



How Passmores Academy is using CPSQ-targeted mentoring to boost student performance



Identifying the skills for success

Passmores Academy, in Harlow, UK, is a thriving secondary school of more than 1,000 students. Despite a catchment area which includes areas of significant economic deprivation, 98% of students achieve the course they applied for at post-16, above the national average.



This student success is partly due to a strong commitment to student support. From staff research the school identified three key areas of development that were a barrier to student success at GCSE: developing a growth mindset, increasing their resilience and improving their study skills. To develop these skills, Passmores recently introduced a targeted mentoring programme and completed a study to evaluate its effectiveness. The programme used a behavioural assessment as an initial analysis of a student's strengths, and areas for improvement to better target the mentoring required to improve student performance. Such targeting could also help make sure mentoring resources were focused more accurately.

In the study, a cohort of 20 OfS Uni Connect students (students living in postcodes with low participation in higher education) completed the Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire® (CPSQ) for schools, from Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing. CPSQ for schools is a non-cognitive assessment that provides insights into students' personal styles (their attitudes and behaviours) across five key competencies – thinking, study, coping, communication and collaboration. These closely matched

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About CPSQ for schools

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) for schools is an online questionnaire designed to assess the personal styles – the attitudes and behaviours – of students aged 15–19. The questionnaire can be used by teaching staff in a range of contexts, including coaching and mentoring where insights into student performance can help identify areas for development and improvement. CPSQ for schools also supports students' emotional development by analysing resilience and coping style, so that the right support can be provided to help build self-awareness together with more specific competencies.

About Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing

We are part of the University of Cambridge and have been working with UK and worldwide schools, universities, governments and employers for more than 15 years. Our admissions assessments and personal styles analyses are a global mark of excellence that set the quality standard, and provide a fair measure of skills and aptitude that help employers make informed decisions and enhance their selection processes. We have a global network of centres that spans 150 countries, making it easy to assess applicants wherever they may be.

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the key areas of development that Passmores wanted to focus on with their students.

Using the CPSQ results

The results from CPSQ were then used to inform a five-week, personalised programme delivered by mentoring organisation Brightside, designed to address the weaknesses identified by the questionnaire, while also developing those additional skills that could impact on performance over time. At the end of the programme Progress 8 performance data from year 10 was compared with students' year 11 mock GCSE exam results. A 'blind' control group, matched for similar characteristics as the mentored group, was monitored during the same time period but did not take part in the programme.

Despite the research cohort receiving relatively short-term intervention from the mentoring team, the outcome was very positive. 'We were pleased to see a significant difference in the results of the mentored group, compared with those of the control group,' says Lee Pickering, Passmores' Associate Senior Leadership Team and Head of History, 'and as the exams were marked to the same criteria and moderated, we can assume this was a constant in the research'. Although, at this stage, not all students showed progress, the results indicated that the mentored group were moving in the right direction; this group saw an average increase of 2.06 levels in subject performance between year 10 and the year 11 mock exams, whereas the control group saw an average increase of only 1.46 levels.

Apart from promising group results, the project revealed potential hidden barriers to progress and wellbeing for individual students. CPSQ was used to open up supportive conversations with students and parents. It helped one student who on the surface appeared to be doing well to talk about self-doubts and feelings of stress. This prompted timely help from the school and others, and they went on to continue to perform well and achieved their GCSE expectations.

'Whilst this is a small sample the data is still important, and has led us to conclude that targeted mentoring, based on CPSQ results, is likely to help students improve their performance over time,' says Lee, who now plans to continue using CPSQ for schools within Passmores' mentoring and coaching programme. 'CPSQ for schools is very useful as a starting point to open up conversations,' he adds. 'It is accurate at identifying students' areas for improvement. It targets mentoring and helps make programmes efficient by saving time. It enables resources to be tweaked and personalised to student needs.'

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