

Case Study

Setting Name	The Hamble School
Lead name and email address	Jemma Morgan jmorgan@thehambleschool.co.uk
Audit Focus Area	Using the relational approach to support students (both at phase transition and during in year admission) to create an environment in which students feel safe, connected and ready to learn.
Title of Research Project	Supporting students with transition to build a sense of belonging.
Action Research Question	How can relational practice be embedded into our transition programme so that students develop a strong sense of belonging?
Brief description of your action research project	<p>Our school demographic is widely varied. Our context is:</p> <p>28% SEND, 3% EHCP, 26.4% FSM, 44% Disadvantaged, 6% EAL</p> <p>We have a large number of students that arrive to us in Year 7 with multiple barriers to learning. 8.6% of our students have 3 or more barriers to learning which include but are not limited to: Childrens services involvement, SEND and safeguarding mental health concerns.</p> <p>As well as this, we admit a disproportionate amount of complex in year admissions. This academic year we have admitted 34 students, many of which have either been out of education for an extended period of time or have complex needs.</p> <p>Our action research project used knowledge and strategies gained from our participation in Hampshire run projects such as 'Being Secondary Ready', 'Year 7 to 8 transition', and 'Implementation Framework to support change' as well as Relational approach research through ARC to ensure our transition programme for both phase and in year admissions focused on placing relationships at the centre of our approach to ensuring an effective transition so that students are able to thrive at The Hamble School.</p>
Year 7 transition	

<p>Person/situation background</p>	<p>Year 6 to 7 cohort</p>
<p>What happened?</p>	<p>Mission Transition programme – Our schools transition timeline provides a carefully sequenced, relationally driven framework that supports students and families long before they formally join the school. This begins with early communication. The timeline ensures repeated, meaningful contact with pupils, parents, and primary colleagues. Activities such as Primary school assemblies, data-sharing meetings, and welcome events create multiple touchpoints that foster familiarity, predictability and trust. By structuring these interactions over many months, the school reduces uncertainty, strengthens students’ sense of safety, and builds the foundations for strong relationships with key adults. This deliberate pacing recognises that connection, not compliance, is what underpins a successful transition.</p> <p>Our most vulnerable students are also supported through an enhanced transition programme. This includes strategies such as key-adult assignment, consultation evenings, extra visits to the school and small-group tours.</p> <p>The school models a relational approach that prioritises belonging and personalised support. The timeline ensures that staff have the time and information needed to understand each child’s strengths, needs and context, enabling attuned and responsive practice once students arrive in Year 7.</p> <p>Events such as taking our Proud Friday reward system to the Primaries, Summer School, and the Headteacher attending the Year 6 productions further humanise the process, creating shared experiences that deepen relational bonds.</p> <p>As a school, we are intentionally building a secure base, where consistency, empathy and partnership with families allow students to enter secondary school feeling known, valued and supported.</p> <p>This structured yet relationally grounded approach ensures that transition is not a single event but a sustained journey of connection and care.</p>



**What has
changed/developed?**


Following the successful implementation of the transition programme, we have looked to further improve the programme and also further embed practice by strengthen links with the feeder primary school with a focus on shared practice and common language around relational approach practice.

Our school alongside the 3 feeder schools participated in an Educational Psychologist led project focused around Implementation. The focus of the project was based around frameworks such as 'The Resilience Ball' and 'Self-regulation approaches'. Through collaborative working and the use of the EEF implementation model we were able to build a shared relational approach by strengthening communication, shared understanding and consistent practice across settings. We attended implementation circles, where we were able to share ideas, discuss progress and reflect on practice.

By engaging feeder schools in professional dialogue and shared CPD, we were able to begin to ensure that primary and secondary staff are using similar language when talking about behaviour, relationships and emotional regulation. As a result, we are developing a coherent relational vocabulary that supports continuity for pupils as they move into Year 7, helping them experience a more predictable and relationship-centred transition.

