



**Villiers Park**

Educational Trust

# Impact Report

September 2017 - August 2018

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Empowering young people to succeed

Registered Charity Number 225920

# An introduction from Jordan Jones

## Swindon Scholar Alumnus

Let me start by looking back. In Year 9, I was less interested in my school subjects and never thought of my education beyond the current year. I never saw the bigger picture. I thought perhaps architecture was for me. I might have made it to university.

I then joined the Swindon Scholars Programme and now I can see that everything can change in a few years.

Being a Scholar has given me the confidence and maturity to push myself further, it's broken me out of one track thoughts and when it's coming up to difficult times with school work, it's motivated me to do more.

I had the raw skills within me, but my regular sessions with my learning mentor Becki, and the Skills4Success framework has helped me define my skills and make them work for me. For example, I've always been quite headstrong. But Becki has taught me to take that role and transfer it into a more communicative way of explaining my views to people, when working in groups.

Becki and I talked about my career goals and she encouraged me to do more research into architecture. I realised it was too 'artsy' for me and that I'm more about making things work, being a problem solver and developing a project until it's complete. Civil engineering was right for me and Villiers Park helped me see that.

A few months before my A-levels, I attended a maths Inspiring Excellence course. I arrived tired and worn down – it was a difficult year, and I wasn't sleeping



properly. But the course was revitalising. I loved working with like-minded people from different walks of life and it allowed me to re-centre my thoughts. I left full of energy, motivated, with a healthy mindset and a calm head, ready to do my A-levels.

Admittedly, I found them difficult. I know that without Villiers Park, I wouldn't have tried so hard. I wouldn't have had the foresight that civil engineering was something I enjoyed, and I wouldn't have got to my end goal. I am now in my first few months at the University of Plymouth studying Civil and Coastal Engineering.

I honestly haven't seen or heard of anything better than Villiers Park, which can work you towards university and give you the motivation, skills and confidence to go further and beyond what you ever thought you could.

*Jordan Jones*



# Why we exist

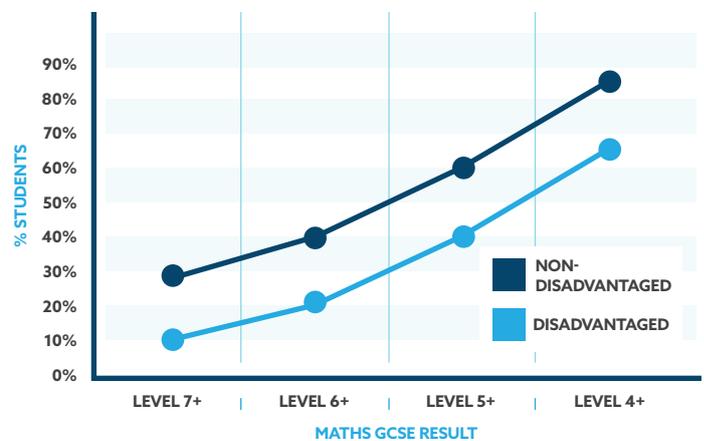
We believe every young person should have an equal opportunity to reach their potential. In reality, their background often determines where they end up. The UK has one of the worst rates of social mobility in the developed world. Our education system is failing millions of young people.

A high ability student from a less-advantaged background is more than twice as likely to underachieve in their GCSEs as their non-disadvantaged peers of equal ability.

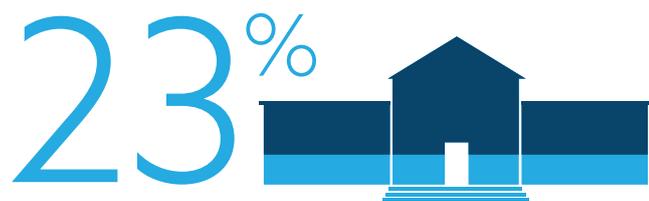
This impacts on GCSE and A-level grades, progression to higher education, access to competitive professions and the ability to break through class ceilings. These young people are prevented from achieving the success they are perfectly capable of.

It is not right, nor fair. It's a tragedy for the individuals, their families and communities, and a national socio-economic disaster.

