



Rotherham Charter

Summary Report: Initial Gathering Feedback - 22nd September 2016 Newman School and Newman Additional Resource (NAR)

Gathering Feedback Implementation Team (IT):

This report has been generated by a number of practitioners including:

Jemma Wilkinson – Practitioner Lead

Amanda Moreman – Joint Parent Lead

Adela Bingham – Charter Implementation Team

Eva Ogden – Charter Implementation Team

The report is based on consideration of the following:

- **Gathering Feedback Visit:**

Guided Tours of Newman and NAR: This included three tours (two at Newman and one at NAR) by pupils who attended the settings. Both tours at Newman were delivered by Post 16 students and the NAR tour by a KS3 pupil.

Unstructured time in classrooms: In order to ensure that all of the students felt as comfortable as possible the team were invited into a number of classes where we free to interact with the students, join in with their learning and get to see how they spent their time in class. The team joined; a morning session in the nursery, a reading session in the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) class, a reggae music making session, an exciting English class, circle time, break time and cooking at NAR and, finally, tea and cake at the end of the school day!

Informal conversations with parents: The team appreciate that there is limited face to face contact with parents during drop off and pick up times but a member of the team was able to have two informal conversations with parents during this period

A focus group with members of the student council: Two members of the team had the opportunity to hold a small focus group with student council representatives

- **Parental Feedback Forms:**

Parents have been able to share their views in a variety of formats including a questionnaire sent to the home, a 'three simple things' form and an online questionnaire

- **The School Website and 2014 Ofsted report**

www.newmanschool.co.uk

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2321819/urn/106966.pdf>

- **An review of NAR Provision (Sept-Dec 2015)**

A review was recently carried out by a range of practitioners to consider the impact of the NAR provision. As part of this review students and parents were interviewed in order to gather their voice and hear about their experiences

This report is generated from the voice of the children and young people who Newman and NAR and their parents and carers





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The evidence upon which it is based is a 'snapshot' of our experience and offers a foundation from which the schools Charter Team can reflect and build; further identifying strengths, areas for development and formulating an action plan

The gathering feedback process and analysis is based on **narrative practice**.

Background

Newman is a Community Special School. It comprises of Newman School and NAR. The school and resource cater for a total of 120 children and young people (20 of these places are at the resource). Newman School takes young people from 2 years old through to 19 years old. NAR caters for young people from 10 years of age to 19 years. At both settings the students can enter the school at any point throughout both their academic lifetime and the school year.

All young people who attend Newman Community School have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or, if it has not yet transferred to an EHCP, a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Students attending Newman school may have previously attended a specialist or mainstream setting, whilst others may have begun their school life at Newman. Students attending NAR have often experienced a difficult time with education, resulting in disengagement or persistent non-attendance.

Ofsted (2014) describe the children and young people who attend Newman School as having "complex SEN which often involve combinations of physical disabilities, physical and psychological medical conditions, autism spectrum conditions, challenging behaviour, moderate and severe learning difficulties as well as difficulties with communication." The students who attend NAR are described on the schools website as children and young people who "may experience neuro developmental conditions with social, emotional and communication needs, pervasive developmental disorder, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC); resulting in high social and emotional vulnerability. The resource is for young people who cannot access a mainstream provision, when bespoke individual learning/personalised interventions have been exhausted".

Julie Mott is the head teacher for both Newman School and NAR with the day to day management of NAR being the responsibility of the Teacher in Charge, Michaela Cocksedge. NAR has now been open for just over two years, whilst Newman school was officially opened as a school in 1949! It has gone through many changes since then but still retains its unique (listed) design.

Overview

The schools eagerness to join the Charter family and to celebrate their practice in this area has been infectious. The Leadership team and Governing Body have placed value on the process, highlighting that their drive to be the best that they can be is not just about the





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academic progress of individuals but also encompasses the emotional well-being of their students; the school acknowledge and understand that forming positive, trusting and genuine relationships with their families, children and young people is essential to this. The school are striving to be Outstanding and it is clear that they live by their school motto 'Better Never Stops'. It has been apparent from the start that Julie and her team are building on excellent foundations. The commitment to Inclusion is evident throughout both settings and the experience of working with such a varied and kind setting has been both a fun and enjoyable experience for the team as well as an interesting and insightful one.

