

**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY**

# **BUSINESS CLASS / Staffordshire**

A partnership of Staffordshire businesses have committed to supporting Business in the Community's 'Business Class' initiative. Business Class is a government-endorsed programme, which provides a systematic framework for businesses to support young people by forming long-term partnerships with the schools those young people attend. There are eight business and school partnerships within the Stoke & Staffordshire Cluster.

The aim through this collaborative partnership is to address a number of key focus areas that will play an important part in each school delivering on their strategic long term plans. This Business Class Cluster is also only one of 290 partnerships nationwide, so the projects organised within this Cluster will help share best practice across a national movement.



## **What we are aiming to achieve**

Our Programme aims to prevent social background determining a young person's success at school and beyond. Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived areas of the UK. Stoke is ranked 13th in the Government Index of Multiple Deprivation Report 2015, and has a rate of claiming benefits 25% higher than the national average. In 2014 Stoke came fifth from bottom in national league tables for GCSE results.

The aim of our Cluster is to provide business support to schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils helping them to improve their performance thereby increasing the employability of their pupils and affording them a better chance in life.

### **What we have achieved as a partnership...**

In the 2014/15 academic year the Staffordshire Cluster businesses volunteered 1,718 hours, across 50 projects, supporting 3,065 pupil interactions - thereby helping to improve academic achievement and increase employability.

## **The Cluster Partners**

The photo at the top highlights the Business Leader, Stuart Seddon who established the Staffordshire Cluster and the 8 Business and School partnerships. Stuart's business, Novus Property Solutions was the first Staffordshire business to sign up to Business Class. Novus then partnered with Thistley Hough Academy. The Hanley Economic have partnered with Ormiston Horizon Academy, Steelite International have partnered with Haywood Academy, Lucideon have partnered with Excel Academy, Home Retail Group partnered with Stafford Manor High School, Keele University partnered with Sandon High, Riverside Housing partnered with The Discovery Academy and Stoke on Trent College partnered with The Cooperative Academy. Each business committed to a three year partnership.



## **Award Winning Collaboration**

In June 2016 the Staffordshire Business Class partnership were acknowledged by Business in the Community for the impact the programme has had on thousands of pupils across Staffordshire.

## Some examples of the type activities the partnerships have delivered...



Novus Chairman Stuart Seddon said: "Novus established the Staffordshire Business Class Cluster in September 2013. We partnered with Thistley Hough Academy - a secondary school located 4 miles from our Head Office. The aim was to create a long-term partnership, generating improved performance for the benefit of pupils. Seven more business and school partnerships have been formed since. Across the Cluster needs-led activities take place ranging from; strategic advice, mentoring, skills projects, volunteering and improving school facilities. In 2014/15 the businesses in the Cluster volunteered 1,718 hours, and supported 3,065 pupils by improving their skills and employability."

### Novus and Thistley

This was the first Business Class partnership to be established in Staffordshire in 2013. Novus are a family owned National building, painting and maintenance business who have their head office located in Stoke. Novus have been supporting Thistley with numerous project to help improve the Academies' performance and help provide pupils with development and employability skills. Projects have ranged from constructing a school allotment, to a mentoring programme, to establishing a scholarship programme to developing a school bank. Over 50 projects have taken place, with all the projects supported having one thing in common, widening pupils horizons.



### Question Time Event

Novus Property Solutions' chairman Stuart Seddon chaired a panel of Staffordshire firms that faced a grilling on responsible business from more than 90 school pupils. The Question Time-style event took place as part of Responsible Business Week and brought together eight different organisations (ranging from Stoke City Football Club, to the Chamber of Commerce, to both local Universities and local business leaders) to discuss the ways they can work together for a fairer society and a more sustainable future.

Davina Beckett from Co-operative Academy, one of the schools in attendance, said: "It was interesting to hear about how the different businesses are trying to be more responsible. We have been studying corporate social responsibility as part of our Business Studies course, so it was useful to hear some local examples."

### Hanley Economic and Ormiston Horizon Academy

The Hanley is a local, independent building society based in Stoke-on-Trent. The Hanley is partnered with Ormiston Horizon Academy (formally James Brindley High School) which opened in September 2011 and has a relentless aspiration to make a difference to the lives of their students. The partnership commenced in January 2014. A detailed action plan focusses the partnership on a range of activities in line with the Ormiston's priorities.

These activities include; the establishment of a school savings bank (supported by students), work experience in a wide range of areas, internships, financial/budgeting sessions for students, the design and production of staff awards by students and support for community initiatives such as the Potters Arf Marathon.





Nuria de la Fuente, Business in the Community, Education Partnerships Manager commented; "You cannot underestimate the value the businesses and the individual volunteers bring to the pupils they support. As the Education Support Manager I get to see the improvement in the pupils in areas such as confidence, improved skills and raised aspirations. Just as beneficial is the impact the schools have on their businesses partners, it is a big learning curve for businesses, but each partners comes out stronger as a result of the two way partnership with their school. It is also great to see how receptive our pupils are and it goes to show the value of business supporting the school curriculum."

## Britannia Stadium Pupil Skills and Career Event

The Cluster organised a Skills and Employment Event at the Bet365 Stadium and invited every school to put forward ten pupils each (80 pupils in total). At this event the Cluster launched our own Business Class Awards. Each time a project takes place a star pupil is put forward by the Project Leaders. 80 pupils were acknowledged with an Award and bespoke Certificate at this event. More collaborative events are planned in the future.