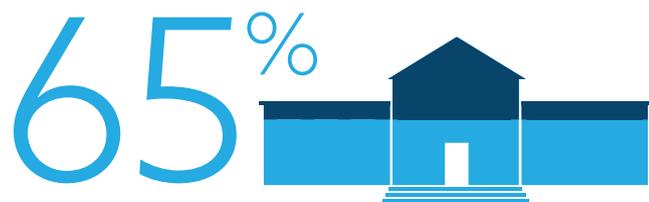
GCSE maths results for students in England who scored level four or above at Key Stage 2



Just



of all state school students compared to



of all independently schooled students progress to the most selective universities\*

What barriers are these young people facing?



Caring for a sibling or parent



No role model experience of higher education



Low household income





We empower young people  
to succeed and become  
leaders in their field

# What we do

We deliver unique and tailored programmes that raise academic, personal and employability skills. Our programmes increase aspirations, boost motivation and create opportunities.

We recognise that to tackle social mobility, a wide range of problems need addressing: from support in early years, to focusing on the reasons why young people become NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). We are experts in working with high ability young people aged 14-19 from less-advantaged backgrounds. We have a long standing track record of success working with this group of people and our programmes are proven to have significant impact. We see our work as one of the pieces of the social mobility puzzle.



## Scholars Programme

A four year support system for students from Year 10 to Year 13 currently in six regions of the UK, equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.



## INVOLVE

Students create and lead an enrichment activity in their school or college for their peers, developing their Skills4Success but also enhancing the learning environment for hundreds more young people.



## Inspiring Excellence Programme

Subject specific residential courses for high ability Year 12 and 13 students across the UK. The courses challenge and inspire participants, and have lasting, transformational impact.



## Bespoke Programmes

We run a number of bespoke programmes working with organisations and partners across the UK who share our mission and principles, utilising our expertise and models.



# Our Scholars are closing the gap

We have analysed our Scholars' GCSE results using the Progress 8 measure used by the Department of Education to demonstrate the progress a student makes between Key Stage 2 and 4.

Progress 8 data shows that on average a student from a disadvantaged background will achieve four grades lower at GCSE than their more advantaged peers. Our Scholars have achieved GCSE results in line with the national average for more advantaged students of equal ability. By doing so, they have completely closed the performance gap, enabling them to compete on a level playing field.

## GCSE attainment



## Villiers Park in Numbers



**10** regions in the UK are home to our programmes



**87p** out of every £1 donated is spent on charitable activities



**700** students are on our Scholars Programme



**50** tutors, who travel from as far afield as Europe and USA, teach on our Inspiring Excellence courses



**43** staff work in our centre in Foxton and our regions across the United Kingdom



# Skills4Success

Success in exams is important, but we believe that high attainment is a direct result of the development of employability and other key skills and behaviours. These are our Skills4Success.

The twenty Skills4Success were developed with reference to independent industry research and reports and the expertise of our staff across the country.

Every programme, activity and mentoring session we run focuses on developing these skills, according to each individual's own strengths and areas for development.

Scholars will regularly self-evaluate and be aware of their own progression throughout their four years with us. Those on shorter courses, such as Inspiring Excellence, will be introduced to Skills4Success and will understand how their experience develops and enhances their skills throughout their time with us.

## Behaviours



## Personal attributes



# Our Year

## The Highlights



**September 2017**

A new partnership with Study Higher - a network of higher education (HE) providers whose aim is to encourage young people from less-advantaged backgrounds from Swindon and surrounding areas into HE - saw us launch Fantastic Futures. Funded by NCOP (National Collaborative Outreach Programme) via Study Higher, Fantastic Futures supports Year 10-13 students with mentoring, INVOLVE and a residential course.



**November 2017**

Inspire2INVOLVE was launched in Plymouth, in partnership with Downing College, Cambridge and South Essex, in partnership with Emmanuel College, Cambridge. This programme works with Year 12s who have the opportunity to attend an Inspiring Excellence course and to run an INVOLVE project. Diane Henderson, Assistant Vice Principle and Head of Sixth form at Marine Academy said her students have benefitted immeasurably. "Inspire2INVOLVE fosters independence, raises aspirations and greatly enhances self-esteem," she said. "It enables young people to glimpse the possibilities which await them and widens their horizons. It is an invaluable programme."



**January 2018**

We welcomed our first students funded by the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO) - also part of NCOP (see September) - who aim to help young people from the region with little or no experience of university to explore the world of higher education. Students from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire attended a three day residential in Foxton for academic content delivered by our tutors, to start work on INVOLVE projects and to tackle a bespoke escape room challenge focusing on Skills4Success such as negotiation, resilience and problem solving.



