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Birmingham School Works to Overturn Damning Ofsted Report

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A West Midlands school which has been placed in special measures by Ofsted is adopting a radical approach to exclusions and behaviour problems in order to make a step-change in its culture for pupils and staff.

The most recent Ofsted inspection at Shenley Academy, in Birmingham, found a catalogue of issues including: under-achievement by disadvantaged and special educational needs pupils; low attendance rates, especially from disadvantaged and special educational needs pupils and a high rate of fixed-term exclusions.

In response, the school, which is run by the multi-academy trust E-ACT, has seen changes to its leadership team, including appointing in a new Head of



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Inclusion and SEN. Jonathan Hickman, who has been tasked with improving the school's culture and, specifically, with improving the attendance of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students.

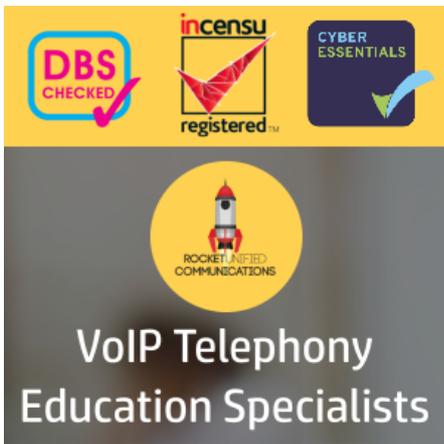
"For me, children's social and emotional health is where you start to make changes. If you improve this then educational attainment follows. This is a challenging school with high levels of deprivation and we want to create a really different environment where staff and students look out for each other," he said.

One of the main tools Mr Hickman is using to make these changes is The Thrive Approach, which is based on neuroscience and attachment theory to equip adults with the knowledge, insights and resources needed to develop the relationships that help children to flourish and learn. Mr Hickman trained in the Approach at his previous school, North Birmingham Academy, which saw a drop in fixed term exclusions after it introduced the Thrive Approach as well as achieving its best-ever GCSE results. In November, the school won the Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award for Secondary Schools 2019 in recognition for the work it has done to create positive relationships between teachers and pupils.

Already, making these changes has started to pay

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off at Shenley with a noticeable reduction in staff turnover, down from 30 staff leaving the first term Mr Hickman was appointed to a single figure turnover last term. The school is now hoping that other areas such as attendance and achievement will improve as the changes take effect.

Shenley Academy wants to share its journey with the local community and is inviting teachers, social workers and anyone else interested in children’s mental health to come into the school to find out more about the changes it is making and to watch a screening of the film *Paper Tigers*. The 2015 documentary charts a year in the life of an American high school whose Principal adopts a trauma-sensitive approach to its pupils, many of whom have a history of truancy, behavioural problems and substance abuse. The results are astonishing – and Shenley’s leadership team are hoping that that it will see similar outcomes.

The film, along with talks from Mr Hickman and Thrive’s Kay Hamilton, will be screened on January 16 from 4.30pm at the school. Attendance is free and open to all – but please email enquiries@thriveapproach.com to reserve a place.

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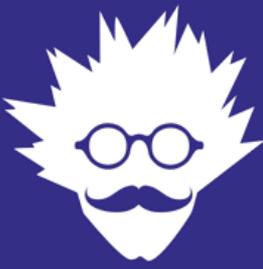
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