

Annual School Monitoring & Review Process: Summer Term 2014

Visit information

School name	Samuel Lister
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Date of review visit	2 July 2014
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Lead External Consultant	Joan McKenna
Team Member	Helen Griffin
Peer Headteacher	Rachel Kidd

SECTION A: Main focus of review visit

<p>Focus on Leadership linked to the 5 levers identified by Bradford Partnership heads which are</p> <p>Shared Vision, Values and Ethos</p> <p>Middle Leadership and its development</p> <p>Systematic Marking and Feedback</p> <p>Student Progress and Intervention</p> <p>Staff Monitoring and Development</p> <p>The review team will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">gather information as to where there are highly effective systems and practices to share across the Partnershipadvise schools where there is strength and where there are inconsistencies <p>Evidence Base</p>
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- Three learning walks
- Observations of an assembly and tutor time
- Seven meetings with a range of senior and middle leaders and other staff
- A discussion with a group of students and informal discussions with others at social times
- Scrutiny of students' work
- Observations of the Year 6 transition activities taking place during the review
- A review of some documentation

SECTION B: Note of Visit

Shared Vision, Values and Ethos

'Outstanding achievement for all' is the academy's mantra and this was quoted by virtually every member of staff with whom there was a formal discussion during the review. Students also understood this, although they expressed it in a different way. In the main, staff had a common and shared understanding of the academy's priorities and had a clear sense of how it was planned that these would be achieved. There is a two-pronged, interrelated strategy in place, one focussing on removing barriers to learning and providing pastoral support to help overcome these, and the other focussing on promoting academic achievement. Teachers and students are aware of this dual focus, although again, students expressed it in a different way to staff. Because the academy's vision, its rationale and the approach to achieving it has been communicated well to staff, they feel involved and demonstrate a strong sense of commitment to it. Students generally do too, with the large majority showing a preparedness to meet the academy's expectations of them, wear their uniform smartly and behave well. Most students engaged in mature conversations with members of the review team; just one or two were silly in an attempt to impress their friends.

The Principal feels that the time is right to revisit the academy's vision in order to strengthen it further. This would seem to be appropriate, as some inconsistencies in practice on the part of both students and staff were noted during the review which suggest that not all staff are implementing it equally fully in practice and not all students are absolutely buying into every aspect. Overall, however, the evidence indicates that there is a growing, shared sense of purpose within the academy which means that it is poised to accelerate the pace of improvement. Staff see the Principal as embodying the vision, and other staff spoken with are keen to follow her lead and meet her high expectations of them.

The Principal and some other leaders expressed the view that attracting more students into the academy is critical to its development in the future. To this end, Year 6 pupils were seen to being made very welcome during the transition activities underway on the day of the review.

Middle Leadership and its development

Expectations of middle leaders have been sharpened and their roles have been clarified. Arrangements for holding them accountable for their impact on students' outcomes have also been strengthened, with regular meetings with their line managers, and, if the Principal is not their line manager, with her too. These are reported to be helpful meetings by all concerned, but they are not all conducted with the same frequency, with some line management meetings being held weekly and some fortnightly. A wide range of development opportunities have been provided to enhance middle leaders' leadership skills, from participation in training courses to more personalised approaches for individuals. There have been opportunities for some middle leaders to shadow more senior colleagues and for secondments to the senior leadership team to undertake specific projects. Middle leaders are very positive about the support they receive. Indeed, one said that opportunities were provided for training before he had even taken up post. Middle leaders talked with confidence about a range of relevant issues, such as how they ensure accuracy of assessment data, their monitoring and evaluation and, in some cases, 'difficult' conversations that they have had to have with members of their teams. It is obvious that the skills and confidence of middle leaders are increasing, and some gave very convincing answers to questions asked. Not all are equally experienced or effective however. Examples were given of where improvements in practice are evident as a result of action taken by senior leaders. However, they recognise that more is required in relation to some individuals if middle leaders are to become a consistently strong team.

Systematic Marking and Feedback

Clear improvements in the quality marking and feedback are evident, especially recently. Marking occurs regularly. Very little unmarked work was seen. Many subject specific comments were seen, as were examples of attention being given to improving students' literacy skills. There were examples of both self and peer assessment occurring, some of which were of good quality. Helpful diagnostic comments by teachers were seen, and, in the best cases, students responded explicitly to them and, as result, improvements in their progress were evident. There was some variation, however. This related to the quality of teachers' comments, whether or not students responded to comments, and if so, the quality of those responses. There were occasional weaknesses in teachers' handwriting and their own use of grammar. The use and completion of flight paths on the front of books was also variable. Some books looked at contained relatively little quantity of work. Thought could usefully be given as to how work that is completed and stored electronically can be included in work scrutinies.

Student Progress and Intervention

Positive developments to the arrangements for promoting, assessing and tracking students' progress have occurred. These include the now widespread use of transition matrices to show progress from different starting points in all subjects across all year groups, and the fact that every student has a target of four levels of progress. After each data track, data conversations are held between the Principal and middle leaders and between middle leaders and their

teams. Actions and interventions to be taken are identified and agreed. There are also weekly meetings of the Principal, assistant Principal responsible for achievement and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science to review progress.

Whole academy data on outcomes for the current year was not examined in detail. There were positive aspects to that seen. For example, headline figures in Year 11 are projected to rise in 2014, as are outcomes in English. Some important outcomes in mathematics, however, are projected to fall. This represents a significant vulnerability for the academy in 2014. This means that the 2015 outcomes will be critical for the academy.

The monitoring of quantitative data about attendance is thorough and it is becoming more detailed in relation to behaviour, with plans to develop this further next term.

Staff Monitoring and Development

A range of evidence is drawn upon to judge teaching, including lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutinies. Separately, there is a rigorous process for checking on students' progress, with strong accountability of subject leaders directly to the Principal. There are plans to triangulate these different sources of evidence more fully in future. It is recommended that work scrutinies be accorded greater emphasis.

Senior leaders are very good at seeing potential in staff and in nurturing it. Staff spoken with said that they feel well supported by senior leaders and feel that they have good opportunities for development, including on subject specific pedagogy as well as wider issues. Staff are extremely positive and enthusiastic about the academy's use of the TEEP strategy for promoting developments to teaching. This is the case for newly qualified teachers through to leaders. Senior leaders say that it has been instrumental to promoting regular dialogue about teaching and learning and more cross-subject sharing of ideas and information. It is seen as an essential tool to promote the skills regarded as critical for moving the academy to good and onto outstanding

Staff expressed much loyalty to the Principal and the academy and there is a sense of it being poised to build on the improvements to date and to accelerate the pace of change.

Circulation of the Note of Visit

The Note of Visit prepared by the Lead Consultant will be sent to the headteacher and a copy for the Partnership and LA.