tom would have more direct eye contact with myself and less distractions from people and things around him. I cannot say for certain if this alone led to an improvement in his engagement in lessons but I feel I was modeling better communication skills to Tom which in turn was reciprocated.

To further improve relationships with my class I stood at the door every lesson and welcomed every student into my class, asking each student how they were, this allowed the class come into the classroom in a calm manner and I could gauge if there were any issues from previous lessons or break would hinder the learning of students in my lesson and therefore, be proactive in managing any behaviours which may arise as a consequence.

The PEP toolkit explained that changes to routine were very difficult for students who have a delayed development of their executive functioning, I know this is a difficulty for Tom as he comes to school on non-school uniform days in full school uniform and does not take place in school trips. The PEP toolkit suggested visual timers, two minute warnings for the end of each activity and warnings of any changes to routine to be shared with the student. In light of this I use a visual timer

for all activities and warn the class if I am going to miss the lesson. This not only helped Tom but extended all pupil's executive skills.

In January 2016 during the year 10 exam, Tom did not attempt a single question. I also spoke to parents after the year 10 exam, and although supportive, did not engage in any helpful or effective action steps to help Tom improve. Tom's parents further informed me that the attitude Tom displayed in Science was the same in all subjects. In response to Tom's year 10 exam I highlighted questions in the next end of topic test I believed he could be successful on. I also told him that the highlighted questions were the minimum expectations i.e. his exit pass. His grade improved from a U to an E. As a result, I praised him quietly away from his peers and made a positive phone call home. Tom was proud of his achievements but would not want attention to be drawn to him in front of his peers.

I often offer writing frames in class for students who are struggling with written work; however I either put it on the board or have this as an extra hand out. In February 2016, an LSA told me Tom finds starting work on blank pages a challenge, even with a writing frame. This is consistent with delayed development of executive functioning. As a result I wrote writing frames straight into Tom's book to structure his thinking without being intimidated by blank pages. Tom completed his work. Over time I gave Tom less scaffolding and more responsibility, for example Tom completed a mock ISA on a writing frame but also had the sole responsibility for identifying control variables for his group, drawing the results table and using the stop watch. Following praise for successful completion of these tasks, Tom and his group were allowed to decide on their own roles and responsibilities within their group for the next activity.

Later on in the same month, I used SOLO taxonomy as another method to structure an answer. This was a complete disaster. Tom did not engage in the slightest, not even when sentence starters were provided. As a result I went back to using key words and sentence starters for the next piece of free independent writing.

Towards the end of February I spoke to the school counselor and found out more about his background. A key issue was the death of his dog, which he found highly distressing. His mother had also be hospitalised for six month, prior to a parental split and subsequent house move, which had been his home since birth. One positive piece of information gleaned from our conversation was his interest and love for politics. I used this as a conversation starter, the impact of which was Tom engaging in conversation with me for the first time on a topic that was not subject related.

At the time during international security threats, with terrorist attacks happening in different countries, Tom was upset that one incident received significantly more news coverage than another. He was unable to move forward from this, and was sharing his thoughts and feelings on the matter for the duration of the lesson. Had I not had the conversation with the SENCO about Tom, I would not have understood the context of Tom's anxiety.

At the end of the academic year, a major personal break through occurred where Tom came to my lab unprompted, opened the door and asked how I was. Considering this student did not willingly speak to me for two years, or complete any work, I found this moving as well as a significant personal achievement for Tom to engage socially with a member of teaching staff. A further achievement, however, this time of an academic nature, was Tom's completion of his Science ISA where he had attempted all questions without support of any kind.

**Sarah Field: Cowplain School, Waterloo**

## The student (referred to as JW)

### Brief factual description of the student.

- Target minimum grade (TMG) = C
- Achieved a C grade in CORE Science in June '15.
- Took Higher Bio/Chem, achieved C/D, took Foundation Phys, achieved C. Achieved a B grade in his controlled assessment.
- I had never taught him Science before, but had taught him citizenship and the odd cover lesson where I had found him quite 'awkward' and argumentative.
- The year 11 classes were remixed in September '15 and JW was in my group. All had achieved a grade C in Core Science in summer '15 and were expected to achieve a grade C in Additional Science in June '16 C.
- He has recently been diagnosed with diabetes.

### What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

- My initial thoughts were that he was more able than I had previously perceived him to be.
- Very early on I believed he could achieve at least a C if not more, and this is what I wanted to convey to him.
- The PEP toolkit helped me identify 3 areas of need: Adult relationships, peer relationships and sense of self.

### Other information obtained from a discussion with the social inclusion officer.

- JW lives with dad, his mum left when he was at primary school. She now lives in Devon and has minimal contact with JW
- Dad worked abroad a lot and so JW has spent a lot of time with grandparents and nannies.
- He feels a lack of control in his life, and as a result has been known to bully others and make inappropriate comments towards other vulnerable students, especially girls. Dad has since remarried.
- JW is part of year 11 programme in the Optimum Learning Centre once a week where he has to interact with peers. Here he learns and practices relaxation techniques and discusses the highs and lows of his week). Initially he was unenthusiastic about the support and questioned why he had to do it, but didn't miss a single session in the first term.
- He has a tendency to blame others and struggles to take responsibility for what happens to him. He doesn't take praise well, but does like a bit of 'banter', being made a fuss of, singling out and a bit of notice/time spent on him.

## The story of my work with JW

The three significant areas of need identified from the PEP Toolkit were JW's difficulties in forming adult and peer relationships and his sense of self.

Need	Strategies and things to consider
<b>Adult relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit JW at front, close to a wall if possible.</li> <li>• Set clear boundaries, empathetic but firm tone.</li> <li>• Staff changes cause anxiety- warn of cover, discuss with JW before any group changes occur</li> <li>• Be aware he may find the end of school year distressing</li> <li>• Be succinct / focused on his behaviour, never make it personal. Minimise shame and need for eye contact.</li> <li>• Avoid long drawn-out enquiries</li> <li>• Don't send to isolation room if possible.</li> <li>• Don't make him wait for a consequence- keep consequences short and complete sooner rather than later. Same with rewards, short sharp and immediate.</li> <li>• Present consequences with empathy not anger, avoid getting in control battles!</li> <li>• Offer time out as option to de-escalate.</li> </ul>
<b>Peer relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal peer support group with social inclusion officer.</li> <li>• Sit next to a 'model' student. (JW still had a few problems with comments 'flying' around with other students in the class.)</li> <li>• I asked who he thought he would work well with he 'chose' a friend to sit with at the front. Will need to alter with everyone else ½ termly??</li> </ul>
<b>Sense of self</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value him by listening carefully and give him time and praise effort and genuine success</li> <li>• Set meaningful goals and discuss them with them- e.g. sitting higher tier papers</li> <li>• Promote positive thinking.</li> <li>• Allow JW to make choices and be responsible for his learning</li> <li>• Avoid comparison with other students</li> </ul>

I kept a brief diary of my work with JW. I have included these comments and summarised what I have found from working with JW at the end.

