



ASDAN
education

Building a culture of achievement

The impact of the pursuit of CoPE
(the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) on
GCSE attainment and engagement in learning



University of the
West of England

Research report undertaken by
the University of the West of England

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Foreword

Marius Frank
CEO, ASDAN



“DfE should introduce a performance indicator which focuses on the whole distribution of performance within a school, including those at the top and bottom ends of the distribution”

The Wolf Report
(2011)

ASDAN Education has grown over the last 30 years from a small group of practitioners interested in educational theory and classroom practice to become one of the larger Awarding Organisations in the UK, with registered centres across the world. For the first 25 years ASDAN programmes developed organically, picking up effective ideas both from sources within the profession and from face-to-face work with learners.

In 2003-4, at the suggestion of QCDA, existing best practice was distilled into a stand-alone qualification called the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE), available at Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. From a few hundred students in the initial pilot group, by 2009-10 there were more than 40,000 registered learners across the country and it was clear that CoPE was being used by thousands of schools as a tool to raise achievement and attainment.

ASDAN centres were supplying a stream of anecdotal evidence that CoPE was having a significant impact on learner achievement beyond that of counting in the SCAAT as a GCSE equivalent. While stories showing that the lives of individual learners have been enriched are heart-warming to those with a vocation to teach, they cut little ice with a Department tightly focused on an academic measure.

In order to investigate further the links between CoPE and achievement at GCSE, the following report was commissioned based on the national cohort data rather than anecdotes from supportive centres.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Frank', written over a horizontal line.

Outline of the research

This finding is based on analysis of data from the National Pupil Database, comprising more than 500,000 young people who completed Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 2010, and illuminated by qualitative data collected from four schools currently offering CoPE.

The research analysis is mainly based on a distinction between two approaches to offering CoPE within schools, linked to the proportion of the overall cohort undertaking it:

1. Thin usage: where CoPE is undertaken by less than 25% of the cohort. In these schools, the pupils selected to undertake CoPE are most likely to be those with serious educational challenges, including behavioural issues, persistent absenteeism, missed schooling for chronic ill-health or personal reasons, and/or other situational factors
2. Wide usage: where CoPE is undertaken by 25%-100% of the cohort. In these schools, CoPE students will be from a wider cross-section of individuals. This group still has more educational challenges, on average, than those schools not offering CoPE at all.

In this summary, all comparisons relate to the difference between 'wide usage' schools and schools not offering CoPE at all.



Principal findings

Commission

The study reported herein was commissioned by ASDAN Education from the Bristol Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and Education (BRILLE) at the University of the West of England (UWE).

The five research questions that the research team was asked to address were:

1. Do pupils who undertake CoPE achieve a higher grade at GCSE English Language than comparable pupils who do not?
2. Are pupils who undertake CoPE more likely to achieve five GCSE passes than comparable pupils who do not?
3. Are there any identifiable subgroups of pupils (e.g. in terms of social deprivation or gender) for whom the impacts above are particularly marked or absent?
4. Do pupils and staff identify relationships between CoPE and other KS4 study with respect to pupil engagement, attendance and motivation?
5. If so, what is the nature of experiences, perceptions, impressions and claims about such relationships?

There were three strands to the research.

1. Whole Sample

The key analysis was to determine whether there were significant differences between the GCSE attainment of students who had and had not pursued CoPE. Analysis was also undertaken into the possible impact of demographic factors such as gender or ethnicity, to see whether CoPE had a particularly strong or weak effect for different groups.

2. Paired Sample

200 pairs of young people with identical demographic and external factors and identical attainment at KS3 were randomly isolated from the main dataset, with one individual in each pair having pursued CoPE and one not. This examined whether ostensibly similar individuals performed differently at GCSE, based on whether they pursued CoPE.

3. Qualitative data

As part of the research team's visits to the sample schools, interviews were undertaken with staff and pupils to provide evidence of perceptions of CoPE and shared beliefs or claims about its relationship to other study at KS4.

