

Achieve

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR ACHIEVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME STUDENTS?

A review of outcomes (January 2023-October 2025)



Supporting young people to
Achieve their potential

funded by



AngloAmerican



Woodsmith
Foundation

1. The purpose of this summary

This summary presents the headline findings from the independent outcomes evaluation of the Achieve Programme, tracking change for approximately 150 disadvantaged young people across Scarborough & Whitby and Redcar & Cleveland from Year 7 to the end of Year 9. It is written primarily for the Achieve Project Steering Group and future members of the Achieve Strategic Partnership Group, though its translation into different dissemination products during 2026 can offer valuable learning for all stakeholders.

The evaluation has been guided primarily by three agreed Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that seek to assess the extent to which the Achieve Programme contributes to:

- **KEQ 1:** Change in student engagement behaviours

- **KEQ 2:** Change in their personal, social and emotional development
- **KEQ 3:** Change in their skills, knowledge and aspirations (including parents)

The summary synthesises:

- Longitudinal matched-case quantitative analysis
- Whole-cohort surveys
- Parent/carer feedback
- Mentor outcome recording
- Qualitative case studies, vignettes and Most Significant Change stories.

It focuses not simply on whether change occurred, but on the nature, depth, consistency and developmental significance of that change across adolescence.

2. The Achieve cohort and the challenge it set out to address

Achieve was not designed as a universal enrichment programme.

It was intentionally targeted at young people whose potential was at greatest risk of regression during adolescence.

The cohort is characterised by:

- **~80% Pupil Premium**
- Significant proportions of:
 - Young carers
 - Looked After Children
 - Students known to statutory services
- Predominantly high and middle attainers at the end of primary school
- **53% experiencing two or more disadvantages** (vs. 25% of non-Achieve peers).

The strategic intent was to:

- Contribute towards students' personal, social and emotional development
- Protect their wellbeing during the most vulnerable phase of development
- Build their confidence, resilience, aspirational outlook and essential life skills
- Stimulate motivation and sustain engagement with learning and opportunity
- Prevent the quiet erosion of potential that often precedes later disengagement.

This cohort also experienced:

- COVID disruption in Years 4-6 prior to starting the Achieve programme in Year 7
- Developmental immaturity on entry to secondary school
- Heightened emotional and social vulnerability.

Against this backdrop, success was defined as both positive improvement in desired outcome domains and the prevention of regression.



3. Retention, reach and engagement with the Programme

Programme retention has been exceptionally strong:

144 students originally registered of whom 124 remain on programme (86%) after 2.5 years

12 new starters have accessed the programme of whom only 1 has left

135 remain on the programme out of a total of 156 Achieve students participating

87% retention figure overall is much better than the 66% anticipated after 3 years.

Attrition has been largely due to school moves rather than programme deficiency.

This unusually high retention reflects:

- Strong relational engagement
- High perceived value among young people and families
- Effective delivery infrastructure.

Critically:



Young people consistently cite

- Trusted mentoring relationships
- Feeling “chosen”
- Access to experiences they would not otherwise have
- A positive peer identity.

Year 8 emerges as the pivotal engagement year, with the July 2024 residential acting as a major inflection point for confidence, identity and openness to experience.

“It’s the one thing I don’t want to miss.”
Achieve student

4. KEQ 1: Change in Achieve student engagement behaviours

By the end of Year 9, longitudinal matched-case analysis shows:

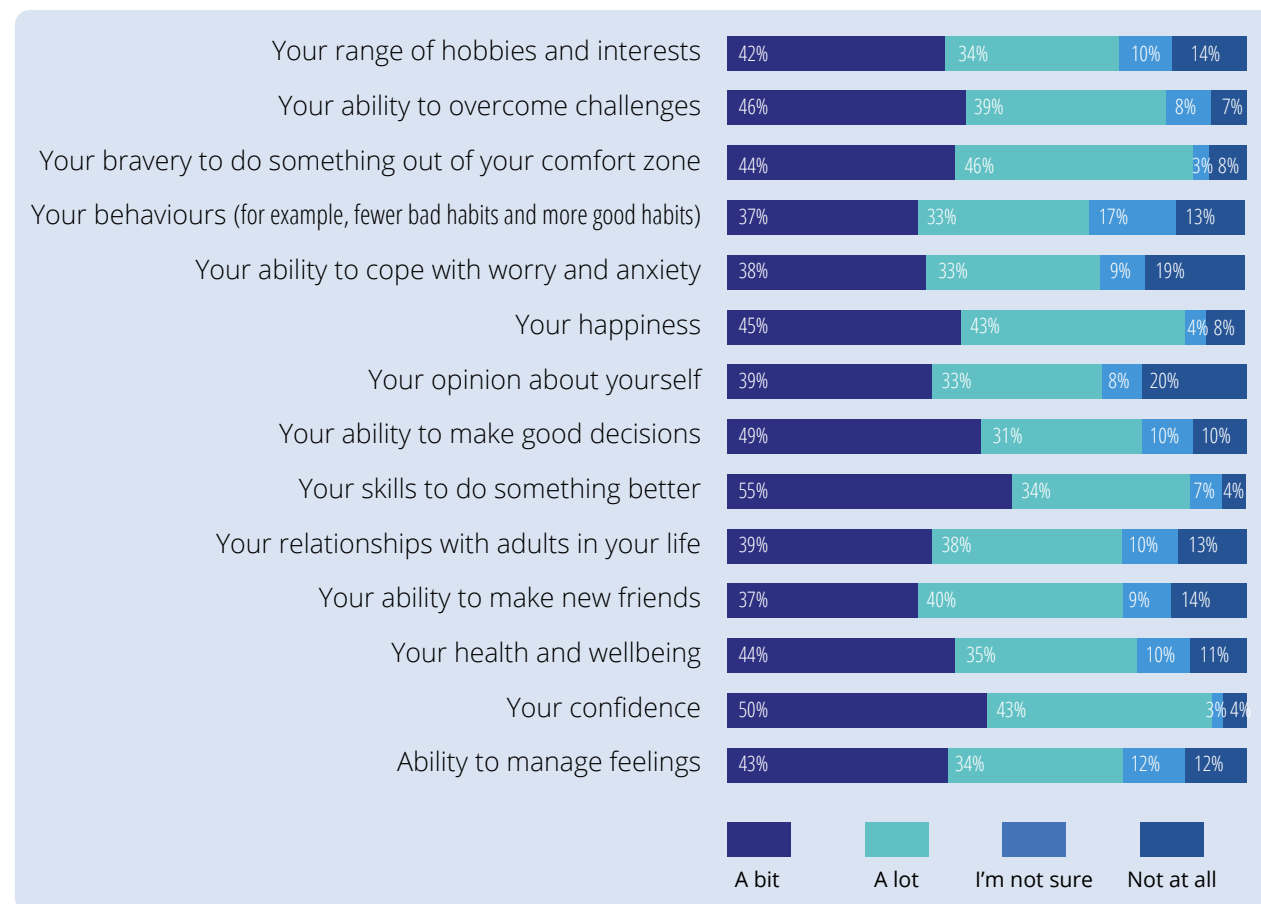
- 92% maintained or improved the view that there was opportunity for them to try new things; with over 9 in 10 having participated in diverse extracurricular activities between Year 7 and Year 9.
- Comparable results suggest that levels of participation for many enrichment activities that support the development of cultural capital are often on par with non-

disadvantaged peers (SHEU, Year 9 survey, January 2025)

- 81% have also maintained the same level of motivation or improved their level of motivation to try new things since Year 7.

Depth of engagement with Achieve

- 86% say Achieve helped them “a lot” in at least one of fourteen tested outcomes
- 33% say the programme has helped them “a lot” in 7 or more outcomes



This is a strong indicator of depth of programme contribution, not simply ‘surface’ participation. Teachers described a noticeable shift from “passive presence” to “active participation” for

many previously withdrawn students. Achieve is actively strengthening engagement behaviours at a developmental stage when disengagement normally accelerates.

5. KEQ 2: Change in Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Social and emotional competence

- 65% maintained or improved their ability to manage feelings
- Just over 40% showed definite improvement
- YRSS analysis shows strongest gains in:
 - Emotion management¹
 - Empathy
 - Peer relationships

Qualitative evidence consistently reinforces these gains:

- Previously isolated students forming friendships
- Increased openness in emotional expression
- Trust in adults becoming embedded.