**October 2017**

We launched our Atlas Appeal, seeking £10,000 to update our library into an innovative and modern learning space. The library is an important space for the 1,200 students who stay in Foxton each year; for quiet study, group activities and relaxing. Within six months the target was achieved and the library was fully redecorated and reorganised, with the addition of new technology to accommodate teaching and presentations. Thank you to those who generously supported the appeal.



**December 2017**

Heidi Allen, Conservative MP for South Cambridgeshire, and Robert Halfon, MP for Harlow and Chair of the Education Select Committee, visited our Foxton centre. Heidi invited Robert as she was keen for him to know more about our work - which she described as 'phenomenal' in a follow-up article she wrote in numerous local newsletters. The pair met with staff and enjoyed lunch with students on the Computer Science Inspiring Excellence course. We are thrilled to have gained a strong supporter who has a pivotal parliamentary position regarding education.



**February 2018**

On Valentine's night the first episode of Generation Gifted - a Blast! Films documentary - aired on BBC 2, following the lives of six young people from less-advantaged backgrounds from Year 9 to GCSE, including our Tyneside STEM Scholar, Liam. A science whizz, Liam bowled over the audience with his brightness, compassion and drive. His first year as a Scholar included a visit to Reece Group, a maths masterclass and a two-day residential in Foxton. The next instalment is in February, tune in!



### March 2018

INVOLVE projects were organised in honour of British Science Week – many funded by grants from British Science Association. Highlights included ‘My Robots are Bananas’, a session run by three Year 12 students from Suffolk One school for 60 Year 7 pupils, testing the limits of potassium power using bananas to complete circuits and play video games. In Swindon, the Year 11 STEM Club at Lydiard Park Academy ran an afternoon of activities for Year 8 students, creating memorable ‘wow’ moments to encourage their peers to consider STEM subjects beyond GCSE - including greeting the students with dry ice smoke flowing from the sinks.



### May 2018

Twenty-eight students aged 11-14 gave speeches on topics including artificial intelligence, transfer caps in football and the economics of hope at the PRIDE Talks, an event organised by five Year 12 Hastings and Bexhill Scholars - all Sussex Coast College students – for their INVOLVE project. They ran workshops to help the students develop ideas for their talks, build presentation skills and cope with anxiety and they ran the event, hosted at The Hastings Academy. “The Principal and senior staff members reflected on both the capabilities of their students and the impact Villiers Park is having on the school through INVOLVE,” said Alex Grant, Hastings Scholars Programme Manager.



### July 2018

Five of our Scholars took part in the first work experience scheme of its kind at the Houses of Parliament. The Scholars – who’d all love to work in politics - were assigned to a department or Select Committee for a week, giving them the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of how they operate, witness Parliament in action, ask lots of questions and carry out some meaningful work. Yasir Yusuf, 18, a Hastings & Bexhill Scholar rose at 5am for his commute, joining the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. “We’ve heard perspectives from the Deputy Clerk who has been here since 1986 and staff who have been here for two years, so it’s been really interesting.”



### April 2018

Two groups of Scholars who were in Foxton for their residential trip benefited from time with speakers invited through the Founders4Schools platform, as part of the ongoing partnership we have with them. Four speakers - leaders in business and research industries - spoke to the Scholars about their profession and the educational journey they took to get to that point. They then supported the groups with their projects, focusing on presentation skills and how to communicate key messages in their pitches.



### June 2018

BBC Newsreader Reeta Chakrabarti was amongst guest speakers at a special event held to mark the opening of the Mike Baker room. Mike, an award-winning BBC Education Correspondent and Villiers Park trustee, who was pivotal in the development of the Scholars Programme, died in 2012. Money raised in his memory has allowed us to transform the previously outdated room into a modern, bright learning space. Reeta, who worked with Mike for many years, joined former colleagues, friends, family and supporters to celebrate the positive legacy he’s left for young people.



### August 2018

Three of our Scholars were amongst 43 students at Trinity College’s first residential for Year 11s from less-advantaged backgrounds. We partnered with Trinity to deliver the residential, offering students an opportunity to experience life at Cambridge and develop key skills. Elsewhere, 18 A-level students aiming for a law career joined a residential we developed in partnership with global law firm Allen & Overy, who aim to improve social mobility in the industry. A&O Accelerate gave students an unrivalled insight into the world of law and helped them to develop key skills to aid their studies.

