



A student story

Jack

Jack joined us as a quiet and deeply anxious young man. Coming from a disadvantaged background and navigating the challenges of Autism he initially found the secondary environment overwhelming. In Jack's first term his anxiety was so acute that he frequently found it too difficult to remain in classrooms and was highly reluctant to engage in any form of interaction with others. Despite these barriers there was a clear sense of untapped potential - he just needed a safe, structured way to bridge the gap between his internal world and the school community.

At his core, Jack needed a sense of psychological safety and a reason for education to feel relevant. He required a consistent, trusted adult presence to help him manage his SEND related anxiety but he also needed more than just emotional support - Jack required a curriculum that would provide him with opportunities to develop his confidence and prove to himself that he could make a positive contribution to himself and others rather than just surviving from day to day.



The Open School enhanced Jack's experience by providing him with personalised support alongside opportunities to build on his personal interests and to connect his learning to the real world. The subtle shift of emphasis away from his deficits and towards building on his talents enabled Jack to build a portfolio of successful moments he could reflect and take confidence from.

The transformation has been profound. Now in Year 10, Jack has evolved from a student who fled the room in distress to one who actively seeks out opportunities to engage in discussion with others. He recently took a lead role in a student voice focus group, speaking with clarity and conviction to a visiting Headteacher about his personal learning journey. Jack's attendance is excellent, no doubt as a result of his improved perception of self worth and confidence. He now navigates social and professional interactions with a level of confidence that would have been unthinkable during his first term.

Looking ahead, the future is bright for a young man who was once at risk of total disengagement. Jack now has a clear sense of agency and purpose regarding his future pathways and he is currently starting to consider which subjects he would like to study at college.