

# SUCCESS STORY

## Hopedale Children & Family Services

How investing in behaviour training and staff development supports recruitment and retention for a group of outstanding special schools.

### At a glance

- **Name:** Craig Barker
- **Role:** Executive Headteacher
- **Organisation:** Hopedale Children & Family Services
- **Location:** England, UK



### About Hopedale Children & Family Services

This group of six outstanding independent special schools across Staffordshire and the northwest of England supports over 400 students, ranging from 3 to 19 years old.

All students have been referred from the local authority, and have complex social, emotional and mental health needs, and/or cognitive and learning difficulties.

“**Our approach is one that is inclusive, therapeutic and nurturing to meet the needs of every student.**”

### Benefits of choosing Team Teach

The Team Teach approach emphasises the importance of relationships for effective behaviour support, and this philosophy underpins Hopedale’s values and ethos. “Many of our students have had very difficult, fractured experiences before they come to us,” Craig explains. “We work hard to build those relationships. Our environments are incredibly inclusive, nurturing and therapeutic, allowing us to meet all students’ needs.”

Through training and support for all staff, leaders nurture a therapeutic, relational approach that recognises individual need. This equips staff teams with a toolkit of strategies to forge strong connections, reduce risk, and take a positive, proactive approach to behaviour support. Craig says, “Team Teach training ensures that our staff are focused on the 95% of de-escalation skills and relationship-building, meaning we can reduce the need for physical interventions.”

## The approach

Investment in staff training to develop a consistent approach to behaviour support across the organisation.

### Spotlight on an In-house Team Teach trainer



- **Name:** Oliver Radzins
- **Role:** De-escalation Specialist

#### Role

Oliver supports staff in building relationships and de-escalating behaviour. He also helps with the induction of new staff and will use his Team Teach training to lead sessions across the organisation.

#### Pathway

At just 20 years old, Oliver is the youngest Team Teach trainer at Hopedale Children & Family Services.

There is a clear professional development pathway for Oliver and the staff team at Hopedale with a large number of staff working towards or obtaining Qualified Teacher Status while working within the organisation

“Hopedale’s commitment to internal growth and development has resulted in an incredibly low staff turnover rate of just 1.9%.”

### Staff development & training

Hopedale Children & Family Services have 19 qualified Team Teach trainers across the organisation, including 8 Advanced Skills trainers.

These staff are responsible for sharing knowledge, skills and understanding, providing behaviour support for staff and students, and leading in-house training sessions.

This model ensures a consistent approach across every school in the group, and empowers all staff, no matter what their role, to effectively support behaviour.



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## The results

Training large numbers of staff to be Team Teach trainers and investing in development and training options means Hopedale Children & Family Services have exceptionally low staff turnover rates. In 2023, they won the NASS 'Outstanding Impact' award for their staff recruitment, retention and training programme.

Having so many certified Team Teach trainers has enabled leaders to build a consistent, coherent approach to behaviour across the whole organisation.

The benefits for staff, students, and their families are far-reaching:

- In England, the average percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is 12%\*, however Hopedale bucks this trend with all school leavers going on to further education, employment or training.
- Through a holistic, relational, and therapeutic approach, students develop vital self-regulation skills that set them up for success in the future.
- Attendance rates are high and students want to come to school, where the environment is safe, inclusive and positive.

As Craig explains, "Education is for everyone, and we strive to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and supported. After difficult experiences in the past, many of our families say they feel like they have won the lottery!"

## Next steps

- Open up new schools across the region
- Provide a clear training and development pathway for staff
- Continue to share practice with other schools, including mainstream settings

**Our holistic approach is transformative, not just for the students, but for their families, too.**

\*Estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England, March 2024

## Get in touch

Find out how we can support you and your organisation:



[info@teamteach.com](mailto:info@teamteach.com)



UK: +44 (0) 20 3746 0938  
International : +44 (0) 20 3832 8875



[teamteach.com](https://www.teamteach.com)



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