Week commencing	What happened	My reflection
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JW had an argument (a few silly comments back and forth) with another student he doesn't always get along with. It ended with his head down on the table in tears. Both had made comments, but the other was still doing work. I removed both of their stamps, but he was not happy. I could not get him to discuss the problem.</li> </ul>	At this point I decided to change the seating plan and had a 1-1 conversation at the end of a lesson with JW to see who he thought he would work well with. He mentioned being friends with X and Y, so I moved JW to the front with X
9 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asked not to blow/knock work off of the table in front of him onto the floor and to pick it up and bring to me. He did and seemed fine, but when I next looked over he wasn't looking happy.</li> <li>• During a matching task on the IWB he was handed the pen, which he handed straight to his partner, later he was given it again and he threw it on the floor. I asked him not to, as he wouldn't like me to do that to his things. He then broke into tears with his head on the desk. I didn't know why but one girl commented that he was sensitive to what I had said.</li> </ul>	Looking back, the lesson was about genetic modification and I had discussed how bacteria are genetically modified to produce insulin. I think this may have been a trigger for JW.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I noticed his hands in his fists on the table shaking- he appeared angry. I left him but asked him to get on. He was looking at his hands and then went to the nurse. He returned at the end and said he had done the work. The nurse confirmed he was checking his sugar levels (I'm not sure whether shaking due to this or sugar levels)</li> </ul>	
4 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2016	JW ended up getting frustrated and tearful. I asked to stay behind at the end of the lesson and he did! We discussed the content of the lesson- a debate about the use of embryonic stem cells- and he explained that he found it frustrating/upsetting when other students were not seeing the importance of using stem cells to research/devise new treatments for things like diabetes. He found the topic very interesting, and did want to be included but found the topic emotional.	I decided to allow JW to remain working with X as they worked productively (normally I would change the seating plan for all). I have brought his friend Y to be close to them also
18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2016	JW achieved a C in his chemistry and a D in his biology mock papers. I used subtly praise. I said I had no intention of moving him from the higher tier papers and that I thought if he pushed himself he could achieve a B. We discussed him sitting higher physics, and agreed that he would go for it even if we decided to change nearer the time. This was done privately at my desk. He was smiling as he went back to his desk.	
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan and 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2016	Nothing of great significance except JW has been getting increasingly chatty with Y. Finally I moved her to another table. JW was not happy about this, but I felt it better than moving him.	I need to change the seating plan again but I want to discuss this with JW before I do so. I will move him with X to the other side of the room under the premise that all higher students will be sat together. Will move all not just JW.
26 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JW failed to complete all the work set and I was firm that he would not get the reward sticker. I made it clear that I expected him to complete the work at after school clinic.</li> <li>Another student (his friend Y) asked if she could just do it over the weekend and come at a break to mark and I refused, due to the instructions/consequences being clearly outlined on the front. I also reiterated that I just wanted them all in the habit of completing it on time and not giving up my break time if they did not and that 15 minutes might not be long enough anyway.</li> <li>There was a bit of eye rolling, but then JW added in, 'do we have to stay the whole hour if we are just marking?' I agreed that they could complete and mark the questions, fill in their www/ebi/sr and then go once the scores were given in. He seemed to think this was fair.</li> </ul>	I need to be firm and consistent over the next few weeks with exam question homework, in the hope that they will all get into the routine and see how easy it is to do and mark on time. In future I will attend clinic to monitor and have 1-1 discussions about the missed work with all including JW.
Easter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JW attended school over Easter to complete a controlled assessment. This was his '3<sup>rd</sup>' attempt. Although he had achieved his target grade I was keen for him to know I thought he could do even better, and that I continue to have high expectations</li> </ul>	



	<p>of him. He tackled the CA positively and is continuing to finish it during school and after school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having marked the last CA JW improved the most out of all students in my class, by 7 marks taking him from a C to a B/A (above TMG).</li> <li>• Rather than calling him to my room, (the toolkit suggested not to 'summon' students or make them feel they are in trouble), I found him at lunch and let him know quietly. He smiled! He was very pleased.</li> </ul>	
13 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	<p>First day of new groups for revision. JW has been placed in the large 'top' group aiming for Bs/As. JW has his head down much of the time and is not keen to engage in the group tasks, despite being sat with students of choice from our usual class.</p>	<p>JW doesn't seem to cope well with change and a new group of students. I need to pre-warn/inform the other 2 teachers in the rotation so that they can support him over the next 4 weeks.</p> <p>I continued to ask him questions and keep a close eye on his homework, making sure he was completing the past questions and marking and responding to them.</p>
19 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	<p>JW seemed quite flustered/disorganised and couldn't find work from cover/last week. It was only later that the nurse came in to check on him and said he hadn't checked his blood sugars at lunchtime.</p>	<p>Check with nurse when I have JW after lunch to make sure he has checked his blood sugars</p>
25 <sup>th</sup> April 2016	<p>Double lesson back in his usual class group, JW seemed on good form again, participating in group tasks and completing all work.</p> <p>After the Biology exam I bumped into JW and asked him how it had gone. He was really positive and upbeat about the paper and said it went well.</p> <p>JW came to find me on the field on leaver's day and asked me to sign his shirt!</p>	

### Summary and evidence

JW responded well to having some input into what he does and where he sits, and likes subtle praise. He knows that this will only happen if he does as I ask and completes home learning and classwork consistently. He does have problems at times and his head goes down on the desk if the topic is in any way related to his diabetes, or if he has any brief altercation with any other student. He still finds it difficult to recognise that his unfriendly behaviour encourages unfriendly behaviour from others in return.

He has seemed content and works well with X, who he chose to sit with, and as a result I have allowed this to continue. I/he did not make a big thing out of this selection of a partner, just a brief 1-1 discussion. However his other chosen partner Y did not work out so well, and therefore the seating was changed back by me. I did not discuss this with him at length but I did warn them that this would happen.

His attitude towards me this year has definitely been more positive than last year when. I have purposefully been non-confrontational but firm with my expectations whilst giving him some input at times, and having some 1-1 conversations with him when there has been a problem. I have also maintained consistently high expectations by entering him for higher tier papers in his GCSE.

His most recent mock result on the higher P2 paper was a C grade, one of the highest in the class, and I believe that he may even achieve more in the final exam. He was quietly pleased, and I quietly congratulated him as I handed back the papers, but maintained that was as I had expected of him.

He also happily came in during the Easter holidays to improve his current controlled assessment grade (from a C). Previously he had not been keen to have to 'redo' things. He managed to improve his CA grade by 7 marks, which was the most in the class.

He remained positive during the exams and told me that they went well.

At the prom JW made an effort to come and talk with me!

**Alex Bidwell, Henry Beaufort School, Winchester.**

## The student (referred to as MW)

### Factual description of student

- This student is very pleasant and eager to please.
- Minimum target: C      Challenge target: B
- (these are generated from KS2 data and are totally unrealistic given her progress at KS3)
- Mock grade: F (Bio – F, Chem - F, Phys – E)
- She has a range of issues that can affect her learning.
- She has been diagnosed with:
- Tourettes, ASD, OCD, ADHD
- There is also a suggestion that she may be bipolar.
- She has significant involvement with our SEN dept. (“the student hub”).

### What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

The PEP toolkit highlighted *language development* and *Executive function* as her 2 major areas of concern.

Filtering information is particularly difficult.

She has very little understanding of what constitutes “hard work” (5 minutes of sustained effort is often too much for her).

She frequently agrees to things to hide her lack of understanding.

Needs & strategies:

- Confidence
  - Routine
  - Repetition
  - Self evaluation
  - Word lists.
- Organisational skills
  - Chunking
- Perseverance.
  - Linking skills
  - Use of visual cues
  - Scaffolding tasks
  - Multisensory approaches
  - Providing alternative vocabulary
  - Metacognition

Bridging

### Other information

- She is articulate about her problems and open about mental health issues.
- She takes regular medication which can cause periods of instability.
- She has had major problems at home. Her relationship with mother and step father has been strained for a long time. There has been very little support or structure at home. Questions have been raised with social services over potential neglect / emotional abuse.
- Recently she moved in with her father & step-mother, which has been very positive for her. Step-mum in particular has been very supportive.

