



*SSA has done wonders for my son and
I'm so proud of what he has achieved.*

Parent



"Creating Unimagined Futures" is the vision of Stone Soup Academy. It is present in

everything that we do and it is alive in the Academy. We don't see barriers, we see opportunities and we all love what we do.

You have made me do better in life and put me where I needed to be. I thank every one of you at Stone Soup for every last thing you all did for me. I wouldn't be where I am now without my Stone Soup family. Year 10 student.



Vision and Values of Stone Soup Academy

Stone Soup Academy is an alternative provision free school in the centre of Nottingham, serving students outside mainstream education in an environment that encourages their academic and personal development. We are committed to the education and welfare of our students, with the goal of preparing them for a successful future in our community.

The foundation of our work is the ambition to create an educational environment for young people who would otherwise be left behind. All too frequently, students who are deemed to be 'difficult' or 'disruptive' are faced with a future of unemployment or social disadvantage.

The Academy holds at the heart of its work the ambition to create an environment that fully equips students for the future outside of the academy. Our goal is to empower each individual student to achieve in practical, functional, and long-lasting ways. When some

students join us they and their families believe that they have failed in some way, that they cannot succeed and that education is not for them. We have the privilege of changing this to enable our young people to access futures that they did not believe were possible to achieve.

We celebrate their successes and use their successes to motivate and encourage those who come after them. We are passionate about our desire to help young people to make a difference to their lives and this strong relationship that we build with our young people is demonstrated by the number who come back even after they have left to share what they have achieved and who and what they have become.

With this in mind, we aim to:

- Provide a supportive environment that aids the learning and personal development of all students;
- Improve the behaviour and attitude of each student with both adults and their peers;
- Reinforce each student's self-esteem and integrity;
- Instil an understanding of fundamental British values.

Vision Statement

‘Creating Unimagined Futures’

We believe that every young person has the opportunity to succeed by being motivated and inspired, rather than contained. We believe that through our work and intervention with our young people that they can all achieve futures that they could not imagine when they join us.

Our school aims to develop young people into unique, responsible, receptive, discerning human beings with a sense of their own value. Our school is structured to nurture the social development of all the young people we work with, most of whom experience significant disadvantages which compromise their ability to learn.

We facilitate young people's learning, removing the barriers to their learning through a holistic approach and developing their ability to maintain good relationships with each other and with the members of staff, caring for and promoting the school and their community. We apply a multi agency approach involving external and internal support personalised to each child. 360 degree case studies of each child support our interventions and impact.

Our vision for Stone Soup Academy offers a broad and balanced curriculum delivered within a family environment using a pedagogic approach rooted in learning by doing, inspiring and motivating, where learning naturally involves exploration, curiosity, failing and learning from mistakes, and a host of associated effective responses.

Our curriculum allows young people to develop their vocational skills, and be given the opportunity to work in real businesses, learning not just the skills associated with their vocational choices, but the long term life skills that are required for the workplace. It is our intention that all young people attending our academy will leave with the skills and motivation to become fully independent, contributing members of society.

Work experience is offered to students and links with local businesses support our learners' development in this area. This alongside a comprehensive careers programme delivered by our Level 7 Careers Advisor enables young people understand pathways to the future and what they need to achieve in order to attain their goals and aspirations.

Core Values

- Respect: We believe that mutual respect allows us all the freedom to be open and honest and to support each other to success.
- Aspiration: To instill in all of our young people the belief that they can achieve, they can be successful that they can create unimagined futures for themselves.
- Positivity: To overcome these barriers to learning and to instil in our young people that it is not where you have been but where you are going to that is important

Ethos

The school will be underpinned by 7 key ingredients for our Stone Soup:

Ingredients

We will always try to show relentless positivity

We will always be unfailingly ambitious for you

We will always try to respect and understand you.

We will always try to be kind and caring in our approach to you

We will always find creative ways to engage you in your learning through what we teach and how we teach it.

We will always celebrate your successes

We will always be here for you even after you have left

Stone Soup Method

1. We will always try to show relentless positivity

Relationships are the core of our work as without positive relationships we are building a house with no foundation.

Our first step is to focus upon creating positive relationships between staff and students, this quickly widens to include parents/ carers and the wider community.