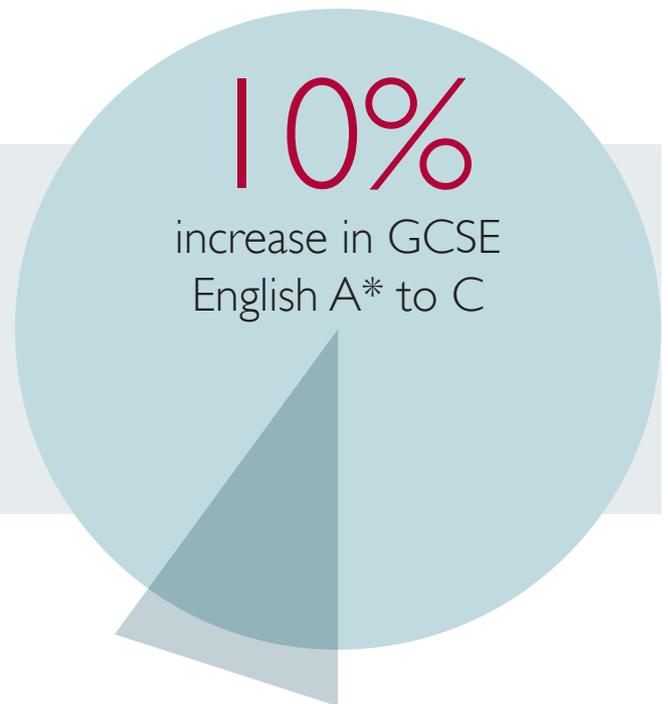


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Improved attainment at GCSE

The completion of the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) at Level 2 has a statistically significant association with improved attainment in GCSE qualifications

Undertaking CoPE at Level 2 in a 'wide usage' school is associated with an estimated 10% increased likelihood of achieving GCSE English at A* to C, compared to similar young people in schools not offering CoPE.

