Students into Schools:
student, teacher and pupil perspectives

A report on a university volunteer mentoring programme and experiences in a local school

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1. Introduction

This is a report on a small study which sought to explore the temporarily linked educational lives of university students and school pupils through a university Students into Schools volunteer programme. The programme provides volunteering opportunities for students, and learning and mentoring support for pupils, in local primary and secondary schools serving disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Students into Schools (SiS) serves to enhance the well being, confidence and aspirations of pupils living in disadvantaged and challenging circumstances. Evidence collected by the University indicates very positive outcomes of the programme for mentored pupils, with school heads convinced that student mentors boost pupils' academic achievement levels.[1] There are interesting questions about how the scheme works in practice, and is experienced by students and by pupils.[2] The research project was designed to:

(a) explore students' motivations for participating in the programme, their evolving perceptions and experiences of pupil mentoring, and their values relating to community engagement, and personal and educational development;

(b) understand how the programme was managed, and perceived, within a case study secondary school;

(c) investigate secondary pupils' experiences of having student mentors and their perceptions of if, and how, this mattered to them.

2. Overview of research project and research design

The University Students into Schools programme brings together university students and school pupils through a volunteer mentoring programme, and provides an interesting focus for research into young lives in social context. The overall research was designed as a small preliminary case study, undertaken with a view to assessing the potential value for a larger case based or comparative study across the city. This document reports the findings of the case study, undertaken to explore the diverse motivations, experiences and practices associated with this specific educational intervention, through 2013-14. Discussions were held between the researchers and the University SiS programme manager in late spring of 2013. A specific school was identified as a potentially interesting partner and early contact with the school confirmed their interest in participating. The school is in a disadvantaged neighbourhood and contains a high proportion of pupils on free school meals and with English as an additional language. It has a longstanding association with the SiS programme, and draws annually on many student volunteers as classroom teaching assistants and pupils mentors. The research design was given formal ethical approval by the University. A sample of student volunteers was drawn up with reference to brief personal profiles provided by the SiS management team. This enabled us to identify a spread of students, across university departments, volunteer type (independent or on a taught module) and interests. Through email approaches, followed by phone calls where possible, we recruited 11 university students to participate in interviews. They were interviewed by either Sarah or Indi in the autumn of 2013, just prior to, or near the beginning of, their mentor volunteering. In spring 2014, near the end of their volunteering, we

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[1] Evidence collected by the University SiS team
[2] We refer to (university) students and (school) pupils throughout.

ran a second interview with seven of the original 11 participants. Of the remainder, their SiS arrangements had fallen through, and they did not undertake any mentoring.

We also held an introductory talk with the current school SIS facilitator, and interviews with another three teachers currently or previously involved in running SiS in school. They had somewhat different perspectives depending on their current role and department within the school (the mentoring programme is organised slightly differently across departments). In the early summer of 2014 we ran some small group interviews with pupils involved in the mentoring programme, to learn about their own perceptions and experiences. With the exception of the introductory meeting at school with the SiS coordinator there, and one pupil group interview (where consent was declined), all interviews were recorded.

3. School context

The school has a high proportion of pupils in families in challenging circumstances. Many of them are recent migrants and non-native English speakers. Many pupils arrive in school throughout the academic year, and are therefore out of step with the normal teaching timetable. The school puts a good deal of emphasis on partnerships with parents and carers, and on the teaching of English to enable the fuller integration and learning of children for whom English is a second language.

The use of student, and other, mentors is extensive, with previous rates of coverage running at over 50% of year 11 pupils having a mentor (Teacher B. Mentoring is carried out by individuals from different organisations, not only the University).

