

# South Shropshire Youth Forum

## Church Stretton School REACH project



What we said we'd deliver in 2018/19

Work with Church Stretton Secondary school and Church Stretton Town Council.

Church Stretton Outdoor **REACH** project. Delivery of a short term time programme (6 sessions in total). Up to 10 young people aged 13-16 referred onto programme of activity. Pupils will be referred onto an alternative curriculum learning experience from Church Stretton Secondary School – these pupils will not be achieving their potential because of:

- bullying or other emotional issues
- poor/non-attendance at school, work or college
- risk of exclusion from school, college or society.

All activities will take place during School/term time on the Long Mynd (Cardingmill) and/or Rectory Woods.

### What happened?

8 young people were referred from Church Stretton School, with 6 completing the programme. A total of 8 full day sessions were delivered including 5 practical outdoor sessions with the National Trust, 1 with the Town Council, 1 induction day and 1 day evaluation and youth consultation.

Sessions took place from October 2018 to January 2019

## **Session 1**

### **Induction**

The first session was based in school and included:

INTRODUCE OURSELVES – name, where you live, hobbies or interests, place you'd like to visit most in the world

INTRODUCTION TO REACH

TEAM RULES AND GROUP AIMS

TEAMBUILDING GAMES – SURVIVAL GAMES, ACID LAKE

SWOT ANALYSIS

HEALTH & SAFETY

GROUP & ACTIVITY RISK ASSESSMENT

INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS

Each pupil designed their own Action Plan that was based on their own targets (things they wanted to achieve on the project. This was used to design a tailor made programme that young people would reflect and assess their own performance.

## **Session 2**

### **Gorse burn at the Wern**

The Wern is an area owned by the national Trust just outside Little Stretton. The land is used to burn waste materials from the NT land including gorse and bracken.

## **Session 3**

Tree coppicing and burn at the Wern

## **Session 4**

Bramble clearance at Rectory Woods for Church Stretton Town Council

## **Session 5**

Tree coppicing and bramble clearance

## **Session 6**

Tree coppicing, bramble clearance and general site tidy up

## **Session 7**

Site tidy up and shelter build

## **Session 8**

Evaluation & youth consultation

## **Feedback from Church Stretton Secondary school**

Six of our pupils have just completed an 8-week REACH Project with the South Shropshire Youth Forum. 6 of our most vulnerable pupils were selected to take part in the opportunity over 8 Friday's which commenced after October half term.

Pupils who met the criteria for selection included those who were not reaching their academic potential, those who were having behavioural difficulties in school, pupils who had low resilience or self-worth or pupils who were facing possible exclusion from the school. We felt that an 8-week placement out of school would be beneficial to give pupils a break from the daily demands of classroom education. Many of these pupils prefer a practical, hands-on curriculum and the project was aimed at giving the pupils a psychological boost.

As SENCO at the school I have work closely with 5 of the 6 pupils selected and have had the opportunity to gauge responses and opinions since the project finished.

The overwhelming feedback from our pupils was very positive. Although pupils sometimes moaned if it was too cold or too wet, they have all spoken very highly of the project, and the tutors since finishing. I have also received positive feedback from parents. Pupils said that they enjoyed the opportunity to work out of school and that they liked being in smaller groups with their friends. 4 of the 6 pupils were accruing numerous negative behaviour point prior to commencing the project. Although I am unable to attribute a difference directly to the REACH project it is clear that all 4 pupils are behaving better in and around the school site.

Personally I was very impressed with the organisation, punctuality and personable nature of the tutors and course. The 6 pupils selected were by no means an easy cohort and both Richard and Sara related to them instantly. I was impressed with the way they were proactive and enthusiastic without abandoning the need to keep behavioural expectations high. Both Richard and Sara supported school rules and values despite being off the school site.

Having seen the Project more closely I would be very keen to take part again in the future. While I feel our pupils benefitted hugely, I feel I now have a better understanding of type of pupils who could work with the Youth Forum in the future.

Tom Ward  
SENCO  
Church Stretton School

### **Feedback from Patrick Edwards Co-ordinator from the National Trust**

Things started off well. I liked the atmosphere and the vibe. It was a good number of people. They listened to instructions well. It was good that some of the group were helping others especially with the tree felling. They worked well together and worked safely.

The lunch time break was good, it wasn't too long, and seemed to keep the flow going. The length of day was good too.