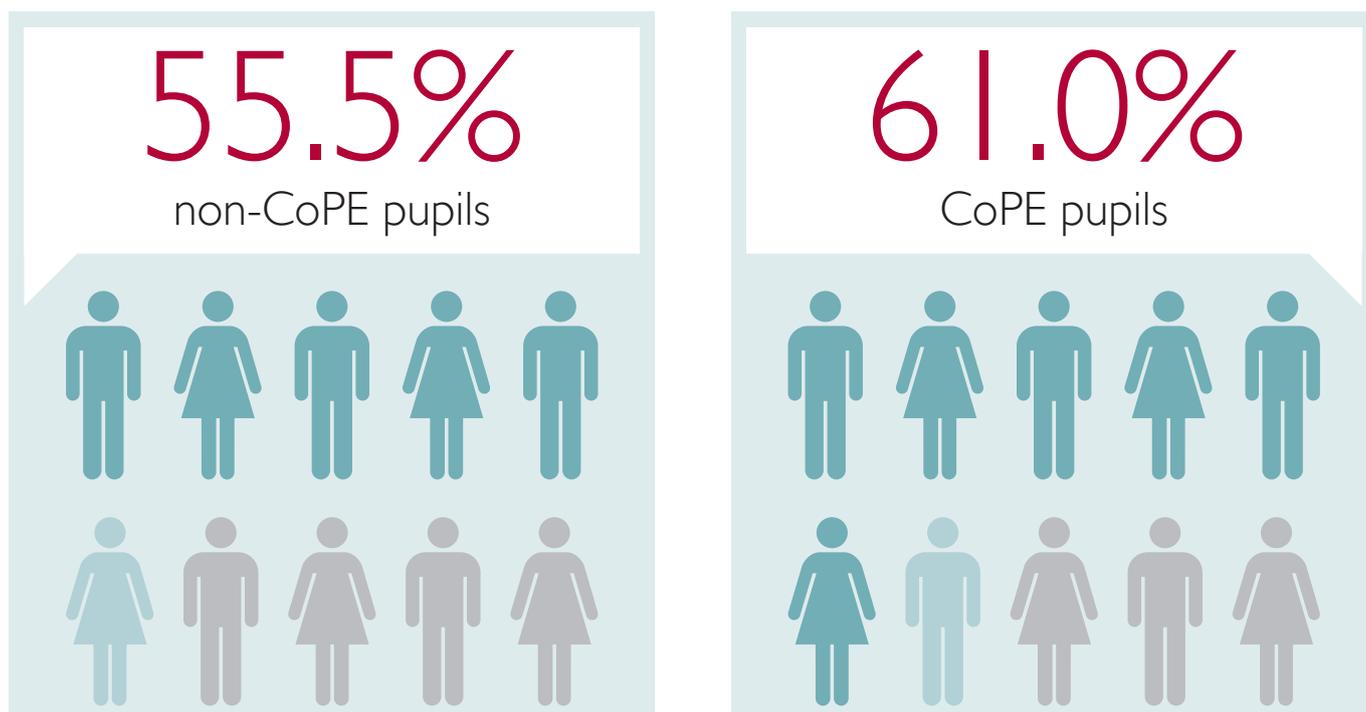


5%
increase in GCSE A* to C
incl. English and maths

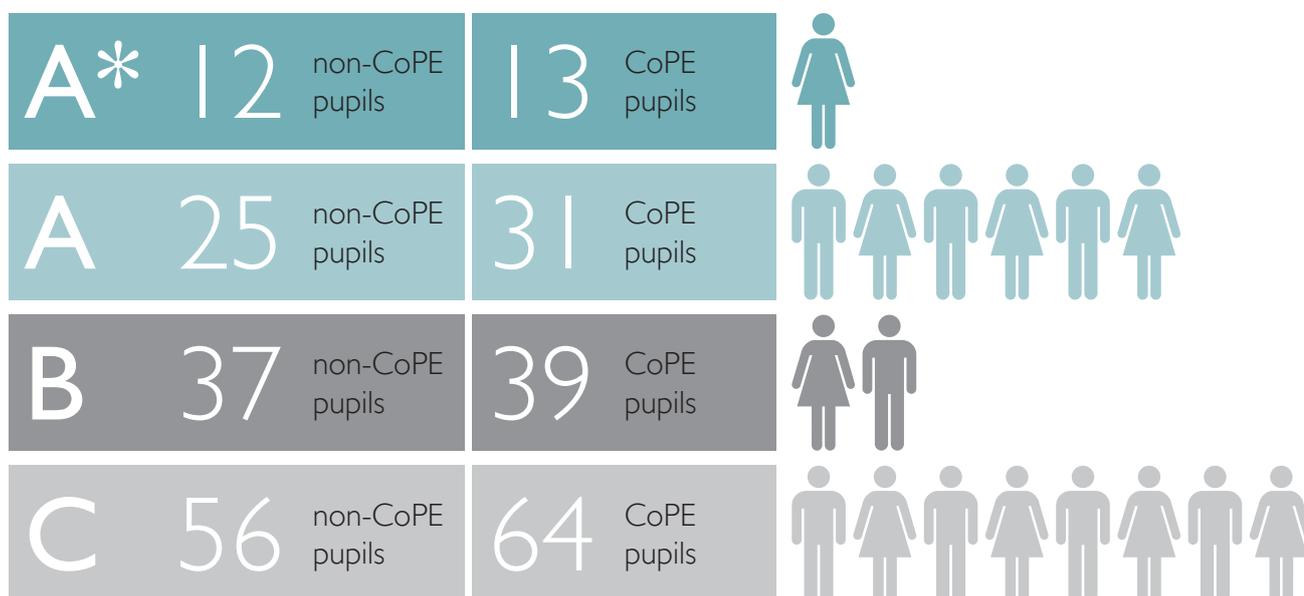
Undertaking CoPE at Level 2 in a 'wide usage' school is associated with an estimated 5% increased likelihood of achieving five GCSEs at A* to C including English and maths (excluding equivalents), compared to similar young people in schools not offering CoPE.