4. Teachers' views of SiS

We interviewed 4 teachers with current and /or past involvement in the managing and running of SiS on behalf of the school. The overall view is that SiS is a highly successful and valuable programme, with positive consequences for pupils in school. Teachers identified a range of important benefits including access by pupils to an adult within school who is not a teacher, and with whom pupils can develop a more informal relationship. The mentor too can provide a role model, and when the mentoring works well it can encourage greater interest, confidence and enthusiasm in the pupils. In turn that can enhance their social confidence and self efficacy, and raise their aspirations and expectations of themselves. Meeting people at university, being with someone they like, having a role model, improving their abilities in speaking English, and communicating effectively were all cited by teachers as valuable and important aspects of the mentoring programme. Teacher C saw SiS as improving pupils' ability to relate to others, enhance their confidence and self esteem, and their ability to deal with everyday situations. Additionally it was noted that pupils might 'open up' to their mentor and not to a teacher. Teacher B described the value of mentoring in helping pupils to open up, and providing a role model, perhaps a university student who despite a difficult background has managed to be successful. Speaking of the pupils he said:

"..*living in this area they think that the world's going to pass them by, but they see that people can actually make it, and so they want it too*"

Pupils can become more motivated due to the mentoring, and behave better in their lessons. The teacher continued:

"*I think it's the best thing going. Some of these kids haven't got anybody, some of them don't talk to their parents*"

For Teacher A similarly, whilst there are outcomes of a more measurable kind, such as improved English, a very particular value of the mentoring programme resides in the quality of the mentor-pupil relationship:

"*It would be very hard to effectively analyse the impact of this kind of intervention in [a] data crunching kind of way. You can't put a price or a number on a relationship, or something which makes people aspire ..[and] enthused and interested*"

These more social dimensions of the mentoring relationships and implications were stressed as important contexts for successful academic learning. Teacher A, again:

"*If you are not in the right place to learn in your head because of your personal experiences, you need to sort that out first before you are going to improve academically*".

Teachers also firmly understood pupils to value the mentoring. Additionally they saw it to carry some kudos amongst pupils.

The content of mentoring sessions is devolved to student mentors and to pupils. The school (we understand) holds a record provided by the university student, regarding the content of each mentoring session. The school takes a 'light touch' here, and does not formally review these records. Teacher A noted a tension between the case for providing more detailed guidance on the content of mentoring sessions and the value of flexibility in how pupils and mentors evolve their relationships. In practice, we will see, sessions were diverse, some strongly steered by the student, some very contingent on pupils' agendas, and often quite ad hoc depending on circumstance.

Areas for consideration

It may be worth further consideration of mechanisms through which to provide some input and/or feedback to student mentors. Would there by value in a termly review for example, with the link teacher? Additionally, might pupils themselves be asked to keep a log of their meetings? (perhaps only for sharing with their mentor). These might help students and pupils plan meetings, and contribute to enhancing their cumulative value.

5. Organisation of SiS within school

5.1. Year groups

Within school those pupils who were thought likely to benefit from having a student mentor were invited to participate in the programme by the coordinator. Typically they were in year 11, but also some were in year 10. These years were deemed most valuable for further pupil support due to imminent GCSE exams, and also due to the additional focus that more mature pupils are expected to bring to their exchanges with mentors.

5.2. Allocation of student volunteers and pupil pairs

Different models of 'matching' students and pupils appear to have been used over the years, across school departments, with different models of managing this matching process, sometimes done in a 'bespoke way' managed by staff (Teacher A); and sometimes following a model in which more responsibility for choice was devolved to university student mentors (Teachers B, D). In November 2013 a day was organised by school, when student mentors were briefed by the school SiS coordinator (also a senior teacher and manager in school). Students were provided with a 'pen portrait' brief description of pupils by the SiS coordinator who also had personal knowledge of pupils. A student would then volunteer to mentor a given pupil depending on how they saw their own interests and skills matching the pupil's apparent interests and needs.

5.3. Organisation of student-pupil meetings

The school context is important for understanding the organisational and logistical challenges of running SiS. The school day is tightly timetabled. Mentoring meetings were arranged by students and pupils, required to take place outside of core curriculum subjects, and lasted up to an hour. In practice they could be significantly shorter. Missed meetings appeared to be a common occurrence, noted by both students and pupils. Most people can be forgetful regarding events falling outside their normal routine, and mid-teenage youngsters may be particularly in need of timely prompts to ensure they recall an arrangement to meet with their mentor. This may be exacerbated by having a different arrangement each week. Teaching staff may be stretched further in allowing pupils to miss part of a lesson which then requires catching up on the part of the pupil. University students and school pupils are not allowed to communicate directly outside of school, for example on social media or by phone, in order to protect the privacy of both parties. University students appear to be dependent on reception staff to initiate the chasing up of pupils who do not arrive for their mentoring session. Link teachers play an important role in enabling communication, but practice is diverse. It may be that arrangements are perceived as quite 'ad hoc' from the perspective of pupils, which may make their attendance at mentoring meetings particularly vulnerable to other factors, and contingent on the motivation and organisational abilities of the pupil, and /or the intervention of the link teacher to provide a reminder.