The secret to forming these strong relationships is to approach every situation with an open mind and heart. No matter the challenge a young person's attitude or behaviour poses the team will always try to find a positive response - one that demonstrates Stone Soup is a family, where individuals are encouraged to approach everyone in a non-judgmental way.

We all work together, I have a voice here and I feel really supported. Year 10 student

We train our staff in the use of 'refrains' to ensure staff approach all situations in a similar way. 5 of the most commonly used are;

"You have done so well today try to keep this up"

"How can we resolve this quickly for the best outcome?"

"It's really important that we all show each other respect, how could you rephrase that in a respectful way?"

"What is wrong?, What would you say to yourself right now?"

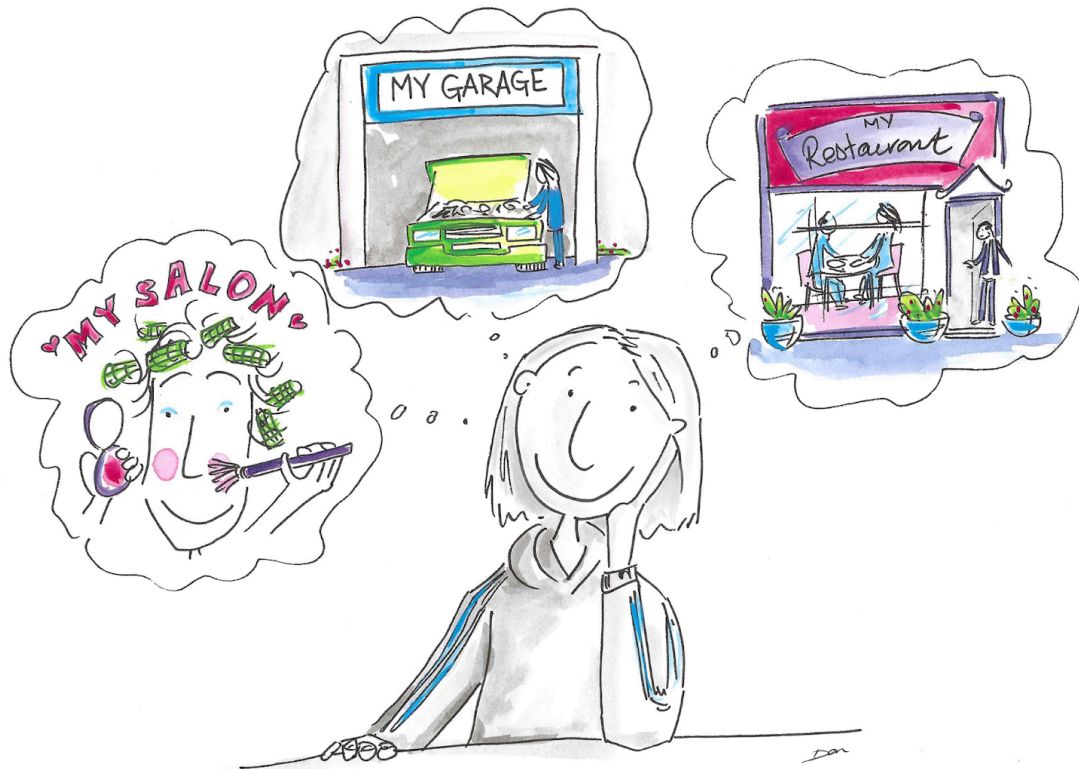
"What are we both doing here? how can move forward"



We never respond to aggression or anger from a student with those same emotions, instead we will use humour, positivity and calmness to help them regain their space. We find many of our young people arrived with us used to a cycle of anger from them being met by anger from their school - the cycle frequently amplifying at a rapid speed.

“the school has a sense of community which creates a feeling of belonging “.

2. We will always be unfailingly ambitious for you



Many of our students arrive with a very pessimistic view of their future, for many their experience in education has been centred around failure.

We work with the students (and staff) to help them see a new horizon.

We will not accept an easy route for their path, we show that we care about their hopes and dreams. If we all care and aspire for our young people, they will start to do so as well. We raise the bar high then scaffold their journey to help them to archive and succeed.

We try to remove any negative association with exams by encouraging students to take useful qualifications and by sitting regular mock exams. We build resilience by demonstrating that tomorrow is another day and we do not judge tomorrow upon today's mistakes.

‘When you are a youngster and things go seriously wrong in your mainstream, you may well need a second chance. Students in Nottingham who get that second chance at Stone Soup find an offer and opportunity that delivers on that chance and more often than not brings them success.’