The most outstanding feature of both school sites for the Charter team was the genuinely warm, caring and loving relationships that the staff had for the students and that, in return, the students had for the staff. Every member of staff knew every individual's name as well as knowing details about their interests and likes which they would engage in conversation about. As every individual walked through the door they were greeted by every adult that they came into contact with. When visiting lessons this care and warmth continued, children and young people received nurturing support by staff who appeared to have the child's happiness at the centre of their actions. It was clear that this was a family.

The parents who shared their views also spoke strongly about the caring ethos and nature of the school and how safe the school made their children feel.

The teams' observations of the schools routines and system were that they were well embedded into 'everyday life' resulting in them taking place without them being obvious. Students had their self-care needs met in a dignified and discreet manner whilst continuing to be involved and including in their class. The communication between staff and students during these times was both clear and caring. The staff 'normalised' the need for support with self-care which will undoubtedly have an impact on the self-esteem and self-confidence of each individual.

Throughout the day we met with individuals who were happy, friendly and welcoming, and who took great pride in telling us the good things about their school. The ease with which we observed the students interact with the staff highlighted how comfortable they were in their environment.

The students knew who, and where, they could go to for support and spoke clearly and articulately about a variety of support systems around school. Our Space and the staff in there were praised for helping students to "chill out and calm down" and we were told how, when you had a problem and it was taken to Miss Fox in the Inclusion office it was "just fixed" and they didn't need to worry about it anymore. The approachability and helpfulness of the family support workers at both sites, Liz and Toni, has been commented on.





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The principles of the Rotherham Charter are being embraced at both Newman School and NAR, both of which provide many examples of excellent practice for each of the Charter areas.

At the end of each section are some suggestions for further development to help inform next steps and planning. Many of the suggestions involve making very small changes and the Charter Team has found that 'making small changes can make a big difference'. They should not be viewed as a 'to-do' list. We would suggest that they are considerations that could be discussed with, and encourage involvement from, parents/carers and students.

Charter Strengths to Celebrate:

Welcome and Care

One word that was apparent in all communication with students and their parents was an overwhelming feeling of safeness. Young people reported that they felt safe in school thanks to the staff who support them, this was also highlighted in Newman School's 2014 Ofsted report when it was reported that "pupils feel very safe" and that there were no concerns around bullying or the students feeling that this could happen. One student from NAR commented that "...you can't get bullied here."

The welcoming environment was clear to see, in both settings. Reception staff are friendly and helpful; telephone communication with reception staff also carries this vein – you are greeted by a friendly voice with a can do attitude. The team were greeted by smiling faces everywhere they looked from John, the site manager (who always managed to smile no matter what job he is doing) to the School Meal Supervisory Assistants (SMSAs) who served us our apple crumble and custard.

The entrance to both settings contains a photograph of every staff member and their role and the students know who all staff are. Students did not differentiate between teaching staff and support staff which the team felt highlighted the equality of all individuals. It was nice to be able to watch the video showcasing a snippet of Newman life when waiting in the main school reception and, equally, when in the main reception in NAR it was lovely to see the pictures showing the achievements of the young people who attend. Moreover, the 'Lego' description of NAR told us all we needed to know about how many of the students felt about their school.

The care shown between students is exemplary. During one of our tours a student was unsure of the lesson that she should be in and both of our tour guides were able to help her. We were shown systems that had been put in place to support students with relationships, including the support from Inclusion and the Friendship bench in the playground at Newman. All students at Newman told us that they had friends in school. The caring relationships of the pupils was also identified in the 2014 Ofsted report when they state "staff provide pupils with positive role models through developing good





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relationships, treating them with respect and preserving their dignity. This is clearly reflected in how pupils treat each other in lessons and on the playground”. Students at NAR were sat engaging in conversations with one another, supported by staff, something which the team is aware can be very challenging for this cohort. Young people at NAR spoke of being happy and enjoying school now that they were “coming here”

Excellent Practice:

- ✓ Students, parents and visitors are welcomed by friendly, smiling faces
- ✓ All students are known by name and are greeted with warmth not only when they arrive at school in a morning but also during any interactions with adults
- ✓ The students look out for one another; they know all of the other students, regardless of age. In the dinner hall students were helping their peers, actions which came as second nature
- ✓ Both settings cater for a diverse group of students with a range of skills and needs and staff do not hesitate to welcome everybody in the same way
- ✓ The start of the school day is calm, orderly and relaxed at both settings – despite there being a number of logistical needs to meet
- ✓ There are formal and informal systems in place for all students when relationships seem more difficult, for example the friendship bench. The students place their trust in the adults and feel secure that they will help them with any concerns
- ✓ The students are encouraged to be polite, friendly and helpful and this was how they behaved towards the team during our visit
- ✓ Students report that staff members talk to them in a friendly way and encourage them to socialise whilst also understanding that they may find aspects of this difficult
- ✓ Students commented that they feel safe at school and parents shared this perspective
- ✓ Sensitive support is offered to families experiencing difficulties

Suggestions for discussion and development

- Parents acknowledge that it is difficult to co-ordinate events that they can attend but shared that they would welcome more opportunities to visit school for informal reasons

Value and Include

It was clear for the team to see that all the students across both settings were accepted and loved for the person that they are. There is a wealth of individuality in every school we visit but what was clear at Newman school and NAR is that each individual person comes before any of the needs that they may present and are valued as an individual before anything else. The range of differentiation that was present within each classroom setting highlighted how teaching staff and support staff work hard to ensure that every student has access to their curriculum.





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When personal care tasks needed to be completed (such as tube feeds or moving an individual from a sitting to standing position) these were done with nurturing explanations whilst still ensuring that the individual continued to be included in what was going on around them. At the end of one lesson that we observed a student was asked to place a basket on the table which the other children were required to place items they had been using in. Before doing this the student took the basket to one of his peers (who was in a wheelchair) and asked them if they wanted to put their item in first. Without prompting, this young man had been aware that not everybody would have been able to complete this task independently and, by taking the basket to his peer first, he showed that he understood the need to make adjustments and amendments in order to include everybody in an action. Whilst this did not appear to be anything other than the 'norm' for this young man it highlighted that the students are supportive and considerate of their peers; something which it is clear is modelled daily by staff in school.

Parents commented on the art work that is displayed around school, as did many young people. The young people at NAR have produced a description of their school via the medium of Lego, it is the first thing that every visitor sees as they approach the front doors.

Newman school have a school council who meet regularly and are well known around school. All of the students who took us on a tour of school told us about their council and the way that it helps them. They were able to share how they can feed information into their council and how they find out what the results of the discussions have been. The school council were confident and comfortable in sharing their views with our team which demonstrates how they have been empowered to do so. All of the students that we met were supported to communicate with us by the staff working with them.

Parents at both settings shared how staff work with them to ensure that the right support, approach and plan is in place for their child with comments such as they "always have my child's best interests at heart" and we are "consulted over interventions" shining through. Parents clearly feel included in decisions and this leads them to feel secure about their child's well-being and safety whilst away from them.

At NAR students shared how they had been supported to develop their own interests and try new things. Many of the young people spoke about the 'fun' that they had at school and often did not see the learning that they were engaging in. The staff at NAR showed skill at interacting with the students they were working with to include them in conversations and help to maintain their engagement on an activity. Students at NAR are educated in a variety of ways in order to ensure that the curriculum, environment and support meets their needs and the flexible support offered was evident, both from our own observation but also from feedback from parents and students.