Ensuring mentor-pupil meetings happened on time was often a significant logistical challenge, with very uneven experiences of effective communications between pupils, students and link teachers (mentioned by members of all 3 groups). **It seems likely that further reflection on opportunities for enhancing communications between students and pupils, and between students and school, could add value.**

The yearly timetable also presents challenges. Student training and briefings occur at the start of the academic year and students and pupils are not paired up until the second half of the autumn term. There may be no meetings occurring from mid December when university term ends, until the end of January, after the university exam period. Again where communications are not facilitated, prolonged gaps between meetings may lead to their breakdown. Teacher C reflected that if the university could get students recruited and onto the mentoring placements sooner this could be beneficial.

<u>**Areas for consideration**</u>
Are there ways to firm up arrangements so they are more routine for pupils and/or to firm up mechanisms for reminding pupils? A timetable for mentoring meetings might help. For example, meetings might be planned a month ahead and logged in planners and

diaries. Students might be supplied with a copy of their pupil's timetable so they know where the student is when they visit school. They might also be supplied with a school calendar so they are aware of closures; training days etc

6. Perspectives of university students

Eleven university students were interviewed at or near the start of their participation in the SiS mentoring programme in 2013. We had hoped to interview all of them a second time in the spring of 2014, to learn about their experiences as these had evolved but a number of students were unable to participate in the programme, and so we ran second interviews with the remaining 7. Amongst these there was variability in how extensively they had been involved in mentoring, and in the period it had covered.

6.1. Motivations to participate

The 2012-13 Review of Students into Schools (Sharp 2013)[3] asked student participants about their reasons for volunteering. There, the most common response (at 30%) was 'to gain experience for a possible career in education'. The next most common response was 'to gain skills and experience to enhance CVs' (25%), and thirdly and fourthly (at 17% and 16%) were 'a desire to help others' and 'to share skills/knowledge/interests with pupils' (Sharp 2013). The accounts of motivation given by students in our own qualitative research echo these kinds of responses but additionally flesh them out a little. The most notable feature of the current research sample was the typical expectation of a career in teaching. Some students were already committed to a career in teaching and en route to undertaking teacher training when we first met them. Others saw teaching as a career option and were (to differing degrees of certainty) seeking to establish if it would be a career which would suit them. Those who were expecting a career in teaching particularly emphasised the value to them of gaining experience in a school context with which they were unfamiliar. Typically this was about gaining mainstream or state school experience, and experience in working in contexts of disadvantage, or working with pupils with diverse abilities and levels of interest. Students wanted to broaden their experiences in particular ways, building on previous volunteering, an 'industry year' and overseas teaching experiences. This broadening of experience they saw as serving some different purposes, for example: ensuring that they were making a good career choice for themselves by gaining teaching experiences in new contexts; and laying the groundwork to ensure success (through showing breadth of experience) in applications for teacher training courses. Motives included strengthening CVs or teacher training applications, but the motives also overlapped extensively with ideas about personal development and being certain teaching was right for them, regardless of context, and with a desire to make a difference to pupils. One student was particularly motivated to help young people understand maths, and very keen to help pupils who were struggling with their studies. Making a difference to pupils was a common motive across the mentors, and exemplifies an ethos shared with others and discussed in the literature which, echoed by the study participants, reveals a blend of instrumental and altruistic motives (Holdsworth 2010; Handy et al 2010)[i]. Additionally, and less noted in the general literature, motives around personal development were important, overlapping with students' thinking about teaching as a vocation.