Subjective wellbeing (SWEMWBS²)

- 67% of students maintained or improved wellbeing (since Year 7)
- The mean wellbeing score rose from 23.3 to 25.0 (out of 34)
- 42% of students showed reliable improvement
- 41% have remained stable
- 17% of students showed reliable deterioration.

This confirms a dual reality. Achieve is protective and strengthening wellbeing for most, whilst a smaller group requires targeted and specialist support. Achieve therefore appears to be operating as a primary prevention and early intervention model.

"Before Achieve, silence was how he coped. Now he talks."
Youth Mentor

Exhibit: Case study: Finding confidence through cooking, Whitby

When 'M' first joined Achieve, she was quiet, hesitant, and preferred to work alone. The kitchen sessions offered her something different a space where success was measured not by grades but by taste, teamwork, and laughter. In early sessions she barely spoke, but over time, her Mentor noticed her leaning in, watching how others mixed ingredients and offering small suggestions.

By the final project, she had taken charge of the pasta dish, delegating tasks to others and joking about who was "the better chef." Her confidence extended beyond the sessions.

Teachers later reported her speaking more openly in lessons and forming new friendships. M reflected, "I didn't think I could be good at anything practical. Now people ask me for help." Her Mentor added, "She found her voice in that kitchen and once she'd found it, she didn't lose it." This case exemplifies how relational learning and collaborative practice in Achieve nurtured social and emotional competence, belonging, and confidence through everyday acts of trust and teamwork.

6. KEQ 3: Skills, aspirations and parental insights

Aspirations and belief in the future

Among longitudinal matched cases:

- **Students with goals and plans increased from 69% to 76%**
- **Belief they will be successful when they grow up rose from 42% to 70%**

Students' future thinking is notably holistic, prioritising:

- **Mental and physical health**
- **Fairness**
- **Relationships**
- **Career and income.**

This underlines the importance of integrating careers provision in 2025/26 into a wellbeing-led identity framework, not treating employability in isolation.

Exhibit: career sparks and exam curiosity

- One of the young female students was inspired by a Meet the Professional session and now wants to be a midwife.
- After visiting Bishop Burton College, a student asked his mum how to make an egg sandwich because he'll 'need to know' at college, a tiny but telling evidence of seeing himself there in the future.
- Students described as previously reticent were now 'asking about exams.'
- 'Proactive' parents describe their child becoming more confident in discussing future goals at home and ask for more information about career pathways.

"I didn't think people like me went to college before." Achieve Student

Exhibit: Most significant change story: 'P's Discovery

"Before taking part in Achieve, I wasn't really sure what kinds of jobs there were in like, creativity and culture. Doing this has meant I've met lots of different people with different jobs that I might not have met before, and I know a lot more about what kinds of jobs there might be. They maybe aren't jobs I'm that interested in, or want to do, but it's interesting, and good for me to know about I think."

Parent and carer insights

Parental insight provides powerful external validation:

- **94%** (of 53 respondents) observed positive change in their child from taking part in Achieve, typically noticing an average of 2-3 inter-related changes
- **76%** now hold more frequent future-focused conversations at home about their child's future and 42% say Achieve has changed how they view their child's future.

Parents/carers saying that Achieve has helped their child 'a lot' in these ways (n=53 responses, July 2025)



Parents most frequently cite changes in their child around:

- Increased confidence and motivation to try new things
- The way they explore possibilities for their future
- Discovering new skills and talents
- Greater independence
- New friendships
- Renewed motivation for learning.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Achieve students value the essential skills more in 2025 than they did when the programme started, with notable positive shifts in the way they regard **problem solving, aiming high and teamwork**. Furthermore, the Achieve students have acquired additional, perhaps unexpected, reflective and metacognitive skills which may contribute towards the positive indirect outcomes described shortly. Leadership remains a comparative development gap, informing the next-phase strategic pivot.



7. Overall change by the End of Year 9

Across the full matched-case dataset (n=98 students):

Between **43%** and **68%** report definite improvement across the four core intended outcomes.

Between **66%** and **92%** have maintained or improved.

Regression is limited to around one fifth, at a stage where national decline is typical.

