

*Never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up. Jesse Jackson*

## Barley Lane School

*Hard work, humility, kindness*

### **HT report to FGB/SBLT com:** reporting on autumn 2017-18 (working SIP and rolling SEF)

#### **Context for reporting**

Our second set of meetings this academic year moves from September's review of 2016-17 and we now begin the scrutiny of our work and progress set against our improvement priorities for the academic year 2017-18.

One of those priorities is that "new governors play catch up quickly" and there is immediately work to do and things to share in this report to encourage and support that.

The work of the full governing body in scrutinising the school's safety and effectiveness was reviewed and reshaped two years ago.

New governors at that time, who now lead and are embedded in our work, wanted a sharper focus on school improvement shaped by the Ofsted framework for inspection and that should be evident to new governors in how this report is set out below and the unavoidable structured revisiting of what we said we needed to do better and are we progressing and achieving that?

Governors wanted to be confident their work would not be characterised by administrative housekeeping nor would it be skewed by personal agendas but keep a steadfast and sharp eye on the critical elements of leadership and management, learning and teaching and assessment, personal development and welfare and that these were delivering positive pupil outcomes.

Full governing body meetings would then be focussed on school improvement framed by Ofsted but governors recognised the volume and diversity of work at full governing body meetings would not allow sufficient time to dig down and dig deeper into what was happening in school.

In response another key innovation was a dedicated committee to allow that greater and more reliable scrutiny of behaviour and safety and learning and teaching and "SBLT com" was created.

Governors also considered how they wanted to be reported to and what follows was shaped and determined by them and as each footer describes should be read at 80% across two pages on a computer screen so the pertinent SIP and Ofsted descriptors line up adjacent to reporting (hardcopy is printed to facilitate this also).

Something that has emerged over time is my reporting to FGB and to SBLT com can be done using the same format the distinction being at committee there is much more developed scrutiny and discussion and the committee chair then contributes to wider governor understanding and discussion at FGB.

SBLT com would also consider the range of supporting documents and evidence more closely than FGB again the chair of SBLT effectively reporting to and summarising that scrutiny at FGB.

Again as SIP aspires that "new governors play catch up quickly" the review of governance and the on-going dialogue formal and informal between us encouraged the sharing of a wide range of data and information and this a pragmatic approach that accepted the risk of too much information was less risky than the risk of too little.

Governors also wanted to become fluent in the full range of potential information and indicators and measures soft and hard that would enable and empower them to hold me and the school to account.

Critical to all this was the greater and almost habitual and purposeful presence of governors in school so what they see and experience can triangulate what reporting and information are describing.

### **Context for this report**

Each report looks back on the preceding half-term block and incrementally as the academic year unfolds. It is an incremental and “live” self-evaluation and a window into how the school is now and that is significant because SEMH schools can slip into serious difficulty very quickly and established governors are fluent and canny in this and understand too their regular presence in school critical to their having a credible and reliable sense of how stable and safe school is...or indeed isn't?

This report then will reflect our progress and the obstacles and challenges to progress and our response in the completed first half of the autumn term 2017. It will pragmatically reflect also the opening weeks of the second half-term and to improve the opportunity to absorb and reflect on and therefore better scrutinise the report and me it will be shared at least a week and likely two weeks prior to any meeting.

Currently the school is facing a coalescing of challenges that will be described in the framework below but it will help develop governor understanding to supplement and scaffold what follows with a brief narrative description of these past first weeks and months of 2017-18.

### **Brief narrative report**

The absence and reduced presence of very talented and productive colleagues across disciplines and in key roles continues to impact powerfully and incrementally with some corrosive force on our effectiveness, energy and morale. The remaining team and many and diverse figures again across roles and disciplines continue to offer significant discretionary effort. The school as a result remains stable.

The children and young people return in September after the long summer break and we have year on year experienced a powerful retesting of fair boundaries and reasonable expectations. There is always a minority of children and young people presenting as super complex and risky. The core matter then of maintaining and promoting health and safety, wellbeing, good order and discipline and the essential positive climate for learning is a big ask and challenge. The goodwill and hard work and commitment of the team again ameliorate matters and the school as experienced by three separate governor visits this half-term is a happy and stable community.

These are times of “blame culture” and greater negativity and even aggression and intimidation and the team sadly has to negotiate and make safe risks and pressures generated by some parents and carers from small discourtesies to powerful unfairness and even threats of violence.

The funding model where money is not frontloaded but follows pupils means in a setting where numbers are not stable and those leaving do so as a cohort but those arriving to replenish numbers and so funding do not creates financial pressures and shortfalls. This is then compounded by historic heavy spending on personalised packages to keep highly vulnerable youngsters safe until they leave or new suitable placements are secured (a lengthy process) and not all monies are recovered.

Staff absence is not always compensated in any way and in a small school one teacher down means we cannot grow the school even where referrals healthy and so bolster funding because we risk compromising health and safety.