6.2. Organising mentor-pupil meetings through the school year

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[3] Sharp (2013) 2012-13 Review of Students into Schools, ACE, University of Leeds

The students had very diverse experiences of Students into Schools at the case study school. Some were involved in much more intense engagement with the school, for example two participants were spending several hours in school every week and participating as teaching assistants as well as mentors. They felt more embedded in school than other volunteers, who sometimes struggled to maintain a working relationship with school. There were some chronic difficulties relating to communications between the latter students and the school pupils. According to students, pupils routinely forgot, or claimed to have forgotten, to come and meet with the mentor at the pre-arranged time, and had to be found by reception staff. This cut short time for mentoring meetings. These were already short and sometimes arranged within half hour lunch breaks at a pupil's request. Arriving at school and having to wait for a pupil to be chased, and having truncated mentoring sessions, was a quite common experience amongst those mentors who came to school only in order to undertake one to one mentoring sessions. This caused frustration amongst the students.

Of the original 11 student mentor participants in this study, 4 did not continue their volunteering due to circumstance and contingent organisational or personal health problems (for example, a university module convenor was ill and unable to manage a module into school programme; a student did not receive DBS clearance in time to commence volunteering). Even amongst the 7 who saw through their mentoring for some sustained period of time, and who we interviewed a second time in spring 2014, there was great unevenness in their ability to maintain regular and (by their account) productive meetings with pupils. Of the 5 students *who were not teaching assistants* and went to school only to meet their mentee, 4 recounted as a struggle the work required to ensure the pupils' presence. Pupil's forgetfulness and/or failure to appear for arranged meetings was a common experience and left many students frustrated. Sometimes the mentor /mentee relationship broke down altogether. One student held only 5 or 6 full length meetings in total as the pupil "would forget to turn up", or would need be found by reception staff and she described the truncated meeting time which would then be available. This was echoed by another student who described several planned meetings where the pupil came late (after being 'chased' by reception staff) or missed altogether. A third student undertook mentoring sessions regularly before Christmas but reported that subsequently the mentee failed to show up, and the mentoring broke down. A fourth student recounted how her experience of mentoring fizzled out after 4 or 5 weeks, when she and the pupil lost contact, an outcome she put down to a combination of pupil illness, loss of contact over the university Christmas holiday, a lack of meaningful communication with school, and the repeated requirement for the pupil to be chased (and sometimes not found) by reception.

Area for consideration

There is a major challenge in facilitating communication and meeting arrangements between university students and school pupils. Such difficulties arose routinely for student mentors, and left them feeling frustrated. Where students were also teaching assistants in school, presumably with much more routine access to their mentees, there appeared to be no concern about meeting with mentees. We believe further and detailed consideration of the most effective way to facilitate and smooth mentor/mentee communication and meeting arrangements could be highly valuable.

6.3. What happened in mentoring sessions and were they seen to be useful?

Students described how they worked out the content of their mentoring relationship in communication with their pupil mentees, seeking to provide effective guidance. Usually the student took a steer from the pupil and then sought to shape the mentoring sessions as useful learning encounters. The most typical use for the sessions appeared to be one of two things:

a) helping the pupils with their academic work, typically by helping with revision but also seeking to help them improve their work in ways which would enhance their chances of successful GCSE results, e.g. providing practical guidance relating to written English and expression; or
b) offering them advice and guidance as relevant to working out what to do on completing year 11/ GCSE work. For example, guidance might be given about CV writing or interview preparation for college interviews, enhancing general learning skills, or seeking to guide pupils to move from very generalised future plans to more focused actions and goals relevant to such plans.

Students expected to frame the mentoring sessions with reference to pupils' concerns, and react appropriately to ensure the session would be a productive encounter. Mostly students did not prepare ahead of time but asked pupil to bring something with them to work on, although at least two students were quite strongly directive in shaping the mentoring sessions. Elsewhere the student mentors were reacting to pupil interests, sometimes 'playing it by ear', and not typically preparing anything ahead of the meeting. It would seem that many of the meetings are quite 'ad hoc', and pupils rarely took work with them. Students reported on ways they reacted to pupils' concerns and ran the mentoring accordingly. They were generally positive about this. Some students observed that pupils typically are unclear about the content of the relevant subject syllabus. **Students are not themselves familiar with their pupil's exam syllabus. This may be an area where students could be briefed and provided with some resources. An outline of subject syllabuses as well could prove useful.** A desire for more resources was voiced by pupils themselves (discussed later). An aim of SiS is that pupil feels they have a real stake in shaping mentoring sessions so there are risks of overdoing the guidance given to students. **It might nevertheless be useful to provide some more explicit guidance about the possible content of mentoring sessions; examples of successful activities, and additional resources, and reflect further on how to help students and pupils frame their encounters in the most productive way.** The University does some of this already (see Appendix) as part of its training and support, but there may be value in reviewing coverage here.