‘Like-for-like’ comparison between 200 sets of paired random individuals.

Attainment of five GCSEs A* to C including English and maths:



Attainment in GCSE A* to C English:



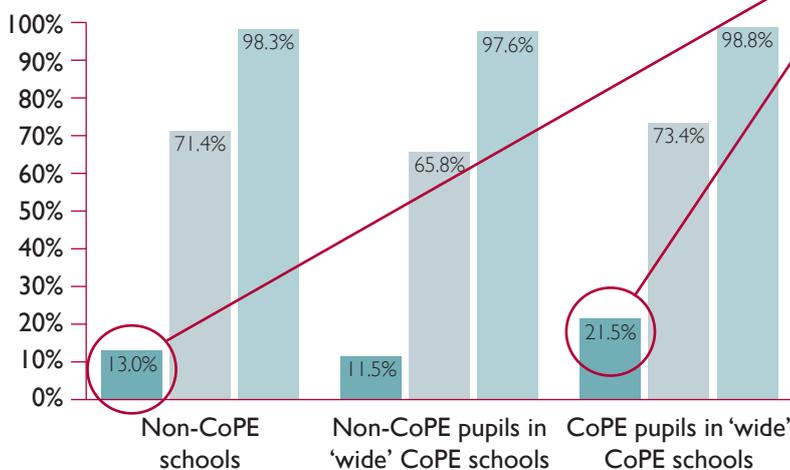
“ English and maths GCSE (at grades A*-C) are fundamental to young people’s employment and education prospects. Yet less than 50% of students have both at the end of Key Stage 4 (age 15/16) ”

The Wolf Report (2011)

Positive impact on other pupil groups

CoPE appears to have a stronger impact among those young people with low KS3 attainment, special educational needs, from black and minority ethnic communities and those who are eligible for free school meals

Low KS3 attainers in English: GCSE English pass rate at A* to C



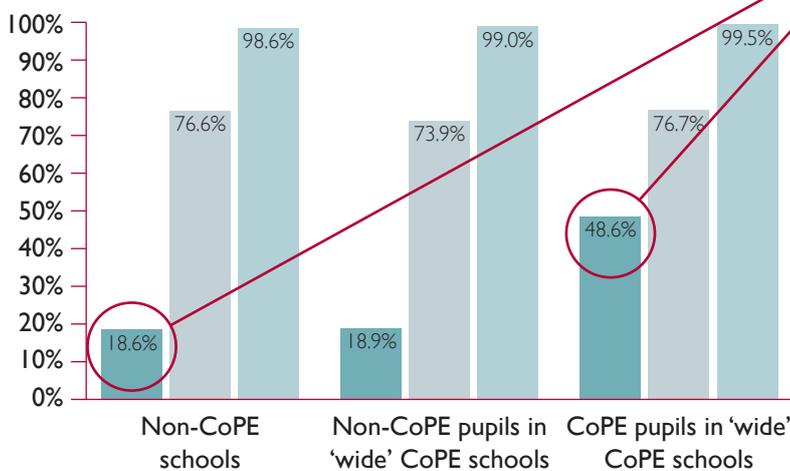
65% increase

21.5% of the low KS3 attainment group taking CoPE achieved GCSE English at A*-C compared to 13.0% in non-CoPE schools



Extract from Fig.2 GCSE English pass rate A*-C by KS3 attainment, school type and CoPE

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities: GCSE English pass rate at A* to C