***Since the start of the project her attendance has become a significant problem.***

## **Rationale:**

I chose MW as she was vulnerable, but clearly wanted to succeed. Her mental health issues and family background have held her back throughout her schooling, but I felt that extra support could make a real difference to her.

The PEP toolkit was a very useful starting point to help me understand what issues we were dealing with. It showed her two biggest areas of concern were **language development** and **executive function**. I tried to treat these as the cause of her issues and her lack of confidence, poor organisation and lack of perseverance as symptoms.

I then used the toolkit to draw up a list of potential strategies to help MW develop.

## **The most successful strategies:**

**Routine and repetition** were stressed as ways to help both executive function and language development, so that was where I started. I created a simple template with the title as an objective and simple recall question(s) as a starter every lesson (e.g. - *Instead of having "Resistance" as a title, I had, "Using V&I to calculate resistance". Starter – What do the letters V&I stand for? What units do we use to measure them?*). I referred back to the objective frequently both verbally and visually during lessons. Similarly, I created a simple template for the end which made students reflect back on the title (e.g. - *Can you now calculate R if you are given both V&I?*), followed by a simple plenary recall game (e.g. – *keyword bingo*).

The impact of this was a rapid improvement in confidence and organisation. The regular routine and repetition of factual recall meant that MW knew where she stood and had a much better idea of what was expected of her.

**Chunking and scaffolding of tasks** were also suggested by the PEP toolkit (chunking to help executive function and scaffolding to help language development). Breaking lessons down into easy to manage chunks that got progressively more difficult whilst offering less support, and allowing students to work thorough those tasks at their own pace had two major consequences. Firstly, MW got started much more quickly than in previous lessons as she had the confidence to attempt the first, easier, task. Secondly, it helped her to persevere for longer than she used to. These two things helped to reinforce her improved confidence.

**A multisensory approach.** In between the consistent start and finish to my lessons I used visual cues, alternative vocabulary, and a wide variety of tasks which were all helpful for developing understanding and assisting recall. However, they do beg the question of how is this different from normal good teaching?

## **The least successful strategies:**

I tried a number of approaches that did not show noticeable results:

- Word lists – MW found these boring and refused to use them.
- Linking skills – These turned out to be very time consuming and often led MW to becoming side tracked.
- Self evaluation & metacognition tasks – Also very time consuming and caused MW to doubt herself. Loss of confidence meant she then stopped working. These strategies are much more likely to be successful when working with younger students, or where there is more time available to embed the skills needed.

**Progress:**

Unfortunately progress was frustratingly slow.

Attendance deteriorated significantly over the year. From Christmas to the start of the exams, MW missed half of her lessons. Upon investigation, it appears that the majority of these absences were due to either medical or CAMHS appointments, but some were also meetings in school (ELSA support etc.) and some periods were spent in the “student hub” (SEN dept.) as she was upset / anxious.

In the lessons that she did attend, her attitude, effort, perseverance and confidence all showed improvement, but she was still very reliant on teacher input. She wanted to check everything before moving on. Her attainment did not show any significant change (Ranging from a D to a U, but averaging an F). Given her drop in attendance, this could be viewed as a positive outcome.

**Reflection:**

I learnt a lot about MW by doing this project. Having discussed her issues with so many relevant staff I found myself to be more sympathetic and understanding than I may have otherwise been. The PEP toolkit was an excellent starting point which gave me a much better insight into the issues that she was facing and some good ideas for ways to support her. As the project continued, other needs became apparent (mainly attendance in this case) which had to be dealt with.

The biggest lesson that I learnt by doing this project seems obvious in retrospect. Change can be painfully slow. The earlier we intervene with a student, the more effective that intervention will be. Year 11 may often be too late to make a significant difference to their exam attainment. Softer outcomes, like confidence, perseverance and organisation may improve, but these things take time to filter through to improved attainment.

I will use the PEP toolkit in my work next year because it is a valuable way of identifying some of the complex needs of our more vulnerable students.

Although it cannot be treated like a flow chart for the diagnosis and treatment of students with barriers to engagement, it is an excellent starting point that gives a good deal of insight into the issues that individual students are likely to be facing, along with a list of strategies that may help. As we get to know these students better, other strategies are likely to become apparent.

It has become clear that the needs of each child change over time and it may be necessary to redo the assessment multiple times. In order to speed up this process, it may also be useful to convert the PEP toolkit into a spreadsheet or online tool.

**Alastair Wright: Amery Hill School, Alton**

## The student (referred to as TD)

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

- TD is a female, Yr10 pupil at Kings School. She is in a lower set for science.
- Since the start of year 10 she has attended college one day per week.
- TD finds school difficult on many levels. She finds it hard to make friendships with her peers, and also struggles with many adult relationships. She demonstrates inappropriate behaviour in class such as shouting out, and absconds from lessons frequently when challenged by teachers regarding her behaviour. She will often refuse to do work, or just put her head on the table and refuse to engage.
- She often absconds from school completely.
- She finds the relationships with peers difficult and shows anger easily.
- She has suffered bullying in the past, although this is less of a problem within her own year group at school as many now know and accept TD. She has suffered bullying at college this year which has resulted in her missing college sessions.
- TD.D enjoys science and demonstrates a real interest and understanding.
- Verbally, she demonstrates good understanding but has problems with recall and expressing her understanding in writing. She also struggles with understanding what written questions are asking.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

The PEP toolkit analysis identified several areas of need, the most prominent were:

- Sense of self.
- Peer relationships.

The actions I decided to focus on arising from this analysis were:

- Careful consideration of seating, and partners for practical work
- Structured activities with clear outcomes
- Careful use of praise to build self-esteem.

### **Other information.**

TD's mother died several years ago and has since lived with her grandmother, who is very supportive of the school. Her grandmother was involved in raising TD, as both her parents were long-term drug addicts. TD's father is alive but she sees him rarely. Grandmother blames dad for her daughter's involvement with drugs and also her death and so does not encourage contact.

Social services are not involved with her care, however medical staff / NHS are because TD suffers from ADHD and fight or flight syndrome. She has mental health issues related to attachment and her bereavement following her mother's death for which she receives counseling from CAMHs

### **From discussion with HOY:**

TD is a highly vulnerable pupil with many complex and related issues:

- HIGH-RISK internet involvement: self harm sites, dark drawings.
- Flees from conflict (fight or flight syndrome): she will often leave the school site during the school day.
- Self –image, compulsive eating, overweight

### **Perceived Barriers to Learning:**

Common triggers that cause disengagement in the classroom are:

- High noise levels
- Personal remark directed at her from another pupil.
- Conflict between other pupils
- Extensive reading required.
- If she's not eaten lunch

TD is verbally articulate, able to demonstrate insight and understanding but she has a very limited recall from one lesson to the next and her writing is poor.

I taught TD at the end of Monday (after PE) and Wednesday (after art). Problems arising during the day meant that TD missed a lot of lessons; this was a particular problem on Mondays after PE.

