



**PROJECT
BASED
LEARNING**

PROJECT BASED LEARNING

AT THE
RNNGROUP





***“From Project Based Learning,
I can take away the confidence I
have gained while being here.”***

Introduction to PBL and Programme Overview

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is designed to re-engage learners through practical, hands-on experiences in supportive environments.

Using trauma-informed practice and restorative approaches, staff build strong, consistent relationships with learners, helping them feel safe, understood and ready to learn again.

The aim is to **build confidence, emotional resilience, and employability skills** through a **project-based curriculum**, enabling a smooth transition into college or supported internships and apprentices after a term or depending according on the individual and their progress in the programme.

The programme acts as a bridge back into education, supporting learners to transition into their chosen vocational area with confidence.

The RNN Group's termly programme supports young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs who are aged 16-19, or up to age 25 where they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Learners may be eligible if they meet **one or more** of the following criteria:

- At risk of or currently NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).
- Previously home educated (6+ months).
- In need of structured support to access further education, employment, or training.

Each student will have the additional opportunity of having a 3 Year Skills and Progression plan created with them to support progress and journey.

Delivery Structure:

- 3 days per week between 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Balanced mix of classroom learning, outdoor education (developed based on each location), and reflective sessions.

Project-based learning provides learners with a safe, purposeful, and empowering way to learn by doing.

It recognises the whole person - not just their academic ability - and gives them opportunities to develop emotional resilience, communication skills, and confidence in their own potential.

Facilities and our Two Key Sites

The Project-Based Learning (PBL) provision is delivered at two sites: Idle Valley Nature Reserve and Dearne Valley College.

These learning environments allow learners to experience both outdoor, nature-based learning and college-based vocational settings, supporting a gradual and supported transition back into education.

Learners benefit from:

- Practical, hands-on learning environments in a natural setting (Idle Valley)
- Access to vocational facilities at Rotherham College, North Notts College or Dearne Valley College.
- Tailored group to support engagement and relationship-building
- Flexible learning spaces that reduce barriers to participation
- Opportunities to learn outside of a traditional classroom



Dearne Valley College



Idle Valley Nature Reserve

For some learners with SEMH needs, traditional classroom learning can feel overwhelming or disconnected from real life.

Factors such as anxiety, low confidence, or previous negative experiences in education can make it difficult to engage, focus, or see the purpose behind lessons. Missing lessons on a full-time vocational course can cause them to fall behind, become anxious about returning, or have poor relationships with staff.

Project-based learning offers an alternative approach that helps these learners reconnect with education in meaningful and empowering ways at a pace that suits them.

Instead of learning through textbooks or abstract tasks, students work on real-world projects that have a clear purpose and visible results. This gives learning context and relevance, helping students understand **why** they're learning and **how** their skills can make a difference.

Our Aims for Students of our PBL Programme

How our project-based programme supports SEMH learners:

1. Builds confidence through success.

It allows students to experience success step by step - from planning and creating their three-year plan to presenting and reflecting. Each achievement, no matter how small, reinforces a sense of competence and self-belief.

2. Encourages teamwork and communication.

Working on shared projects helps learners build trust, develop empathy, and practise social skills in a supportive environment. They learn how to listen, contribute, and celebrate others' ideas - vital skills for both life and work.

3. Supports emotional regulation.

Hands-on tasks and active learning help reduce stress and anxiety. The structure of project work, with clear goals, timelines, and roles, creates predictability and safety, which is especially important for students with SEMH needs.

4. Promotes ownership and motivation.

When learners have a say in their projects and see tangible outcomes, their motivation grows. They begin to view themselves as capable problem-solvers rather than passive students.

5. Connects learning to the future.

By linking projects to real-life themes, like work, community, and independence, students can see how their learning prepares them for adulthood. This directly supports the Preparing for Adulthood framework and helps with transitions into college, training, or employment.

Looking ahead

Throughout the project-based programme, learners will develop their own three-year learning plan which will highlight their goals for their time at college and afterwards. This could include the type of course they want to enrol onto or what career they have in mind.

The programme is embedded with careers advice and guidance so that learners can better understand what qualifications they need to progress onto their chosen career pathway.

At the end of the term, learners are supported to transition into a vocational course, into work, apprenticeship or other outcome to support their progression and next steps

Learning Plans

The PBL programme is designed to support learners who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET to successfully re-engage with education and plan their next steps.

Learning is delivered through meaningful, project-based activities that feel relevant and achievable.

Learners will:

- Rebuild confidence, motivation and self-belief
- Develop positive routines and engagement with learning
- Improve communication and teamwork skills
- Build resilience and emotional awareness through a trauma-informed approach
- Take part in restorative conversations to support behaviour and relationships
- Gain insight into vocational pathways and future career options
- Develop the skills needed to transition into further education or training



Programme Phases:

Phase 1: Basecamp – Building Me, My Team & My Toolkit

Focus: Self-awareness, emotional regulation, teamwork, resilience, goal setting and transition planning.

Activities: Daily Zones of Regulation check-ins, identity and strengths activities, team-building challenges, shelter building, communication tasks, emotional toolkit creation, wellbeing walks, reflective journaling, introduction to 3-year progression plans and outdoor expedition challenges.

Phase 2: Grow, Root, Give

Focus: Health and wellbeing, independent living, sustainability, responsibility and community contribution.