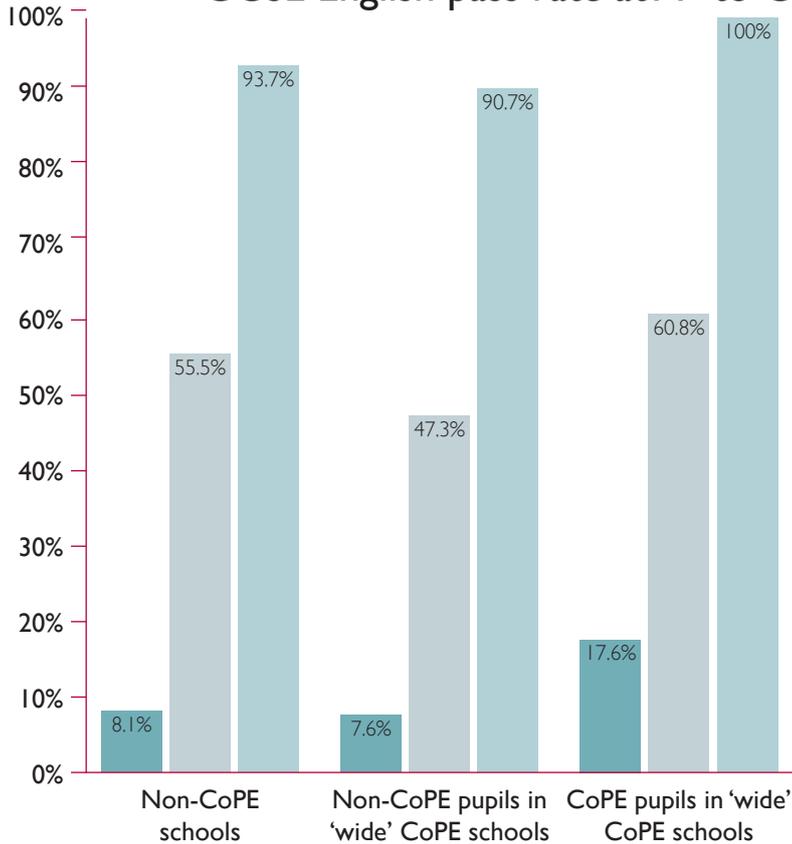


CoPE has a particularly strong effect on BME pupils with low KS3 attainment



Extract from Fig.11 GCSE English pass rate A*-C by KS3 attainment, ethnicity, school type and CoPE

Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils: GCSE English pass rate at A* to C

