

Extended Watford Area: Guiding Principles and “that means” statements

Introduction

Through a two-part 2020 workshop, Extended Watford heads and other school representatives worked together to build consensus and deepen their understanding of the ‘learning experiences’ which will define the core of Hertfordshire and individual schools’ Educational Vision. This led them to generate a set of organising guiding principles that will help define that Vision and how it is realised.

In addition to agreeing a set of guiding principles and challenge statements, Part two of the workshop enabled them to check that they had shared understanding of the meaning and implications of theirs and Stevenage’s principles.

Agreeing Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles were generated and agreed by participants:

- Principle 1: Schools acting as community resource
- Principle 2: All learners will have enjoy learning experience
- Principle 3: We believe that all schools should value qualitative (soft) achievements)
- Principle 4: Parents have a right to attend schools too! Be learners themselves
- Principle 5: We believe that the curriculum will prepare pupils for life-long learning
- Principle 6: We believe that the whole family should be included within the learning experience
- Principle 7: All learners will be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning
- Principle 8: All teachers will be subjected to the types of experiences student meet
- Principle 9: Parents/guardians will feel that they are partners in the learning process through active participation
- Principle 10: We believe that all our schools should work with other agencies to enrich provision for students
- Principle 11: Parents have a right to be fully involved in their child’s education

Activity 3b: Review of Extended Watford’ and Stevenage’s Principles

Participants reviewed their principles and those generated by Stevenage. There was agreement on all seven Stevenage’s principles. Four of Stevenage’s principles received very strong support. These are:

Principle 2: Our curriculum and learning experience will be personalised, flexible, relevant, rich and stimulating with breadth and depth of choice

Principle 3: We want our learners to acquire the qualities, skills and competencies for life. **There was consensus that the phrase ‘that have a currency with employers, FE and HE providers’ should be removed because ‘it doesn’t sound inclusive’**

Principle 5: Schools are the heart of our community and will lead in delivering services to meet community needs and interests

Principle 7: Schools will be flexible, sustainable organisations that support the learning experience for all

Activity 4: Further Analysis of Extended Watford's Principles

In addition, participants analysed seven highline principles (including six of Stevenage's principles) and uncovered their implications. These are set out below with each principle that was articulated by the group set out in bold and statements that describe what 'that means' in practice organised beneath it.

Principle 1: Our vision will be values-led and inclusive. That means

- All learners in the community will have access to opportunities and support that meet their needs
- All learners will be protected against individuals who might constitute a risk
- We will create a place of safety and refuge for vulnerable students, e.g. autistic children
- We will remove artificial barriers that stop individuals from being included and consequently prevent them from achieving

Principle 2: We want our learners to acquire the qualities, skills and competencies that will prepare them for life. That means

- We will acknowledge the value of employers, FE & HE and involve them in the learning process and environment
- We will develop a wider range of 'qualifications' to assess skills and competencies that are transparent and portable
- We will provide support for and create opportunities for work placements to enable learners develop and practise essential 'soft skills'. These skills can be gained by managed risk taking and leadership opportunities

Principle 3: Schools are part of the community and need to deliver a service that is co-produced with all parts of the community. That means.....

- We will ensure that our schools are opened for longer hours to learners of all ages
- Our schools will provide a range of on-site services and accommodation to meet community needs – leisure, health, police/safety, This could mean increased costs
- We will provide adequate resources to support increased site management – security, etc
- Our schools will encourage the joint use of their facilities

Principle 4: All learners will have enjoyable learning experiences. That means.....

- Everyone should have the opportunity to excel and have their successes celebrated
- We will organise learning to be more personal and flexible to meet needs and change
- We will develop a culture of cooperation and collaboration throughout the school estate

Principle 5: Parents have the right to be fully involved in their child's education. That means.....

- We will acknowledge the value of parental participation
- We will find innovative ways to engage parents and enable them to share responsibility for the education of their children
- We will establish 'Parent Councils' to encourage more parental involvement in the education process
- We will develop a family learning programme which will include practical courses to support the enhancement of parenting and employability skills

Principle 6: Schools will be flexible, sustainable organisations that support the learning experience of all. That means.....

- We will open our schools for longer hours to support the needs of the wider community
- Our schools will work as clusters to provide a wider range of facilities on site. This could mean joining budgets
- We will invest in the personal development of learners and professionals within the whole organisation
- We will provide subsidized learning for those who cannot afford it
- We will work collaboratively with organisations external to the schools and enhance the opportunities/facilities/resources available to all learners in the community
- Our schools will employ business managers to

Principle 7: Our curriculum and learning experience will be personalised, flexible, relevant, rich and stimulating with breadth and depth of choice

- Our schools will be given the autonomy to direct the educational pathways of individual learners
- All learners will have ILPs which will be reviewed regularly