work collaborative

Exceed Learning Partnership
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NETS AND ANCHORS / CASE STUDY

Exceed Learning Partnership: Edlington

Collaborating in place by convening a neighbourhood delivery board



Illustrative image (AI-generated), not this setting.

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At a glance

School group

Exceed Learning Partnership (ten schools, around 5,300 pupils)

Place

Edlington, Doncaster, starting with the Royal Estate

Phase

Primary focus (Edlington Victoria Academy), in a mixed-phase Trust

Key partners

Doncaster Council, Edlington Town Council, South Yorkshire Police, St Leger Homes, local schools and community organisations

Contributors

Beryce Nixon OBE, CEO

A school cannot close the gap alone, so the Trust helped convene a whole neighbourhood around children's futures.

Anchored in place

Understanding the school context. Edlington is a village with active community groups and green spaces such as Pit Wood. After COVID-19, conditions on the Royal Estate worsened sharply, with empty homes, absent landlords and organised crime. Around four in five parents fall in the most deprived tenth nationally for education and skills, so many children start school behind. The turning point came when pupils described feeling unsafe and unable to sleep near home.

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Working in partnership. Beryce took the children's concerns to the Chief Executive of Doncaster Council, who brought senior leaders together, and the council funded Exceed to act as the local anchor. In January 2023 the Edlington Delivery Board, first chaired by Beryce and meeting in school, brought together the Trust, local schools, the council, police, housing and community groups around a local delivery plan: safer communities, housing and environment, children and families, and community wellbeing. A weekly tasking group tackles immediate issues, and the police use the Home Office “Clear, Hold, Build” approach to disrupt organised crime. The school is part of “village” life too, with pupils singing at a local care home and supporting the food bank.

The net: building capacity together

The Trust's leadership has placed the school at the heart of a wider neighbourhood programme. Schools in Edlington, in and beyond the Trust, work together on a cradle-to-career Children and Family Zone and joint peer reviews, and pupils across the Trust share a student council. Edlington Victoria now supports more than 40 schools as a regional Attendance and Behaviour Hub.

What is in place

The Delivery Board, local delivery plan and weekly tasking group; a free breakfast club, family support, a uniform and hygiene bank, and 50 "excellent experiences" for every child; a forest school and floodlit pitch shared with the community.

The difference it is making

In 2024, from a low starting point on entry, Key Stage 2 outcomes were 17% above Doncaster and 14% above national. Attendance in 2024 to 25 was 96.1%, 1.3% above national, with no permanent exclusions. The February 2025 inspection signalled the school was likely to be outstanding. Police and pupils say the estate is much quieter and empty homes are being secured and repaired.

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Challenges and lessons learned

Fragmented ownership and legal limits slow change in housing, and disrupting crime revealed a gap in youth provision. Regeneration moves more slowly than school improvement and relies on bids and grants.

How they made it possible

First step: listening to pupils and using the school's own data to decide what to tackle first.

Roles and time: Beryce chaired the Delivery Board, with a consultant coordinating partners. This is led as a collective partnership. The chair and vice-chair are elected annually, and neighbourhood managers provide administrative support.

Funding: around £40,000 of initial council funding. Since then, all organisations have supported the collective priorities and resourced key projects or initiatives. There are no external pots of money.

Partners: senior council, police, housing and community leaders share one local delivery plan.

Starting with what you have: build on the police, housing and community networks already in place.

What we wish we'd known at the start

Get decision-makers in the room from the start, begin with one clearly defined place, and expect regeneration to take longer than school improvement. Small, visible wins keep everyone believing change is possible.

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In your setting

School context: What does our own data, including what pupils tell us, say about life outside school?

Working in partnership: Is there a local table where schools sit with councils, police, housing and residents, and if not, could we help convene one?

Building capacity together: How does our school group support a school to lead beyond its gates, and share what it learns?

"When you invest in a child's environment, safety and wellbeing, you transform their education and future prospects."

Beryce Nixon OBE, Exceed Learning Partnership

Full paper and supporting sources

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