Furthermore, we have continued to strengthen our collaborative work with the feeder schools through the development of joint INSET days. A recent INSET day included a keynote speech and workshops delivered by Kit Messenger, co-director of Changing Chances and Leader of the Empowerment Approach. Her approaches are grounded in relationships, neuroscience and emotional regulation. Her model emphasises understanding the brain, recognising triggers, responding to unmet needs, and equipping children with language and tools to communicate effectively. Her workshop provided staff with a common language around feelings, needs, and self-regulation (e.g., "brain best," needs-met vs. unmet needs), which is foundational to building consistent relational practices across a school community.

We have also focused on further enhancing links with our Primary schools and fostering relationships with families in our wider community through events such as our Collaborative Music

	<p>concert, our Sports Ambassadors hosing Primary Sports Days, a Primaries Matinee performance of our School Production and Year 5 Arts day.</p>
<p>What impact has this had on the individual/the setting?</p>	<p>Students develop a sense of belonging at The Hamble School early on. As a school, we are able to celebrate and share the success of collaboration with the community.</p> <div data-bbox="531 651 1273 1104">  </div> <p>The Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA - The Hamble School) report highlights the transition as a key strength: <i>'Transition and induction to the school is a strength with much already in place.'</i></p> <p>The Governors Monitoring Visit report in October 2025, stated the following a student voice panel:</p> <p><i>Year 7 students talk about how well they are enjoying Hamble School and feel that Transition was good and incredibly supportive. It was a pleasure to meet so many thoughtful and insightful young students who spoke of an enjoyable transition.</i></p>



Parent feedback is positive about pre-transition events such as Open Evening and School Tour:

YEAR 5 & 6
FEEDBACK

Rated the Open Morning as 'excellent'...

"Esme was very informative and a good ambassador for the school. She covered everything we needed to know."

Rated the Open Morning as 'excellent'...

"Really encouraged to see the improvements made to establish a positive learning environment. Douglas is a credit to the school – Very knowledgeable, polite and confident". A good balance of tours vs. presentation."

Rated the Open Morning as 'excellent'...

"Ruby did a fabulous job showing us around. Very good to see the school. It has helped to consolidate our decision."

Rated the Open Morning as 'excellent'...

"Very impressed. Pupils and staff seem very friendly and the facilities are good."

Rated the Open Morning as 'excellent'...

"Liked seeing the classes in action. Good questions answered from the guides. Tour guides Doug and Ben were excellent."

THE HAMBLE SCHOOL
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

Parent feedback about the transition programme included:

- Hamble teaching at the Junior School and Summer School helped build relationships
- All of it, I felt it was very well planned
- Transition went much better than I thought
- The interaction between the school and parents helped

Student feedback received via student surveys and Student Council meetings highlight the value the school places not only on academic but emotional and social aspects of school life also.

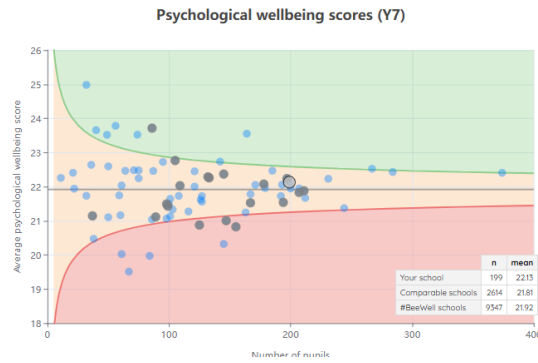
Summary: What students like most about school

- **Friends & Social Interaction:** Seeing friends, social time during breaks.
- **Breaks, Lunch & Food:** Enjoyment of lunch times, canteen food, special meals like Christmas Dinner.
- **Lessons & Subjects:** PE, Art, Drama, Dance, Media, Science, Technology.
- **Activities:** Clubs, sports, productions, Dance Live, football teams.
- **School Environment & Support:** Positive points system, rewards, respect, kindness, safety.
- **Facilities:** Library, drama studio, tech rooms.

