

Words for Your Future evaluation report

About the National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK and giving disadvantaged children, young people and families the literacy skills they need to succeed in education, employment and life.

We work in the UK's most deprived communities, campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents, and support schools and early year settings. All our work is underpinned by our pioneering research and analysis.

KMPF and Words for Your Future

The National Literacy Trust would like to thank the Kent and Medway Progression Federation (KMPF) for its generous support of the Words for Your Future programme.

Words for Your Future is a bespoke programme that brings higher education into the classroom to unlock students' literacy skills and raise aspirations. The programme provides authentic opportunities for Year 9 students to engage with university student ambassadors, and targets those who have the ability to achieve the grades to secure a place at university, but may lack the confidence and literacy skills to do so.

Over five teacher-led sessions, Year 9 students meet and engage with student ambassadors and National Literacy Trust staff, to develop questioning and active listening skills while learning about university life and the importance of literacy skills for future attainment. The students learn about different communication styles, conduct interviews with the student ambassadors and prepare presentations to share with the class.

To give students a taste of higher education life, the final session takes place at a university. Students tour the campus and have the chance to present in a university lecture hall, giving them a real-world context in which to practise their communication skills.

This report shares our findings from Words for Your Future this academic year, including insights from teachers, students and ambassadors.

Partnership activity

The two participating schools from within KMPF target areas were St Anselm's Catholic School, Canterbury and Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, Hythe.

- **58** Year 9 students participated in Words for Your Future from across both schools. The students were selected by the schools to support the English KS3 curriculum, specifically

student competence in speaking and listening, writing, delivering formal presentations and using discussion to learn.

- **11** student ambassadors supported the programme. They provided insight into their educational journeys to higher education and demonstrated how they use their literacy skills for their course. One of the student ambassadors was an ex-pupil of a participating school and could therefore offer a unique and relatable insight into their experience.



Student Ambassadors meeting St Anselm's students

"It has shown me that when I have finished college I have another door open for education."

Student, Words for Your Future

Key findings, Words for Your Future

Data was collected from students taking part in the programme. In addition, teachers provided their feedback on the outcomes they observed in their students after participating in the activities. Student ambassadors were also asked to give insights into their experience of being involved with the programme, and outline the impact they feel they have contributed to the students' achievements, as well as any benefits they have gained for themselves.



Students from Brockhill Park learning about university life at Canterbury Christ Church University

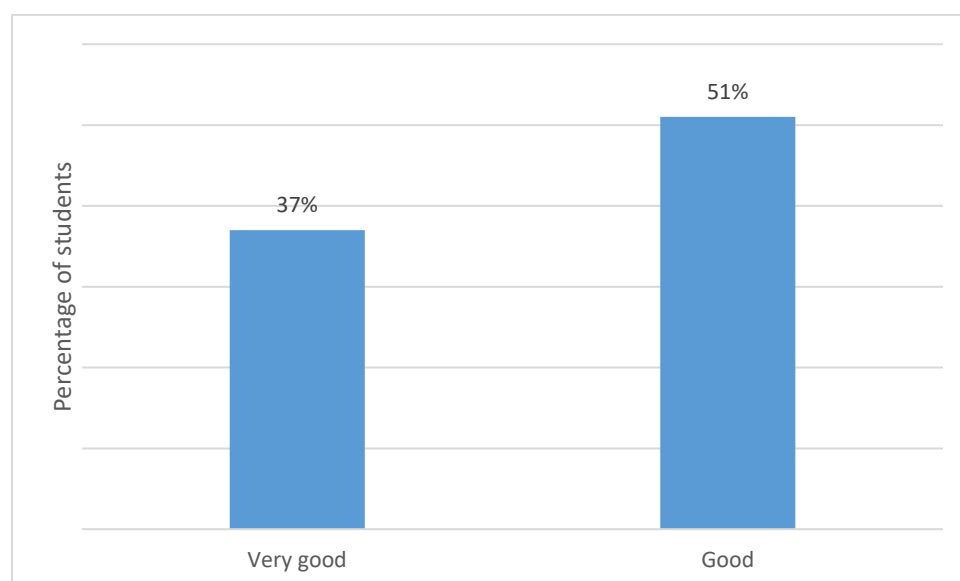
Feedback from students and teachers

This section will present findings from the students and insights from the teachers to provide an overview of the impact of the programme.

Overall, the programme was incredibly well-received by the Year 9 students, with **88%** saying the programme was '**very good**' or '**good**'. Students reported that they found the programme useful and insightful, particularly working with student ambassadors in practising their communication skills.

"I enjoyed being able to communicate comfortably with the university students." – Words for Your Future student

Figure 1: How students rated the Words for Your Future programme





"I enjoyed preparing and presenting my group's presentation."

"By showing me the courses available at Christ Church University and the qualifications needed, it has definitely made me consider taking part in higher education."