The Review of Students into Schools (Sharp 2013) documents ways in which students felt pupils may have benefited from the mentoring programme. Some of the more common responses included 'increased one to one support', 'pupils enjoyed having a role model', and 'raised pupils' confidence and aspirations'. Amongst the students interviewed in the present research, there was a good deal of diversity in responses, and students were circumspect about how much difference they could make on the basis of quite minimal contact with pupils. Nevertheless they mostly felt themselves to be making some positive difference for the pupils. Examples of this included helping pupils with their revision and learning, improvement in a pupil's confidence with English language, helping a pupil improve their chances of securing a C grade in their English GCSE, having made some difference to a pupil's ability to focus his thinking and see through plans, and helping pupils improve the presentation of their CVs (some were applying to college, or for work experience). Not all students felt themselves to have made a positive difference to pupils, nor been enabled to. For example, one student recounted how her pupil had demanded a subject expertise from her which was very different from that

which she had offered, and different from what the pupil had originally requested, a situation the student saw as integral to the breakdown of her mentoring placement. Another optimistically recounted in our first interview how he hoped to make a difference to his mentee who had a 'laid back attitude', by being a positive role model, yet by his second interview recounted how after eight sessions he felt he had made no progress, and the pupil remained uninterested. Having been connected with a much more enthusiastic pupil this student was now much more positive about his ability to shape the mentoring into a productive weekly encounter.

In sum, most of the 7 students interviewed twice (especially those who managed an ongoing mentoring relationship) were positive about SiS and valued their experience in terms of it allowing them to make some positive difference in the lives of the pupils they were mentoring, to further their career thinking, to broaden their experience and capabilities, and to extend and gain confidence in their teaching abilities. Difficulties with ensuring pre-arranged meetings took place on time caused frustration. There was diversity in the lead students felt able to take in running the mentoring sessions some of which sounded quite ad hoc in reacting to pupils' immediate concerns. **It may be worth considering the value of extending or firming up opportunities for students, and pupils, to review the direction of mentoring sessions with a third party.**

7. Experiences and views of school pupils

Four small group interviews were run with Year 10 and 11 pupils in the summer term of 2014, before the GCSE exam period. The school SiS coordinator set up these meetings, arranging for us to meet pupils with differing degrees of enthusiasm for the mentoring programme. The four groups were assigned, broadly, relating to the frequency with which they had attended mentoring meetings across the year. Given school time constraints the 4 group interviews were scheduled back to back, and were allocated around 20 minutes apiece. Sarah and Indi ran two group interviews each. Within the interviews there was a good deal of variability in pupil participation, and their brevity presented a challenge in building rapport or getting 'beneath the surface' of pupils' comments. However, the interviews did generate some insights into how pupils experienced the student mentoring. Three group interviews were recorded, and detailed notes taken of a fourth where pupils declined consent to be recorded. There was no intentional link between these pupils and the university students who we had interviewed. We started off the interviews with questions about pupils' likes and dislikes regarding their current school year. The main focus of the brief interviews was on their experiences of having a mentor. We asked them about the bases on which pupils are offered a student mentor. Their ideas echoed what we had been told by teachers, referring to the purposes of mentoring in terms of motivating pupils, the chance for pupils to speak to an adult in school on a more equal basis than they would with a teacher, the mentor as a role model, and someone to help them with their school work and revision. One pupil said that they had mentors so that they could think like adults and learn "*..how a person from out of school is*". Another said "*..putting us on the right track, so if you are bad in school.. and angry and wanting to fight people .. they can help sort it out*"; one said she didn't know why she had a mentor, and many said it was to help them with revision. The pupils also echoed the teachers' assertion that having a mentor is well accepted amongst the peer group, and not at all seen in a negative way.

