



# Using data to drive early student support

<b>School name:</b>	John Spence Community High School
<b>Type:</b>	Secondary (ages 11 to 16)
<b>Region:</b>	North East
<b>Students:</b>	About 850
<b>The Difference Programme:</b>	Inclusive Leadership Course (ILC)
<b>School Challenge:</b>	Tracking student interventions to meet diverse needs
<b>Identified Solution:</b>	Using data to underpin whole school approach

## CONTEXT

For staff at John Spence Community High School, supporting students means more than just responding to immediate challenges - it's about anticipating needs before they escalate.

The school serves a diverse student population, with 44.3% of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) - nearly double the national average. In addition, increasing numbers of students are arriving in Year 7 with undiagnosed learning needs, alongside a wider cohort requiring social, emotional, and mental health support.

With such varied student needs, one of the school's biggest challenges has been **tracking and coordinating interventions effectively**. Staff needed a system that allowed them to see what support was already in place, identify gaps, and ensure students received the right help before reaching crisis points such as exclusion or persistent absenteeism. Over the past two years, the school has been transforming its approach, shifting from reactive interventions to a structured, data-driven model that prioritises early identification and targeted support.

## CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

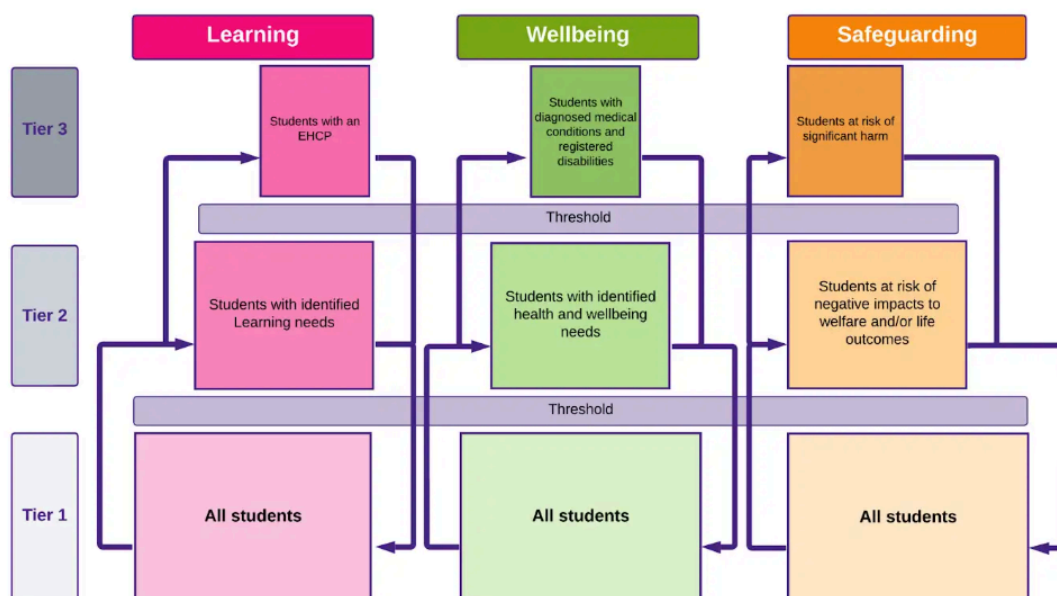
A key turning point came when the school joined The Difference [Inclusive Leadership Course](#) (ILC). In 2023/24, the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher took part, and this year, Kirsty Wyllie, Associate Assistant Headteacher overseeing student welfare and support, has continued the school's engagement with the course.

Through the ILC, school leaders adopted the **Whole-School Inclusion Framework**, a tool that helped them structure and refine their approach. Building on this, the school developed a detailed tracking and tiered support document to categorise individual students by level of need across learning, wellbeing, and safeguarding. The document outlines the corresponding support available at each level, ranging from universal provision to specialist interventions, enabling staff to identify students before they are at risk of exclusion or persistent absenteeism.

The document is reviewed fortnightly with the Headteacher, SENCO, and key staff members to proactively plan interventions, ensuring that:

- **Universal support at Level 1 is strengthened** to prevent students from requiring more intensive interventions.
- **Students identified as moving “up a level” receive tailored and timely support.**
- **The school can track past and present support for individual students** and identify additional measures where needed.

### The Difference Whole-School Inclusion Framework



## EARLY INTERVENTION IN ACTION

One example of this structured approach in practice was with a cohort of Year 7 students identified as needing additional support. Many faced external challenges influencing their behaviour in school, and there were concerns about potential setbacks over the summer break. These students were placed in the school's **Student Engagement Centre (SEC)** - a nurturing environment designed to provide targeted, 6 to 8 week long placements before aiming to reintegrate students into mainstream classrooms. Through early identification and structured interventions, these students transitioned successfully into Year 8. The ability to act early, rather than waiting for difficulties to escalate, was key to their success in preventing potential lost learning.

## LISTENING TO STUDENTS

Alongside tracking student progress through attendance and behaviour data, Kirsty has also introduced student voice activities to ensure the school understands which forms of support are most effective. These sessions allow students to share their experience and feedback, highlighting what has worked for them and what could be improved. This student-led insight is helping to shape more personalised and responsive strategies moving forward. Kirsty has also highlighted the importance of giving young people the opportunity to feel listened to.

## NEXT STEPS: STRENGTHENING JOHN SPENCE'S APPROACH

Building on these efforts, Kirsty is focused on further refining the school's support strategies to ensure that interventions not only help students in the moment but lead to longer term strategies and a whole school approach to inclusion.

One priority is enhancing how the impact of interventions is measured, incorporating student case studies alongside attendance, behaviour, and academic data. By capturing both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the school can gain a clearer picture of how interventions translate into real changes for students.

Another key focus is bridging the support between the SEC and mainstream classrooms. SEC staff already work closely with students to identify potential triggers and the support they need when reintegrating into mainstream classrooms, which is then communicated with teachers. The next step is to embed these inclusive strategies across all classrooms, ensuring that all students feel consistently supported throughout the school day.

*“It's not just about including the students - it's including everything around them and being aware of that and respectful of it... bringing it all together”*

With a continued focus on student voice and data-driven decision-making, John Spence is committed to expanding its inclusive practices and ensuring every student receives the support they need before they reach a crisis point.