

Case Study

Tor Bank School





SEN Case Studies

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From 2011 to 2013, CCEA Regulation conducted development work with special schools and Learning Support Centres to look at how to promote and recognise the achievements of learners with SEN. The context for this work was the Entitlement Framework (EF). It was important to ensure that learners with SEN could fully realise the benefits of the EF through better recognition and promotion.

From September 2011 to June 2013 a number of special Schools and Learning Support Centres trialled the use of Learning Programmes. These are programmes of qualifications, at entry level and Level 1, accredited to both the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

Schools that took part in trialling Learning Programmes reported a positive experience. They have indicated a willingness to continue to use Learning Programmes of accredited qualifications with their learners. These case studies document their experiences. The case studies should provide you with insight and guidance on how to identify Learning Programmes and introduce them into your school.

“Involvement in this SEN project has been a positive experience for both myself and our students. It has provided me with an insight into different qualifications that are suitable for students with learning difficulties.”



Tor Bank School caters for students from 3 to 19 years old with severe learning difficulties (SLD). It is in the heart of Dundonald Village, beside Dundonald High School. We are committed to an inclusive agenda for all students. We provide an enriched curriculum for each student and work



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collaboratively with parents and health-related professionals to meet the individual needs of each student throughout their schooling. We are a participant school in the SEN Learning Programmes Project for qualifications for students with SEN aged from 14 to 19. This case study illustrates how Tor Bank School planned and implemented Learning Programmes (LPs) in a sixth form class to improve the continuity and progression of qualifications on offer to our 16–19 students. It also explores both the student and teacher experience, as well as highlighting new progression routes for our students.

QUALIFICATIONS AND LINKS WITH OUTSIDE PROVIDERS

The school currently offers a wide variety of qualifications from different awarding organisations such as ASDAN, CCEA, OCR, British Safety Council and Prince's Trust. We have strong connections to Castlereagh Area Learning Community (CALC) and associations with Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC), our local Further Education (FE) provider. Both these providers have enabled our students to access a wide variety of activities and experiences, giving them opportunities to mix with their peers. This ensures that we are working towards meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, as well as promoting lifelong learning. We also have links with North Down Training Ltd, a local training organisation, which offers courses that prepare and enable students to secure and maintain work placement.

SIXTH FORM DEPARTMENT AND PRACTICE

Teachers in the sixth form department follow a dynamic programme that promotes lifelong learning. This programme also builds on and develops the attributes the students have developed in their early years such as:

- independence;
- confidence;
- self-esteem; and
- a desire to explore and engage with their local and global community.

We reinforce practical, social and personal skills in a multidisciplinary and interagency framework. We offer students opportunities to become inclusive members of our society by participating in:

- accreditation;
- Further Education;
- Young Enterprise;
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award;
- Education for Employability;

- Outward Bound; and
- work placements.

We also work with external employment support agencies such as MENCAP, The Now Project, Stepping Stones and The Orchardville Society. Collaborating with these agencies ensures that our students are ready for their transition and progression pathways post-19 and have access to their local and wider community.

PROJECT RESOURCE DOCUMENT AND LEARNING PROGRAMMES

CCEA Regulation developed a project resource document, which provided an overview of regulated qualifications that recognised and rewarded the achievement of students with SEN. This document covers Entry Levels 1 to 3 and Level 1 qualifications that various awarding organisations offer. The document provides a list of some of the qualifications that are on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) as well as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). QCF Qualifications consist of bite-size chunks or units that students can combine to make a qualification such as an Award (6–8 credits), a Certificate (13 credits) or a Diploma (usually 32–37 credits). One credit is equivalent to a total of 10 hours of learning time. Using unitised qualifications allows students to:

- create personalised learning programmes;
- progress at their own pace; and
- bank units they achieve.

If students aged between 14 and 19 gain qualifications on the QCF when at school, they can build on these with other providers at their post-19 placement.

The project resource document also outlined the importance of developing LPs for each individual student. LPs should include qualifications covering the

following three strands:

- Literacy and Numeracy;
- Learning for Life and Work (LLW); and
- a vocational element.

The guidelines allow teachers and students to develop individualised LPs made up of discrete qualifications, taking into account each student's preferences, interests and abilities. These LPs ensure flexibility, continuity, progression and accessibility for all students with SEN between the ages of 14 and 19.

