How we work with young people at The Haven School

The vast majority of our pupils want to behave well, learn successfully and thrive. However, their mental ill health or emotional distress interferes with this.  We use a medical model to support our pupils to improved health.  This can prove more complex than when helping someone get better from a physical illness because mental ill health does not necessarily make linear progress.  Sometimes we see great improvement which can be sustained for weeks or even months but then an event can occur which knocks the pupil off course again.  For our young people who are LAC this could be a change of home placement; for children who have suffered trauma or family breakdown there are multiple scenarios that can occur – the return of a long lost family member, the disappearance of a parent or another event that retriggers the trauma etc. Sometimes there is no obvious reason for the return of emotional instability. However, pupils need intensive support at these times. This is where the importance of positive relationships with staff, built up over time, can have a big impact. A pupil will often confide in a trusted adult and, by talking through their trauma, make steps towards improvement. At these times it may be necessary to modify the programme that the pupil is following and adaptations are made to their timetable, allowing more time for calming and reducing either academic or social pressure. We are experienced in monitoring and managing emotional distress and mental ill health and work with the family and other professionals to agree steps which support the young person. Our records prove that this approach works. Some pupils who have not been to school for years remain on roll at The Haven and achieve success in examinations and move on to other educational destinations.

As with other forms of ill health, when a pupil is suffering from emotional distress they made need time out of school to access medical appointments, or to recover enough to be able to re-engage with school. This can impact on their attendance. However, we work closely with all professionals and parents/carers to ensure pupils are back in school as soon as they are ready and able to manage. When a pupil has suffered significant distress, we may use the principle of gradual exposure to re-integrate them back into the school. This model has been successful with many of our students. Timetables are reviewed weekly, with the aim being for them to be in school, as close to full time as possible, as soon as they are able.

We do not underestimate the effort it takes for some young people to navigate their way through the school system. Emotional distress and associated issues of low self-esteem, low mood, fear of failure etc. are very hard to live with and manage. Our staff are very aware of this and our training and procedures ensure that all our young people are very well supported at The Haven.