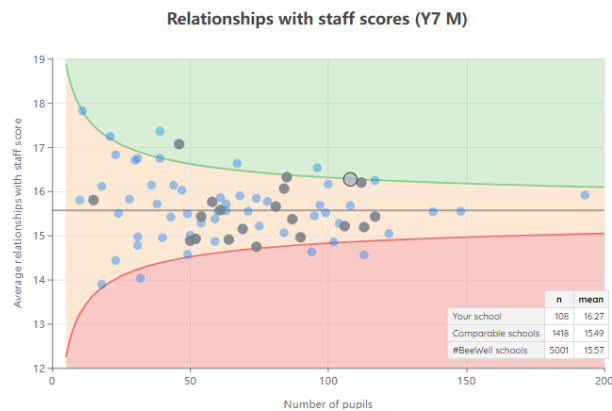
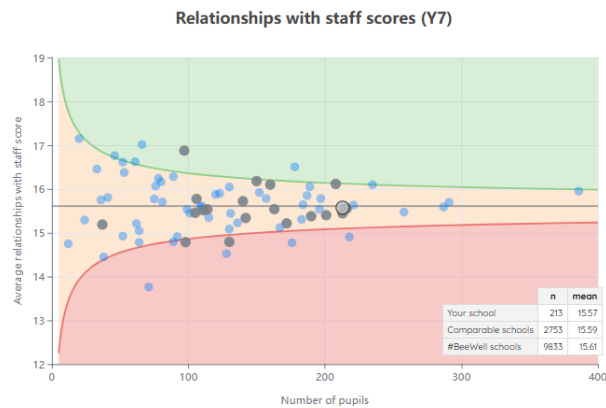


Our recent Bee Well results show that Year 7 students score well on many aspects including:

Physiological wellbeing:



Relationships with staff (particularly for male students):





	<p>School pressure:</p> <table border="1"> <caption>School pressure</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Not at all</th> <th>A little</th> <th>Some</th> <th>A lot</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Your school</td> <td>21.1%</td> <td>37.6%</td> <td>21.1%</td> <td>20.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Comparable schools</td> <td>13.1%</td> <td>35.7%</td> <td>29.4%</td> <td>21.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All schools</td> <td>13.9%</td> <td>37.9%</td> <td>29.2%</td> <td>19.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Through laying solid foundations through the transition programme, students have settled quickly into school life, are engaged in lessons and participating in a wide range of extracurricular activities.</p>	Category	Not at all	A little	Some	A lot	Your school	21.1%	37.6%	21.1%	20.2%	Comparable schools	13.1%	35.7%	29.4%	21.8%	All schools	13.9%	37.9%	29.2%	19.0%
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<p>What has been learned for the whole setting community?</p>	<p>By delivering a comprehensive transition programme which is built on developing relationships and connection, we have been able to build trust with families and students. Students have developed an early strong sense of belonging which has resulted in positive engagement with school. We have also been able to very quickly identify those students who need extra support and intervention to.</p> <p>We continue to drive collaborative working with our feeder schools to ensure common language and strategies in supporting our students so that when they transition to Secondary school the expectations and support are familiar and consistent.</p>																				
<p>What is essential for other settings to know from this case study?</p>	<p>Building collaborative links with Primary schools is essential to not only know and understand the students but to ensure practice is transferable.</p> <p>All stakeholders need to be part of the process.</p> <p>Being open and honest with families about your offer from early on is essential in order to build and maintain relationships.</p>																				
<p>In Year transition</p>																					
<p>Person/situation background</p>	<p>In September 2025, we admitted to students with complex backgrounds.</p>																				



	<p>These students are siblings whom are LAC in the care of a family member. Both students have a history of trauma, Childrens Services involvement and entrenched non-school attendance. Both students were not attending their previous Secondary placement and through the Virtual School applied to attend The Hamble School.</p> <p>Attendance at their previous school in 23-24 was 12% and in 24-25 was 3%.</p>
<p>What happened?</p>	<p>The priority for the school initially was to understand the context of the students and the barriers to education. This information was gathered through multiple meetings involving the School, Virtual School, Childrens Services and the family.</p> <p>An integration plan was established and due to the non-engagement with educational provision, we initially started the students in our Inclusion Bases on reduced hours provision.</p> <p>The priority at the beginning was to build relationships and trust with the students as a way to re-engage them in education.</p> <p>The students transitioned between Inclusion bases as a way of enabling progress and making small steps to transitioning to mainstream lessons. The students also participated in interventions and academic studies to address gaps in learning.</p> <p>Once the students were settled and ready to attend lessons, support was provided with building their curriculum offer focusing on their interests. A RAG rated timetable was put in place and over time the students hours were increased and they began attending lessons. This was achieved over a 3 month period.</p> <p>The students now attend lessons full time and access to the provision bases support and check ins.</p> <p>One of the students requires additional support for their emotional wellbeing and is receiving intervention by Future You.</p> <p>We have also as a school continued to work with Childrens Services where there have been concerns and supported the family with food bags, uniform support funds and household fund vouchers.</p>



