



common thread

SCHOOLS



PROSPECTUS

Providing safe, caring, learning environments

www.commonthreadgroup.com



Colin Campbell
1925 - 2007

Colin Campbell worked professionally for many years as a psychotherapist specialising in working with children who had suffered abuse and supporting the staff teams who worked with them.

He worked quietly behind the scenes offering support and sharing his knowledge, mentoring many professionals and was inspirational in enabling them to fulfil their dreams. One organisation that exists, thanks to Colin's mentoring, is Common Thread.

One of Colin's own personal dreams was to create a "school" for our children, many of whom have a remarkable intelligence but who found that main stream education failed to meet their needs.

'Common Thread School is dedicated to his memory'

Welcome

Welcome to the Common Thread School Prospectus, we hope it is useful and informative. Common Thread School is a long wished for and eagerly anticipated development for Common Thread, our parent company responsible for the delivery of residential services for young people.

The Prospectus is influenced by many great minds including some of my own team! And whilst this is a rather static document in form, we hope you come to see our school as "a work in progress" with our children moulding and influencing, new research and outcomes dictating our level of response, and the whole company taking a responsibility for bringing it alive.

The fundamental driving force being, of course, better outcomes for our children.

Julie Joseph BA (Hons) MSc, RDMP
Chief Executive Officer
Registered Movement Psychotherapist





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Welcome Message from our Executive Head of Education

It is indeed a privilege and honour to welcome you to Common Thread Schools. Through our caring and nurturing environment we are able to offer a bespoke educational package that we trust will enthuse each and every young person, assisting them to realise their underlying potential.

We invite everyone to embrace this opportunity and make the most of our broad curriculum that takes each individual young person's needs into consideration ensuring appropriate, proportionate and timely interventions and delivery.

We strive to provide an inclusive and enriched curriculum that provides each young person the opportunity to overcome difficulties and unlock their learning ability and attainment.

Our exceptional teaching staff are well trained, equipped and dedicated to work in partnership with those that share our passion and commitment for the future of our young people.

Kieron O'Brien
HDE.FDE.DipTh.MEd.



Introduction

Common Thread Schools are a unique group of schools where we are passionate and committed to maximising the full potential and improving the life chances of our vulnerable and sometimes challenging young people. We provide education for young people primarily between the ages of 8 and 18 years, who have experienced significant trauma, neglect and/or abuse and have become detached from mainstream education. We aim to make our young people's experience with us a really positive time, encouraging growth in confidence achievement and attainment.

We hope when our young people leave us they will be successful, achieving individuals and will remember their learning at Common Thread as being interesting, exciting, successful and even sometimes brilliant.

Our Vision

- Strive to provide an educational experience that will enable learners to re-enter mainstream education as confident, effective and successful individuals
- To provide a supportive, safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for all learners who have become detached from mainstream education
- To provide access to a broad and wide curriculum that focuses on each learner's likes and ambitions through active 1:1 and small group participation
- To become the educational provider of choice providing appropriate, proportionate and timely interventions in meeting the needs of each individual learner
- To provide facilities that embrace individuality and creativity
- To enable learners to feel safe and welcomed

Our Core Values

- Demonstrate & Encourage Integrity & Honesty
- Learn through creative opportunities, development, experience and reflection
- Choose and promote sustainable and ethical practice
- Driven by professional and personal excellence, celebrating success
- Promote mutual respect and confidence
- Deliver and operate with Tenacity and Courage
- Interact with openness & suspend judgement



Our Aims



- Nurture the development of individuals to reach their full potential
- Provide a safe, happy and caring environment for everyone
- Enable all learners to develop independence, knowledge and understanding to the best of their ability and progress towards becoming successful, confident, effective and responsible individuals
- Promote high standards of learning, achievement and behaviour for all and thus maximise full potential
- Establish a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum, which supports depth in understanding, engenders life long learning and which is appropriate to the needs and stage of development of each young person
- Facilitate active, participative learning to engage young people in their education, build self-esteem and experience success
- Value, support and celebrate the many different ways that young people can learn and achieve their potential by emphasising and identifying the most appropriate, effective pedagogies for our young people
- Respect the rights and views of other people and acknowledge our own responsibilities as citizens. Consider the impact of our actions on the environmentally friendly practices
- Consolidate and promote the idea in young people that education is important
- To promote that education can be:
 - A gateway to a fulfilling life, a place in the workforce and becoming a valued member of the community
 - A positive pathway to inclusion in mainstream education, further education courses in colleges and universities supported by through care

Our schools provide a happy, safe and rich environment where young people are encouraged to develop, achieve and maximise their potential through quality learning experiences. Our goal is to engage young people in their education through active learning and each young person is encouraged to be involved and engaged in formulating their own Individual Education Plan (IEP).



COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS – OUR SERVICES



Our Education and Training Facilities

Currently based at the following locations:

Dumfries	DG1 area
Falkirk	FK6 area
Kilmarnock	KA1 area



Our Learners

Common Thread School offers education appropriate to the needs, stage of development and age of young people in the following age groups:

8-11
12-16
16 and older

Residential Learners

Education is offered to all young people while in a care placement with Common Thread Residential Care services. Young people from other residential placements are welcome.

Day Learners

Common Thread Schools also offer education on a day placement basis. Referrals are welcome from other care providers who want their young people to experience our highly supervised and bespoke educational provision.

Where appropriate for a young person we always support access to mainstream education and transitions from residential care or home base to our education facilities.

Our Classes

Class groups are small and in accordance with individual needs and abilities. Staffing levels are high and our therapeutic staff support our key teachers. A wide range of subjects are offered encouraging all young peoples interests and strengths, developing their unique talents, aspirations, independence and motivation, and love for learning.

Our Timetables

Each young person has an individual timetable and curriculum, subjects and course plan. The timetable is drawn up in accordance with individual needs and the pace. Each learner receives a bespoke package, which is then spread over the week and reflects accordingly on the timetable.



COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS – OUR CURRICULUM



The Common Thread School Curriculum aims to:

- Develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work
- Focus on literacy, numeracy and health and well being
- Engage young people in their education through active learning
- Be tailored to meet the needs and interest of the pupils
- Be one where every young person can experience and enjoy success and achievement
- Where appropriate, achieve the young person's inclusion in the community and further vocational courses and training -
 - Encourage self esteem
 - Encourage respect for self and one another
 - Encourage the value of interdependence of others in the community
 - Work in partnership with external specialist agencies in planning, working collaboratively and positively, supporting our young people

We do this by ensuring our curriculum is:

- Is challenging, stimulating, exciting, motivating, engaging and active
- Is broad, varied, relevant and flexible and has depth and progression
- Is flexible in accommodating trauma and behavioural issues.
- Is supported by technology to help overcome barriers to learning
- Is supported by well qualified, motivated staff
- Puts each young person at the centre of the curriculum as active partners in their learning

Under 12 Primary

Curriculum for Excellence

12-16 year olds:

Certification at National level 1-5

16 years +

Vocational courses through our college partners in each area. We offer SQA accredited personal development and skills for work opportunities. We offer many other SQA courses dependant on the needs of the individuals.





OUR CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

The main focus of the Common Thread School Curriculum is Core Skills, Personal and Social Development (PSD) and Health and Well-being.

PSD covers features such as:

- Enhancement of personal characteristics and social relationships
- Information on healthy lifestyles
- Information on citizenship including a knowledge of rights and responsibilities in today's society
- An understanding of the world of work and enterprise
- An awareness of religious and cultural diversity
- Specialist programmes – including anger management, combating substance abuse, behaviour management and promoting resilience

Along with key aspects of essential knowledge, understanding and skills provided through effective delivery of:

- Literacy and Communication – English
- Numeracy – Mathematics
- Information and Technology (ICT)

Common Thread School Secondary Core Curriculum offers:

- Certification at National level 1-5
- Outdoor Education activities
- Hospitality
- Dance, drama and music
- SQA Leadership and Personal Development Programmes
- Skills for Work

Physical Education and Mathematics follow their own path but can support topics very well especially alongside geography and science.



Outdoor Education

Common Thread School supplements learning opportunities with physical activities such as sailing, walking, cycling and orienteering. This forms part of enterprise and outdoor education adding value to and enriching the curriculum.