### **What I aimed to do to address her needs:**

- Provide a calm entry to the lesson with a clear outline/overview of what is going to happen in the lesson (type of activities).
- Be very clear if she will be working in a group or on her own and who she will be working with to reduce her stress related to social uncertainty.
- To have clear expectations about what will need to be written.
- Plan and share a well-structured lesson and provide a calm learning environment. Not too many stimuli.
- A zero tolerance approach to personal comments)

### **What I did:**

1. Changed the seating plan to a conference style so that all pupils were facing each other with no backs turned. This was to ensure that pupils could not be 'talked about' and encouraged pupils to recognize facial language, something TD finds difficult. I allowed TD to sit on a corner, this provided more personal space, easy access to the door and allowed her to have her back to the wall.
2. On entry, I personally welcomed her to the lesson. I asked her about her day, how she felt. I told her how I thought she was feeling e.g. you look tired today TD, have you had a busy day, late night etc. You look happy today, have you just had a good lesson?' I tried to link my facial expression to feelings to encourage recognition in others.
3. I always approached TD from the front so that she could see me coming. In the class I rarely go behind the conference desk. From the front position I can see all pupils and they can see me. I always crouched down in order to make eye contact when talking to TD. This was to gain her attention quickly and so she could see my facial expression to help her gauge how I'm feeling. This was particularly important when giving praise and ways to improve, so she could see that I was pleased, even if work wasn't completely right.
4. Lessons always began with an overview that provided specific reference to when written work would be required, and when work would be paired or individual. This was to make expectations related to the aspects of work she found stressful very clear to TD. This also gives me chance to gauge her response and willingness at the outset so that I could respond more effectively.
5. To increase TD's sense of control I included many opportunities for her to choose to communicate through drawing or writing because TD enjoys drawing.
6. I increased the use of 'pupil-speak' in activities to promote peer interaction. When pairing pupils in this group, I chose same sex pairing to improve peer-peer relationships.
7. I tried to incorporate wildlife into as many lessons as possible. TD demonstrated a great knowledge of animals and so this provided a good hook to get her interested in a scientific concept. It gave her confidence to talk in class, as she felt she had knowledge to share. I also allowed her to illustrate her completed work with animals around the edge.

8. I tried using music in class but this was a complete disaster. TD became over-stimulated; this was the only time I had to ask her to temporarily step outside the classroom during a lesson.
9. When using worksheets I chose cloze activities whenever possible to reduce the amount of writing required. I also selected pupils to read sections of text to aid understanding.
10. I used 'read, draw, speak' activities with pupils to summarize topics, aid recall and improve revision strategies. I also used visual memory anchoring techniques at the start of lessons to encourage recall and linking to previous lessons.
11. I decided pupil groupings at the start of each term. This was to take away the uncertainty of who TD would be working.
12. For the GCSE Controlled Assessment Task, I chunked the work into small pieces and provided lots of praise when each part was completed. I chose the Biology CAT that referred to penguins, as I knew that TD would enjoy the research element required.

### **What has been the impact?**

**Improved attendance:** Over the course of the year TD attended more science lessons than any other subject and she had no unauthorized absences from science. TD had unauthorized absences from all other subjects and also from science in year 9.

**Improved relationship with me:** Over the course of the year there have been highs and lows of engagement and attainment. Although it has been hard to demonstrate sustained impact I have developed a positive relationship with TD whereby we will have a chat at the start of the lesson. In most lessons TD will smile at some point.

**Greater social engagement:** TD will now put her hand up to answer questions most lessons. She will engage and share information and stories about things she's seen on the TV or Internet. There are still lessons however, where TD will not engage or produce any work, or make eye contact.

**Improved recall of previous learning:** During lessons TD demonstrated good insight into practical tasks; she would ask pertinent questions and verbalize ideas about fair testing. However, a couple of lessons later she would find it difficult to recall what she had done in any detail. Using the visual memory anchoring techniques with this class seemed to help. Sometimes direct questioning about other things that happened in the lesson helped TD remember.

**Improved learning environment:** The learning environment with this group of pupils has improved. Other strong characters in the group (that could act as a trigger to TD) have less of an impact, with the overwhelming ethic in the group being one of trying to do your best and being positive.

**Attainment:** Her FFT target grade in Science is C, she achieved a D grade in her mock (an improvement on an E in the previous mock).

### **Appendix:**

TD was transferred to The Osbourne School after Easter due to a deterioration in her behavior around school. This will be reviewed in the autumn term.

**Tracey Lewis: The King's School, Winchester**



## The student (referred to as Fred )

### Brief factual description of the student.

Fred is in year 9, I teach him in a mixed ability class. He is not looked after but has an ISP and SEN support plan resulting in him receiving full time learning support. He is high on the autism spectrum; his head of year and Learning and the learning support team believe he has PDA (but refuses to do tests) and has social emotional health issues. He also becomes much more problematic getting closer to holidays due to the uncertainty with circumstances at home.

Fred lives at home with his parents however they don't always gets on and home life can be argumentative. He has an excellent relationship with his grandfather whom he goes fishing with at the weekends.

### What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

The PEP toolkit analysis suggested that Fred has many barriers to engagement in learning. The two areas in which he appears particularly weak are social emotional difficulties alongside speech language and communication.

The toolkit highlighted the importance of direct phrasing and personalising instructions (but I needed to gain his trust first). I had never taught him before this year. After gaining his trust I made sure I always said something positive about him or enquired about his hobbies (he was particularly interested in animals and fishing).

He finds communication difficult and the toolkit suggested giving plenty of time for him to formulate his ideas and time to complete tasks. When he became off task it suggested giving him time before asking him to get back to work; to talk with him about the work or other things of interest at this point and slowly draw him back to the task in hand.

### Other information.

A meeting was held for all teachers of Fred. The Head of year described how Fred has a tendency to walk out of lessons if things don't go his way. During this meeting I learned:

- Fred loves fishing.
- He dislikes writing and will often refuse or fail to complete written tasks.
- Word instructions carefully, he doesn't respond well to direct instructions.
- He finds changes of routines and transitions between activities difficult. Ensuring he has significant advance notice helps, but even then he may not be able to cope.
- He has been given a learning support pass to leave lessons when things get too much for him. I observed him using this in other classes especially when being asked to write in English.
- It was suggested he should sit on his own, at the back of the room and furthest away from the door; it was thought this would be a disincentive to leave the room.

***However, my research and efforts suggested this was not the best seating position for him.***

I met the SENCO and discovered certain TAs work better with Fred than others.

I observed Fred in several lessons and noticed a regular pattern of behaviour, he would enter the class quietly but rarely completed the work set, and would slowly became more unfocused and start to disrupt other pupils e.g. throwing paper and pens. It appeared as though he would do anything to avoid having to work.

## **Strategies employed and their impact**

### **Strategic seating and grouping:**

The toolkit suggested Fred would benefit from sitting at the front of the class where he would feel less constricted and able to leave and use his safe card more easily; so I did this. I did not sit him on his own (as suggested at the school meeting) but I put him on a table with his TA and two very patient pupils whom I thought would provide him the time he needed to formulate his ideas. Initially he ignored these two pupils but with perseverance and time he gradually became more involved in practical work. It helped that he was given the same role in relation to practical work every session; he knew what to expect and found it easier to settle.

### **Forming a personal relationship:**

Having learned about his love of fishing and interest in animals and wildlife I ensured that every lesson we had a short conversation about his recent fishing trips. I tried to relate as many tasks, especially written ones, to these interests.

### **Removing the stress of writing:**

I did not demand writing from him but simply provided a pen and paper and personalised written tasks for him. He still struggles with written work and particularly lacks confidence with extended writing. I have tried breaking questions down into smaller chunks but as yet I have had limited success.

I have started to use more informal models for writing, e.g. planning mindmaps. These have proved more successful as they require fewer full sentences. Whilst he still writes the bare minimum he is at least able to plan an experiment and produce and record results.

**Zoe Sterland, Wyvern College.**

## The student (referred to as E )

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

- E is a high achieving year 10 girl but she lacks self confidence. When she doesn't understand she can become hostile and sarcastic to those offering support.
- When she does get it she is keen to offer opinions but doesn't like to be publicly praised.
- Her mood can swing suddenly and there is some history of self-harm.
- She often has difficulties starting a task promptly, leading to her having lots of half attempted tasks.
- Preparation for exams is often non-existent which she justifies by saying things like "well I'm only going to fail".
- Her reaction to poor performance in tests leads her to disengage and lose even more self-belief.

