



Summary Report



NFER Evaluation of the Arnold Foundation for Rugby School

Lamont E., Flack J., Straw S. (2010).

Rugby School commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out an independent evaluation of the Arnold Foundation.

This summary report sets out the key findings.

Many independent schools, founded with charitable intent, also provide bursaries. However, Rugby School's distinctive approach is attracting a great deal of interest from politicians, the media, parliamentary committees and, perhaps most importantly, from other schools that have been keen to learn from its experiences.

Rugby has always provided bursaries for day pupils but since the Arnold Foundation was launched in 2003, the School has offered the same opportunity to boarders. Forty-two boys and girls have benefited from the Foundation's assistance so far, and the School aims to have 10% of its pupils supported by bursaries within the next ten years.

A resounding and significant finding of this research is that the Arnold Foundation is providing life-changing opportunities for the young people it supports. Rugby's historic commitment to widening access, partnerships with educational charities, comprehensive pastoral support for pupils and their families, and the generous and continuing involvement of its donors, have contributed to the Arnold Foundation's impressive success.

About the Arnold Foundation

The Arnold Foundation was established in 2003 as a charitable foundation to offer fully funded places at Rugby School for pupils who would benefit from a boarding education, but whose parents are not able to afford the fees. Applicants have to demonstrate that they are academically able and would benefit from the opportunity to study at Rugby.

The Arnold Foundation works with charitable organisations such as IntoUniversity and Eastside Young Leaders' Academy (EYLA) to recruit potential pupils, and is broadening its partnerships with other schools/organisations. Historically, Rugby has had a commitment to widening access and a desire to change young lives, and has always provided bursaries for day pupils. However, since the launch of the Arnold Foundation in 2003, the School has opened up bursaries to boarders. Forty-two boys and girls have benefited from the Foundation's assistance so far (24 are currently supported), and the School aims to have 10% of its pupils supported by bursaries within the next ten years.

What is behind the success?

The research has revealed a number of distinguishing features that are in place to ensure the Arnold Foundation is successful in meeting its aims and in transforming the lives of those it supports.



Distinguishing features of the Arnold Foundation

- **School ethos and charitable history:** the Arnold Foundation is embedded in an egalitarian and inclusive School culture. Historically the School has had a commitment to widening access and a genuine desire to change young lives. Indeed, the Foundation pre-dates and goes beyond the requirements of The Charities Act (2006).
- **Strong leadership and alignment with existing values in the School:** a firm and passionate belief in the transformational power of education is the motivational force behind the Foundation, and is powerfully conveyed by the Head Master and the School's Governing Body.
- **The involvement of partner organisations:** the development of partnerships with educational charities and schools that have direct experience of supporting young people who are at risk of social exclusion and under-achievement, and involving these organisations in the selection process, enables the bursaries to be targeted at those who will benefit most. The partners are also key to providing ongoing support for pupils and their families.
- **The careful selection of Arnold Foundation pupils:** careful selection of pupils, carried out in some cases with partner organisations, enhances the success of the programme. Selecting pupils who stand to gain the most from a boarding education and who can later become role models and leaders in their own communities, as well as those who can deal with the transition to Rugby School and can flourish and thrive, is fundamental to its success.
- **A comprehensive package of pastoral support:** as well as standard School-based support, Arnold Foundation pupils benefit from Arnold Foundation tutors and the support from senior staff in School. Some pupils are also supported by partner organisations. This pastoral support is crucial to the success of the Arnold Foundation and has also cemented the partnerships with the charitable organisations that work alongside it.



- **Recognition of the value of pastoral support for parents:** an additional key ingredient and distinctive feature of the Arnold Foundation is the recognition that parents also need support. A parent coordinator provides support to Arnold Foundation parents, as do the partner organisations and staff in School.
- **Support from donors:** the Arnold Foundation relies entirely on support from donors. Donors are largely Old Rugbeians or parents of former and current pupils at Rugby School. The School keeps donors well informed about the Foundation, and uses effective methods to raise new funds (e.g. use of the Arnold Foundation promotional DVD; using pupil testimonies; Head Master speeches at donor events). Donors value the fact that the Arnold Foundation supports bursaries for individuals rather than capital or building projects, and many plan to continue donating to the Foundation in the future. Time and effort are channelled into securing continued donations and the School has created the structures to ensure this remains a priority.



Benefits

The Arnold Foundation is leading to life-changing impacts for the young people it supports. Furthermore, these benefits are extending beyond the immediate pupils who are supported, and leading to positive outcomes for their families and local communities, as well as for other Rugby School pupils and staff.

