

TRANSCRIPT: Preparation for adulthood

Anthony Munday and Dean Cooke

Anthony: The whole purpose of what we're trying to achieve is to get the students as ready as possible for adulthood and to take the skills that they've been learning, through the school, and make them as functional as possible.

Dean: We don't see the students as having particular named needs. It's finding out what the students can do and moving them on from there and we're just trying to make them as independent as they can possibly be.

Pupil 1: We need to learn how to do our own washing, learn how to cook our own meals.

Pupil 2: 'Cos we want to be independent.

Pupil 1: We have been learning to cook beans on toast.

Pupil 2: Spaghetti bolognaisel!

Pupil 1: Bangers and mash - sausage and mash.

Pupil 2: Yeah, is that what you call it! Well, we put our clothes in the wash, in the washing machine and then, when they wet, we had to put them in the drier.

Anthony: We will have students that will go into some form of adult care but that doesn't exclude them from a balanced curriculum and a breadth of coverage that allows them still to experience opportunities, such as going to the cinema, such as having a bus pass and travelling to and from town.

Dean: We try not to be class based. So we want our students to leave with the ability to use the numeracy skills that they've got but we want to know: can they do it in the shop; do they know how much change they're expecting; do they expect to get any change at all? And similarly, with language, are they able to talk to and interact with people they're not familiar with?

Anthony: We insist on all of our PE activities being off site. So, as an example, the students are expected to be able to access a public swim as a customer of the local leisure facilities.

Dean: In terms of our students moving about as independently as possible, what we're trying to do is give them the means to do that in a safe way. Some of our students will go completely independently. If they do do that, then we make sure that they've got the 'phone with them and that they can communicate with us. Other groups will go with one adult and, of course, we have other students who will always work one-to-one but their independence will come in the terms of their choices of what they want to eat or drink or which shop that they want to go into.

Pupil 2: I walked down to the shop on my own and then I ring my mum to tell her I'm finished. I need to look at the road - left and right - and hear the cars that are coming or not and then, it's safe to cross.

Dean: And that's the key, I think, to push our students right up to the edge of their ability but without pushing them too far and putting them at any risk.

Anthony: They've come through school where things are tailored and structured to ensure that they're as confident as possible and the real world doesn't quite work like that.

Dean: One of our important things is to try and teach them to cope with, for example, finding that they haven't necessarily got the right money, so they don't panic and they realise that, actually, it's not that big a deal. I hope that what we're doing in the post-16 department is encouraging parents to give some of their children a little bit more responsibility. It's a very difficult thing for a parent to let go because they feel that it's a very dangerous world but we're proving that our students can cope.