Example of the strategies and interventions used for one of the students:

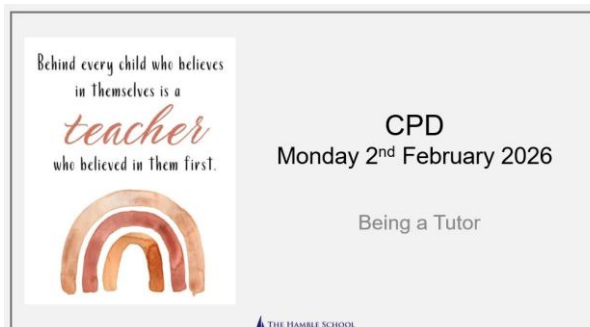
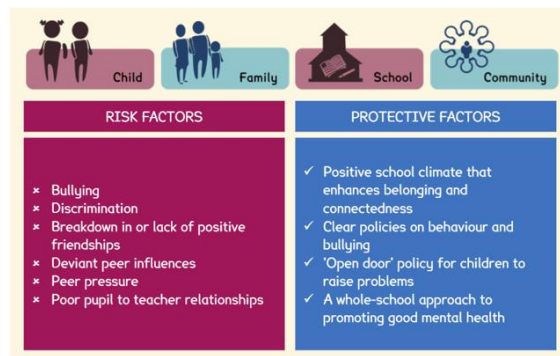
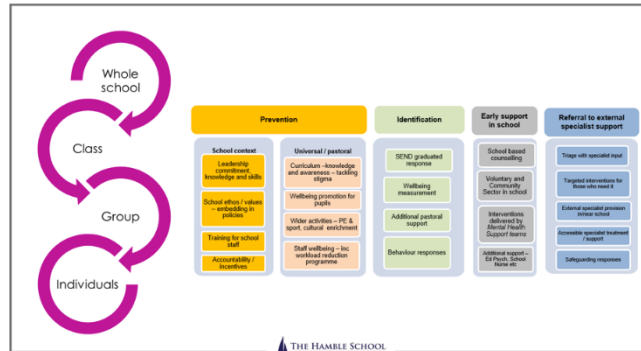
Student: *** Previous school: Crestwood Key Stage: 4 Year Group: 10.5 Start Date: 2/12/2025 Managed by: SBE	SEN Status: N LAC: Y Pupil Premium: Y Referral Status – transitioned From Engage 2/12/25													
Summary of referral to Retrack *** was moved to Retrack at the start of December 2025 to support with coaching into her lessons as she as moving to the final transition phase of reconnecting with Education and reintegration.														
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Typical Behaviours: On our initial meeting with *** and carers the first week in September *** presented and lacking confidence and very anxious about attending school and voiced a dislike at the thought of wearing her school uniform. The decision was made to place *** in engage to monitor her behaviour, mental health and interactions with peers due to her lack of social exposure for the last 3 years.	Key Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - *** does not has a SPP, however a referral for ASD is underway - *** presents with low self-esteem and quite withdrawn so support was given by Engage to build relationships and self-esteem. - Support with mental health - Coaching into lessons from Retrack - Support with organisation and homework planning - Allow *** to discuss any concerns and support if needed - Contact with carer who is supportive 													
Multi Agency Intervention Childrens Services Virtual School	School Intervention and Support Support from Engage Support from Retrack to attend all lessons. Tutor activity support in Retrack – work on growth mindset, resilience and school rules. Support with accessing Class Charts and organising homework. Model appropriate oracy – *** can be quite vocal about her thoughts but has settled and controlled this issue well Punctuality report as *** was sometimes late to school Support with telling the time Support with connection meetings with key staff – tutor and new staff to help *** break the ice. *** wrote a short bio of herself to introduce herself to her tutor. Support in Retrack at break and lunch (*** also supports another student with friendship)													
Impact of interventions: *** is now full time, in school and attending her lessons and tutor. *** has worked incredibly hard to fill gaps in her learning, she literally worked through her lunch break revising and has shown great resilience. She enjoys sharing her work on Proud Friday	Key Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retrack staff see *** daily - No SPP 													
Targets for future working: *** to be allowed access to Retrack at break and lunch where she joins another student and completes revision and homework with support if needed.														
Signed:		Date: 12/03/26												

