



School Improvement Consultant Visit

Spring Term 2017

School: Archers Brook **URN Number:** 111517

Telephone Number: 01513382141

Headteacher: Mrs Samantha Myers-Whittaker

Chair of Governors: Mr Bob Compton

SI Consultant: Judith Jones

Personnel Involved: Samantha Myers-Whittaker (HT); Jim Hilditch (DHT); Tracey Birch (KS2 Lead); Kellie Henerty (TLC Lead)

Date: 14th March 2017

Copies to:
The Headteacher
The Governing Body

SCHOOLS OWN AGENDA

Update on School Issues

- In February, the school experienced an ASIA (Associate School Improvement Adviser) visit, as part of a Local Authority (LA) initiative to gain a valid overview of any special school that is in an Ofsted window. (The school was last inspected in 2012). The reports stated that the school had moved forward considerably since the Ofsted inspection and provided a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that the then, identified areas for improvement, had been met. (As the School Improvement Consultant's reports have verified). The ASIA concluded that the school's judgements in the SES, that the school is outstanding in all areas, were borne out on the visit supported by compelling evidence.
- A three-day Ofsted inspection of the residential provision was undertaken the week previous to the current SIC visit, and judged the school to be outstanding for a fourth time, against all indicators. The inspection was undertaken by a team from London and was extremely challenging typified by the demanding questioning technique of the lead inspector who drilled down on all questions. The verbal feedback was very positive and helpful in regard to signposting lines of enquiry that a full Ofsted inspection might follow ie the gender imbalance of the small number of girls in the school and also DBS.
- A brief tour of the school with the deputy head, highlighted the increasing breadth of the school's curriculum offer and pupils' excellent behaviour and behaviour for learning. The school presents as a calm, purposeful and harmonious environment, conducive to learning. The deputy head reported on the school's increasingly developing links with mainstream schools and West Cheshire College that valuably support students' transition. The school's expertise in supporting young people with challenging behaviours is well respected and drawn upon by mainstream schools.
- The Teaching School Alliance is progressing well. A director has been appointed from one of the schools in the alliance, a company have been commissioned to design a logo and the infrastructure is in place. SLE applications open shortly. Work from the alliance is already being commissioned; for example, West Cheshire College have approached Archers Brook to advise its tutors in supporting Post 16 students with attachment needs and behavioural problems. Training for SENCo's has also been commissioned. The core aim of the alliance is to promote inclusion and responsiveness to pupils' needs in mainstream settings.
- Currently the school has 76 pupils on roll and predicts there will be 73 in September requiring the school to intelligently plan staffing against a situation of financial austerity. The school intends to have a two-form entry in September 2017 and has produced a timetable for 2017-2018 to reflect this. This will also require more teaching staff and teaching assistants in a situation when the school faces a reduced budget. Senior leaders are undertaking a staffing restructure involving appropriately unions and the LA's HR department. The headteacher is cognisant that hard decisions will have to be made.

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS VISIT

- Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors are aware of the Ofsted document "Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings" (August 2016). The head of care has discussed safeguarding with a governors' sub-committee. The headteacher and head of care are on the system to attend Level 3 safeguarding refresher training.
- The school has taken action to ensure that all the policies and guidance highlighted in the last visit are now on the school website.
- Termly meetings with the lead governor for safeguarding and the head of care have been put in the school diary. All governors have a fully understanding of the National Minimum Care Standards.

AGREED FOCUS:

1. Discussion with the Key Stage 2 lead regarding assessment
2. Discussions with the DHT and TLC lead regarding the "Cream of the Crop" initiative and joint scrutiny of a sample of pupils' books.
3. Teaching and Learning Communities
4. 2017-2018 developments
5. Agreed Actions
6. Focus of summer term visit

OUTCOMES:

1. Discussion with the Key Stage 2 lead regarding assessment

- The KS 2 Lead has aimed to develop a tracking system that demonstrates pupils' progress over time, as is consistent with other key stages in the school, aiming to develop a system that works for the school and is understood by senior leaders.
- As with colleagues in other special schools, data and information from feeder primary feeder schools varies considerably as schools respond to "life without levels", they are all using different forms of assessment.
- The school gathers data from Primary Schools Accountability based on pupils Key Stage 1 average points score, along with FFT Aspire, where available. Pupils are baselined on entry using CAT, GL Test and NGRT reading test and teachers consider if the outcomes of their baseline assessment reflects the information from the primary schools if there are discrepancies, further assessments will be undertaken. Teachers then agree end of key stage targets for each pupil based on the assessment data and their own professional judgements. The assessment data is then transcribed to a spreadsheet to provide an overview of all pupils' performance in each core subject.
- The spreadsheets scrutinised during the visit did not demonstrate progress for a large majority of pupils from one half term to the next, although pupils had progressed during that period. The school would be wise to break down the levels of descriptors into smaller steps into order to demonstrate the progress pupils are making.