Direct impact Intended outcome of the Achieve Programme	Decline	Ambiguous	No change	Definite improvement	Maintain & or improve
My opportunity to try new things*	2.4%	5.9%	23.5%	68.2%	91.8%
My motivation to try new things*	9.5%	9.5%	23.8%	57.1%	81.0%
The way I feel about my future*	21.4%	13.1%	23.8%	41.7%	65.5%
The way I can manage my feelings*	21.4%	13.1%	22.6%	42.9%	65.5%

This pattern is consistent with a programme that is strongest where it is most intentional: widening horizons, sustaining motivation and supporting emotional regulation.

Exhibit: Case study: 'K' opening up to new experiences

'K' had low confidence and limited social engagement when he joined Achieve. He often stayed on the edge of activities, watching others take part. His Mentor described him as "present but guarded." Over months of creative workshops and outdoor challenges, he began taking small steps first helping with equipment, then volunteering to try activities. During the summer residential, he tackled abseiling after much hesitation. "My legs were shaking, but I did it," he said. Afterwards, he signed up for new clubs at school and began mentoring a younger

pupil. His Programme Coordinator reflected, "He came alive outdoors, but what mattered was seeing that confidence back in school." Teachers later reported improvements in teamwork and reflection. K summarised his own change simply: "I like trying new things now. It's fun, not scary."

This case study captures Achieve's strength in fostering openness to experience, curiosity, and confidence through experiential learning and sustained encouragement

8. Indirect Outcomes

The programme may also be contributing to wider outcomes for Achieve students though other factors will likely be more significant given the evidence reviewed.

- Attitude to learning: **81%** maintained or improved sentiment since Year 7
- Behaviour at school: **79%** maintained or improved since Year 7
- Attendance: weakest effect, but still **57%** maintained or improved since Year 7.

Indirect impact	Decline	Ambiguous	No change	Definite improvement	Maintain & or improve
Outcomes the programme hopes to contribute towards indirectly					
My attitude to learning	11.5%	8.0%	27.6%	52.9%	80.5%
My behaviour at school	6.9%	13.8%	33.3%	46.0%	79.3%
My attendance at school	30.2%	12.8%	17.4%	39.5%	57.0%

Strongest areas of sustained progress

The most stable gains are in:

- Opportunity to try new things
 - 68% definite improvement
 - 92% maintained or improved (ranked 1st)
- Motivation to try new things
 - 57% definite improvement
 - 81% maintained or improved (ranked 2nd)

Emotional regulation and future outlook

- Managing feelings:
 - 43% definite improvement
 - 66% maintained or improved
- Feelings about the future:
 - 42% definite improvement
 - 66% maintained or improved

By the end of Year 9, Achieve is:

- Protecting the majority from developmental decline
- Producing its strongest effects in the domains it most intentionally targets
- Making meaningful contributions to emotional regulation and future orientation within realistic adolescent constraints.

