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How does peer mentoring work?

There are many variations including:

• Pupils in both primary and secondary schools can volunteer to be a mentor or mentee following an assembly on the topic
• Some schools allocate mentors to a class and allow potential mentees to choose their own mentor. Others will allocate a mentor with particular subject skills or because they are a positive role model
• In some schools all newcomers have access to either a class mentor or an individual mentor should they want one
• Other schools favour schemes for gifted pupils. Some provide an extra layer of support for those who are falling behind or experiencing problems with school in general
• Secondary schools often draw on students in year 9 or above for their mentors
• Primary schools may draw on year 6 pupils for their mentors

All mentors are trained and supported by the scheme co-ordinator, year tutor or form tutor who acts as a mentor and guide to the peer mentors.
How does it work from the pupils’ perspective?

- They speak the same language as each other
- Have common experiences
- Mentors have high levels of empathy with the mentees
- They share common issues, hopes and fears
Credibility and facts, empathy and support

Issues such as sex, relationships, drugs and alcohol are often discussed in young people’s groups based on gossip, myth and hearsay. But, a trained peer mentor can provide factual information on these topics effectively and with more credibility than adults.

Schools often have clear anti-bullying strategies but children being bullied can feel very isolated and lonely. Peer mentors can offer the bridge between school policy and personal experiences.

The transition to *big school* is often on the agenda in peer mentoring relationships.
Linking the school’s agenda to the pupils’ agenda

Effort must be made to find a link between the school’s agenda and the pupils’ agenda. For example, the school may be interested in issues such as study skills, homework, behaviour, attendance, bullying and health issues. Pupils may have a different perspective, which could be about relationships with friends, a pet dying, sexual experiences, boredom, not seeing the relevance of schoolwork or problems at home.

If the focus is on the school’s agenda there is a risk of the mentee being put off.

When the focus is initially on the mentee’s agenda, this will help to build trust, rapport and confidence. The mentee will start to feel valued and respected. Increased self-esteem, confidence and motivation follow and, ultimately, the school’s and the mentee’s objectives coincide and are achieved.
Main topics of discussion in peer mentoring

• Bullying – physical, verbal, at school or at home
• Relationships, peer pressure
• Smoking, drinking, sex, drugs
• Changing bodies, general health issues
• Relationship with parents, family break-up, bereavement, redundancy
• Homework, relationships with teachers
• Difficulties with school subjects
• Self-image, food and diet
Setting up a peer mentoring scheme

Why do schemes fail?

- Insufficient resources
- Lack of planning
- No clear aim or objectives
- Lack of staff support
- Lack of support for the mentors
- No training
Voices of experience

‘The more time spent thinking about the scheme the better. You need to think about who it is for and what you want it to achieve. You also need to know how you will know when you have achieved it.’

Experienced scheme co-ordinator

‘I found it really useful to write an action plan and to think about who else inside or outside the school needed to be informed or involved.’

Scheme co-ordinator

‘Some staff couldn’t imagine that the pupils could be trained to deal with complex and sensitive issues such as sexual health and substance abuse and they have been surprised at the attitudes, maturity and skill of the young mentors.’

Head of year

‘We found our local EBP (Education Business Partnership, see pages 75 & 109) really helpful and supportive.’

Headteacher

‘We are trying to develop community spirit and relationships within the school.’

Scheme co-ordinator
About the authors

Bob Garvey

Bob has been involved in education all his career. His experience includes primary and secondary education as a teacher and he now works in higher education as a principal lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. In 1998 Bob was awarded a PhD from The University of Durham for his research into mentoring. He has published widely on the topic of mentoring in academic and professional journals and has contributed chapters to a number of edited books. Bob is co-author of the best-selling *Mentoring Pocketbook*.

Kim Langridge

Kim has been involved in mentoring for many years both as a mentor and a mentee. He has written many scheme co-ordinators’ handbooks for a range of organisations including schools, voluntary sector groups and business organisations. He provides training for mentors, mentees and scheme co-ordinators throughout the UK. He is currently involved in a mentoring project targeting young offenders. Kim is interested in all aspects of human learning and development. He holds a Masters degree in Strategic Human Resources Development from London Guildhall University.
Mentoring Pocketbook. January 2010. Authors. For mentoring to develop students' creativity, it should not be considered as a passive activity (Alred et al., 1998) but a dynamic one which requires active participation from the mentors and mentees for mutual development (Ramage and Henderson, 2009). The active participation involved in the mentoring process can be best described by looking at the three-stage model proposed by Alred et al., which consists of exploration, new understanding and action planning. Previously known as "Mentoring in Schools", the revised "Pupil Mentoring Pocketbook" explains how to: set up and manage a pupil mentoring scheme; train peer mentors; conduct mentoring meetings; evaluate mentoring; persuade people of its benefits; ask relevant questions; and avoid problems and pitfalls. Given the task of Pupil Mentoring and not really knowing where to start, this is a good starting place. Short, sharp, snappy - good value. Read more. One person found this helpful. The Mentoring Pocketbook - now in its third edition - shows how to design and manage a mentoring scheme, how to prepare to be a mentor, how to conduct mentoring sessions, how to maintain the relationship through the different stages and how to evaluate mentoring. Book Preview. Mentoring Pocketbook - Geof Alred. You've reached the end of this preview. Sign up to read more! Pupil Mentoring Pocketbook. By Bob Garvey and Kim Langridge. Teachers' Pocketbooks £6.99 each. These are the latest two titles in an excellent series. Pupil Mentoring describes and supports the practice of bringing people other than teachers into school to support pupils' learning. It takes the reader through a three-stage mentoring model of Exploration, New Understanding and Action Planning. Teachers and heads should read this book. PUPIL MENTORING Pocketbook. By Bob Garvey & Kim Langridge. Cartoons: Phil Hallstone. Contents. Page. The first mentor, famous mentoring relationships, what Introduction mentoring is and isn't, coaching or mentoring?, uses, scope, a. The Mentoring Pocketbook is my well-used and trusted text that I recommend to all new mentors and mentees. It is a versatile, pragmatic and educative book for anyone looking to engage with mentoring informally or through an organised programme.