

AUTUMN TERM 2020 School Improvement Meeting

Name of Trust: Valour Multi Academy Trust Beech Hill Primary School Walbottle Village Primary School	Name of School Improvement Advisor: Nick Conway	
Date of discussion: 14th September 2020 8th October 2020	Time: 11.30-1pm	Duration: 3 hour
Purpose of the visit/focus: - Summary Points - School's own agenda - Progress made against actions identified in the last visit - Keeping Children Safe in Education: Changes from September 2020 - School reopening and getting learning back on track - Attendance Strategy - In-Depth Review offer - External evaluation of Self-Evaluation Summary, School Improvement Plan, PP Strategy - Review of the impact of support and areas for additional/ Summary of future actions		

SUMMARY POINTS

The Chief Executive Officer, working closely with the Head Teachers, have managed the COVID-19 outbreak exceptionally well. Plans for the implementation of a 'Recovery Curriculum' are underway and also of the highest quality.

- Following the Government's announcement regarding September returns for all pupils, leaders made plans to facilitate all groups to start this academic year. This was a huge step forward and leaders issued full guidance. Trust schools are finding the communities have positively embraced the changes and school systems are running smoothly in both Walbottle Village and Beech Hill, regular communication with parents has been essential in facilitating this.
- During lockdown, the schools provided highly individualised learning programmes which were easily accessible to parents. Tasks were differentiated very well for all pupils including SEND. Home learning during lockdown was effective - the development of a remote learning platform will enhance the offer for those children who need to self isolate and for those classes if they need to home learn for two weeks. The schools are building on the success of Dojo and will use this platform going forward.
- The Trust arrangements for keeping in touch with parents have been very well thought through with weekly newsletters and personal contact. School continues to keep in touch on a regular basis with pupils and parents who are self isolating by phone calls, emails, through the online platform and where appropriate socially distanced doorstep visits.

SCHOOL AGENDA

As part of the online meetings between School Improvement Advisor and the Headteachers we examined schools' procedures in a post lockdown situation. We examined a variety of areas including:

- the barriers that the school has faced in managing the return to full education for all pupils
- how leaders are ensuring that pupils resume learning the school's curriculum, including contingency planning for the use of remote education and the use of catch-up funding
- how pupils are settling back into expected routines and behaviour, including regular attendance
- how any identified issues related to special educational needs, health, care, well-being issues for particular groups of pupils are being addressed
- the school's safeguarding arrangements (focusing on arrangements at the time of the visit but potentially also looking at what was in place at the start of the COVID-19 response)

Leaders were challenged and supported throughout the visit to ensure the pupils and staff were adapting well to the new arrangements in place. The Head Teachers spoke with passion, common sense and a secure knowledge of their schools. Both schools are in a very strong position to ensure the pupils thrive quickly as a result of carefully thought out plans for future development.

Both schools have a stable, experienced team and despite some changes to senior leadership positions as a result of maternity of first rate Deputy Head (WVPS) or pending Headship for an excellent deputy head at Beech Hill; the HTs are confident that the school is in a very strong position regarding the quality of education as a result of middle leaders stepping up in challenging circumstances.

A clear remote learning plan for both schools has been completed. This identifies what will happen in the case of a group of children (for example, an entire class) or an individual child isolating. The school has clearly thought through procedures for remote learning which includes training pupils in the use of Class Dojo in class time, strategies for contacting pupils who are absent from school and isolation packs for the EYFS pupils or those who may not be able to access the work through ICT.

PROGRESS TOWARDS ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE LAST VISIT

School improvement advisor objectives were set for 2019-2020 back in October/ November 2019 and tracked through to early March 2020. Little did we know that the objectives that were set were absolutely not reflective of the true priorities as 2020 panned out. Much was achieved from mid March 2020, despite the extraordinary challenges.

Priorities set in March 2020 for Walbottle Village which the school continues to develop are:

- In Early Years, continue to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the ELGs for physical development – further develop continuous provision in the outdoor area.
- Consolidating the strong leadership with a focus on middle leaders developing the curriculum leadership skills.
- Monitor the attainment and progress in Reading

At Beech Hill

- Develop the curriculum intent and implementation for all subjects in line with the new Ofsted framework
- Consolidating the very strong leadership with a focus on middle leaders developing the curriculum leadership skills.
- Monitor the attainment and progress in Maths following a slight dip in 2019 in KS2.

Trust leaders have worked extensively on developing middle leaders, this has had a significant impact because both schools are in a strong position despite challenges to changes in staffing.

The Trust has recently completed a poverty proofing exercise. This report examined areas in the school as wide as uniform, parental events and pupil items brought in. The report provided a number of useful suggestions for improvement but highlighted the strength of established routines and procedures to support the most vulnerable in school. It also made suggestions to enhance procedures which the schools have included in the School Development Plan.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION: SEPTEMBER 2020 CHANGES

The Trust's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are exemplary. The safety of pupils during the COVID-19 outbreak has been of paramount importance. Very well-established systems are in place to respond to any pupils who may be at risk of harm.

Leaders take their responsibilities for pupils' safety very seriously. They carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site. The head teachers have ensured that safeguarding has a high profile around the school during school closure and is a very visible presence now school has reopened. An addendum to the Trust Child Protection Policy has been implemented in response to COVID-19. All policies that relate to safeguarding have been reviewed including Behaviour, Anti-Bullying and on-line safety.