The team also experiences a natural anxiety and pressure with inspection imminent.

Protecting the wellbeing and therefore effectiveness of staff that underpins the children and young people's happiness and wellbeing is tough in such a context.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management: current self-evaluation: good**

### **Planned and proactive school improvement activity in 2017-18**

1.
  - Governors have been habitual visitors and their visits have been lengthy and developed and robust.
  - New governors have been engaged and proactive in both their visits and in their initial meetings.
  - The informal dialogue with lead governors for example safeguarding has been on-going.
  - Established and embedded governors have ensured headteacher PM closely aligned to SIP
2.
  - New behaviour leaders in both primary and secondary schools have quickly established themselves
  - Acting leaders have tackled the significant gaps in operational leadership and key admin' tasks
  - Established leaders have been visible and generous in discretionary effort.
  - Emerging leaders across disciplines have been independent and resilient and self-managing.
3.
  - Junior staff have demonstrated drive and initiative and ambition
  - The team has committed to a problem solving "change us to change them" mentality and culture.

### **The impact of that improvement activity?**

1. Governors including proportionately new governors have a clear and reliable view of how the school is and the challenges coalescing and offered insight and encouragement and support to the team at a time where "friendship" is needed but remain "critical" and this creates a sense of both support and challenge in senior staff and this in turn serves the children well.
2. The school community has continued to function safely and purposefully despite challenging context.
3. Their autonomous working and informal "leadership" and consequent success allows stretched resources to cope and senior staff free to manage extreme and high risks.

### **The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1. In a context of pretty extreme and coalescing challenges morale is holding and so the positive climate for learning and more powerfully the stability of the community and how safe the children feel and are.
2. The half-termly review of key measures of safety and behaviour support a judgment of a student body behaving well in a large majority and where risks to their safety and wellbeing are made safe.
3. The children's experience across school life is positive in a very large majority and the inevitable SEMH high risk moments and episodes can be made safe and the children feel secure.

### **The challenges and obstacles to improvement; threats and opportunities**

1. These were known as we entered 2017-18 and embedded in SIP but their full impact unknown and arguably underestimated and the loss of a senior colleague has powerfully eroded into staff energies and morale.
2. The "blame culture" and the creeping lack of trust in and respect for teachers including unfair and escalatory and abusive behaviours in a very small minority of parents and carers generates powerful stresses and hurt and both saps staff energy and diverts it.

### **Consequent reactive school improvement activity**

1. Leading staff and governors have worked to support and affirm staff and promote their wellbeing and morale.
2. Criticisms, complaints and behaviours regardless of their credibility or fairness or in some cases lack of balance have been responded to promptly and openly and fully.

### **The impact of that improvement activity?**

1. Morale and motivation and effort all high and school stable.
2. We have maintained our integrity and responded to criticisms of all kinds as we have promised, "no criticism or recriminations as a result of expressing a criticism or complaint" and a "willingness to listen fully and openly and avoiding knee-jerk defensiveness". Equally we have asserted our right to fair and reasonable treatment.

### **The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1. Behaviour is good in a large majority and as described risky behaviours made safe and governor visits confirm prevailing atmosphere and relationships both good.
2. Resolving and repairing relationships with parents and carers is powerfully beneficial to the children.

## **School improvement priorities 2017-2018: key challenges and opportunities**

### **Leadership and management**

1. Progress in governance is consolidated. Governors are increasingly fluent in the work of the school, confident with the available and diverse indicators and measures. Their growing presence in school is sustained and embeds their understanding and triangulates their judgments and their ability to call the school to account. New governors play “catch up” quickly.
2. The safe day to day operational running of the school in all its risk and complexity and challenge is further delegated to established, relatively new and emerging leadership talent across the team and that group is diverse in its make-up.
3. All staff across disciplines but most powerfully the teaching and support team embrace their responsibility to be owners of and lead in their own increasing understanding, competence and influence across school life.

### **Pertinent Ofsted grade descriptors: the effectiveness of leadership and management; “good”**

- Leaders set high expectations of pupils and staff. They lead by example to create a culture of respect and tolerance. The positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils support the progress of all pupils at the school.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils and promote improvement effectively. The school’s actions secure improvement in disadvantaged pupils’ progress, which is rising, including in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education at the school. This helps them plan, monitor and refine actions to improve all key aspects of the school’s work.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity, resulting in a positive school culture. Staff and pupils work together to prevent any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and staff take appropriate action to identify pupils who may be at risk of neglect, abuse or sexual exploitation, reporting concerns and supporting the needs of those pupils.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: current self-evaluation good**

**Planned and proactive school improvement activity in 2016-17**

1.
  - The team has quickly and openly identified “frailties” and moved together to reflect and respond to them in the critical spirit of “change us to change them”.
  - Three themes have emerged: complex groups, high risk individuals and motivating Y11s.
  - The team has brought resilience and hard work in a tough context to meet these challenges and more widely to promote and protect a positive climate for learning.