## Home Retail and Stafford Manor High

This partnership started in February 2013, there was a big launch approach with careers networking event taking place that involved every pupil at Stafford. This partnership has focused on Home Retail site visits, work experience, C.V Writing, Mock interviews. There have been 6 ongoing projects through this partnership, with the key focus on the 6th Form as Manor High felt this would have the most impact on their school.

## Steelite and Haywood Academy

This partnership was formed in October 2013, Steelite are a manufacturing business specialising in tableware, with over 1000 Employees, delivering to 140 countries across the world. Haywood Academy is a school located 1 mile away from the Steelite Factory. Their core focus area has been work based learning, such as work placements, mentoring, site visits, team challenges and helping shape the curriculum from an employer point of view. 18 ongoing projects have taken place over the course of the partnership. Haywood Academy have credited their partnership with raising the standards of their pupils in terms of employability.



## Lucideon and Excel Academy

The Lucideon and Excel partnership is now in its' 3rd year. Lucideon is an independent global expert in materials testing, analysis and consultancy, and Excel is a mixed secondary school located in Sneyd Green, situated in the north of Stoke-on-Trent.



The partnership has significantly enhanced Excel's careers provision for the students as they have been able to link into the 'real world' to get students to relate more to their future career aspirations.

## Stoke College and the Cooperative Academy

Stoke on Trent College and the Cooperative Academy partnership was established in 2015, The Co-operative Academy is a multi-academy trust with and In September 2012, moved into a brand new £23m building, complete with the very best facilities for our students.

Stoke on Trent College is the largest further education provider in Staffordshire with over 13000 learners of all ages, including full-time young people, part-time adults, apprentices and employees of local businesses.



Through this Business Class partnership, Stoke-on-Trent College has helped the Academy to continue to make strides forward to the benefit of students. The College has supported the Academy in a number of areas such as providing all Business Studies with the opportunity to visit different job functions on a rotational basis eg. HR, Marketing, PR and Finance; as well as this all Year 10 students attending the College and receiving an interview skills session in preparation for their work experience placements.

Various events have occurred throughout the partnership from 'Speed date what is my job' carousel, to talking to individuals about their career paths and their jobs. to Mentoring small groups of year 10 and 11 students to support them with their individual achievement in line with their academy targets.

## Some examples of the type activities the partnerships have delivered...

### Riverside Housing and Discovery

This partnership started in November 2014, their focus was on getting pupils ready for work. Riverside have a big call centre, so this was an area that Riverside employees could support in. Phone interviews took place helping pupils practice for a real-life phone interview. Riverside employees also carried out a 'Day in the Life' initiative talking to pupils about their job roles. Riverside also provided support at School career days, and Riverside even involved their Residents Groups, bringing them into the school helping build community cohesion with pupils. Over 10 projects have taken place through the partnership.



### Keele University and Sandon High

This partnership started in January 2014, this partnership's focus has been on helping the School develop their middle leadership. This took the form of Keele 'Institute of Management and Development' supporting seven Sandon Heads of Faculty to improve their leadership and management skills. Although this did not directly involve the pupils the Principal of Sandon has credited this support to contributing to the overall performance of their school academic results.

## Feedback from just one of the School's involved...

### Holly Hartley, Principal at Thistley Hough Academy;

"From the outset our partnership with Novus has had a significant and tangible impact on life at THA. Our partnership is founded on trust and integrity and so it has been easy to engage – despite our significant operational differences.

Novus supports THA in a range of ways that add value to both the strategic leadership of the academy and also in providing our students with inspiring opportunities. Novus are now a daily part of life at THA, from a mentoring meeting with our Year 11, to offering support in a high-level PFI meeting, to the development of a new school allotment, or by working with students on employability based skill sessions – they are very welcome and familiar faces. The THA/Novus partnership came early on in the inception of our local Cluster and Novus Chairman, Stuart Seddon, chairs the wider Staffordshire Cluster group made up of 8 partnerships.

Our Cluster has a co-operative ethos that means that all schools and businesses alike benefit from cross-partnership working. All partner members are equally committed to making a difference to the lives of the young people of our city regardless of their partner. Our Cluster is now in its third year and we are excited by what the future holds for us all."



# IMPACT /

In the 2014/15 academic year the Staffordshire Cluster businesses volunteered 1,718 hours, across 50 projects, supporting 3,065 pupil interactions - thereby helping to improve academic achievement and increase employability.

- ✓ **Businesses partners volunteered 1,718 hours**
- ✓ **Over 50 Projects have taken place**
- ✓ **3,065 pupil interactions**

## Investment

Since the Staffordshire Business Class Cluster was established in September 2013 over £225,526 has been invested by the 8 businesses. (£117,803 just in 2015)



## Communication has been key to our success...

The Staffordshire Cluster is the first Cluster in the country to create a 'bespoke' webpage to provide a focal point for all our activities. The site shares best practice projects that any business and school can replicate. There are over 100 case studies on the page highlighting individual pupil stories and inspiring projects.



## Social Media

We have also set up our own Facebook and Twitter pages where we promote stakeholder engagement.



## Award Winning Programme

**100% of the Businesses involved in the Staffordshire Cluster report and update to their respective Board of Directors on their partnerships impact and progress against Action Plan.**

**100% of the schools involved remarked that their performance has improved since joining Business Class and acknowledged that their business partnership has been fundamental to this achievement.**

**Staffordshire's educational performance has been improved!**

## Who to contact regarding the Staffordshire Cluster

If you have any queries about the Business Class Excellence Awards or would like to submit a nomination please contact:

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Find out more: [www.novussolutions.co.uk/business](http://www.novussolutions.co.uk/business)

# BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY



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