Common Thread schools are set in superb semi-rural locations and young people are encouraged to plan and take part in activities such as:

- Sailing
- Fishing
- Art
- Hill Walking
- Music
- Crafts
- Horse riding
- Cycling
- Canoeing and Kayaking
- Bowling

The area surrounding our schools afford an environment for all these activities.

COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

- Ensure a range of tailored activities in terms of content, length and challenge
- Provide in-depth learning of vocations and training towards further education
- Provide time for additional support where appropriate and required
Influence purchases and development of resources
- Enhance the national certification of subjects
- Allow for timetable and planning events for time out, fun and enjoyment
- Capitalise on skills and strengths of staff
- Help organise personal timetables
- Ensure through care programmes
- Influence length and content of school week
- Influence an appropriate balance of learning activities
- Support 'homework' under taken in the home
- Encourage and accommodate individual interests in vocational training



COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Learning, teaching and assessment

Pedagogy:

'... Of all schooling factors it is teachers and their pedagogies which contribute most to better learning outcomes for all, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.'
(Lingard, 2005, p166)

We can increase quality of learning and engagement by making the experience more teacher facilitated, engaging in quality dialogue and increasing the role of the learner in the process rather than tight teacher control and covering curriculum.

For each young person we aim to implement appropriate, effective pedagogies, which support the continuous development of knowledge, understanding and skills at their level and stage of development. We also support each young person in developing some of the skills and attributes that will help them sustain achievement and become life long learners.

For example

- Working independently and sustaining concentration and motivation
- Working together in a group of pairs – giving and receiving support
- Handling and making sense of information in different forms
- Understanding other points of view
- Interaction with the teacher peers and classroom assistants
- Sharing the intentions of the learning process by setting the scene for the activity by discussing and involving the pupil in what we are going to learn, why and how and consolidation, aim and outcomes at the end of the lesson.

We value working together, co-operative learning, as well as working alone. Our learners will be:

- Involved in planning and reflecting on their own learning – e.g. personal learning plan
- Provided with quality feedback and dialogue
- Encouraged to build their knowledge, understanding and skills
- Encouraged to reflect on achievements and consider next steps to improve

Learning, teaching and achievement encompass not only academic but includes pupils progress in developing positive attitudes and personal and social skills.

As teachers we consider and reflect on the many different ways there are of learning and try to teach in different ways to engage all learners by being aware of the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic ways of learning and young people's many different ways of being intelligent. We support all pupils in achieving their set outcomes and targets.

Assessment of learning (formative and summative)

'Self-assessment by pupils, far from luxury, is in fact an essential component of formative assessment' - Black and William (Inside the Black Box).

Initial Assessment

Initial assessments take place early in placement after a suitable time has elapsed allowing time to settle into the new environment. Our assessment includes observation and sampling of current and previous work in relation to the curriculum, in consultation with staff, parents, young people and any other external agencies or residential care teams already involved.

Our robust and effective assessment procedures result in a baseline profile which helps plan the next steps in learning.

A Personalised/Individual Learning Plan is drawn up appropriately to the needs of each young person in collaboration with all those involved.

Ongoing Assessment

Ongoing assessment across curriculum activities takes many forms.

- Observing** An important tool, in assessing/knowing whether learning/ teaching was meaningful to the young person
- Engaging** In real careful dialogue, quality questioning, giving time to think about answers
- Checking** For understanding, reflective responses
- Giving** Quality feed back, descriptive rather than marking
- Encouraging** Interaction with peers and class teachers and completion of task, planning the next practical steps to enhance learning

Formal Assessment

Formal assessments can take place at the end of each stage in language and mathematics. This is useful in providing evidence of progress or can be used to plan the next steps in a young person's education.

Reporting

Regular progress reports and regular three weekly full staff Progress Meetings will facilitate and help disseminate information and evaluate performance and progress. Reporting takes place regularly and can be used to inform a Review, Children's Panel or placing authority. Whenever possible parents will be involved in setting targets and will have an opportunity to review progress in these targets and subsequent curricular progress.

COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Provision for Monitoring and Evaluation



Staff will regularly evaluate the progress and merits of the programme and the approach to learning and teaching, including its effectiveness, in enabling each young person to attain their short term and long-term targets. Fulfilment of criteria regarding targets can also be provided by feedback from all relevant staff both teaching and pastoral.