CHANGES TO SCHOOL PRACTICE

After consulting the project resource document and carrying out an internal audit of current qualifications undertaken within the sixth form department, we selected OCR Life and Living Skills (OCR LLS) as the qualification that best fitted our students' needs and abilities. This one qualification has 150 units to choose from. These units are divided into skill areas, such as Communication, Personal Skills, Numeracy and World of Work, ensuring continuity and progression for our students until they leave school at 19.

We devised the LP (outlined on page 5) using the guidelines suggested in the project resource document. The LP takes into account the individual learning styles and abilities of the four students in the sixth form class. All of these students were 18 years old and leaving school in June. BMC covered the vocational strand.

During Term 2 we managed to secure funding for a 16 week Outward Bound programme with the Belfast Activity Centre. Therefore, we decided to link this programme with the Prince's Trust XL Programme, selecting the following Entry Level 3 units: Introduction to Team Work Skills and An Introduction to Developing Group and Team Work.

“The sixth form students enjoyed the variety that the LP brought.”

Provisional Timetable for 2011–2012			
One Learning Programme used with four students in Sixth Form Class			
All OCR titles listed in this table are units chosen from the OCR LLS qualification			
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Literacy	OCR Asking questions and making requests in everyday situations (EL2) OCR Providing personal information in writing (EL2)	OCR Understanding short texts and simple instructions (EL2) CCEA Essential Skills in literacy (EL1)	OCR Completing forms with personal information (EL3)
Numeracy	OCR Working with whole numbers up to 100 (EL2)	OCR Reading and recording time (EL2)	OCR Using coins and notes (EL2)
LLW	OCR Personal Skills – healthy living (EL2)	OCR Home Management –following a simple recipe (EL2)	OCR Home Management – food hygiene and safety (EL3)
	OCR Home Management – recycling, managing waste (EL2)	OCR Preparation for work (EL2)	OCR Completing a job application (EL2)
	OCR Carrying out routine tasks (EL2)	OCR Rights and responsibilities at work (EL2)	
		Prince’s Trust XL Programme Introduction to Team Work Skills (EL3) An Introduction to Developing Group and Team Work (EL3)	
Vocational Related	CCEA Occupational Studies on Kitchen and Larder (Food Preparation) delivered by BMC		

TEACHER EXPERIENCE

We based the LP for implementation in September 2011 on CCEA guidance. We incorporated the three integrated core strands:

- Literacy and Numeracy;
- Learning for Life and Work (LLW); and
- a vocational element.

Literacy and Numeracy

We tried the OCR Life and Living Skills qualification in

the skill area of Literacy and Numeracy for this strand (as outlined in the table above). Schools must be registered centres before offering this qualification. They can register by completing the online Approval Forms.

You can find all the skill areas on the OCR website under the Life and Living Skills qualification. Within each skill area, the unit is broken down into learning outcomes and achievement criteria that facilitate



teaching. You can assess a unit, taking into account the learner's needs, using any method or combination of methods:

- observing the learner;
- questioning the learner; and
- examining the learner's work/product.

For Entry Level 1, there is a set of descriptors of different levels of achievement: an achievement continuum. The achievement continuum ranges from encountering experiences (Level 1) to the application of basic skills, knowledge and understanding (Level 10). We report learner achievement against the achievement continuum.

Teachers must fill in a transcript for each unit completed. This provides a clear and personalised statement of exactly what the student has achieved against each assessment criteria for the unit. A copy of this transcript accompanies the certificate. At first, this was time consuming as it required teacher input and was an unfamiliar method of assessment.

In the second term, we introduced CCEA Essential Skills in Literacy at Entry Level 1 to establish whether it was a suitable qualification for our students. Familiarisation with the course content was the first step. We then created resources and worksheets as well as timetabling a discrete class for CCEA Essential Skills with the four students, who all had individual timetables. Knowledge and understanding of the CCEA exam system and entry and moderation dates is essential. You can find all this information on the CCEA website or by contacting CCEA directly.

In summary, when trying out new qualifications there are many challenges. These include:

- developing knowledge and understanding of the qualification and each skill area;
- creating new resources or modifying existing ones;

“The staff found the LP useful guidance to ensure that students achieved continuity and progression.”

- becoming familiar with assessment and moderation procedure (interchange system and paperwork); and
- the cost of the accreditation.

Both CCEA Awarding Body and OCR provided support meetings as well as one-to-one advice on any issues that we encountered. We used Entitlement Framework funding to help pay for these qualifications.

LEARNING FOR LIFE AND WORK (LLW)

We covered the LLW strand of the LP by completing various units from the OCR Life and Living Skills qualification. These units complemented the existing sixth form programme as they promote independence as well as a social and life skills programme. The students enjoyed completing these units, as they were based on the practical aspects of their timetable: Recycling, Survival Cookery and Work Experience Placement.

