



Alps - At the Heart of Establishing a Successful Sixth Form Shirley High School

Brigid Doherty,
Vice Principal KS5,
Shirley High School



Context

Shirley High School is an 11-18 mixed ability comprehensive school in Croydon. Until 2011 we were an 11-16 school. The Post 16 provision at Shirley began to take shape during a time of turbulence; difficulties in securing planning permission for a new sixth form block and an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement in November 2014. During this time the Senior Leadership Team and the sixth form staff used the expertise of Alps to help drive up results and establish a learning culture at Key Stage 5 that 'strives for excellence'. The three year average point score of those students joining the sixth form in Y12 is 42.7. Many of our students face social and economic hardship and are the first in their families to go to university. Monitoring the students' progress using Alps target grades has enabled us to put intervention strategies in place; leading to year on year improvement in both student outcomes and value added performance.

A level Value Added Performance – The Three Year Trend

Provider A level Quality Indicator score	-	0.95	1.00	1.05
Provider A level Quality Indicator grade	-	5	3	2

Establishing a 'high quality' sixth form on limited financial resources in an area flooded with post 16 providers was part of the challenge we faced. In meeting this challenge the leadership team implemented a Post 16 Improvement Plan that, from an early stage in the development of our Key Stage 5 provision, concentrated our efforts on quality first teaching as opposed to quantity of numbers in the sixth form. Our strategy in essence was to focus on value added performance, making sure all students made the required progress to improve their life chances. We knew that it was vital to put systems in place that would support students and staff; ones that were accessible to all parties involved, including parents and carers.

The use of Alps has been fundamental in helping to bring about very real change in our young people's lives. In half termly 1:1 meetings the sixth form students are always keen to discuss the progress they are making towards their aspirational targets and are very supportive of the school's Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy which requires all post 16 assessments and/or home learning to have Alps targets clearly identified on the work which are linked to the written feedback received.

The school began to utilise Alps minimum target grades in 2012. Alps training was undertaken by members of the leadership team and heads of department, many of whom were new to teaching A level and anxious about using Alps as a motivational

tool with students. The Alps representative demystified the process and, with patience and careful guidance, clarified how to read the reports and to use the data to our best advantage. By the end of the two hour presentation teachers were left feeling inspired and clearly understanding the value of using Alps as a means to support and monitor the sixth form students. So impressed were the leadership team with the 'above target', 'on target' and 'below target' colour coding that Alps employs they decided to adopt these same colours when issuing Key Stage 3, 4 & 5 progress reports to parents/ carers.



The First Alps Reports – Taking Action

The first Alps reports (BTEC and AS level) gave the leadership team much to mull over; the T score for AS level was a Blue 7 and our value added performance a Black 6. Subject review meetings took place in September 2013 from which we formulated bespoke student intervention plans for our Year 13 and developed our Post 16 staff intervention strategies. As part of this strategy the school introduced a 'sixth form teaching' strand to its CPD programme. This strand would focus on areas such as 'Differentiation at Post 16', 'Target Setting as a Motivational Tool' and 'Quality First Teaching in a Post 16 Classroom'. It became mandatory for all teachers of KS5 students to attend. Having access to Alps reports straight after the results meant that staff were able to analyse their students'

performance and set out plans by which to address any areas of weakness quickly and effectively. Regular meetings between me, as the Raising Standards Leader for Post 16, and heads of departments whose subjects were a blue or low black for value added performance on the recent Alps report, began in earnest. Each meeting honed in on areas of concern and taking the necessary action to nullify such trends e.g. buddying up red value added subject teachers with blue value added teachers and sharing best practice, completing KS5 work scrutinies and using the PiXL 6 Associate to do a biannual Post 16 learning walk. Not having to wait for the L3VA report to be issued in November meant the school could respond promptly to combat blue performance.

These measures and others have evolved over the years as we have turned our A level value added/quality indicator from a Black 5 in 2014 to a Red 2 in 2016, with Post 16 teachers having greater confidence in how they can use Alps to help predict correct outcomes for their students;

- May 2016 A level value added predictions - 81% meet Alps
- August 2016 A level value added results - 85% meet Alps

Sixth form students and their parents/carers trust the data supplied by Alps and see the target setting process as an instrument by which the school can improve standards and bring about success.

A level 'T' Score

	2012/13 ¹	2013/14 [*]	2014/15 [*]	2015/16 [*]
T score - Single year score	-	6.00	4.67	2.67
T score - Single year grade	-	6	5	2
RED teaching & learning %	-	6.2%	9.9%	38.4%
RED teaching & learning grade	-	7	7	3
BLUE teaching & learning %	-	36.9%	14.1%	8.2%
BLUE teaching & learning grade	-	6	4	3

A level 'T' Score AS level 'T' Score

	2012/13 ¹	2013/14 [*]	2014/15 [*]	2015/16 [*]
T score - Single year score	-	4.67	3.00	2.33
T score - Single year grade	-	4	3	2
RED teaching & learning %	19.6%	19.5%	45.1%	57.8%
RED teaching & learning grade	6	5	3	2
BLUE teaching & learning %	44.6%	22.6%	13.1%	5.5%
BLUE teaching & learning grade	7	5	4	3

Concluding remarks – Alps V L3VA

For the past three years the school's Alps and L3VA reports have shown year on year improvement. However, the L3VA's lack of detailed analysis, omission of Year 12 AS performance and delay in publication has meant that, as a tool to bring about rapid change in a bid to drive up standards, it has not had the same currency with staff and students as Alps. The need to take quick

and decisive action at the start of a new academic year so that no time is wasted in improving our students life chances has meant that Alps has been fundamental in the school's mission to build a strong and successful sixth form, one that will not rest on its laurels but seek to help all its students achieve their full potential.

We are at the end of the telephone Monday to Friday 9am-5pm – **01484 887600** or you can email us at: **info@alps.education**

Please visit our website for more information: **www.alps.education**



IS 621807