In developing the system the school should aim to compare its own expectations for rates of progress with similar special schools locally and nationally. The aim being to demonstrate how well pupils are progressing to reach their expected standards for their abilities, needs and age. The SIC advised of two schools the KS 2 lead might wish to visit in this regard.

The school should also define rates of outstanding and good progress using information from the National Progression Guidance, its own extensive knowledge of the progress pupils at Archers Brook make over time and benchmarking pupil progress against CASPA and other similar special schools judged to be outstanding by Ofsted.

2. Discussions with the DHT and TLC lead regarding the "Cream of the Crop" initiative.

- For a number of years, the school has demonstrated a strong commitment to continually extend the range of AfL strategies, the initial driving force, being its involvement in the Dylan William project. An area however, that pupils have always found difficult due to the nature of their needs has been to reflect upon their own learning. Following reading and research and discussions in the TLC group, staff agreed to run a pilot study using the "Cream of the Crop" initiative. The success criteria in a lesson using the approach are scaffolded for each learner and can be teacher and/or pupil led; pupils can add extra criteria if they decide to push themselves further. At the end of a lesson or project the pupils reflect upon their learning using the "www" and "ebi" approach; they are required to identify at least one area for improvement. Cream is an acronym for:
 - C**ome to a stop
 - R**ead over what you have produced so far
 - E**valuate your work against success criteria
 - A**sk yourself "is this my best effort"?
 - M**ake at least one improvement
- Pupils have embraced the concept and view it as part of their daily/weekly tasks, and find it meaningful
- The approach is used in conjunction with the school's marking policy and is in line with pupil feedback. Staff have adapted and tailored the approach to meet their own and pupils' needs.
- Scrutiny of pupils' book across a range of subjects confirm consistency of approach by both staff and pupils whilst also highlighting teachers' adherence to the school's marking policy.

The "Cream of the Crop" initiative illustrates the school's continuing solution focussed approach to its work. When an issue is identified, staff reflect, discuss and put forward ideas to address the problem.

3. Teaching and Learning Communities

- Teaching and Learning Communities were established in the school following working with other schools in the local area in this way. Three groups have been established within the school, each with identified leads, linked into school development plan. They are:-
 - Outcomes for pupils across the 24-hour curriculum
 - The quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - Personal development, behaviour and welfare(SMSC) across the 24 hour curriculum

Staff can be part of the one of the TLC's but they can also cross over. Each will have focuses for development as linked into the SDP and can decide on how they are going to implement changes for school progression.

- The TLC groups meet at defined times as part of CPD each Tuesday, usually 3-4 times a term. All staff in the community are expected to input and may also lead sessions. All are invited to contribute their ideas to facilitate sessions and activities across the 24-hour curriculum. Initiatives are monitored and evaluated in order to evidence the impact on school improvement.

The TLC's provide a unique opportunity for staff at all levels to make an active contribution to whole school improvement; most relish and value the opportunities to work as a team.

4. 2017-2018 developments

- A key area for focus in the next academic year is to develop a new initiative "Visible Learning". It is seated in meta-cognition and is evidence based learning stemming from the work of Gardner and John Hattie. The headteacher is optimistic that if successful it will take learning pedagogy to a higher level. It means an enhanced role of teachers as they become evaluators of their own teaching. According to John Hattie, Visible Learning and Teaching occurs when teachers see learning through the eyes of their pupils and help them to become their own teachers.
- TLC's will continue at least every other week.
- Another strand in the SDP will be mental health. The consultant signposted the headteacher to Manchester Hospital School, whose work in this area is highly respected.

5. Agreed Actions

- The school improvement consultant to seek the agreement of the Birches School in Manchester for the Key Stage 2 lead to visit in regard to their Key Stage 2 assessment processes and the way in which they presented evidence to Ofsted during their inspection in the autumn term 2016.
- The school improvement consultant to seek the agreement of Manchester Hospital School (MHS) for staff to visit the school in regard to their provision for pupils with mental health problems.
- The Key Stage 2 lead to follow up the recommendations made in the report in regard to further developments in assessment processes; also to arrange visits to Cloughwood School and the Birches.
- The headteacher to contact MHS to arrange a visit for staff.

6. Focus on summer term visit on 4th July 2017

- i) Triangulation of evidence of the quality of teaching and learning.
- ii) Performance Management – links to pay and progression.
- iii) Governance

SUMMARY:

The school continues to be an outward facing institution and through collaboration, influences and benefits the provision in all the schools it involves. The headteacher is dedicated and highly regarded as a leader of learning within her own school and the wider community. Excellent staff training and development opportunities have resulted in a high-quality workforce in which the views of all staff are valued.