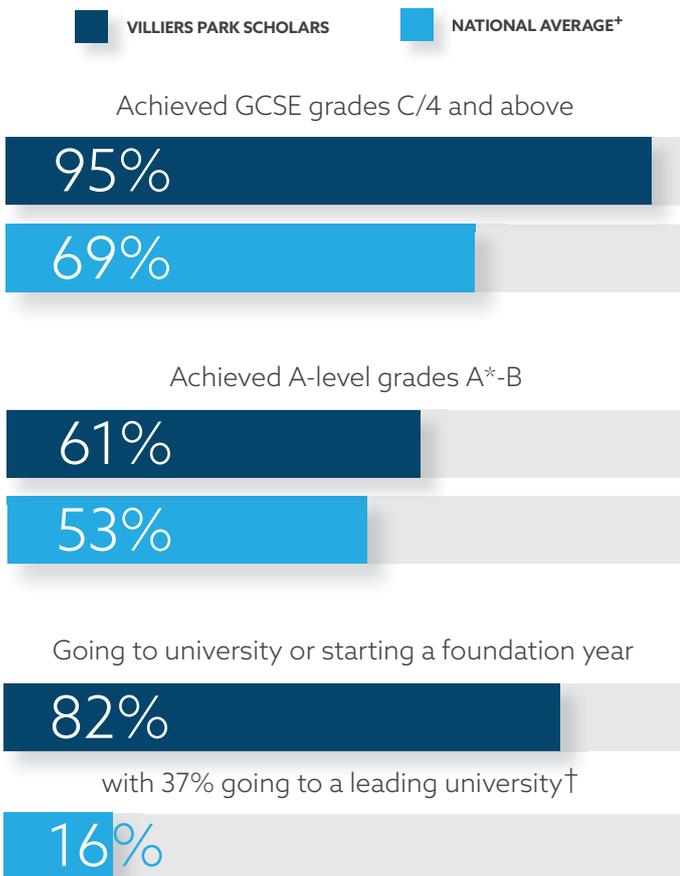
# Scholars Programme

The Scholars Programme is a four-year scheme for high ability students from Year 10 to Year 13 in regions suffering high deprivation, low attainment and low Higher Education take-up.

Over 700 students are on our programmes across six regions of the UK, Hastings, Swindon, Tyneside (STEM), Norfolk, East Lancashire and Crawley. The Scholars Programme equips students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed, using evidence based support such as one-to-one mentoring, skill building activities, residential events, and meaningful interactions with employers and universities.

## Our Impact

### Results



### Skills4Success



**98%** improved their confidence<sup>±</sup>



**98%** improved their communication skills<sup>±</sup>



**93%** improved their problem solving skills<sup>±</sup>





## Who are our Scholars?

♀ 56% female

♂ 44% male



**66%** first generation in their family to go to university



**48%** eligible for pupil premium and/or free school meals



**24%** from black and minority ethnic groups



**3%** young carers



**59%** from a family with a low household income – under £33,000 a year



## Georgia Rhodes

### Tyneside Scholar sets her sights on a future in medicine

"I didn't see myself as somebody intelligent," reflects Georgia Rhodes, a Year 12 student at George Stephenson High School in Newcastle. She's looking back at her Year 10 self, when she joined the Tyneside STEM Scholars Programme.

She also wasn't sure about her career, thinking perhaps law would be a possibility.

Fast-forward to now. Georgia is studying biology and chemistry - subjects she'd never have chosen before. So what's changed?

"It was developing the skills I now have, such as confidence and presentation skills during residentials and my mentor's support," she said. "She told me about evening lectures for medical students at Newcastle University that I could attend. I went along and it showed me that medicine was something I could, and wanted, to do."

Georgia values that her mentoring sessions are tailored to her own needs, giving her dedicated time to focus on herself - something she doesn't get elsewhere.

"The support I get feels personal, impartial and balanced," she said.

She can see she's a lot more confident and self-assured. In contrast, she's noticed that her friends have less idea what they're going to do next - or how to do it.

"I can see the barriers I'd have faced without the Scholars Programme," she said. "I was clueless before about how anything really works, but now I'm confident, have a recognition of my ability in science and I'm really enjoying my A-levels."