Activities: Growing food, gardening projects, healthy eating and nutrition, cooking, routine building, budgeting, caring for living things, community food donations, sustainability campaign, teamwork and personal responsibility.

Phase 3: Transition & Celebration

Focus: Preparing for next steps, employability, confidence, independence and successful progression.

Activities: Vocational taster sessions, orientation visits, CV writing, interview preparation, travel training, transition planning, guest speakers, shadowing opportunities, celebration event, presentation of achievements and review of individual progression plans.

Embedded Throughout the Programme

Focus: Developing confidence, emotional wellbeing, independence and readiness for adulthood.

Embedded Strategies: Trauma-informed practice, Zones of Regulation, SEAL, Preparing for Adulthood outcomes, Careers Education (CEIAG), real-world English and maths, nature-based learning, multi-agency support, daily check-ins and reflections, personalised transition planning and NOCN project units.

What our Students Think?

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I am really enjoying Project Based Learning. It helps me stay engaged because I can work on practical tasks rather than only theory. I also feel like I am making good progress and improving my skills while working through the projects.

I feel like I can regulate my emotions better now. I am better at recognising when I need to calm down and not get so angry. Instead, I will now walk away from the situation to help myself calm down. I have enjoyed the practical outdoor activities in Project Based Learning.

I especially like creating things out of wood because it lets me be hands-on and creative. It is satisfying to see something I have made myself and it helps me learn new practical skills

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I like PBL as they have smaller groups and I feel more confident. My confidence has allowed me to stay in Animal Care with the friends I have made without my Coach staying with me.

I would recommend Project Based because it gradually builds your time up in college and the area I chose to study in. I wouldn't change anything about Project Based as I enjoyed everything. I don't feel I need to do the course again as I have taken what I need and am now moving into Animal Care full-time.

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I have enjoyed my time in PBL. It has helped me being back in a classroom environment and develop my English and Maths skills.

It has helped me realise my passion for welding and has improved my time keeping by having a routine again.

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I found project-based learning really fun because it allowed us to learn by doing activities instead of just sitting in the classroom. It made lessons more interesting and helped me enjoy learning more.

One thing I liked about project-based learning was that we got to work on real tasks and create things ourselves.

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I find PBL easier than normal school for the relaxed feel. There's less pressure so I don't get stressed out so much. I've learned to give everything at least one chance.

I can't really think of anything I would change about PBL. PBL is better than what I had before. The staff give 100%, I've enjoyed all of it to be honest. Yes I would do the course again, 100%.

I've felt happier coming into Project Based than I have anywhere else including Primary, Secondary and the other Colleges I have tried.

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From Project Based Learning, I can take away the confidence I have gained while being here.

At the start I felt nervous, but working on the project helped me speak more, share my ideas, and work with other people.

It also helped me improve my teamwork and communication skills.

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Success Stories

The PBL provision has successfully supported learners to re-engage with education and take positive next steps.

Learners who had previously disengaged from education have returned to regular attendance.

Increased confidence and willingness to participate in group activities

Improved behaviour through the use of restorative approaches Learners progressing into vocational courses at Rotherham, North Notts and Dearne Valley Colleges.

Development of clearer career goals and aspirations

Many learners leave the programme with a renewed sense of purpose and a realistic plan for their future.

Natalia couldn't see the point of being here, wasn't willing to learn the work and has a very unbothered interest in anything we offered.

But now, she has made a huge change and now completes all the work given and more. She is constantly asking for homework and wanting to learn more. Natalia is going for a taster at childcare and if all goes well they will accept her early! She is very polite and always willing to help other.

When Harley first started he was very shy but he soon settled and made good friends with everyone.

Harley has been a pleasure to have with us, communicates well, uses brilliant team work skills and always tries his best with the work. Harley also did amazing in his Joinery tasters and the staff from the area are really impressed with his skills. Because of this, Harley will be heading over to Joinery full time!

Project Based Learning:

Celebrates First Successful Cohort!



SCAN THE QR TO READ MORE



What Parents of PBL learners think

I just wanted to say that my daughter has benefited so much from taking part in the project-based learning course. It has done absolute wonders for her confidence. The project has really accommodated her needs, and you have taken the time to get to know her and understand her anxieties.

The emotional check-ins have made a huge difference. Being able to identify where they are emotionally and then speaking with them straight away when they were in the yellow or red zone really helped calm her down. This approach has made such a positive impact.

She has truly been treated as a person rather than just a number, and she seems like a completely different person now.

I think the course is an absolutely fantastic opportunity for any child who struggles with attending college due to SEMH. I am so grateful that my daughter was put forward for this, and I want to thank you.

You are all amazing, and I truly hope this course continues so that more young people can benefit from it.

She also has attended the Hubs for 2 weeks now this is massive as you know. She started by saying her nerves wouldn't allow her to do this. I'm thrilled with how she is as a person, thank you it has meant the world to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to give feedback on the course.

The PBL tutors have had a huge impact, helping my daughter to settle and showing her a new direction in education. They have taken the time to understand her anxiety around people and have addressed it in the best possible way.

They have all been incredibly kind and supportive, even providing mobile numbers so I could let them know when my daughter was on her way to College. One of the tutors has also offered to take my daughter and show her where her new course will be, which means a lot to us.

The team has gone above and beyond their duties. Their dedication to my child's needs has been amazing and they have really listened to her. As a result, some of my daughter's confidence has returned and she is now looking forward to continuing her studies and building a future in education.

Thank you all for being there.





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