What has changed/developed?

Due to the success of this integration and reflections on the Year 6-7 transition work, the school reflected on the importance of staff relationships with students, particularly those with complex backgrounds. As a result of this we have invested in our CPD programme with staff. We have delivered training on the role of



staff in supporting students with emotional wellbeing and mental health, role of the Tutor and ACES.



This training has been essential in building a relational approach in school. When staff are confident in recognising emotional needs and responding with empathy and consistency, we believe students experience a sense of safety and belonging.

We believe that our Tutors being stable, trusted adults. They are a consistent person in the students lives. They notice small changes in the students and the ones who set the tone, check ins, celebrates success but also holds the line.

The training we delivered around ACES deepened staff awareness of how early experiences shape behaviour and emotional



	<p>responses, enabling them to interpret behaviour through a lens of curiosity rather than judgement. This shared knowledge has helped to create a compassionate, connected school culture where students feel understood, valued, and supported.</p> <p>Staff are also able to apply this training not only in their role as a Tutor but also in the classroom and where mentoring our Year 11 students. Support staff also received this training so that they can implement this practice into their interactions with students. This also helps our staff understand and support our more complex in year admission students.</p> <p>More locally, we have also invested in staff training in areas such as but not limited to: supporting Young Carers, supporting students that move across county borders, understanding the impact of domestic abuse. We have also provided training via Solent Mind to 15 members of staff so that they can provide Mental First aid.</p>
<p>What impact has this had on the individual/the setting?</p>	<p>The staff involved in supporting the two case study students received the below email from our Designated Teacher following a CLA:</p> <p><i>Dear all,</i></p> <p><i>Just had the CLA review for *** and ***, the IRO was very complimentary about how the school have supported the girls and their transition back into mainstream school. She thanked everyone involved.</i></p> <p><i>Well done team. Teamwork makes the dream work.</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for all the hard work, nurture and time put into supporting the girls. The IRO was amazed that the girls were in school full time, going to lessons and happy.</i></p> <p><i>Jane</i></p> <p>One of the students has 82% attendance. The 18% absence was due to her reduced hours provision at the beginning of her integration plan. Therefore, for the hours that she has been expected to attend, her attendance is 100%. The other student's attendance is the same with the exception of 1 day of absence for illness since attending the school.</p> <p>Across the school, we are also seeing an impact of the whole school focus on the relational approach. Tutors are more actively involved in</p>



	<p>early intervention for attendance. We have recently seen a 3% increase in the percentage of students at 90% attendance.</p> <p>We have also seen an impact in behaviour data. Year to date, we have seen a 32% decrease in suspensions compared with last academic year and there has been a significant reduction in the number of suspensions for abuse against an adult, further illustrating the improvements in relationships between staff and students.</p>
<p>What has been learned for the whole setting community?</p>	<p>Building relationships with complex in year admission students is essential for an effective transition.</p> <p>An integration plan for in year admissions has to be personalised and build in collaboration with the student.</p> <p>Strong staff student relationships has an impact on engagement and sense of belonging.</p>
<p>What is essential for other settings to know from this case study?</p>	<p>Invest time in getting to know the students pre-admission.</p> <p>Ensure an integration plan is created which includes the students with clear success criteria and next steps.</p> <p>Identify key staff that can build effective relationships with complex students and ensure this relationship is maintained.</p>

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