### **What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

This showed E has issues with her sense of self.

### **Other information.**

- I tried setting up an academic mentor for E, but this unsuccessful because pupil premium students were prioritised.
- The student councillor felt there was a greater need to ensure E received pastoral support

## Actions and impact

Action	Why I thought it would support the students need	Impact	Next steps
Targeted, subtle praise	She often sought out praise and it helped boost her confidence but was very self-conscious about it being public. I attempted to do this quietly and not in front of her peers.	Praise hasn't worked well as she rejects it or says "you're only speaking to me because you think I'm an idiot".	Will focus praise on things she seems proud of before I give any feedback. She responds well to LSA (in room for another child) will use her to critique child.
LSA critiquing	She could snap a little when I commented on her work, either positive or negative but accepted the comments of the LSA in the room	Initially worked very well, however after a while she worked out what we were doing and began to snap at the LSA as well.	Less personalised feedback.  Avoid praise unless her work is really good.
Table feedback to scoop up her issues	She was very self-conscious of any support. So I attempted to give more general feedback to the whole table.	Some success, but without the direct feedback to her she would often ignore the whole table advice given.	Try to give feedback to her and the girls next to her.
Feedback only to her and the girl next to her	She didn't always focus on the whole table feedback as it wasn't quite specific enough to her, so I tried to make the group slightly smaller and gave feedback to her and the girl next to her.	She seemed to pay more attention to the feedback and comments when shared out between the two of them.	

**Callum Clement Smith, The Westgate School, Winchester**

## The student (referred to as Z )

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

- Z is a year 8 boy, he is very positive about his work and tries hard but isn't always successful. He is incredibly needy in terms of positive praise and displays a lot of attention seeking behaviour. He seems to rush his work so that he can announce he is finished. The result is half completed work. He generally responds well when challenged about this but is often reluctant to look back and improve work, which he considers 'finished'.
- He usually gets on well with his peers and has many positive relationships, although he can be confrontational with them when challenged.
- He rarely completes homework on time.

### **What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

This suggested Z had difficulties with executive functioning.

### **Other information.**

I observed Z in maths lessons and noticed similar behaviour patterns.

## Actions and impact

Action	Why I thought it would support the students need	Impact	Next steps
Chunking:	He often missed important parts of his work and rushed to finish. Chunking would help him complete each phase properly and fully complete his work.	Z was able to break it down himself before a task started. He was able to look back at a task and spot missed steps, useful for troubleshooting what was wrong with his work.	He started to get lazy with this approach once the novelty wore off and he began to convince himself he was finished when he hadn't.
Teacher led chunking	Z got into the habit of thinking he had completed something when he hadn't. I needed to ensure I set the chunks otherwise he wouldn't do them	This worked well for a time but he still rushed through each chunk of work to declare it complete.	Need him to reflect upon the level of detail in his work and spot why it isn't completed.
Self-evaluating	He felt he was done and completed when he wasn't. Self-evaluating would hopefully encourage him to look at his work with a critical eye.	Spotted where he had done really well and was able to spot what he had achieved well in. Used it to link back to the key themes / objectives. Evaluated his work very well to begin with (far higher than I would) but became slightly less effective over time	He wasn't happy to go back and edit his work despite spotting where his work lacked detail.
Pre planning	He didn't often manage to record all his ideas and was reluctant to go back and change or re draft his work when it was confused.	I encouraged him to verbalise what he wanted to do with his work. He was very reluctant at first, wanting to complete rather than reflect. When he did eventually manage to do it he took so long that he didn't manage to get enough written down. Or would suggest that because he knew what he was going to write he needn't actually write it.	I need to find a way to speed the process up.
Keywords	The process of verbalization was taking too long so I tried to speed it up by asking Z to simply think about the key words he would need to use in his answer as a rough guide to structuring his answer	This sped things up and Z was able to get key statements and ideas down. From a literacy point of view though the statement rarely worked together as a piece of continuous prose writing.	

**Callum Clement Smith, The Westgate School, Winchester**

## The student (referred to as BL)

### Brief factual description of the student.

BL is a very engaging pupil. His home life has a massive influence on his behaviour in school and means that homework is a big problem. BL loves Science but finds it hard to write his ideas down on paper although he is happy to verbalise them. His behaviour in school is varied and but he thrives on positive relationships with adults. He is in a middle ability group but his literacy is poor. His reading age at the start of the year was 9 years and 10 months.

I teach BL 3 times a fortnight and share the class with 2 other teachers.

Observations from the beginning of the year revealed:

- Poor classwork in particular the quality and quantity of written work.
- Very keen to answer questions verbally in class.
- Smiley.
- Inappropriate interactions with others in the class, especially during written tasks and group work.

### What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

#### Executive functioning

- Starting tasks
- Working memory
- Change in routine/teacher
- Planning
- Self-evaluation

#### Suggested strategies/interventions:

- Chunking of work, interactive/hands on learning, prompt sheets
- Covering all learning styles, mnemonics, music?
- Visual timers, two-minute warnings
- Planning formats – goal, plan, do, review
- Thumbs up, smiley faces, traffic lights
- Bridging scenarios, connections with real life. Transfer/link ideas. Meta-cognitive reflection
- Game-show ideas WTP/11/21/31

### Other information.

From speaking to our EWO, family liaison and head of year it became apparent just how bad life at home can be for BL. He has a very dominating elder sister in the school who makes life difficult for him at home. Mum is not supportive of BL wanting to do well and can hinder his progress by destroying homework etc. BL is slow to start but once started has good ideas and flows well. Written work very challenging and he needs a lot of support in this area. At times he can find group work difficult – especially if he doesn't understand the instructions.

He can arrive in school frustrated if there has been a bad start to the morning at home. He would like to be able to do homework but home can be hectic (TA has supported in school at primary). His head of year is currently supporting this and BL attends homework club after school.

Lack of computer access at home makes some homework very difficult.

## **The story of my work with BL**

I chose to complete this task on a pupil who is PP but who also has a turbulent home life. After reading BL's IEP and file from primary school it was clear he had problems with organisation, homework and relationships with others, especially adults. I completed the PEP toolkit questionnaire and found the areas he struggles with were made clearer. His areas of weakness came under the title of *executive reasoning*. He had other areas but these did not seem as such a barrier to his learning as the executive functioning. This tied in perfectly with my observations of him and his inability to start written tasks and complete longer tasks. The PEP toolkit explained how developmental trauma could lead to these issues, which resonated with what I had learned about his home life. The PEP toolkit also gave some indication that he finds relationships with adults difficult.

I made sure that on entering the classroom I always had a short conversation with him, always had a smile and tried to take an interest in anything he had to tell me. I know he has issues in other areas so I wanted to make science a positive place for him. This was particularly important when he arrived from a lesson where he had experienced a difficult time. This has meant that he now always arrives to science with a smile, ready to work. During one lesson I was telling another boy that if his behaviour didn't improve I would phone home, that his parents would be disappointed because they cared. BL said 'mine wouldn't care' to which I responded 'but I do'. He went around with a big grin for the rest of the lesson. Empathy for him has made a vast difference. Science has given him somewhere to feel cared for.

Over the last few lessons the class have been a little more difficult and I have had to be very strict with the behaviour policy. Interestingly this has had a negative effect on BL and his attitude to work. Just a couple of lessons without the smiling, personal interest has meant he will not start work quickly, engage in written tasks and is answering less verbal questions.

The PEP toolkit helped me identify different strategies to try to improve his written work. I started by ensuring that at the start of every task BL had an opportunity to ask me any additional questions on his own, not in front of the class. This has ensured that he always asks for help when needed without feeling stupid. It also feels proud when he has not needed to ask any questions.