We help students expand their horizons by offering vocational qualifications (eg multi-skills, beauty, mechanics alongside traditional GCSEs and BTEC qualifications).

Through our approach exams feel like a useful tool to help them have a positive life. We talk about qualifications being like keys to open doors to the future of our young people. Expectations for positive student behaviour are always high but achievable. We know they can learn, no matter what barriers they encounter along the way.

We believe in our students and in time they start to believe in themselves.

How do we do it?

Real work experience opportunities in local business leading to part time and full time work.

Strong links with local businesses to give our students positive experiences and possible funding for future projects.

Investment in careers and the employment of a level 7 careers trained professional sited in the academy - The majority of our students go onto work, education and training and any students who are NEET we continue to work with to help them transition successfully to work, training or education.

3. We will always try to respect and understand you.

Many of our young people have experienced challenges in their lives and some students live in environments and situations that are not conducive to learning. We will always try to intervene to support both them and their families to negotiate the expectations of education.

A common theme for all of our students is that they will have found working in mainstream schools problematic, many just do not thrive in a mainstream environment. However the last thing any of them need is to feel judged or labelled as a failure so we will always try to give them a second chance!

We ensure the staff are aware of the particular barriers faced by every student by sharing their situation and triggers, this knowledge is not used to label, or to pity, but to provide an insight into strategies for engagement.

We will always try and find innovative ways to support our students, we always go above and beyond what a young person has experienced to date.

Our students feel safe as we provide a safe community for them with simple expectations of behaviour for everyone within our school community.

How do we do it?

We have a dedicated engagement team

There is a personal coach for every student

We provide 1:1 intervention as needed

A school counsellor is available

All staff known by first name

We welcome all students with a handshake and a smile at the front door every day and we are there at the front door in the evening to say goodbye.

Suits Day - All year 11 students are bought a suit to celebrate the end of their journey with us and to prepare them for their next step.

4. We will always try to be kind and caring in our approach to you

We all want to be cared for and kindness and care are key attributes of Stone Soup Academy. They are an expectation and our staff are passionate about the role that they play in the journey of each young person.

Our staff enjoy working at Stone soup and are passionate about what the academy does and of their role in it!

This is not just a job for our staff – it is a passion.

Many students share this enthusiasm for the academy and will come alive when talking about how it has helped them. Many students demonstrated real upset when they were not able to come into the academy during the pandemic lockdown. We understand that due to their life to this point every child demonstrates their happiness and their feelings of belonging in many different ways. It is our job as the 'adult in the room' to unpick their emotions, to understand and care no matter what.

Every week the staff contribute to a video praising individual students for their work in the past days. This kindness is shared between staff members as every week they also share Thank- you notes with each other – ensuring everyone feels appreciated.

Every student, every day is greeted with a handshake (virus permitting) and a positive word. Regardless of the challenges of any day there is always a friendly word to be found.

Students reported being 'listened to for the first time at school'

Some students respond with anger, we respond with humour. Humour is an essential part of the academy, with laughter an important tool between staff and students.

We do not eliminate poor behaviour but we do disarm it by ensuring that any behaviour exhibited by a student will be met in a calm and caring manner.

How do we do it?

Weekly meeting where every student is discussed and action agreed on - We share information to increase our depth of understanding.

Regular updates to referring schools so that everyone joins us on the journey for every student.

Daily follow up for any absentees

Communications Spreadsheet is used by all involved with students to ensure consistency. Staff & engagement team work as one large student team.

Student success is celebrated at every opportunity, by email, in meetings and in publications.

5. We will always find creative ways to engage you in your learning through what we teach and how we teach it.



The core purpose of any education establishment must be learning and alternative education is no different. Many students arrive into Stone Soup used to a model of learning which just does not work for them.

The underlying cause of many of our students's disaffection is their disconnect with whole class learning. Individuals who do not see the relevance of their education are unlikely to feel positive about it.

We design an individualised timetable for each student, with the mix of subjects and methods of delivery suitable for them. For example, some students benefit from intensive 1:1 in some subjects whilst others will be accompanied to attend vocational college courses.

The timetable of a student may be changed quickly in response to a particular need or issue.

Staff undergo weekly CPD and monitor their development against national teacher standards using Blue Sky.