Students, Words for Your Future

Brockhill Park students delivering their presentations on campus

Feedback on the programme was also positive from teachers at each school. The impact that working on presentations with the student ambassadors had on the students was clear to the teachers.

"We are delighted that our students felt confident to stand and deliver their presentations, especially when we look back on their first workshop and their lack of confidence and self-belief. The support we received was wonderful and the student ambassadors were such a marvellous support to them. Sharing their personal experiences helped to form a connection with our students and has opened their minds to the idea that university may not be out of reach for them after all." - Teacher

The survey also identifies that giving opportunities in the programme for students to practise speaking and listening skills has increased confidence and enabled them to use communication skills effectively. The programme has also led to an increased understanding of how communication and literacy skills are important for students to imagine and explore a future after school.

As Figure 2 shows, the Words for Your Future programme has increased students' confidence and understanding of literacy and communication skills.

- **80%** felt that as a result of Words for Your Future, they have a **better understanding** of why good literacy skills are **important for their future**.
- **59%** said that they feel **more confident** than before in their **speaking and listening skills** after taking part in the programme, and felt **more aware** than before of speaking and listening techniques they can use to **communicate effectively**.

The multiple opportunities that the students had to talk to the ambassadors allowed them to develop their confidence in communicating and to work effectively to successfully deliver their final presentations. Both teachers found this element of programme beneficial for their students. The programme aims to develop a relationship between the students and the ambassadors by engaging over multiple sessions, and this teacher noticed the impact this had on their students:

“The peer relationships between the mentors and our students was wonderful. Great for opening their minds about the future in general and understanding social and cultural differences.” – Teacher

“I learned to be confident in reading and presenting and to work in a team.”

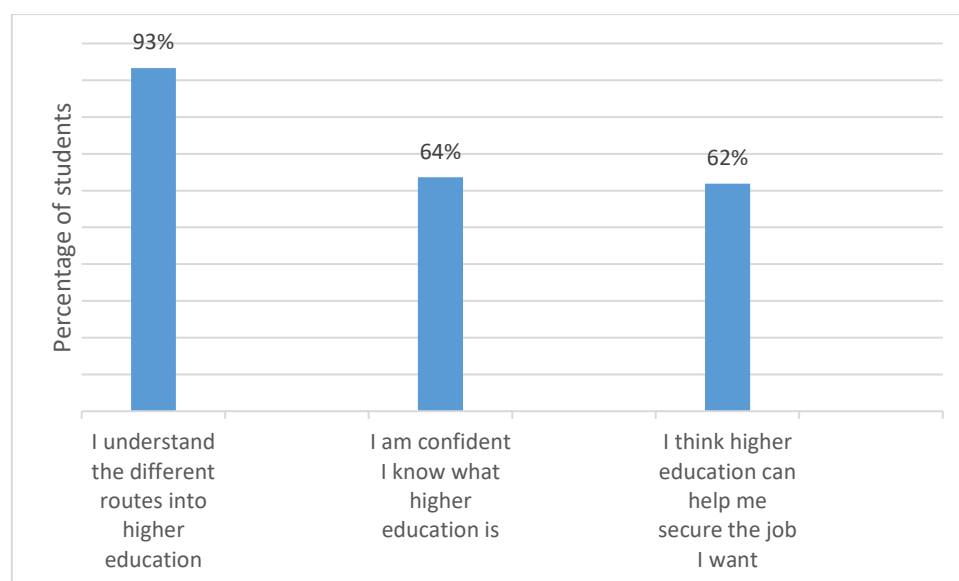
Students, Words for Your Future



Brockhill Park students working with student ambassadors

One of the aims of the programme is to increase awareness, aspiration and knowledge of higher education. Figure 3 shows that **93%** of students understand the routes into higher education more than before. There is also an increased understanding of the knowledge and the benefits of higher education than before taking part in the programme.

Figure 3: Student understanding and awareness of higher education



The increase in students' improved aspiration and awareness of higher education was evident from their comments.

"It showed me what I can do, and that being more socially confident can improve on my future career and experiencing a higher education path can lead to a well-paid, enjoyable job/career."

"I feel this has given me a better understanding of higher education and if it is right for me."

"I think it helped me understand the concept of university more."

"It made me re-think my choice of going straight to an apprenticeship to maybe go to college."

Teachers also agreed that students felt a sense of higher education being possible and attainable to their students.

"One student, who is not academically confident, now understands that higher education is not a myth for only the 'best students', but a route to success depending on their paths!" – Teacher

The teachers acknowledge the importance of the students being on campus and working with the student ambassadors to create the aspirational focus and tangible meaning to their learning and skills development.



St Anselm's students touring the campus

"It did make a difference to how I feel about higher education."