To improve BL's literacy I ensured that every written task included sentence starters. This helped BL with the more difficult explanations and his written work has improved slightly. Towards the end of the year he completed his first piece of extended writing about the journey of a sperm. In September BL would only write single sentence answers. His spelling of key words has also improved as a result of me ensuring that these words are written on the board.

BL has struggled to complete homework in all subjects (see introductory notes). I found it didn't help to make a big deal of when he failed to complete homework instead I was very positive and praised BL when he managed to do it at homework club or even sometimes at home.

I have employed a number of strategies to help BL work better with others in groups and independently from the teacher. There has been progress, but it has been slow. I have had to intervene and repeat instructions on numerous occasions. BL struggles to understand instructions and claims he rarely knows what to do. If he isn't given the opportunity to ask he just doesn't bother and will try and complete experiments, which will inevitably fail. As such his ability to work with others is very limited and he lacks confidence in his work. I tried to check the work of BL's group first, this has helped but is an aspect of work that will require constant attention.

### **Next Steps:**

- Pass on the work I have done with BL to allow a smooth transition into year 8.
- Keep building BL's confidence and ensure his next teacher has empathy for his background and gives him the extra time he needs.

**Jenny Beck: Swanmore School, Swanmore.**



## The student (referred to as AI)

### **Brief factual description of student.**

AI is a student that has been taken into care. He has really poor handwriting and comprehension. It takes several attempts for him to “get it”. He is still enthusiastic about his learning despite all this, but this enthusiasm is waning as he completes each assessment and scores a poor grade. Some low-level behaviour issues are starting to ‘bubble up’ and could possibly snowball if/when his self-esteem gets knocked enough after enough assessments.

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

My diagnosis suggested issues surrounding: peer relationships & sense of self.

Peer relationships: AI finds it difficult to accommodate other students, show empathy to and show genuine interest in other’s ideas. He finds it difficult to respond appropriately, especially to female peers. AI has been moved away from working with girls in groups and has been sat next a passive/quiet boy who is more accommodating of his controlling behaviour. Intention has been to work with him to incorporate other people’s ideas gradually, using the context of science as a community of scientists. By June/July another attempt to pair him with girls/ more outspoken partners will be made to gauge if a difference has been made.

Sense of self: Demonstrates power-seeking behaviour, wants to dominate discussion, his idea goes, will be quiet when others are talking, but doesn’t want their ideas.

### **Other information.**

DT is the SENCO. I sat in on AI’s PEP meeting with LAC, social worker, parent, foster parent and SENCO. Was quite illuminating to hear AI’s story from SENCO afterwards. AI is quiet and has a difficult family background. He lacks confidence around sporting activities.

AI identified that the extra Maths and English he does helps him, although he wants to avoid this as it takes time away from his other subjects he likes, like technology.

AI has since moved out of care and back in with his Mum. I have not seen any marked change in AI since moving back in with Mum, either positive or negative.

# Periodic reflection – AS – peer relationships

Action	Why I thought it would support the students need	Impact	Next steps
Sit at front next to girl	Clashes with some of the boys, sat with opposite sex might avert this	None – he was actually worse sat with girls, rude and had to be moved.	Think about seating plan more carefully
Lots of praise, call him to answer questions	Low self esteem, might improve ability to share ideas with peers	Really liked this focus, attention and merits	Keep using this method, be careful of perceived "favouritism"
When setting group work, joint responsibility for completing tasks, nobody can go to break until all four books complete	Likes to dominate and no accept other's ideas, this forces him to accommodate others	He completed his work, but unsure of impact on his IWM – Piaget would suggest low level of development.	Not a lot I can do about this in my position as class teacher, use rules for "talking together" and apply consistently.

- 1) Al has had students and parents complain about his behaviour towards the 3 different boys he has been sat next to. Change of tack to sit Al next to a girl as he might not feel so in competition with female students. I picked a relatively high ability girl (set 3) and briefly discussed the idea of being a mentor. This did not work at all, he was really rude and ended up being sat on his own where he has been ever since. Not able to find suitable peer to sit him next to.
- 2) At the start of the year Al was certainly not a student that would raise a hand to answer a question. I changed to a cold-calling approach and made sure to pick Al to answer 1 question per lesson. The idea behind this was to try to pick up his self-esteem enough that he would want to engage in discussion work with peers, having seen his ideas validated by his teacher. Al has really revelled in the attention he has got and I have felt this has provided him with a positive outlet.
- 3) As Al has not responded as well as I would have liked to when being sat with other students, I have changed tack and demanded that students work together. Al's group were unable to move on and start practical until they had all agreed, following Mercer's rules on 'Exploratory talk', how they would approach the practical. There was a lot of disagreement the first time this approach was use as Al wasn't prepared to accept other student's ideas, whilst other students were doing practical around them. Al had written his own plan for the investigation without involving the other students, who were upset that he wasn't considering their ideas. I decided not to intervene, despite protests from the Al's group. The next lesson they were able to agree on how to proceed in the practical, listening to their discussion, it appeared Al had given ground, as the boys were keen to start practical. Al has improved, but unsure whether this is genuine or if just giving ground for convenience.

**What's worked well:** Praise and validation has helped him to develop better peer relationships, helping him to come out of his shell and engage more with other students. He seems to have some decent relationships, but still sits on his own table. He is now able at least to work as part of a group, which he wasn't able to do before.

**What needs more work:** Trying to get to the bottom of why he is unable to work 1:1 with another student, of either gender. Spoken to SENCO, being LAC has all types of issues, but need more specifics.

## Periodic reflection – AS – sense of self

Action	Why I thought it would support the students need	Impact	Next steps
Have frequent informal chats when appropriate, eg on entry or during independent work	Build self-esteem	Not sure, he didn't do any work when I was having informal chat, others got distracted too.	Be a bit more subtle, maybe limit chat to a quick question "how was your weekend"?
Make sure Ajay is group leader or the person to feedback during group work	Give him a chance to get teacher's praise and build self-esteem.	Really keen to put his hand up, always contributing ideas.	Keep doing this, maybe not every time, don't want perceived "favouritism"
Help Ajay to develop coping mechanisms, eg small bitesize chunks of revision, timetable.	Build resilience to build self-esteem	Really negative impact after exams, feels worthless, eg he got 3/39 on a test.	Not sure what I can do about this! Don't see him enough (3 hours a week)

- 1) Al started the year with a bit of a confrontational attitude and would do little work. I challenged this in the same way that I would any student by drawing attention to this in front of the class and direct him to work. Through using the PEP toolkit I identified that he had a "weak" sense of self, with low self-esteem. I identified that having frequent informal chats enabled him to get to know me a bit better and vice versa, this helped with his confrontational attitude a bit and also enabled me to identify when his work wasn't good enough and circumvent confrontation. Sometimes other students got drawn into informal chats, which rippled around the room causing disruption. I moved to try to be a bit more subtle, so talking to him when students were engaged in discussion or practical work, but this meant he was excluded somewhat from working with his peers. I think overall this had a positive impact on his self-esteem and made him feel more valued by me, which is what I was after. I am not sure how this could be adapted to ensure no disruption to his learning.
- 2) I tried making Al group leader during discussion or practical work – this was because he is the kind of person that likes to get his own way. I thought this would help him to develop skills of incorporating other people's ideas into his own and show him that I have enough confidence in him to feedback ideas. I think this worked reasonably well as he is far more confident in presenting his groups' ideas to the class, but big concerns remain around him railroading other students into following his ideas – he has not been able, nor is he interested in, incorporating other student's ideas. I suspect that is because he doesn't have a well-developed enough sense of his own self, but this didn't work as well as hoped.
- 3) During revision in lessons prior to assessments I have worked with the class to help them revise. I made Al a timetable to help him revise at home. He "lost" it after taking it home, and did the same with the 2<sup>nd</sup> revision timetable I made him. I think a lack of support at home makes it difficult to help support him. We

have worked through how to “chunk” revision into small pieces so it doesn’t feel overwhelming, but this doesn’t appear to have worked based on the grades he has achieved. A really big failure in trying to build his resilience to revision. Unsure on how to proceed, probably needs a whole-school approach to underachieving students, e.g. at school we have a “raising boy’s achievement” group in Year 8. I will try and get him into this group for next year. He is Year 7 now.