Georgia (middle) with fellow Scholars

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// I can see the barriers I'd have faced without the Scholars Programme //

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## Chris Rogers

“Outstanding opportunities that open doors”

Chris Rogers is Lead Practitioner for High Achievers at The Holy Trinity School in Crawley, where the Scholars Programme has run for four years.

“I’m really impressed with the Scholars Programme. It is really well managed with highly professional staff who are committed and engaged. The resources and opportunities provided are outstanding.

“The bespoke university experiences offer students amazing, personalised opportunities to develop their interests. The range of masterclasses and residentials have been a hit and the one-to-one learning mentor support has been invaluable.

“The programme complements the careers and university progression work we do at Holy Trinity. We aim to develop the independence of our learners and this is strongly reflected by Villiers Park.

“It has helped improve students’ confidence, character, resilience and knowledge and opened many doors for them that they simply would not have known how to do so on their own. The benefits have been obvious.”



“ We aim to develop the independence of our learners and this is strongly reflected at Villiers Park ”

# Inspiring Excellence Programme

Throughout the academic year, we run subject specific residential courses for high ability Year 12 and 13 students. The courses are open to students from any state school in the UK who are from a less-advantaged background.

The students study their chosen subject at a university level, in a course aimed to challenge and inspire participants, increase their awareness of opportunities available in their subject area and develop their Skills4Success. Running for over 50 years, they've proven to have lasting, transformational impact.

## Our Impact

### Results

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE STUDENTS NATIONAL AVERAGE<sup>+</sup>

Achieved A-level grades A\*-B

93%

53%

Going to university

88%

with 80% of those going to a leading university<sup>‡</sup>

27.9%

### Outcomes



**98.7%** of students rated their courses as good or excellent<sup>±</sup>



**94%** of students felt their passion for the subject had increased<sup>±</sup>



**13%** of students are going to Oxbridge



### Skills4Success

**91.5%** of students improved at least five Skills4Success, such as problem solving and teamwork<sup>±</sup>



<sup>+</sup>National data from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and UCAS, 2017. <sup>‡</sup>Defined as the top 25% of UK universities.

<sup>±</sup>Based on feedback from Inspiring Excellence students from 2017/18.



“ The stress of A-levels can make you lose sight of why you love what you study. Villiers Park gave me the freedom to enjoy a subject for what it really was ”

Georgina, Neuroscience Inspiring Excellence student, now at University of Cambridge

## Kaila Thompson

"Inspiring Excellence doesn't even come close to describing it"

Kaila Thompson from Belfast caught a plane and a train to attend her Exploration of Shakespeare Inspiring Excellence course, an experience she says was 'beyond worthwhile'...

### What was the course like?

The course was very different from school – in the best of ways! I expected it to be different in relation to the academic aspect as we would be working at a much higher level, however the practical and social aspects of the course were also brilliantly different. We were a group of young people from a multitude of backgrounds, who would have otherwise never met, brought together by shared interests and a drive to embark on experiences beyond the classrooms we were used to.

### What did you gain from the course?

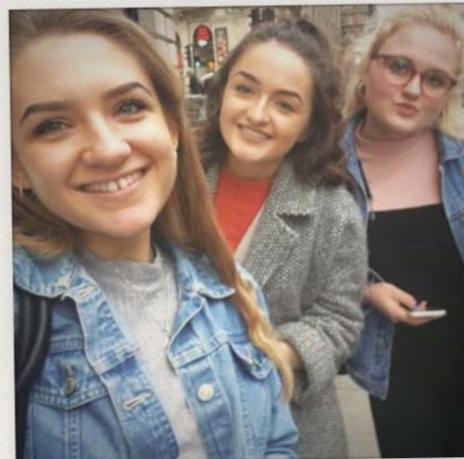
Improved confidence. I never imagined that five days would have such an amazing impact. The course was designed in a way that not only helped me to learn, but helped me to enjoy that learning.

### Did you treat school life any differently afterwards?

I noticed that I used my own initiative a lot more once I was back in school. I pushed myself to become more involved in new things and tried to become more independent in my studies. Also, strangely, I feel it made me appreciate my school life even more than I already did. It made me reconsider why teachers push us to be independent thinkers, to do things which despite making us nervous, make us more confident.