Student, Words for Your Future

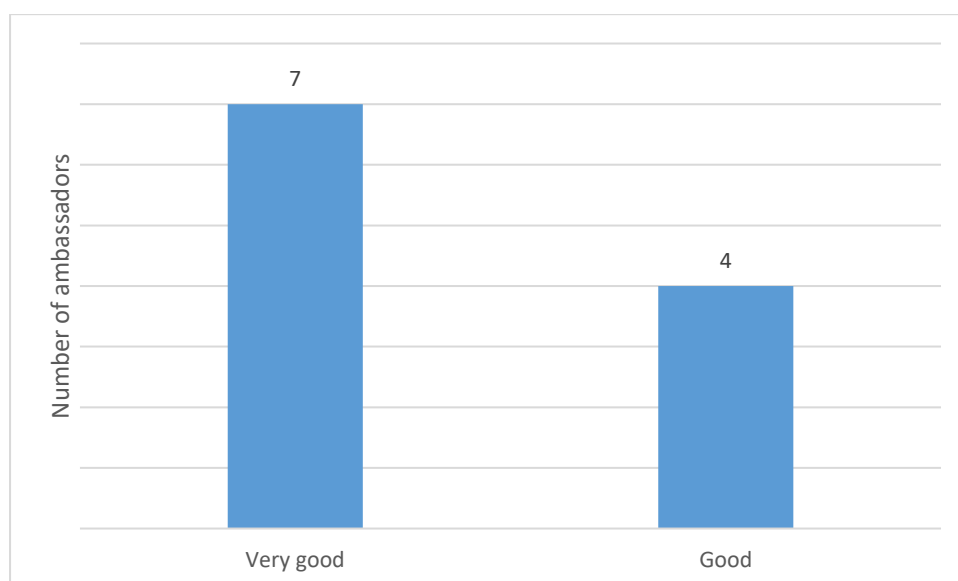
Ambassador insights

The feedback from students frequently mentions the positive impact that the interaction with the ambassadors had on them. This correlates to the impact that the ambassadors feel they made on the students. **10 out of 11** ambassadors believed that their role had made a **positive difference** for the students they worked with on the programme.

"I actively heard one of the students discussing with his friends saying "If we go to university, oh no when we go to university" and it really showed the personal impact we had on his choices for his future." – Student Ambassador

The experience of the programme for the ambassadors was also positive. Figure 4 shows that all student ambassadors who supported on the Words for Your Future programme rated their experience to be **'good'** or **'very good'**

Figure 4: Student ambassador feedback on the programme



These findings are supported by the following comments:

“Really well organised. Good communication. Enjoyed being able to meet with such engaged, interested students. Each session a good length of time.”

“Meeting up repeatedly meant building a rapport with the students, so could help them more.”

“I absolutely loved seeing the students genuinely thinking about going to university, getting excited and visibly growing in their confidence in making decisions about their future careers.”

The ambassadors also gave feedback on how well the programme was run for them to be able to give the best support possible to the students.

“Briefing and information that was emailed was very informative... Great to receive the handbook with hints and tips to help us with the role.”

“I have not had much work experience working with younger people, so it was good to experience this.”

Looking forward – learnings and recommendations

The success of Words for Your Future relies on the support and engagement from funders like KMPF in making a significant and lasting difference in the lives of these young people. We know that COVID-19 has had a catastrophic impact on education. Our work is therefore more important now than ever before.

The key focus of the Words for Your Future programme is to increase the literacy skills of students, so they perform better at school and can access university in the future. The feedback and data from the students indicate that they believe their communication and literacy skills have improved as a result of being on the Words for Work programme. The progression link that students could identify around

aspiring to - and being able to - attend higher education by using and improving these key skills is a distinctive aspect of the Words for Your Future programme.

The role of the student ambassador as a role model is very important to the programme. Developing a positive relationship in their own school environment enables the students to feel more confident to deliver their presentations in an unfamiliar environment on campus.

The feedback that teachers at the two schools (who know their students best) provided also demonstrates the impact that Words for Your Future has had on students. Their comments indicate that the young people we have engaged with on this programme have developed confidence and improved literacy skills by engaging with higher education and ambassadors.

An additional constructive outcome is that working with teachers who have had a positive experience with the Words for Your Future programme helps the National Literacy Trust to cement relationships within communities that need us most, reaching students who will benefit from literacy interventions on an ongoing basis.

If we were to have the opportunity to deliver this project again, based on learnings, we would implement the following enhancements:

- Increase skills reflection opportunities within the content of the programme for the students, specifically with regards to speaking and listening, and specifically aligned to the Skills Builder Framework for essential skills. This would also be mirrored in the teacher training and support through programme delivery, to focus on the literacy objectives throughout.
- Bring the presentations as a stronger focus through the programme, building on this each week.
- Increase opportunities for students to have supported practice of the presentation delivery, before the university visit, to increase their confidence in delivery. We would also deliver this as a carousel activity at the university.

Thank you for your support for Words for Your Future. We hope to have an opportunity to continue to work in partnership going forward, supporting more young people to gain the necessary literacy skills for their future and to aspire to - and succeed within - higher education.