The outward-bound programme with the Belfast Activity Centre enabled our students to develop their teamwork, self-esteem, co-operation, social and interpersonal skills while doing physically and mentally challenging activities that were out of their comfort zone. We accredited this programme with two units from the XL Programme. The Prince's Trust provides teachers with a comprehensive tracking sheet that contains clear learning intentions and outcomes. It also offers training sessions and regular moderation sessions to ensure success at moderation.

VOCATIONAL

Our Further Education provider, BMC, covered the vocational strand, Food Preparation and Cooking (Kitchen and Larder), which is a unit in an Occupational Studies qualification. We funded this unit with the invaluable Entitlement Framework money that our school receives. This money enables our students to

have a stimulating learning experience in unfamiliar surroundings with familiar staff supporting them. It also gives them an opportunity to take direction and follow instructions in a working kitchen. This enables them to have an understanding of the hospitality and catering industry. The unit also allows our students to:

- experience the college routine;
- familiarise themselves with their surroundings; and
- develop social, interpersonal and financial management skills.

All of these skills are essential for their progression pathways post-19.

Our students achieved all the qualifications within the LP. The staff found the LP useful guidance to ensure that students achieved continuity and progression. It also gave the students a foundation for their transition to their progression pathway post-19. The students involved in the project decided to go to FE and follow the Towards Work and Independence Programme. Teachers had to spend more time completing OCR records of assessment and evidence than they did with other qualifications from this awarding organisation. We anticipate that this will become easier next year.

THE LEARNER EXPERIENCE

The sixth form students enjoyed the variety that the LP brought. They were also involved in selecting the OCR LLS units. They chose them based on their personal interests, as well as areas that are at the core of the Sixth Form Programme: personal, social and life skills development. This made monitoring their progress easier for the students, as they knew which units they would be covering.

All students successfully completed their chosen qualifications from the two awarding organisations (CCEA and OCR). They left school with a portfolio of qualifications that prepares for their transition into

adulthood in an FE provider.

Students enjoyed collecting the evidence, which was mainly photographs or verbal feedback gathered from one-to-one and group discussions. They preferred this method of collecting evidence as they based it on their natural strengths.

THE SEN LEARNING PROGRAMMES PROJECT

The SEN Learning Programmes project began in September 2011. Throughout 2011 and 2012, CCEA Regulation provided support and advice in the form of termly meetings with other special schools involved in the project. This was an opportunity to share experiences about the operation of their LPs and to discuss different awarding organisations' accreditation and moderation procedures. Teachers completed monitoring forms each term. The data collected informs future SEN Learning Programmes' development. CCEA also provided an invaluable resource document. This helped to inform the choice of qualification to use in the LP. Termly meetings were very useful and informative as they highlighted similar issues that schools were encountering. These issues included:

- not having an examinations officer, which meant that a teacher had additional responsibility for enrolling students on time;
- moderating the work to ensure that it fulfils the awarding organisation's criteria; and
- preparing each portfolio for moderation.

We also noted that awarding organisations have different rules and procedures regarding moderation and entry dates. We found that using more than one awarding organisation and keeping track of their different rules and procedures was difficult and time consuming.

TO SUMMARISE

Overall Tor Bank's involvement with the SEN Learning Programmes Project for students aged between 14 and 19 years has been very positive.

The resource document provided an overview of Entry Levels 1 to 3 and Level 1 Qualifications that recognise achievement for SEN students aged 14–19.

The project provided opportunities for teachers from other special schools to meet, exchange ideas and resources and share examples of good practice, deepening learning and promoting collaboration.

The LPs provided personalised learning routes for our students who are working at Entry Level and Level 1. The LP allows flexibility: a learner may be at Entry Level in numeracy, but working on Level 2 qualifications in a vocational area. This is the rationale for using QCF qualifications when creating LPs, as pupils can bank units from their previous school and build on units at their post-school provider.

LPs will form an integral part of the 14+ Transition Plan in Tor Bank, which is compulsory documentation for all students aged 14 and above. A Transition Plan identifies the pathway suitable to students and the support necessary to ensure a successful transition from school to adult life. This is a working document, which recognises that an individual's needs may alter over time. We will review and amend it, where necessary, in the subsequent years until the young person leaves school.

The resource document highlighted numerous awarding organisations that provide qualifications for students with SEN. It continues to be a valuable reference for us. In September 2012 Tor Bank School started using the Prince's Trust Personal Development Programme.