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Excellent Practice:

- ✓ Young People are accepted as individuals
- ✓ The students show support and consideration for one another
- ✓ The students have an active student council who are supported to empower their peers and ensure that their voice is heard
- ✓ The work and achievements of the students are displayed beautifully for all to see
- ✓ When students are finding things difficult they are included in the planning of their time and how they can best continue to engage with school whilst ensuring that their emotional well-being is supported
- ✓ Staff work hard to ensure that *all* students are included in *all* activities and lessons; personalisation and differentiation takes place as standard practice
- ✓ Staff work hard to ensure that personal care needs are met in a way which is not disempowering and does not result in the student being removed from the activities that they are doing whenever possible
- ✓ Staff show a genuine acceptance of the students, regardless of need

Suggestions for discussion and development

- Parents spoke about their concerns for when their child leaves the settings, it may be beneficial to consider the methods which school could adopt to help parents to develop their understanding of these processes
- Parents shared that coffee mornings etc. used to be arranged and expressed a desire for there to be more activities of this nature to be offered
- Students are encouraged to be part of their reviews/meetings etc., however, many young people find these daunting. Is there a way that this could be developed? Preparation for Adulthood and the increased focus on the voice of the young person being central to planning following the SEND reforms of 2014 suggest that it is good to begin to support students to develop their inclusion in their decision making about future steps from Year Nine onwards

Communication

The students who attend Newman School and NAR have a range of communication needs and methods. From young people who use AAC devices to children who require pictures and symbols to help them to communicate and to feel assured about their routine. The team were very impressed with how teachers and support staff encompassed all of these methods in their interactions with the young people ensuring that their communication was appropriate at all times.

All around the schools the signs and notices were supported by symbols which we felt highlighted that the staff team considered communication with the students at a variety of levels. The students told us about how Katherine Ryan-Murray would come round and share information with them about things that were happening so they were always aware of the activities that were taking place. We especially liked how this method of communication was highlighted in the Leavers Video where we witnessed Katherine





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running around school into different classrooms. The Leavers videos were a lovely way of saying goodbye to the students.

The schools website had a wealth of information on it with highlights being the Weekly Champions and Pupil of the Week. Home/School books were also used in order to keep open lines of communication between school and home. For a setting where daily contact with parents is limited this is an extremely useful tool which was valued by the parents. Parents also commented that school did send information home and utilised a text messaging service to keep them informed.

Excellent Practice:

- ✓ Staff show a consideration for the communication methods of all the students and incorporate this into their lessons
- ✓ Signs and symbols support written communication and notices around school
- ✓ The students have a good awareness of what is happening and are given messages verbally by a trusted member of staff
- ✓ The use of home school diaries are welcomed by the parents
- ✓ Staff share positives with parents

Suggestions for discussion and development

- Parents commented on the helpfulness of the home school diaries but shared that there were limited occasions when they felt that information could have been written down in a more professional manner
- The website, whilst full of information, can be quite difficult to navigate and contains a lot of written information. It was also felt that NAR could have a greater presence on the website i.e. within weekly champions etc.
- Parents shared that there were occasions when they would have benefited from increased notice about events via the text message system

Partnership

Newman School has a very well regarded student council who meet regularly and discuss issues and concerns that the students have brought to them. The council shared that there is always a quick response to their requests and, whilst they did not always get what they asked for, they shared that they felt confident to share their thoughts. All of the students that we spoke with appeared comfortable interacting with us and sharing their views, suggesting that this is something that they are encouraged to do. At NAR the students are actively encouraged to make choices regarding their learning and the staff work with them to find ways to encourage them to engage with various topics, using their interests and ensuring that they know that their voices are being listened to.

Parents shared that plans and ways forwards for their child were discussed with them and that they were included in the thinking and decision making processes. Parents felt that





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both settings had the needs of their child at the centre of their thinking and worked with the parents to achieve the best outcome

Excellent Practice:

- ✓ Newman Main School has a well-established and active student council
- ✓ Parents feel that decisions about their children are made together
- ✓ Students shared that they have been actively involved with decisions about the use of certain areas such as the bungalow and greenhouse
- ✓ The sixth formers feel that they are given choices about the activities that they can engage in
- ✓ Students feel confident sharing their views

Suggestions for discussion and development

- Parents shared that they worry about what will happen when their child leaves both settings; involving parents in these discussions from year nine onwards (in line with the Preparation for Adulthood models) may be beneficial
- Consider how the pupils at NAR can become involved in initiatives such as the student council
- Exploring opportunities to deepen the level of involvement with students in sixth form about their next steps and actively involving them with each stage of the decision making processes
- Inviting opportunities for parents to contribute to the development of policies and systems

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