Exhibit: Achieve student short case study

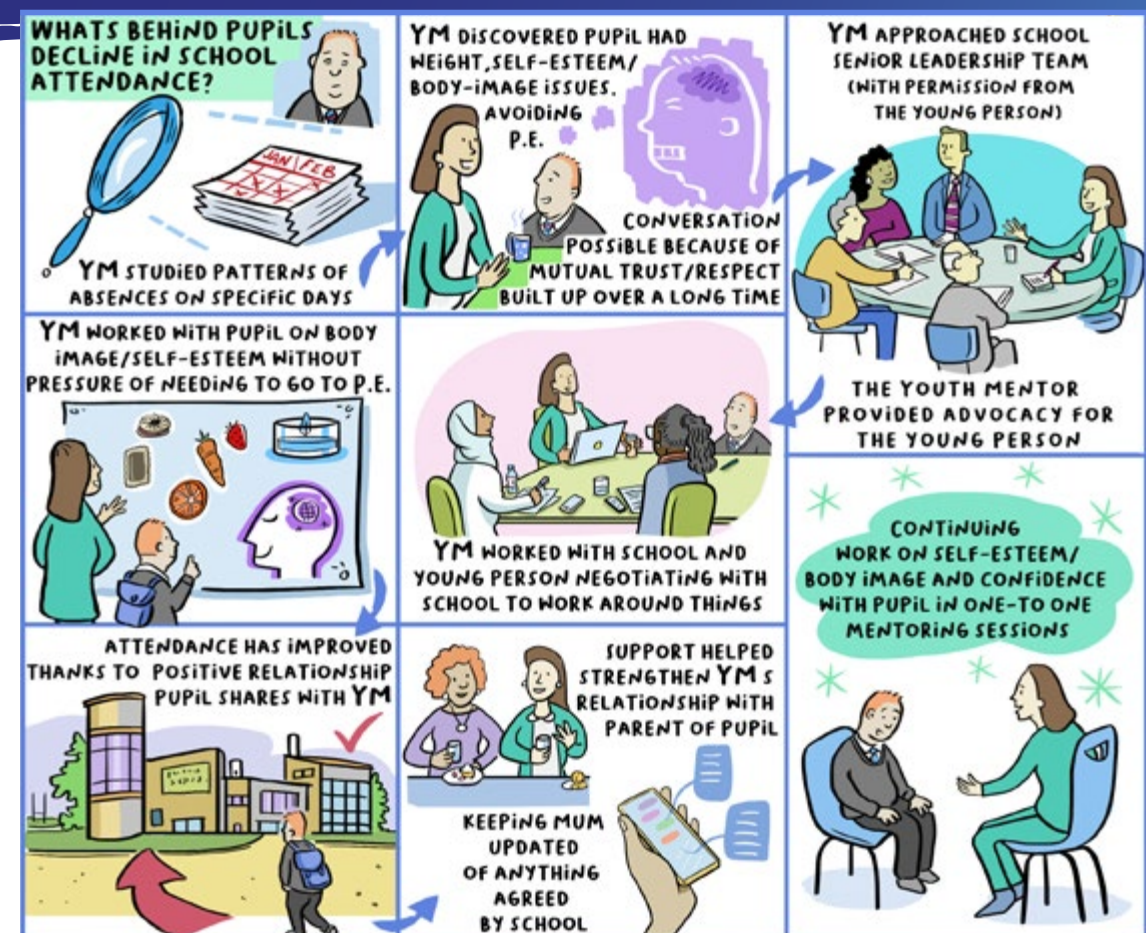
Student 'A' who initially struggled with confidence and self-belief became increasingly self-assured through Achieve's creative and mentoring activities. Engagement in public-facing events (e.g. exhibitions, art-based projects) transformed how they viewed themselves and their potential.

The young person's parent described feeling "proud beyond words" at their child's openness and communication growth. "They've found a voice - one they didn't have before. They speak with confidence now, not fear."

The full case study demonstrates alignment with multiple outcomes

Social emotional competence - improved self-expression and trust in adults	Subjective wellbeing - happiness, emotional release through creativity.	Resilience - maintained engagement despite anxiety.	Perceptions of self - identity growth and self-esteem.	Openness to experience - embracing new cultural and artistic opportunities.
--	---	---	--	---

Visual case study: How youth mentoring supports students with attendance at school