Several pupils valued the student mentoring and stated that it had made a positive difference to them. The areas identified by pupils as important features of mentoring included having someone in school who is 'between a friend and a teacher', or 'buddy', who pupils felt

to be interested in them as an individual, and is someone they could talk to more openly than with a teacher. One said:

"*She didn't order me to do things and I felt I could talk to her about anything.*"

This is a pertinent reminder of the values identified by teachers - first and foremost mentoring may matter for helping smooth non-academic difficulties, and increasing pupils' engagement with school. It seems likely that pupils value the more equal and/or personalised relationship and ability to contribute to shaping the mentoring meetings (although as we learned from student mentors, how this worked out was very varied in practice). Pupils also highlighted the importance of getting help with revision, especially with planning time and developing revision strategies:

"*I didnt know how to [do revision], I used to sit down and fall asleep. [My mentor] helped me .. organise revision and plan my time*"

Help with revision in the run up to GCSEs was perceived by many as a major benefit of mentoring. Some pupils also described receiving help with on-line searches for information (e.g. relating to colleges) and associated advice about colleges and post-16 courses, exploring apprenticeship options and helping search out associated information. They discussed receiving help developing their CV, and help applying for work experience.

Mentoring was not always perceived as helpful. For example, one pupil described how his mentor tried to help him understand maths work, but was unable to do so, and the pupil 'got bored' and stopped arranging or attending meetings. Another said that whilst she had got on well with her mentor, after her holiday she did not meet him again despite hoping to. "*I felt abandoned.. I felt like he didn't want to talk to me no more*". Another pupil said that he felt bad about letting down his mentor when he could not make a meeting due to a class test.

In general there was some patterning across the groups, with the frequent attenders mostly being very positive about the experience, and those with much more limited attendance tending more to indifference. Having few mentor meetings and a relative lack of enthusiasm may go hand in hand. In parallel the pupils who articulated clear enthusiasm for the mentoring programme themselves pointed to quite specific ways the mentoring had benefited them. It may be that the data simply reflects differing degrees of articulacy, but it is plausible that mentoring particularly enthused some pupils, or that pupils who are driven, or have quite clear goals, are the ones who gain most from mentoring. **It may be worth reflecting on where support is most strongly targeted, given time and resource constraints: for example, would it be especially productive to keep a tighter rein on mentoring arrangements where pupils are less positively engaged?**

We asked pupils what they might do differently if they were designing the Students into Schools mentoring programme, and some pupils suggested that the university students could usefully be given more resources to help the pupils with revision or skills. Some pupils said that the student mentors are left to get on with it and have to start from scratch finding materials, and that they should be supplied with more resources. However, pupils were also clear they did not want something forcing on them as they valued being able to drive the agenda themselves. **Their comments also inform our suggestion (see 6.3) for a resource bank for student mentors, more information regarding pupils' course syllabuses, and more points at which to review progress with a third party within school.**

8. Summary and recommendations

Where SiS mentoring works well it does seem to make a significant positive difference to the pupils. Is there a way to extend that experience of positive influence? In this final summary section we summarise some of the areas we believe worthy of further consideration.

The mentoring programme does not fit within school organisational or timetable structures straightforwardly. The onus is on the pupil and a link teacher, to manage this process of arranging meetings. A significant linked difficulty is the challenge of effective communication about meeting times, and pupils remembering meeting arrangements. A number of pupils felt they had been let down by their mentor, whilst for their part most student mentors expressed frustration at meetings missed by pupils, and at pupils having to be 'chased' by school reception. Communications seem to break down very easily and often a mentor/mentee relationship appeared to collapse due to a missed appointment and failure to communicate. *These factors render the mentoring programme arrangements vulnerable to routine disruption.* Success requires a dovetailing of pupil and students' timetables; maintenance of motivation in contexts where arrangements may break down; and effective communication between pupil and student mentor facilitated by a busy link teacher. Currently evidence suggests that a combination of luck, competence, and pupil motivation and/or extensive link teacher support are all required to overcome the logistical challenges in sustaining an ongoing mentoring relationship throughout the school year.

Overall, the SiS programme is very successful in its objectives yet there are areas of weakness whose resolution might further enhance its value and efficacy. We ask some questions and make some suggestions we hope to be of use to school, and the university, in reviewing the SiS mentoring programme.

Question 1: Are there ways to improve communications between pupils and student mentors?

A) Can student mentor visit times be more structured and/or timetabled from the start of the year so that meetings are to be confirmed (or cancelled) rather than set up from scratch?

B) Are there other ways communications can be facilitated? e.g.