Benefits for Arnold Foundation pupils

Arnold Foundation pupils benefit from raised aspirations and increased awareness of what is possible for their lives, making plans for a future that many would not otherwise have considered. They also benefit from improved academic performance, access to a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and enhanced social skills, confidence, increased independence and leadership skills.



- **Raised aspirations:** enhanced aspiration to attend university; recognition of their potential to embark on ambitious career paths.

“I am now at university and they have opened doors for me. I wasn’t even sure I would end up at uni before. But going to Rugby was like, yes I want to do something with my life and achieve. I feel like I have taken so much from this whole Rugby experience.” (Past pupil)
- **Broadened horizons and heightened perceptions of what is possible to achieve in life:** belief that they can achieve what they want if they work hard enough for it; experiencing life-changing and transformatory opportunities.

“I have more opportunities than I would have got. I can do more things in life than I would have been able to do and I can do all the things I want to do. Loads of opportunities are here and when you leave you can do whatever you want.” (Lower School pupil)
- **Improved academic performance:** higher grades; improved achievement; encouragement to achieve; high quality teaching staff.

“Being at Rugby School helps your chances of getting higher grades. At some of our old schools you wouldn’t even be thinking about some of the grades you are asked to get here. The standard of teaching is higher and they push you harder than at my old school.” (Lower School pupil)
- **Opportunities for engagement with a wide range of extra-curricular activities:** value of the academic, extra-curricular and travel opportunities opened up to them; recognition that these opportunities would not have been available in previous schools.

“Young people benefit in a range of ways from attending Rugby if they are open-minded and willing to take advantage of every opportunity. They benefit from access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities and have access to a huge range of sporting activities and clubs ” (Partner)

- **Enhanced social skills, confidence, increased independence and leadership skills:** ability to communicate effectively with peers and adults; interaction with wider groups of people; a sense of independence and responsibility.

“Once you leave the School you are more confident in dealing with things you aren’t used to. All the new experiences bring about a new kind of confidence and a new interest in things.” (Past Pupil)

Benefits for wider groups

The Arnold Foundation is impacting positively on other Rugbeians and Rugby School staff, and, in line with the aim to produce role models and leaders in local communities, impacts are apparent for the partner organisations and the families and home communities of Arnold Foundation pupils.

- **Impacts on Rugby School:** reinforcement of the charitable and inclusive ethos of the School, and increased levels of staff satisfaction from working with and supporting Arnold Foundation pupils.

“The Arnold Foundation was one of the reasons why I wanted to join the School. I am passionate about widening access and would personally have relished the chance to have had the opportunities that the Arnold Foundation pupils have.” (Rugby School Staff)
- **Benefits for other Rugby School pupils:** enhanced awareness of social diversity and an insight into less privileged backgrounds.

“Other pupils report that it makes them appreciative of all that they have. It encourages recognition of the unique and privileged position that some Rugby School pupils are in, and it provides pupils with a greater understanding of diversity.” (Rugby School Staff)



- **Positive outcomes for partner organisations and local communities:** Arnold Foundation pupils acting as informal role models or mentoring young people in their home communities; raised aspirations amongst the young people they support, which filter out into local families and communities.

“She will come back and tell us about her experiences. We will link this with post-16 and HE opportunities and aspirational work. There will be a knock-on effect of raising aspirations and making pupils aware of the various opportunities out there.” (Partner)

- **Benefits for families of Arnold Foundation pupils:** families report pride in their child’s achievements and raised aspirations amongst siblings and other family members.

“In terms of families, they gain in confidence and have immense pride in their child’s achievements and the fact that they have exceeded all expectations.” (Partner)



Concluding comments

A resounding and significant finding of the research is that the Arnold Foundation has been providing, and is continuing to provide, life-changing opportunities for young people.

Consultees speak overwhelmingly positively of the Arnold Foundation and of the significant benefits that it affords not only the pupils, but also their families and communities, and Rugby School pupils and staff. That such benefits have emerged in what is a relatively short life-span of the Foundation is testament to its impressive success. The research strongly supports the continued development of the Foundation and the broadening of its reach to afford more young people the life-changing opportunities available.

About the research

In total, 61 individuals were consulted by interview or in a focus group. Consultees included: staff at Rugby School (19); current Arnold Foundation pupils (22); past Arnold Foundation pupils (8); parents of Arnold Foundation pupils (7); and partners (5, across 3 organisations). A further 179 donors were also consulted via a proforma.



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