### Did it make you feel differently about university?

It made me look forward to university. I feel that - like many young people - I had become accustomed to the support network within my school community and was



*Kaila and friends*

wary about having to leave it behind. After the course I realised that this didn't have to be a daunting aspect of progressing on from school to university, as I proved to myself that I could still thrive and reach my potential in new environments.

### What would you tell someone who'd never heard of Inspiring Excellence courses?

I would tell them that 'Inspiring Excellence' doesn't even come close to describing the magnitude of how worthwhile the experience is, and that it not only inspires academic excellence but it inspires a whole new perspective on many aspects of life. The experience is beyond worthwhile and I only wish more people had similar opportunities to the one I had.

### Villiers Park works with young people who typically face more barriers than others getting into the best universities or careers. Do you feel that represents your own experience? If so, has the course made any difference?

I feel that the barriers I faced when deciding on the best university path for me were more personal than academic and so I didn't see how the course would break any of these barriers down. However, it was through this academic experience that I realised personal barriers should never stop anyone from pursuing their journey to reach their full potential.

**Kaila secured four A-A\*s in her A-levels and has started her English degree at Queen's University in Belfast.**



# INVOLVE

INVOLVE sees students creating, launching and leading an enrichment activity in their school or college for their peers. The activities must be educational and examples include science clubs or arranging visiting speakers.

This develops their Skills4Success, such as project management and resilience, and also enhances the learning environment for hundreds more young people – a benefit we, and schools, hugely value. An award system recognises the level of effort input into the project, and INVOLVE is recognised by UCAS applications as a contribution towards preparation for Higher Education.

## Our Impact

**418** students planned, delivered and completed projects and **2,381** beneficiaries took part in these INVOLVE projects\*



**98%** of students have gained a better overall understanding of personal qualities and employability skills<sup>±</sup>



**98%** of students are likely to talk about INVOLVE on their personal statement or CV<sup>±</sup>



**97%** of students rated their experience as good or excellent<sup>±</sup>

## Skills4Success



**99%** of students improved their confidence<sup>±</sup>



**97%** of students improved their teamwork skills<sup>±</sup>



**95%** of students say they have enhanced their leadership skills<sup>±</sup>

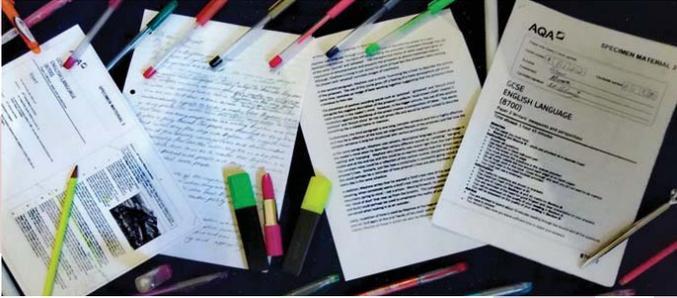


**94%** of students say their project management skills have got better<sup>±</sup>



# INVOLVE

## Around the UK



### Murwa's mentoring for English students

Murwa, an East Lancashire Scholar, mentored five students as they approached their GCSE English Language exam.

The one-to-one sessions were tailored to the student's specific needs and they worked on practice papers, which Murwa marked and gave constructive feedback on. She also taught creative writing techniques (an area many found tricky), developed a word bank and created a booklet with model answers.

"Mentoring greatly influenced their style of writing and their response to exam questions improved significantly," said Murwa. "I am delighted that many of them achieved grade 8s and 9s."

"It is such a rewarding experience to help others, and although I was delivering the sessions, I learnt so much from my peers too," she said.

Murwa hopes to continue mentoring this year. She can see how her own skills have developed, admitting that prior to the project, her own confidence was low.

"The project has helped me develop confidence in my abilities and to be more assertive. I've communicated and interacted with other people and shared ideas – something I wasn't able to do previously – and it's also improved my organisational skills."



### Sign language for beginners

Sadie Smith and fellow Norfolk Scholars at The Hewett Academy in Norfolk spotted an opportunity to teach Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils sign language - something not previously taught at their school. They held an assembly and were surprised by the number of people who wanted to try it out.

With training and resources from the British Sign Language, Sign2Speak was launched.

"After only eight lessons, students can hold an understandable conversation, including their names, how old they are and what they like to eat," said Sadie. "I think the group's success is because as a team we pulled together to make sure it was the best it could be, but also, the motivation we got seeing the students enjoying this new language."