> *Can more time be freed for the link teacher task at school and/or more staff involved?*

> *Can students and pupils communicate by social media/ text to firm up meeting arrangements, if their teacher/ mentor overseer is copied in?*

> *Can mentors occasionally work with pupils in the classroom context, on a one to one basis (as suggested by one of the interviewed teachers?)*

> *Can there be a centralised way of recording /requesting meetings times to which both students and pupil have ready access (say a physically or electronically accessible noticeboard)?*

Question 2: Would there be value in providing a resource bank for students (and pupils?). Some pupils asked if students could be supplied with more resources/ materials which they could draw on.

A) Can a resource bank be made available which might include outlines (and full?) syllabuses of pupil's courses, so students understand coverage and draw on this in helping pupil's with work and revision. Other resources too could include models of successful mentor activities and guidance for students, as a source of ideas or a 'fall back' resource should it be needed.

B) Relatedly, could there be more structured contexts through which to set things up and / or support students and pupils?

C) Are there ways to engage pupils more in the sorts of things they might do with their mentor? This might boost motivation for some. Additionally, might pupils be required to keep a learning / mentee log, which could help them record and value any achievements, and remain confidential between themselves and their mentor, at the pupil's discretion.

D) Could there be occasional meetings for all the mentors and mentees – not just at the start of the programme, but perhaps each term? For example, university students might do a 5-10 minute talk on something which would engage the pupils? This would be part of a session seeking to establish ways for students to feel more integrated within the school, to meet teachers as well as other pupils, and in turn allow pupils to meet other mentors.

E) Can pupils be credited with regular attendance at mentoring meetings? For example, completion of a log through the mentoring programme, regular attendance or completion of the programme might be recognised in some meaningful way by school, say through a certificate of commendation.

9. Conclusion

We have sought to summarise and highlight some of the value and challenges of a Students into Schools mentoring programme, taking a local school as a case study, and undertaking semi-structured interviews with university student mentors, and teachers, and group interviews with pupils. We hope to have gained some insights and offered some suggestions of use to the programme managers at the school and university. The study was not funded by any external project partner and was small scale, in effect a pilot study. We are very grateful to the University, the School, the students, staff and pupils in supporting the research. Were we to make recommendations for a larger project we would particularly like to see research intensively track pupils throughout the school year, using a range of qualitative methods. This would deepen our understanding of their experiences, and the diverse contexts in which they are shaped, and enhance knowledge of how different kinds of learning opportunities are perceived and utilised by pupils.

Appendix

The University Students into Schools programme manager provided a summary of the training of university students and resources made available to them:

Before taking up placement in a school, all students attend two compulsory training sessions (four hours in total). The first part comprises a generic induction, delivered by the SiS team, aimed at helping students understand their role in the school and introducing them to safeguarding, communication and behaviour management issues. The second part of the training, depends on what volunteer role they have chosen:

- mentors attend mentoring training which is delivered by experienced school-based learning mentors;
- academic tutors are split according to the age group they want to work with and attend tutoring training which is delivered by primary and secondary school teachers respectively;
- students who want to work with EAL students attend EAL training which is delivered by the Language Centre at the University.

All sessions are very practical and interactive. Mentors and EAL volunteers are given packs of ideas and material they can use in their sessions and all students receive a SiS pack with tips and reminders from the training that they can use throughout their placement. Following the compulsory training, there is a suite of seminars and workshops students can access throughout the year.

SiS mentoring training includes pack of ideas for mentoring sessions. These are quite generic in nature and do not support any specific subject syllabus. If a student has attended the EAL training, they are provided with information about working with EAL students at different levels of language ability. Finally, students who are academic tutors or are undertaking a placement as part of a module, are trained to be placed and work within the classroom and offer specific academic support, so very different to the more generic mentoring and EAL.

Endnote

[i] Handy, F., Cnaan, R.A., Hustinx, L., Kang, C., Brudney, J.L., Haski-Leventhal, D., Holmes, K., Meijs, L.C.P.M., Pessi, A.B., Ranade, B., Yamauchi, N. and Zrinscak (2010) 'A Cross-Cultural Examination of Student Volunteering: Is It All About Résumé Building?', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39 [3] 498-523

Holdsworth, C. (2010) 'Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations For Student Volunteering', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 58 (4): 421-437