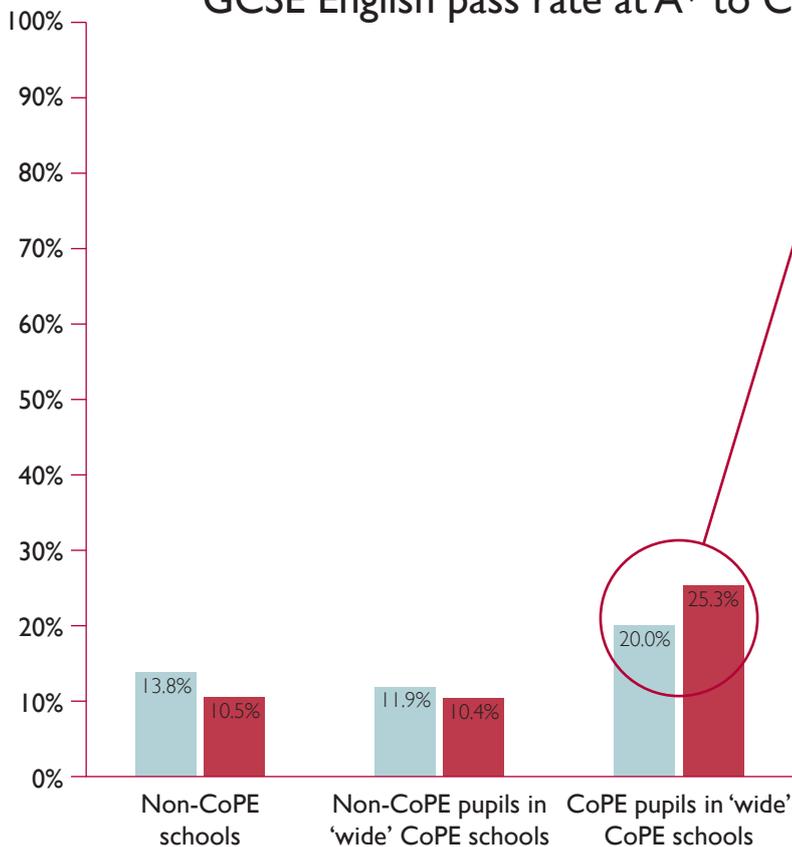


CoPE has a disproportionately positive impact on GCSE A* to C English outcomes among individuals with special educational needs

KS3 attainment in English
 low up to Level 4 average Level 5 high Level 6/7

Extract from Fig.7: GCSE English pass rate at A*-C by KS3 attainment, SEN, school type and 'wide' CoPE

Free School Meals (FSM) pupils: GCSE English pass rate at A* to C



Outperforming
 low attainers receiving free school meals and undertaking CoPE actually outperform their peers from more affluent households

Low attainers at KS3 in English (up to Level 4)
 no FSM FSM

Extract from Fig.9: GCSE English pass rate at A*-C by KS3 attainment, free school meals