Staff carry out action research and to use principles founded in the neuroscience of learning. Without engaging learning techniques, the progress of the individual is limited.

We publish a Stone Soup Journal bi-annually to share knowledge and good practice, written by staff, for staff. We share this with all our referrers.

We get to know the students, to know what works, what does not and then to devise the

most personalised approach that is possible. Where support is needed we try to ensure it is made available.

How do we do it?

Weekly CPD sessions delivered in house and by 'experts'

Regular Teaching & learning briefings where good practice is shared.

Use of technologies such as Google Classroom, Interactive TVs, VR, and educational software to ensure e-learning is available when needed.

We strive to be at the forefront of emerging classroom technologies such as virtual reality.

Teachers are keen to explain the curriculum in as varied and interesting ways as possible.

We work with families and students by supporting them to choose a suitable curriculum that matches their interest and opens future doors.

SEND is across every fibre of the golden thread of creating unimagined futures which is the vision at the heart of our school community we ensure that no learner is left behind.

The curriculum incorporates work placements as appropriate to the needs of the individual student.

6. We will always celebrate your successes

The celebration of success for our Stone Soup family is essential and it is well-known that rewards are far more effective in changing behaviours than using punitive measures.

Stone Soup has a culture of reward embedded in all it does.

One immediate indication of this is the effective use of Class Dojo across all year groups.

Every lesson students can gain dojos, not only do these build towards attractive rewards, but they are also a way of sharing positives every hour. All members of staff can immediately see the positives achieved by the students and the engagement team are able to respond instantly to support students. These electronic points equate to real money, forcing students to realise that their own actions affect their success.

Students of the day / week are also used to identify success.



We hold celebration evenings in place of parents evenings with the focus being on the achievements of the individuals. We use every opportunity to share success.

As well as regular calls home to relay any success throughout the day, our learners often get excited and ask that we make a positive call home for them

students are 'earning' money in their academy account by attending and behaving well. This builds up over time and at the end of the student's time at the academy is celebrated on 'Suits Day' when it is used to buy formal attire which can then benefit the students as they have interviews for college or work.



How do we do it?

Students and staff are regularly entered for regional / national awards (- with an impressive success rate!- We are TES Alternative Provision of the year 2020)

The academy walls hold many photos of student success.

We also have a 'Wall of Pride' for our alluni to demonstrate that it is all about your future regardless of the challenges of your past.

A termly newspaper is widely circulated to our community and beyond Our website contains many examples of student success

Daily phone calls and rewards, weekly postcards and rewards, half termly rewards.

7. We will always be here for you even after you have left



Engagement is the core of all we do and without engagement there would be no Stone Soup. Engagement and relationships with our young people is at the heart of what we do.

It is such a key part of our work that we have a large group of staff identified as 'Engagement team' This team works alongside the teaching team to form the student support team.

Akin to a medical support team, the Engagement staff try to respond quickly to any issue, diagnose the problem and then put into place a plan to diminish it.

Many of our students form intensely strong positive relationships with their engagement team, often citing this as the single most important motivation for them to reconnect with education and employment.

We have created a Pastoral Sixth form to address the issues of our young people becoming NEET once they have left the protective walls of Stone Soup Academy. Although we do not offer a discreet curriculum, we do continue to offer pastoral support both at Stone Soup and in Nottingham College where the majority of our young people transitioned to. We advocate for them, we support them in meetings and we help them and provide facilities for the completion of work after school, If they do not have these facilities at home. Through this continued relationship we have been able to support some of our most vulnerable young people as they take their next steps in their adult lives.

It would be nonsensical for this relationship to be limited to 9-4 weekdays term time only for the duration of a student's placement in the Academy. Therefore not only do we keep electronic contact at weekends and holidays, we encourage past-students to drop in and see us at any time.

We have regular drop-in facilities for ex-students who need support in the next stage of their life. To help them focus on where they want to be and to help them break these goals down into small steps, we then have a trust fund which makes bursaries available to support their journey.

For some of our students our academy is a place of refuge, a safe place and it provides care and kindness for them. The transition to their next phase can take some students longer to adjust to, we understand this.

How do we do it?

Student - staff relationships are at the centre (and every part) of academy life

The strength of the staff team ensures that any individual links are effectively shared amongst the whole academy.

We are always there for our students because that's what families do.

Pastoral Sixth Form. Investment into post as Head of Sixth.