All teachers are aware of each young person's strengths and difficulties and their long-term targets and have access to their PLP/IEP. Progress in these can be reviewed and evaluated at the weekly education meeting, as can the suitability and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Strengths and weaknesses will be identified and strategies for further improvement developed.

Recording

A well planned and in depth system of recording is essential. Academic reports for areas of the curriculum will be maintained and updated by relevant staff and support assistants. All staff will complete regular progress reports for internal use and termly reports will be sent to parents and placing authorities. In annual reviews all relevant information will be documented.

COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Governance

Common Thread Schools are overseen by the parent company Common Thread Ltd. The day-to-day operations and strategic development rest with the Head of Education who reports to the CEO and is a member of the Senior Management Team.

Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team meet monthly and from time to time educational consultants and care staff are involved in meetings to provide further support.

Registration

- All teachers are registered with the General Council of Teachers Scotland – GTCS
- The school is registered with SCIS the Scottish Council for Independent Schools and is a member of Education Through Care, Scotland (ETCS)
- The school is a SQA accredited centre.



School Management Committee

The School Management Committee meets once a term and is drawn from different parts of our parent company, Common Thread Limited. Our Management Committee includes:

- A young person's representative (who will serve for up to one year)
- Executive Head of Education
- CEO
- Finance Manager
- Education Coordinator
- COO
- Key Teachers / Workers
- Educational Advisor



Young People's Committee

The Young People's Committee meets once a term. The Young People's Committee ensures that the pupil's opinions are heard and valued. Young People's views, wishes and ideas for improving their educational services and experiences are encouraged. They are supported in putting other's views across as well as their individual wishes.

COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Certification and Accreditation

Certification and Accreditation gives our young people positive formal evidence of success, encourages personal and social progress and helps them obtain a place in the workforce.

Common Thread School is a registered centre with the SQA and is able to deliver:

- Certification at National level 1-5
- SQA Personal Development Courses
- Dance, drama & music
- Towards Independence
- Transition Challenge
- Skills to Work
- Summer Programmes
- Internal Rewards, Certificates of Merit and Celebrations of success

At Common Thread we believe it is vitally important that young people receive recognition for all their progress and achievements.

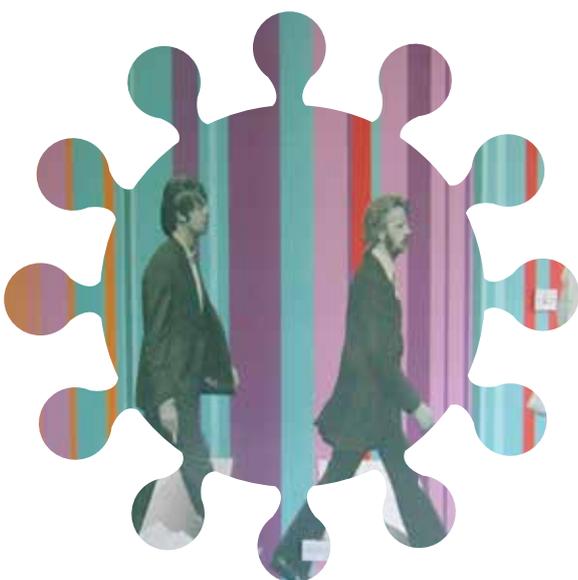


COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Partnership Working

The school is also involved in joint working and planning with social work departments, careers and other agencies in supporting independence, transition and through-care.

The Partnership arrangements with Placing Authorities to support pupil's educational attainment and care provision are:

- Agreeing educational needs, provision and implementation
- On-going communications with authorities and families is positively promoted
- Involving parents/carers in consultation in Pupil Learning Plans and Individual Learning Plans where appropriate
- Planned visits by Placing Authorities, family/ carers
- Reports compiled by all involved in the education of the young person for LAC Reviews and Children's Panels
- Contact arrangements are reviewed regularly as part of the Placement and LAC Review
- Families are consulted regularly throughout the review process where applicable and relevant



COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS

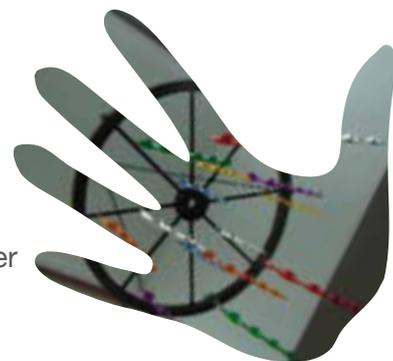
Supporting Good Behaviour

Common Thread Schools practice a holistic approach to working with young people with a range of behaviours. Staff are trained in proactive methods of safe crisis management (SCM). There is a strong emphasis on positive attention from adults, demonstrating a caring interest. Positive reinforcement is used and encouraged to influence individual's behaviour.

At Common Thread Schools any form of behaviour that causes distress to others, regardless of intent or reason, is treated as a serious matter. Any instances will be investigated immediately, responded to swiftly and firmly and outcomes monitored.

We use the following to support good behaviour:

- A participation strategy that allows young people to voice their concerns and ideas to improve the school
- Active learning so that young people are motivated to learn
- Matching work so all can achieve success
- Teachers and assistants who model respect and support for each other
- Visual reminders of rules and expectations throughout the school
- Opportunities to talk through or revisit incidents of poor behaviour and restore the situation or make amends
- Celebration of good behaviour and learning through certification
- Praise and encouragement to develop self-discipline, independence and confidence
- Common Thread School is an inclusive rather than exclusive organisation



COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS - Referral Procedure

Referrals and admissions are welcomed throughout the year.

Our referral process for all our pupils includes:

- Discussion with all appropriate professionals and placing authority to assess the young person's educational needs
- The ability of Common Thread Schools to meet the educational needs of the young person
- An agreement on appropriate site of his/her learning
- The content of the educational programme i.e. Curriculum, especially if it is a Crisis Placement
- Visits to the school by young person, family or carer and involved external agencies

Our preference is to facilitate a visit to the school with a supporting adult(s) to experience the ethos of Common Thread, the education on offer and meet the staff. This visit(s) also helps the school to decide whether they can meet the needs of the young person appropriately.

Induction

Initially attendance at Common Thread full time may not be appropriate for a young person. We are sensitive and flexible in our approach when planning our IEP's, the priority being the young person feeling safe and secure in their place of learning and achieving success in their learning. By providing a less anxious environment the impact on the young person's brain will be more positive and therefore improve their ability to participate and learn.

A crisis placement would suggest smaller tasks, smaller steps and active learning encompassing Literacy, Numeracy and Social Skills.

Transition

Support is always provided for the transition period when young people are leaving Common Thread School to move:

- On to another education and/or care service
- Back into mainstream education in their own community
- Move to mainstream school in our own community
- To vocational training and beyond in local educational establishments
- Into our "Through Care" programme
- Onto 'Independent Living'



We would aim to:

- Prepare each young person for the move
- Liaise with all those involved where appropriate
- Provide support
- Make available all educational documents including IEPs, records, progress reports and any additional assistance the young person may require once they have made the move

COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS – Policies and Procedures

Active Citizenship

Admin and Control of Medicines

Behavioural Support

Care & Education Protocol

Charter of Rights (Young People)

Child Protection Policy

Complaints Procedure

Confidentiality Policy

Equal Opportunity Policy

Health Education

Health & Safety

Internet & E-mail Policy

Moving On

Open Access

Physical Restraint

Referrals and Admissions

Smoking Policy

Staff Capability Procedure

Staff Selection, Recruitment & Retention

Staff Supervision & Appraisal

Participation strategy







COMMON THREAD SCHOOLS

School Locations

Dumfries
Falkirk
Kilmarnock

Executive Head of Education

Kieron O'Brien
HDE.FDE.DipTh.MEd.

Common Thread – Head Office

Benreay
10 Dumfries Road
Lockerbie
DG11 2EF

Tel: 01576 204202
Fax: 01576 202299
Email: info@commonthreadgroup.com

Type of school: Independent, Special Needs.

Chief Operating Officer - Common Thread Ltd

James Lochrie
MA, SW

Prospectus updated : August 2017.

- * Young People First * Be creative & positive
- * Leaders in our field of expertise * Operate Sustainably & Ethically * Integrity and honesty in how we conduct ourselves *

