



# Wick High School: Increasing engagement through partnership with youth work



“ Young people in Wick High School are excelling through youth work. They are developing relevant skills and their achievements are being recognised through a range of youth awards ”

Head teacher Sebastian Sandecki

Partnership with youth work has enabled the school to broaden the curriculum offer and support for pupils. This is helping to raise attainment and improve health and wellbeing, particularly for pupils affected by poverty. Collaboration was also vital to the school's success in engaging pupils during the pandemic and continues to support education recovery.

The school's youth work project 'Step Forward Wick Youth' was initially established in response to a pupil consultation in 2018, which identified that mental health was a significant concern for pupils. It is a partnership between school, Highlife Highland and the voluntary sector. In three years, youth work is now embedded within the school – increasing opportunities for learners to improve health and wellbeing, engage in learning and achieve. Youth work provides universal activities after school, during lunchtimes and in the evenings. All activities are free and young people can apply for a free bus pass. This is essential given the school's large and remote geographical location. Community-based youth work partners have also expanded opportunities for young people to engage in the wider community. This has included arts-based projects, gardening groups, leadership and youth participation – all of which are impacting positively on progress. Youth work also contributes to the school's pupil support service, working closely with guidance staff to support pupils one-to-one.

As part of the timetabled curriculum, youth workers lead a Wider Achievement class. This class is raising attainment for pupils affected by poverty. Young people engage in learning through an informal, youth work approach work. They are developing transferable skills, awareness of the world of work and their achievements are recognised through youth awards, including Princes Trust awards and Dynamic Youth Awards.

“ The importance of offering a youth work approach to learning is paramount as some of our young people who were not achieving their potential in other mainstream classes are now excelling and achieving. ”

Head teacher Sebastian Sandecki

Opportunity for accreditation is embedded into all relevant aspects of the youth work project – including young people engaging in pupil support. This has been key to keeping pupils engaged and achieving.

Youth workers track young people's engagement, health and wellbeing, attendance and skills development (including literacy and numeracy). These indicators are used in reflective conversations to help learners understand their progress. This information is also crucial to the school's effective use of data to measure impact of their Scottish Attainment Challenge plan - tracking progress of individuals and understanding the contribution of youth work to closing the gap for learners in the school.

“ I have enhanced my leadership skills in many ways and this is thanks to being part of the Step Forward committee. I got the chance to chat with local councillors and third sector organisations to make community development plans. I have been part of loads of awards and community projects. ”

Young person