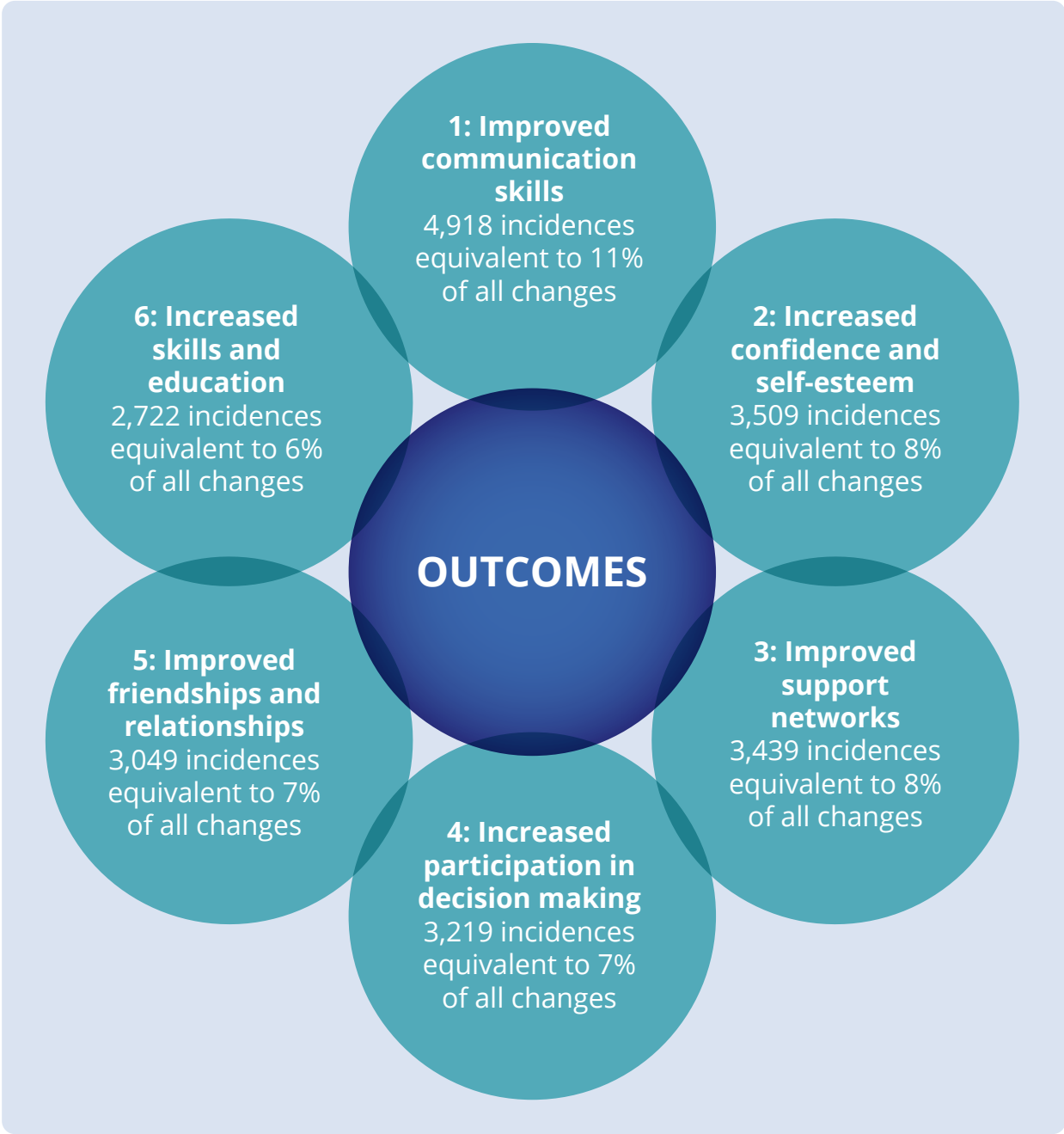


ARTWORK: TNOVIZTHINK.COM

9. Dosage, scale and mechanisms of change

Contact time	Encounters	Outcome incidences	Average
10,493 hours of recorded contact time	8,819 separate encounters	45,824	316 outcomes per young person

The top 6 most recorded outcomes amongst the Achieve cohort are:



Despite lower-than-original-design dosage expectations, outcome density is exceptionally high. Change is being observed across multiple life domains:

- Emotional and mental wellbeing
- Confidence and identity
- Social relationships and communication
- Motivation, behaviour and learning engagement

- Opportunity, aspiration and independence
 - Family and community life.
- It is not the sheer volume of dosage that matters most, but the relational quality and developmental timing of that dosage. Students most often attributed change to *“having someone who didn’t give up on me”* rather than to any single activity or trip.

10. Strategic direction and valorisation

Achieve is no longer an untested pilot. It is now a mature, evidence-informed intervention operating with a high degree of credibility. The evidence supports a shift towards:

- Careers
- Leadership
- Employability
- Post-16 transitions
- Targeted wellbeing support for the vulnerable minority
- Intentional transition planning beyond mentoring.

Valorisation refers to actively converting Achieve’s evidence into future social, educational and economic value. This includes:

- Refining the model
- Informing investment approaches
- Shaping system partnerships
- Supporting potential scaling.

The challenge is no longer to prove Achieve works, but to convert early developmental gains into sustained educational, vocational and life-chance advantage without losing the relational foundations on which those gains depend.

11. Conclusion

Achieve is demonstrating that it is possible to protect and nurture the potential of disadvantaged adolescents through the most developmentally fragile phase of secondary education. Its distinctive strength lies in the combination of:

- Trusted relationships
- Enriched lived experience
- Structured personal development
- Sustained time.

The evaluation now provides a sufficiently robust evidence base to:

- Refine the programme model

- Support further targeted 'case' support in 2025/26 by delivery partners
- Strengthen its social, educational and economic narrative
- Inform investment and scaling decisions
- And contribute to wider learning about how best to support disadvantaged adolescents through Key Stages 3 and 4.

