

From Pippa Manson

Self Second

Our son Thomas, came back home from the (Self Second) residential visit to Hagg Farm so excited and talkative, wanting to share all the experiences with us. We cannot think of any other time that our son has spoken or shown us a positive attitude about school. This trip did wonders to promote his confidence, self-esteem and feeling he can be a success, something that Thomas finds very difficult in a classroom environment...All we can say is thank you....

Unsolicited letter from a parent to the head teacher of a participating school

Thomas, and other pupils like him, have been taking part in Nottinghamshire LEA's "Self Second", a programme for Year 10 pupils at danger of becoming disaffected with education and/or at risk of exclusion. Each year two or three schools, selected on data such as GCSE results and exclusion rates are invited to take part. The school identifies a teacher or youth worker to lead the project and eight to ten young people who the school believe will most benefit.

Through a combination of LEA and school funding (and occasional local sponsorship) each group undertake a week-long adventure residential at the LEA's Hagg Farm Outdoor Education Centre followed by weekly activity in a community-based project of the group's own devising. Projects this year have included constructing wildlife areas in local primary schools, work in community homes, and researching and publishing a booklet on local activities for young people. Key to the success of Self Second are personalised targets set with each pupil, positive relationships developed within the group and leader and the self-esteem the pupils develop through success in adventure activities and in completing projects in the community.

At the end of the school year, project leaders complete an evaluation. These are briefly summarised as follows:

	School A	School B	School 3C
Total pupils at start of project	8	8	8
Number of permanent exclusions	0	0	0
Number at end of year 10	13	7	7

Outcomes noted by the project leaders included:

"The value of being together on the adventure residential was incalculable. Individual's confidence grew as did the team's ability to operate. The experience was vital to the project and enabled us to move forward". School A

"The pupils have benefited from different learning styles and environments - improving social skills and boosting motivation and self-esteem...It has allowed them to add something positive to their local environment; something they can be proud of." School B

“It has provided an outlet for pupils, whose records were negative, to have some positive aspects on their school records” School B

“Several students on the course are ‘quieter’ and showing real signs of maturity. One student in particular (with a previous poor record) has not been excluded since joining Self Second. Several teachers have commented on the group’s improvement.” School C

“It has provided alternative curriculum opportunities which were not previously included in our key stage 4 provision. This project has now been taken up by the school and will form part of the school’s Key Stage 4 curriculum next year” School C

Project Leaders are asked to rate pupils’ progress over the year. These are summarised as follows:

	School A average score from 9 pupils	School B Average score from 7 pupils
Contribution to discussions	4.4	3.8
Work as a team member	4	4.1
Listen to others	4	4.1
Ask for help when appropriate	3.8	4.1
Accept and act on good advice	4.1	3.8
Identify own strengths / weaknesses	3.6	4.1
Set targets for self and group	3.7	4.1
Use time well, meet deadlines	3.5	3.7
Attendance	4.3	4
On report, exclusion/incidents	4.3	3.4 (6 pupils scored 4 one pupil scored 1)
Relate appropriately to most adults	4.5	4
Self esteem	4.3	4
Peer relationships	4.5	4.1
Attitude	4.4	4.1

1= much worse, 2= little worse, 3=little change, 4= some improvement, 5=great improvement

School C did not complete this section of the form.

Next year, Thomas and his colleagues will be moving on to “Taking Off”, a year 11 project which focuses on individualised and vocational learning. Meanwhile other pupils, in these and other schools, will be starting out on Self Second.

Notes:

Self Second has been running In Nottinghamshire since 1995. The project challenges pupils to consider how their behaviour affects others... hence the name “Self Second”.

From Clare Defaye

Nottinghamshire have a project which has run for ten years called Self Second which is aimed at disaffected KS 4 youngsters. Schools are invited to take part and provided with matched funding to work with a group of up to 10 students for

a session a week throughout their KS4. The project starts with a residential week at Hagg Farm, the LEA's Outdoor Education Centre early in the autumn term. High staffing ratios, the medium of adventurous activities and a carefully planned programme which includes pupils in planning and evaluation provide opportunities for teambuilding and development of self-esteem. The project leaders from participating schools attend a training event and take part in the residential. The residential week helps the project leader to establish good relationships with their group and builds up a wealth of shared experiences which are frequently recalled in the following years. Following the residential experience, the group design and carry out a practical community project from school. Time is also allocated to setting and reviewing of individual personal targets with the pupils.

Because Self Second is monitored and regularly evaluated by the LEA, the long term benefits of the outdoor education experience are more easily recognised than is often the case. The residential outdoor activity element is invariably seen by pupils, project leaders and external evaluators as the most crucial and valuable element of the project.

One boy was sufficiently encouraged by his positive experience, particularly of climbing during the residential week to make a success of the remainder of his schooling. His relationship with the project leader endured and his climbing developed. The project leader received postcards for several years from all over the country detailing the young man's climbing exploits.

Several young men with tough, streetwise images developed sufficient confidence through managed exposure to challenging situations to admit to feelings of fear and insecurity. Back in school, this allowed them to show a softer side to their personalities where before they had been difficult to reach and help. One such, demonstrated an unexpected interest in plants. He spent hours carefully transplanting seedlings as part of the follow-up project and went on to take a horticultural course when he left school.

Several students, having raised their sense of self-worth and their aspirations through a positive experience of facing and succeeding in overcoming challenges, returned to school with renewed determination to apply themselves to their GCSE courses. They opted out of the rest of the project and returned to a fulltime GCSE programme. Several others, having established a good supportive relationship with the project leader, were able to use some of their allocated project time to get the help they needed with their academic work.

One group maintained the ethic of teamwork and mutual support developed on the residential week to the extent that each of their school sessions would start with a team meeting. These sessions followed an agenda put together by the group, where issues relating not just to school but also to relationships with parents and friends could be aired and discussed.

One girl with very difficult home circumstances developed a good relationship with one of the outdoor instructors and added her to her self-created support network. Now in her twenties she still occasionally makes contact for support. She still enjoys walking in the countryside which she refers to as 'doing Trailblazer' (after the award scheme used on the residential week)

Although there have been some disappointments, there have been many, many successes on this project. Many pupils have found increased motivation and

their attendance and attainment has improved. Some pupils, according to parents and/or teachers have 'turned around'. The practical projects have resulted in real benefits for local communities. These have included murals for a hospital, a completely refurbished garden in the grounds of an old people's home, school allotments, individually designed and carved benches for a local primary school and a brochure of activities available for young people in the area. Young people who have been considered at risk of failing within or being failed by the system have been helped to make a positive contribution to their community. In doing so they have learned practical and social skills and often achieved a status in their own and the eyes of others which has made a significant and enduring difference.