

CASE STUDY:
**The Two Counties Trust -
Reducing Exclusion through a
Whole School approach to
Inclusion**

“The year before last suspensions were high, attendance was below national average and we were worried about internal truancy.” Deb Eldon, headteacher, is explaining the journey Heritage High School has been on.

“When I was building my senior team I knew people bring different perceptions to what Inclusion is, especially if it’s not how they’ve come up through leadership. I wanted everyone to understand - it’s not about lowering expectations, or an add-on. Inclusion is core, and it happens in the classroom.” In the past two years, Deb’s Deputy and Assistant heads have all done The Difference’s Inclusive Leadership Course.

“Now, we’re all on exactly the same page. Inclusion is a thread which runs through our decisions.” Heritage High has had a year of rapid school improvement: suspensions have halved, persistent absence has fallen by 4% and attendance risen by 1.75%.
“We’ve focused a lot on what every child gets as standard, in universal experiences like ‘family lunch’ so no child eats alone, year group appreciations where the students celebrate each other, focusing on the routines which bring psychological safety. And on all-staff confidence. It’s been the most amazing year - we’ve gone from Requires Improvement to Good in that time.”



Deb’s school is one of nine in Two Counties Trust, where the central team leadership are making inclusion a priority trust-wide. CEO Wes Davies believes professional development is key. The trust has invested in leaders across each school to strengthen their strategy for a universal and measurable approach to inclusion.

18 months in, the “green shoots” of measurable impact are showing, trust wide. Overall attendance has risen, but importantly, it’s risen most steeply for pupil premium children. The biggest drops in suspensions are for students with one or more previous suspensions.

The next phase includes Wes’ own professional development. This year the trust has partnered with social investment charity Impetus, for a programme of support which includes CEO critical friendship in a project to extend the trust’s internal alternative provision offers to all nine schools. *“The strategy for ensuring our schools work for our most vulnerable children cannot be delegated. I am heavily involved in our work on culture, safeguarding and well-being. The decisions we take that benefit the most vulnerable students in our trust, benefit all children, and those are decisions that can’t be left to chance”.*