The team hope to continue their club this academic year, increasing the number of students. "I am very proud of what we have achieved," said Sadie. "If you put time and work into something you want to achieve, you can achieve it. This is very important because with my GCSE's coming up, it's a beneficial mentality to have."

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“ As a team we pulled together to make sure it was the best it could be ”

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## STEM rockets for new Year 7s

Students at Queen Katharine Academy (QKA) on our 2020 STEM Scholars Programme led two, one hour science activity sessions for the school's 'Step Up Day' for new Year 7s. The challenge: make a rocket and see whose would fly furthest.

Yvonne McMenemy, Student Support Officer at QKA, said she was impressed at how quickly the students, who previously didn't know each other well, formed a bond: "They allocated tasks and shared the workload evenly, quickly identifying key strengths of the team," she said. "I saw a definite improvement in their confidence and communication skills. Their reflective capabilities also improved: as they ran the activity a number of times, they took the time to review and refine the activities over the two days."

The Step Up Day is an important feature of the school's calendar. Yvonne said it was clear that the new Year 7s really benefited from the activities. "It's vital our potential students enjoy the day as it helps to positively reinforce the school choice, and the feedback from them all was excellent."

“

I saw a definite improvement in my students' confidence and communication skills

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## Revision tips for home-schooled peers

Nayan and Lillie from New College in Swindon were on our Fantastic Futures programme. They aimed their project at 'pre 16s' – mainly home schooled students who attended their college in the lead up to their GCSEs.

"Being close to exam time, we thought it would be fitting for us to pass on helpful tricks that would benefit them," explained Nayan. Their GCSE revision session was launched.

Nayan, Lillie and their group worked on a presentation, choosing topics to specialise in such as how to use technology and understanding your learning type, and organised advertising. Over 30 students came to the 45 minute session.

"The project was smooth and successful and it was great to hear from students at the end of the presentation, and their tutors, who were thrilled," said Lillie.

"I think because we ourselves went through the hardships of GCSEs only a year ago, it made our information more valuable to them," added Nayan.

New College are keeping the presentation as a resource for future year groups. "It's fantastic that our work is being regarded highly," said Lillie. "We gained several skills such as leadership, organisation and time management, and the fact that the outcome has been recognised is a great achievement."

# Bespoke Programmes

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We have partnered with a number of organisations across the country to deliver bespoke programmes for young people from less-advantaged backgrounds. To do this, we take elements of our core work that are proven to impact young people to develop programmes that complement the work of the partner organisation and our shared missions.

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## Inspire2INVOLVE

Launched in late 2017 and comprising two pilot models - one in partnership with Emmanuel College, Cambridge in South Essex, one in partnership with Downing College, Cambridge in Plymouth - Inspire2INVOLVE is now developing into its second year. The scheme, for Year 12 students from less-advantaged backgrounds, includes attendance on an Inspiring Excellence course and students running an INVOLVE project in their school.

Ollie, 17, from Beauchamp High School completed the scheme. He said: "The programme has put me in a much better position for university - it made my application stand out so much more. It's a once in a

lifetime opportunity that makes you see that nothing is holding you back."

INVOLVE projects included a mock court case day in Plymouth, run by a student inspired by her law Inspiring Excellence course. Using information she learnt from her course, students from Years 7, 8 and 9 learnt about the justice system and conducted a mock court case based on the trial of pensioner Richard Osborn Brooks, who killed an intruder into his property. In Essex, two students have paired up to create a revision pack for their peers approaching their GCSEs, crammed full of helpful revision techniques, guidance, best practice advice and signposting to resources.

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## Our Impact



**16** young people enrolled in South Essex and **15** from Plymouth enrolled. They attended courses including neuroscience, maths and history



**100%** of students rated their course as good or excellent<sup>±</sup>



**100%** of students said their course increased their passion for learning<sup>±</sup>





## Lewis Symes

"This is what education should be about"

Lewis Symes, Associate Senior Leader - Most Able Provision, at Beauchamps High School in Wickford, Essex, says the students from his school have excelled on the programme.

"They've hugely exceeded my expectations of them, with the levels of motivation, independence and confidence they've developed," he said. "It's given them a huge boost in their desire to study their chosen subjects at highly prestigious universities. Seeing them be as successful as they were is one of my proudest career moments. For them to have taken so much from it and achieve so well is exactly what education should be all about."