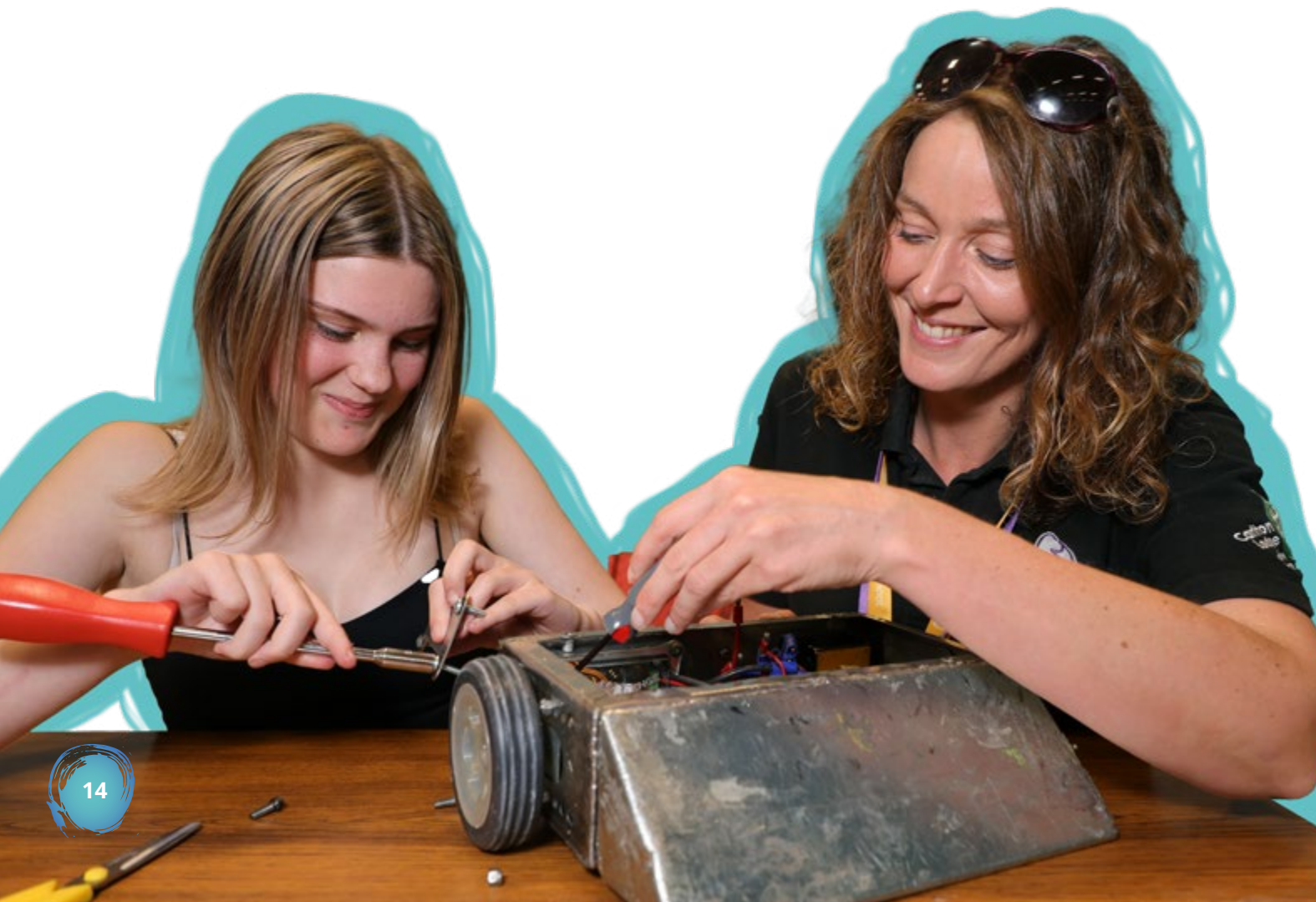
The learning from Achieve now offers a practical evidence base to inform how stakeholders can work together to protect and extend adolescent potential through the most critical years of secondary education.

¹ The Youth Rating of Socio-emotional Skills (YRSS) | YMCA George Williams College

² Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)

Supporting young people to Achieve their potential

funded by





www.skyblue.org.uk

funded by