**What’s worked well:** informal chats to build a personal relationship, building self-esteem enough for AI to get more involved and more interested in his learning and contributing to question and answer discussions.

**What needs more support:** Joined up thinking about LAC across school to have a more meaningful impact, especially on test and exam grades.

**Matt Rushton: Brookfield School, Fareham**

## The student (referred to as EM)

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

EM is a year 11 female student. She is diagnosed with ADHD. She has emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties

### **What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

EM has difficulty establishing and maintaining both peer and adult relationships. The toolkit suggests:

- Consistency is very important
- Don't insist on eye contact.
- Don't push it and choose your battles carefully.

### **Other information.**

EM is on the autistic spectrum and often refuses to communicate or show her work. Multiple parental cancer scares may have increased any attachment issues. She has more difficulties with male teachers with regard to confrontations and is mainly passive (silent) with female teachers. Some exceptions to this seem to be linked with favourite subjects like art. She is very keen on doodles and cartoons and will talk about comics and films with a passion.

## Strategies and their impact.

I picked EM because of things that other staff had said before I started teaching her and my impressions of her during the first few weeks. She initially came into my room very confident and friendly but by the next lesson was very quiet and refused to communicate with me. The next few weeks followed the same pattern and she became reluctant to show her work to me when I was checking understanding and would turn her back on me when I came near as I moved about the room.

The PEP toolkit analysis suggested EM has problems forming relationships with adults. It made me think that I had made a significant mistake in my first lesson with her. The toolkit states:

“If a pupil is trying to monopolise the teacher's time with trivial questions, **clear boundaries** need to be set around this from the start. The teacher should use an **empathic but firm** tone and try to avoid sounding irritated or angry, e.g. *Donna, I know you have questions to ask. Please make a note of them, and I will come to you when I am ready, I haven't forgotten you.*”

This is exactly what had happened when she came in being friendly and confident and I had given her attention and answered a few of her questions. However, I then shut her down like I normally would by saying we need to get on with the lesson and referring to the learning objectives. When she continued I even gave her a warning about staying on task. This may have made her feel that I did not value her and immediately barriers went up.

As a result of this I tried to show EM that she was being kept in mind and not ignored; so rather than try to force the issue I told her quietly and not in front of others that if she didn't want to talk or face me during the lesson that was OK and all I needed to do was check her work to make sure that I knew she understood and was learning. I would check on her every 10 minutes or so to try and let her know I hadn't forgotten about her. This started slowly but the more I kept coming back the more she engaged. Eventually it reached the stage where she would just turn her book to me without me asking when I approached.

Next I tried to engage EM in conversation by specifically targeting her as she came into the room with a pleasant greeting using her name and saying good bye to her at the end of the lesson using the words “see you next lesson” to try and build a sense of continuity for her. Initially she ignored me but after about 3 lessons she began to mumble good morning back but nothing on leaving. This continued for sometime until I had the idea to try and interact with her outside of the classroom and I found out that her tutor room was near where I do my break time duty. I decided to try popping in and making conversation with her during these times. This improved her attitude immensely and led to a few weeks of good lessons with EM participating well.

All was going really well until the lesson after the mock exams when she came in really aggressively and when I asked her if she was alright today she replied no so I asked her why not and her response was “because you're a f\*\*\*ing crap teacher”. I dealt with this as any other pupil and she was removed from the lesson swiftly. I

remained calm and at no time shouted or argued with her and I just responded by saying that I had to follow set procedures if a pupil swears at a member of staff and I would not hold it against her when she back into class next lesson. I think her outburst resulted from her receiving her mock results that morning. She had not done very well in many subjects but had done well in science. Science was her first lesson of the day and I think she took her frustration out on me as it was her first opportunity.

I continued to use the strategies I had already established to show that I hadn't changed my attitude to her. After talking to Michelle Cain at a leading teachers meeting it was suggested that she may have taken her frustration out on me because she felt safer in the lesson and this would possibly be difficult because pupils with adult relationship issues don't like forming trusting relationships just in case they are let down by them or they go away so they tend to push people away first with their behaviour. With this in mind I decided to continue with what I was doing to show that trust was still there.

Pupils with difficulties forming relationships with adults are often nervous or uncomfortable all the time, which can lead to a "fight or flight" mentality which makes it difficult for them to concentrate. The toolkit suggested adding descriptions when talking to pupils e.g. "you look pretty frustrated with that work" or "you seem really interested in that" etc. Things slowly improved over the next few weeks until our relationship was back to her previous high.

The biggest breakthrough came when I was getting pupils to come up with their own questions about speed, distance and time. I gave EM a mini whiteboard instead of pairing her, as she prefers to sit alone. When I came by her again she had written a really good question using superheroes to set the context, so I asked her if I could set it for the class. She nodded so I shared it with the class who all completed it and had fun doing so. It wasn't long after this she raised her hand to answer questions for the first time.

Since this time EM's attitude has gone up and down but she is no longer aggressive to me. Some lessons she comes in and it is immediately obvious that she is frustrated by something so I just say to her that she doesn't have to talk to me but I need to see her work so she just pushes it towards me when I come close. Other times she is confident and takes an active role in class discussion.

In summary, it has been consistency with the little things that were most successful. It helped that she knew my attitude to her would not change, regardless of her actions and that I valued her effort by constantly checking her work. Whilst it may not be possible to put this amount of work in for every student there are some for whom it is essential.

**Mark Wynne, St Anne's Catholic School, Southampton.**

## The student (referred to as A)

### Brief factual description of the student.

- A is a KS3 student. A has had a variety of provisions during KS2 and KS3 and has had access to a variety of different schools and schooling throughout that time. There is a T.A. allocated to the group (though not always). A has intervention support both within the school and outside of the school. They have specific learning needs. Student A has severe difficulties with phonic recoding and struggles with processing meaning. They can be confrontational to peers and adults, disrupting the work of others or complaining that others are disrupting them. They appear confident, articulate (language skills appear high) and have excellent one to one social skills. Attendance and punctuality are poor (this is especially problematic as two of my lessons are period 1).
- A initially tried many strategies to avoid completing written work in my lesson, although A's writing skills are extremely weak A was intent on making others do their writing. (During KS4 A will most likely have access to a reader, scribe and extra time).
- Lateness to lesson was an issue; A usually entered the room behind the other students and due to learning needs struggled with comprehension and completing tasks successfully. Compounding this was another issue that meant that I (or the T.A.) would have to contact others to ensure that A had an appropriate start to the day to ensure success throughout the day.
- However up until this point it was reported that the only barrier to learning was learning difficulties.

### What was learned from doing the PEP toolkit analysis.

After completing the needs analysis tool, the major area was identified as **Sense of Self**. Many of the identifiers in the booklet were beginning to become apparent within my lessons, especially how I used praise and reprimands, the students sense of success and achievable goals identifiable to the student.