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// It's given them a huge boost in their desire to study their chosen subjects at prestigious universities //

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## 2020 STEM Programme

Targeted at students from less-advantaged backgrounds with high academic STEM potential, the 2020 STEM Programme, in Bedford and Cambridgeshire, is well established working with ten participating schools. Funded by Arm and in partnership with The Smallpeice Trust, the programme is substantially raising the profile of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects across the whole school communities.

## Our Impact

Twenty-seven Scholars attended an Inspiring Excellence course, including chemistry, physics and engineering, with 91% of attendees rating their experience as good or excellent. Over 450 of their peers have benefited from INVOLVE projects run across the schools and we offered students the opportunity to seek work experience through Workfinder from Founders4Schools.



**64%** of total A-levels gained are A\*-B



**85%** are going to university  
**55%** to a leading university

This September, Scholars have started degrees in subjects such as pharmacy, forensic science and electrical engineering at universities including Durham, Nottingham and Warwick.

## Ethan Baker

### "Being a Scholar has changed my life"

By his own admission, Ethan used to sit at the back of the classroom, where he hoped to fade into the furniture. Now in his final year on the Norfolk Scholars Programme, life couldn't be more different...

Three years ago, Ethan wouldn't have said boo to a goose. He knew he wanted to change and grow his confidence, but he didn't know how.

So that's where his sessions with learning mentor, Carrie, began.

"She said, 'we're going to break this down, start small, and work our way up'. It seems so obvious but I'd not thought about it like that before," he explained. Together, Ethan and Carrie, who met for an hour during school time every three weeks, tackled other complementary skills he said he'd never have thought about – such as risk taking and resilience. Slowly, his confidence started to grow.

Then came, in his words, the breakthrough moment. In May, Ethan travelled to Foxton for his Neuroscience Inspiring Excellence course. At the end of a week of lectures on topics such as 'Brain Cells, Neurons and Neurotransmission' and a trip to the Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit in Cambridge, the students had to give presentations in groups.

"I was dreading it," he recalls. "When I was rehearsing I would shut down, and I thought 'I've backtracked, I've gone back to who I was before'. But that's where Villiers Park makes all the difference. It was such a good, supportive environment and everyone was cheering me on. I knew I needed to do this and I felt supported in doing so."

After that, he knew the next step was a bigger audience; another challenge.

And so – to SPECTRUM. Ethan's INVOLVE project – where a student creates, develops and runs an

enrichment activity in their school – tackled a gap in provision he'd noticed at Thetford Academy.

"SPECTRUM is an LGBTQ+ youth group. I wanted to create an environment that I felt was missing in the academy; a safe space, a judgement free zone, where people were free to ask questions."

Just before summer, Ethan and two peers who'd helped establish and promote the group, found themselves waiting for the first arrivals.

"It was really tense," he said. "Five minutes went by, then ten. Nobody was there. Then in walked a whole group of people. It was such a relief!"

Ethan can see it's working.

"We had only had three sessions and I could already see people coming out of their shells. As I've been through the same thing, I can relate and I am so proud of them – and proud of myself that I've provided that space."

The benefits of being a Scholar have extended beyond Ethan's personal development; it's given him clarity and direction with his future career too.

Prior to his Inspiring Excellence course, Ethan thought he'd apply to study psychology at university. But the research he and his course mates carried out while in Foxton encouraged him to do more.

"I realised I'm more interested in animals – specifically, the neuroscience of animals," he said. "I'm going to study Zoology."





Ethan (second from right) collects a Mike Baker Scholar of the Year Award, presented by the Sheriff of Norwich, Ros Brown (right)

And he knows how to get there. He's taking biology, chemistry and psychology A-levels and has found the support from his learning mentor with time management, problem solving and helpful tips such as making revision timetables, have ensured he has enough time to focus on his studies – as well as everything else.

“My experience as a Villiers Park Scholar has changed my life, and although it may sound cliché, that is a fact,” he concluded. “It's been one of the most, if not THE most useful experiences of my life so far. I've had so many opportunities that have had a large impact on my life, and who I am as a person – and I've managed to work on the biggest thing for me which is my confidence”

And he confirmed he now would say boo to a goose. With confidence.

“ It's been one of the most, if not THE most useful experiences of my life so far ”



# Thank you

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