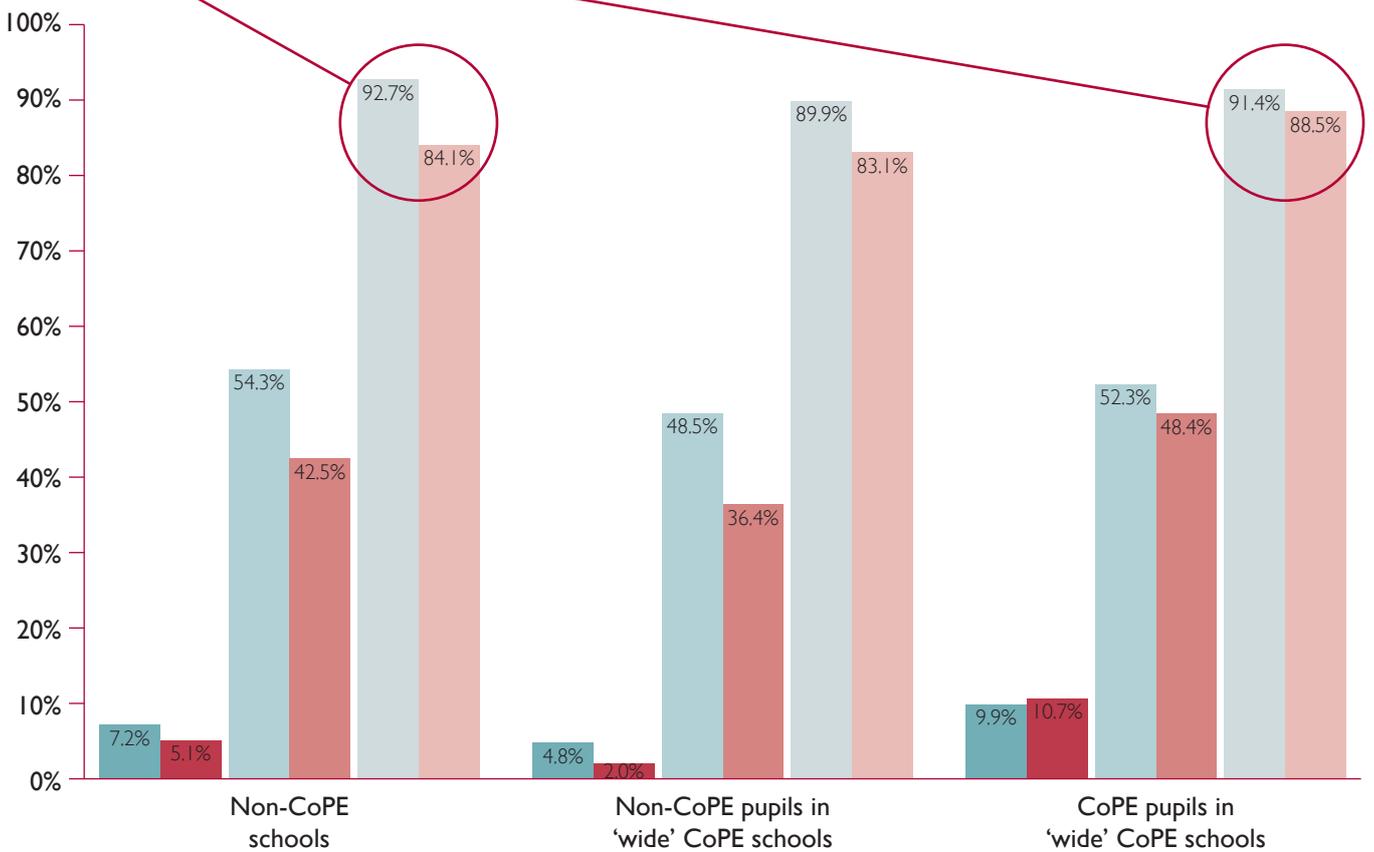
Closing the gap

among high KS3 attainers there is a 2.9% gap (among CoPE pupils) between those receiving FSM and those not. This compares with... 8.6% among individuals in non-CoPE schools

Free School Meals (FSM) pupils: Five GCSEs A* to C incl. English and maths

Extract from Fig.10: Pass rate for five GCSEs at A*-C incl. English and maths by KS3 attainment, free school meals school type and 'wide' CoPE

KS3 attainment in English			
no FSM	low (up to Level 4)	average (Level 5)	high (Level 6/7)
FSM	low (up to Level 4)	average (Level 5)	high (Level 6/7)



Engagement

Teachers and young people report that CoPE boosts confidence, self-esteem, motivation and attendance. It is likely that these benefits feed back into KS4 outcomes, with these young people doing better than they would have done had they not undertaken CoPE

The research study found that:

1. CoPE mitigates the underachievement of individuals with serious educational challenges, while markedly improving the achievement of those without such challenges.
2. CoPE is neither vocational nor academic in any normal characterisation of those categories: it is instead a skills-based process that is compatible with either vocational or academic qualifications or combinations of the two... it is demonstrably supportive of (pupils') learning... also makes a tangible contribution to their achievements in more mainstream terms.
3. Accounts from staff and students highlighted that particular features, namely the systematic use of Plan-Do-Review and collaborative group work provided a mode of working that young people could (and did) transfer to other subjects and other contexts.
4. CoPE had given many students their first taste of success and recognised achievement, and this had changed their more general orientation to study, including raised motivation and confidence.

“ DfE should review current policies for the lowest-attaining quintile of pupils at KS4, with a view to greatly increasing the proportion who are able to progress directly onto Level 2 programmes at age 16 ”

The Wolf Report (2011)

“ I like the days I do CoPE, I enjoy coming to school on those days ”

CoPE pupils from the study schools

“ CoPE gives us skills for the rest of our GCSEs ”

“ When this [CoPE] started in Year 9, I thought this is going to be a waste of time, just keeping him busy... I have to apologise to you because I think this course has done a huge amount for my son in terms of confidence and the way he is progressing with other subjects in school ”

Father of CoPE pupil from one of the study schools (as reported by a teacher)



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ASDAN is a charitable social enterprise with awarding body status, providing courses to about 6,000 UK and international schools, colleges, youth centres and training providers. ASDAN's programmes and qualifications offer flexible ways to accredit skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life.

ASDAN, Wainbrook House, Hudds Vale Road, St George, Bristol BS5 7HY
t: 0117 941 1126 • f: 0117 935 1112 • www.asdan.org.uk • info@asdان.org.uk