### Other information.

- I observed A informally at break time and in two other subjects. A's behaviour and attitude was strongly influenced by their peers and also the type and nature of interactions they were having with their peers. I noticed A responded well to praise but only particular types of praise that were specific and direct to the point.
- When working in a group A would become louder and more disruptive: the smaller the group the more focused A became. The more A was able to 'help' others the more focused the group became.
- A strategy suggested by the PEP toolkit was to set up a 'nurture' group. This group included two students who were producing excellent science work (but were quietly calm when working) and another student who has concentration issues. In fact I set up the whole class with these types of groups.



## **Strategies employed and their impacts**

### **Nurture group**

Student A had the support of two peers and the T.A, but was encouraged to support another student. This helped to enhance A's self-esteem as A was supporting as well as being supported. This worked for about 12 lessons then the relationships within the group became less positive. Student A continued to support the other student throughout the year.

Through the year the T.A. became less involved with the actual writing of work. Student A took greater responsibility for completing writing using a variety of different visual and chunking formats. This gave time and opportunity for both the T.A. and me to celebrate the science knowledge and application whilst also allowing A to increase their feeling of self-esteem.

### **Welcome with a hello and develop a sense of success.**

Every lesson started with individual greetings at the door (as per school meet and greet policy), but added to this was a personal acknowledgement of a personal success achieved the previous lesson. (I extended this to all my classes as this initiated a very positive climate for learning.) I made work personalised available for students whilst I carried this out. This was very time consuming initially and organisationally difficult as I was in different classrooms every lesson, therefore this has been constantly modified, the most successful (for this group) being the regular testing/retesting of knowledge that meant previous resources made were able to be re-used. But the students were able to see a direct correlation in revision and higher marks. this was particularly powerful for student A who started to arrive to lessons on time.

### **Revisiting the PEP toolkit regularly**

I tried to revisit the toolkit monthly, this was important because there was a significant shift in A's behaviour at the end of November that identified executive functioning and locus of control as areas of need. Some things that caused A problems were difficult to control, e.g. the timetable required me to move classrooms midway through a double lesson. This transition was handled by using Student A as the person who helped transfer resources and ensure they were promptly used at the beginning of the next lesson. This involved a briefing at the end of the previous lesson so A was set to succeed. A was also engaged in conversation with an adult during the transition from one room to another. This strategy reduced the number of behaviour incidents in the next lesson.

### **WTP (What's the point)**

This is a game where students have to try and work out what the purposes of different activities are. Student A liked this game as they were able to vocalise the purpose of why we were doing something and were able to develop this skill by being able to add details to other student's answers as the year progressed.

### **Metacognition**

The PEP toolkit provided helpful questions for working with nurture groups. I used these questions every lesson initially and after a while students in the group were began to ask the same questions of each other. This helped increase resilience; however these discussions could suddenly turn into a shouting match as the students become frustrated or angry when they became uncertain how to proceed. I found I had to slowly and repeatedly use the same questions (initially helping them formulate replies) so Student A felt that they could succeed. This was also extended to include chunking visual planner tools to help break down longer tasks into manageable pieces.

This work did not solve the problems A had; there were many instances of poor behaviour over the year in my lesson, but after one particular time the student sought me out to apologise directly to me. No need for restorative justice!

In terms of targets, Student A achieved their end of KS target for the year. In a written GCSE part paper they achieved above their target level for GCSE.

**Gill Quinn: Priory Secondary School, Southsea**

## The student (referred to as MK)

### **Brief factual description of the student.**

MK came to the school in year 7 with some significant behavioural problems and she would often have conflicts with classmates. This has improved as she progressed through years. As a year 11 student MK is quiet in the classroom but often brings outside conflict into the classroom. Her attendance remains low at 80% and she misses some science lessons due to ELSA meetings. This compounds her lack of motivation due to her lack of confidence of the subject as she had missed so many lessons.

There is often some conflict with other members of the class that occurs outside the classroom and as a result MK sometimes misses parts of lessons and when she returns there is tension in the air, which affects learning of both MK and other students, although rarely are there incidents in the classroom.

Her target is a grade D

She currently has both maths and English tutors but is resisting any extra science support.

She has SEN support and there is question mark over whether she has dyslexia.

### **What was learned form doing the PEP toolkit analysis.**

The PEP toolkit highlighted ***motivation and locus control*** and ***Executive function*** as her 2 major areas of concern.

- Difficulty in remaining focused.
- Homework
- Needs extra time in exams (has never asked for it)
- Finds it hard to continue with ideas she finds difficult (afraid to struggle)

MK needs work broken down so that tasks are manageable. She also needs a boost of confidence. She feels that she will fail even if she tries.

## **Strategies tried and their impact**

In long term preparation for the GCSE exam I started to give her command word pyramids to help her understand what exactly the exam questions were asking her. I gave her those as she would often start activities but not complete them. There would be no effort on her part, due to a lack of confidence. The aim of giving her these prompts and a clear understanding of the command words was to give her the confidence needed to 'have a go' at the questions. As a result I was able to praise her in a one to one situation. I choose a one to one situation, as I was aware that she would be uncomfortable with receiving praise in front of the class.

This was repeated on many occasions over a 6 month period which I believe reinforced the notion that the outcome of effort is progress and praise to which MK responded positively. On these occasions MK was engaged and enthusiastic about the lesson and subject content. MK was increasingly finishing tasks and receiving feedback as her confidence grew.

As well as displaying motivation and locus control traits, MK also showed signs of issues with executive functioning. She seemed to have a poor working memory. I started to use a flashcard game that required MK to write keywords for the topic on flashcards with a definition for each on the back of that card. The task/game was to lay out the keywords with the definitions facing down, choose a keyword and give the definition from memory. If correct she placed the card with the definition facing upwards and she would carry on until all of the cards had been turned. If she got one wrong she had to start again. This exercise was met with a steely determination to complete the game. However there were occasions where outside influences caused MK to become distracted.

Another strategy that I tried in order to address the executive functioning was to use models as much as possible to help her picture the science. An example of this was using plasticine models to go through the stages of mitosis. By the end of the lesson MK was able to clearly describe the process of mitosis using keywords in a clear order. I also modelled the use of punnet squares using snap cubes with a list of keywords. This modelling was done in a two to one situation and again the outcome was positive. MK showed a real interest in the genetics topic that was taught.

Towards the end of the year as the content of the course had been taught the focus of lessons became revision. This change of emphasis motivated MK as she felt that there was something tangible to work for. She also felt much more confident as over that previous few months she felt that she had progressed and had received feedback from myself to reinforce this. As a result my focus became solely on executive function.

To structure her revision and to develop a meaningful routine, I gave her mindmap templates for each of the topics she needed to revise and I spent some one to one time with her going through how to use them so that they were beneficial. MK over a period of 2 weeks ended up weaning herself off the templates and completing her own mindmaps. Then next target was to get her to apply the content knowledge to exam style questions. Throughout this process I was regularly giving her quiet praise.

I gave MK a revision booklet in which I had chunked the topics so she was able to set goals for herself during the lesson. This allowed her to tick off topics that she had practiced and she said that she felt that was able to self assess the topics and

identify what she needed to go back a revise again. When she felt that she didn't understand a topic I held mini seminars with her and other members of the class. Both MK and the class responded well to the seminars.

There were however strategies that did not work. As a visual task I gave MK a set of scaffolded questions that she needed to answer while watching a video on GM crops. She watched the video and became distracted. Therefore didn't answer any of the questions and could only remember one or two points from the video.

On reflection I may have been lucky in the strategies that I employed and hit upon interventions that MK responded to positively and therefore only had one strategy that really didn't work. Although I did have to continually work upon the activities and improve them throughout the time I employed them with MK. I feel that MK had made good progress as a result of using the PEP toolkit to identify specific issues that she had.

**Andrew Platt, Amery Hill School, Alton.**