

Selby High School

Using GCSEPod to boost confidence with Pupil Premium students

As a thriving and successful secondary school, Selby High has always worked to ensure that every individual achieves their academic and personal potential. This was what first prompted the North Yorkshire secondary school to subscribe to GCSEPod - the goal was to boost confidence and self-belief amongst its pupil premium students. This move has produced some gratifyingly welcome results.

It wasn't music teacher Laura Stephenson's idea to introduce GCSEPod to Selby High School. In fact, it was Vice Principal Amanda Lumb that facilitated its implementation.

But having been tasked with becoming GCSEPod Lead at the school, Laura has become one of its most vocal supporters.

Laura's enthusiasm is simple. She has seen the positive impact that the digital teaching and learning platform has had upon the school - not least upon its pupil premium children.

Selby High School caters for 11 to 16 year olds across a wide spectrum of backgrounds.

Amanda initially subscribed to GCSEPod at the end of 2017, in a bid to engage the school's Year 11 pupil premium students. For many this is the most important time within the British education system, culminating as it does in the summer exams.

Amanda's confidence in the product, which allows students to learn and revise what they need whether on the move or in the classroom, appears to have paid off.

Of the 54 pupil premium students who sat their GCSEs last summer, over 83% exceeded their predicted grade in one subject or more.

For GCSEPod Lead Laura, this is a praise-worthy achievement. "It is brilliant. Of course, we can't say that all that is down to GCSEPod because there are a lot of other initiatives going on in the school around these children. But there is a definite feeling that GCSEPod was a help.

"It has been used effectively in the isolation area. The children can access GCSEPod on a



computer, and are encouraged to do so. It means we can be confident that they are still learning.

"It has been so successful that we have had one child who was in isolation win our monthly competition for the school's highest overall GCSEPod user. We know these children are also using it in their own time."

While GCSEPod was introduced first and foremost as a pupil premium resource, Laura quickly recognised its worth for supporting students across the board.

"When we first launched GCSEPod to Year 11 in January 2018, it was just days before our mock exam series started," Laura explains. "The Pod got off to a flying start and we got a hugely positive response from the Year 11s. Due to the positivity around the product, we decided to roll it out to all KS4 students that same year."

Of the reaction after the initial launch, Laura says: "Students were using it at home, in their lessons, and everywhere between. Everyone was very impressed by how quickly the students came around to the idea; we had massive usage in the run-up to the mocks.

"I did a presentation to the Year 11s when we introduced it, and I got everyone to download the app to their phone there and then. That was one of the big selling points for them - that they could access it on the go through their phones or tablets, and that it's so easy to use and understand."

Nearly a year into Selby High's GCSEPod subscription and its worth is apparent. "We are getting results higher than expected," Laura continues. "Amongst our top 20 users, the average is 3.5 grades higher than predicted over all of their subjects per student."

GCSEPod was rolled out to Year 10s in March 2018 and Year 9s on their return to school in September. Around 750 children currently have access to it in the three upper year groups.

Laura is also looking to introduce it to the Year 7s and 8s, to "challenge them to stretch themselves". This would mean that all 1,150 of Selby High's pupils would gain access to the platform, where students can stream informative and engaging, 3-5 minute videos known as 'Pods' on everything from Maths to English, History, Geography, the Sciences, languages, DT, Computer Science, Business Studies and PE. They can also do homework and assessments on the platform. Laura is also hoping to introduce GCSEPod student ambassadors from among the more enthusiastic users to help mentor their peers.

To further engage pupils, the school runs a monthly competition for the highest overall user. They acquire points which convert into money, and there is also a prize draw which sees the top 20 from each of Years 9, 10 and 11 in with a chance to win a £10 Love2Shop voucher.

So far, the best performing subjects in terms of Pod streaming and engagement have been English, Maths and Computer Science. "They really like it in English, with the breakdown of the books and the set texts. The students are really on board with that," Laura says. "The language department is really committed to it too.

"For the children, it's great that they don't have to get 10 different text books out to revise, they can just go to their phone and do everything quickly and easily from there. For the teachers, GCSEPod backs up the work we are doing in school and helps us to get the best out of everyone."