I liked the Wern as a base. It gave us the space and freedom to do what we wanted, especially to have a fire.

Some members of the group distracted others, which was disappointing.

I would have liked to have done more tree felling. It would have been good to do some fence work. That would have needed the group members to concentrate a bit longer, and put a bit more effort into the task, and although at the beginning I thought they would achieve that, I had my doubts whether they would finish larger jobs if we had started them.

We did achieve a lot though. All the brash was burnt. We thinned the trees out a little more, it all adds to the management of that particular site.

Youth Forum staff were excellent. Both upbeat and enthusiastic. You motivated the children as much as was humanly possible

Time of year? It was good in that we could do tree work and clearance which can absorb people and abilities. It meant there was no definite end stage. If we worked in the summer it would probably be more footpath work, and so more physical and more demanding on getting the job finished.

### **Feedback from pupils**

4 pupils attended the debriefing session at School. The following feedback resulted.

#### **Best thing about the project**

Lighting fires

Making the fire, cutting tress (new experience)

We got to use bow saws

Making shelters, cutting down trees

#### **Worst thing**

Going into the cold

Going out on cold, rainy days

The cold and cutting brambles

#### **What else would you have liked to have done?**

Survival/bushcraft skills

Use chainsaws

Motocross

Survival stuff

#### **Did the group meet its aims?**

Teamwork – Yes 4 votes

Trying new activities – Yes 4 votes

Learning new skills - Yes 4 votes

Have fun - Yes 4 votes

#### **Activities rated out of 5**

Induction day/health and safety and risk assessment training – score 14 (average 3.5 out of 5)

Gorseburn/managing the fire – score 18 (average 4.5)

Tree coppicing – score 14 (average 3.5)

Land clearance/clearing brambles – score 13 (3.25)

Cooking on fire – score 20 (5)

Shelter building – score 15 (3.75)

#### **Training centre and transport rated out of 5**

General facilities - score 13 (3.25)

Training equipment/resources – score 17 (4.25)

Travel during the project (school minibus) – score 10 (2.5)

#### **Team Leaders rated out of 5**

Providing support as & when required – score 18 (4.5)

Proving the right kind of support when asked – score 15 (3.75)

Project organisation – 13.5 (3.3)

**The projects main outcome was to use practical activities to engage pupils struggling to cope with more academic methods. Each pupil did their own SWOYT analysis, action plan and a personal statement at the end of the project.**

## **Here are 4 statements given at the end of the project.**

*'I think the REACH project teaches us more practical things that help us in everyday life. In School you don't get to learn many everyday life skills. I think that the whole group did more work and learning on the first day on REACH than we do in a whole week of School. If we could do more things like this we would probably learn more'.*

*'I managed to control my anger because I wasn't in lessons. It was more practical than school and we got to do tree felling'.*

*'I achieved more than I would a month doing School work. It was fun unlike School and I learned a lot. My behaviour was better than at School'*

*'I enjoyed the REACH project because it was fun and I've achieved many skills for further on in life. We achieved teamwork, leadership skills and took on responsibility. I really enjoyed it because it had given me confidence, helped me to change my behaviour and I've learnt so many practical skills'.*

### **Discussion of results**

Pupils added a few notes next to some of the scores explaining their scores. The bramble clearance session at Rectory Woods was an all-day activity. Pupils found it hard to get motivated particularly on this day as it was so cold and it was the same activity.

For some reason the pupils didn't like the bus run in the morning. I think the vehicle kept stalling and the driver was a bit strict for their liking.

The 'Wern' was a bit remote and caused a few practical issues, including toilet breaks. It also meant a long wait on some of the mornings as they had to wait for National Trust staff to get there.

With regard to SSYF's viewpoint The Wern was suggested as a venue for the project by the National Trust so the group could see progress on the work they did. Perhaps a toilet (maybe a drop toilet) could be installed in the future. The site worked well from our perspective.

Some of the tasks were repetitive so maybe shorter sessions could be delivered - 2 groups perhaps who could do 3-4 practical days each. The more motivated out of the two groups could be selected for further activities with the National Trust. All this will depend on a number of factors; timetabling, number of pupils available, funding and whether the National Trust has the capacity to support us on a longer project.

In terms of helping pupils set targets and getting them to reflect and evaluate performance the pupils who finished the project did well. There were times when motivation proved to be a challenge but overall the group stuck to their tasks and could see that the project was helping them.