- The head teachers have made sure staff are vigilant in monitoring children who may have experienced abuse during the lockdown. The school recognises the potential of a significant rise in domestic abuse during school closure. Leaders are aware of this as a possibility for all children, not just those who had previously been identified as vulnerable. Parents have been made aware of the school's contacts regarding safeguarding and child protection.
- In addition, leaders are aware of the threats and possible abuse that children may have experienced online during this time. There are increased risks from adults and the exposure to harmful images and threats. Furthermore, as the lock down has forced more and more of children's social lives to move online, staff have been made aware of the increased risk of online peer on peer abuse.
- Families in the category of Early Help/Child in Need/Child Protection remained priority for support. Care Team meetings continued via Zoom, Strategy Meetings via Conference Calls and families were also supported/spoken to face to face on a weekly basis. The schools are in the process of arranging a parental consultation meeting - which will take place via phone calls with parents.

SCHOOL REOPENING: REFOCUSING ON LEARNING

Recovery Curriculum

The Trust's work to implement a Recovery Curriculum which maximises the progress of all pupils is strong. It is based on leaders' very secure understanding of how children learn alongside proven research.

- The 'Recovery Curriculum' has been set up to address and repair gaps in learning, rebuild relationships and focus on pupils' social skills. The curriculum is based upon high expectations and carefully sequenced learning activities which build upon each other.
- All learners, including the most disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, are provided with the knowledge, skills and cultural capital they need to catch up quickly and succeed in life
- Teaching for mastery and a love of reading will continue to be promoted across all subjects, as a result of a good reading and phonics curriculum, intervention has been swiftly put into place for those children who need it. Both schools have recently revised the reading curriculum and is ensuring the children who have been absent from school for a significant period of time can catch up quickly as a result of regular reading and well thought through strategies.

Trust Main Priorities

- **Priority 1** relates to pupil and staff wellbeing by ensuring a positive and safe learning culture is maintained, including revisiting highly effective learning behaviours
- **Priority 2** subject leadership of all areas of the curriculum has recently been strengthened by targeted support for new leaders and clear expectations regarding the role.
- **Priority 3** centres on supporting pupils in learning the key skills and knowledge missed during school closures. The high-quality teaching and learning which is in place across the school will support pupils exceptionally well as they catch up in their learning.
- **Priority 4** relates to remote learning and ensuring that it is of the highest quality, is closely related to the school based curriculum and is supportive of children's academic development. It involves a tired approach which supports individual children if they are isolating, part classes if they need to learn from home or the whole class.

Both schools are developing their curriculum so that subject specific knowledge content is at the heart of the learning sequences.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is improving and moving to average, this is a significant achievement and as a result of targeted support for families.

- The overwhelming majority of children have good attendance in both schools (above 96%).
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is now decreasing.
- As a result of excellent support and challenge the overwhelming majority of pupils attend the Trust schools. At WVPS it is now 96% (Reception to Y6) pre lockdown it was 94.7%. At Beech Hill it is now 96.7, this is a noted improvement on last year.
- Schools have adapted their policies as a result of DfE guidance to all schools. The Trust is developing the range of incentives and consequences to target further improvement.
- Staff make sure that school absences are followed up rigorously. This has resulted in particular individuals and families attending school more and as a result progressing further.

CORONAVIRUS: CATCH-UP FUNDING

Curriculum Catch Up

Leaders and teachers have worked extensively matching their curriculum which was developed last academic year, in line with new higher expectations from Ofsted. It has been adapted so that it fits the current climate and takes account of the fact most children have been away from school for six months.

The head teachers have prepared very clear and detailed guidance on what should be taught from September across year groups. They have worked regularly with staff so that high quality teaching ensures that pupils catch up as soon as possible. This guidance includes:

- high quality subject specific teaching
- strategies for accelerating progress in reading, writing, spelling and grammar
- targeted intervention to accelerate progress for those children who may be at risk of falling behind.

Teachers have identified the areas of study and knowledge content that pupils have missed and are weaving them into the pupils' current work.

Catch up Funding

Leaders have used the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) documentation which identifies successful strategies for accelerating pupil progress including a large focus on first quality teaching, the schools are also targeting additional resources on more one to one teaching through targeted support and identifying well being as well as emotional support. Alongside this, leaders have identified specific evidence based online resources which can be used at school. Leaders have a very clear strategy which they have started to monitor so that any pupil at risk of falling behind will catch up quickly.

OPTIONAL IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF SUBJECT AREA - English (WVPS) Maths (BH)

This is scheduled to take place in Autumn 1b or early Spring 2a

IDENTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS: 2020-21

The school improvement adviser will continue to support the Trust through the termly visit programme.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Pupil and staff wellbeing by ensuring a positive and safe learning culture is maintained, including revisiting highly effective learning behaviours
- Continue to develop highly effective subject leadership of all areas of the curriculum by targeted support for new leaders and clear expectations regarding the role.

- Support pupils in learning the key skills and knowledge missed during school closures by ensuring the high-quality teaching and learning takes place across the school which will support pupils exceptionally well as they catch up in their learning by continuing to develop the curriculum, provide high quality one to one and small group teaching and develop the holistic curriculum offer by establishing the outdoor curriculum.
- Closely monitor the effectiveness of the Reading curriculum (WVPS) and the Maths curriculum (BH)