**The impact of that improvement activity?**

1.
  - A work in progress albeit the complex group is being managed creatively and progress made...
  - High risk individuals have been made and kept safe through dynamic and pragmatic risk management.
  - Senior staff have persisted in seeking to support and engage and motivate year 11s and whilst again imperfect progress secured.

**The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1.
  - The positive climate for and the right to learn both being asserted and children engaging and learning in class.
  - There is notable progress and success in attending and behaving well and learning for complex and high risk children.
  - There are pockets of success for example college courses recovering focus and positivity and of course setbacks motivation in IT but always optimism and perseverance to engage with challenge and support the young people and achieve small but hard won successes...we persist...

**Emerging challenges and obstacles to improvement; threats and opportunities**

1. SIP this year anticipates and embraces the mercurial and ever complex and shifting and diverse and out of left field challenges the children and young people bring and they have as described above.
2. Key staffing absences increase workload and risks and opportunities to reflect and be creative dented.

**Consequent reactive school improvement activity**

1. See above and on adjacent page key element 1iii in SIP
2. Stoic and determined and discretionary effort to persist in asserting a positive climate for learning and the right to learn and the dignity of the classroom.

**The impact of that improvement activity?**

1. In tough circumstances we remain positive and problem solving and focussed as a team.
2. In a large majority lessons and pupils are orderly and purposeful and progressive.

**The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1. All children whether engaged and motivated or disaffected and disruptive are relentlessly challenged and supported to be the former.
2. Pupils experience a largely “normal” classroom experience where learning is protected and promoted and happens.

## School improvement priorities 2017-2018: key challenges and opportunities

### Learning, teaching and assessment

1. Across the team and in every individual there is robust and reliable high expectation of the children and self and an urgent and habitual transparency about the inevitable challenges and setbacks and clear and tangible steps are taken to meet those challenges and address those setbacks by making **personal positive changes** in one's practice through a commitment to:
  - i. The humility to recognise where practice has frailties\* and standards are slipping and behaviour and learning are at risk and the humility too to speak up and seek help to improve;
  - ii. Continuously seeking to understand the children better in all their diversity and complexity, spark and challenge and being a "present" and active listener and contributor to and sometimes leader of the shifting and dynamic conversation formal and informal about best-practice;
  - iii. Consistently demonstrating the graft and energy to make real both emerging and the established best practice we have learned and shared and set out over time through bloody hard work and being alive and open to new ideas and ways of working.

\* is teaching exciting and engaging and modified and differentiated as that drives good behaviour not the other way round.

### Pertinent Ofsted grade descriptors: the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; "good"

- Teachers use effective planning to help pupils learn well. Time in lessons is used productively. Pupils focus well on their learning because teachers reinforce expectations for conduct and set clear tasks that challenge pupils.
- Teachers develop, consolidate and deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. They give sufficient time for pupils to review what they are learning and to develop further. Teachers identify and support effectively those pupils who start to fall behind and intervene quickly to help them to improve their learning.
- Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan learning that sustains pupils' interest and challenges their thinking. They use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' responses and they reshape tasks and explanations so that pupils better understand new concepts. Teachers tackle misconceptions and build on pupils' strengths.
- Teachers expect and encourage all pupils to work with positive attitudes so that they can apply themselves and make strong progress.
- Most pupils commit to improving their work. They are given time to apply their knowledge and understanding in new ways that stretches their thinking in a wide range of subjects, and to practise key skills.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. Teachers promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare: current self-evaluation: good**

**Planned and proactive school improvement activity in 2016-17**

1. There has been greater self-awareness and a commitment to and a belief in the power of modelling always the behaviours we want to promote in the children and young people most notably and pertinently greater self-control and self-awareness recurrent goals in "statements" and EHCPs.
2. As challenges and frailties have emerged the team has committed to a more reflective and creative response to change us to change them.
3. Safeguarding continues to be privileged and the dialogue about it formal and informal and our interventions central to our work every day.

**The impact of that improvement activity?**

1. The narrative part of this report describes something of a perfect storm of difficulty and it is not unreasonable to assert by privileging positive modelling and a more reflective approach we have then promoted good relationships that underpin safety and good order and maintained a safe and stable community in the face of many pressures and disadvantages.
2. Risks and challenges whether year groups, classes, individuals, combinations and chemistry have been acknowledged and prompted the reflection and action and creativity that ameliorates them and protects and promotes good behaviour and learning.
3. A multiplicity of risks have been made and kept safe.

**The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1. Their safety wellbeing, their good behaviour and their learning protected and promoted.
2. As above
3. As above

**Emerging challenges and obstacles to improvement; threats and opportunities**

1. As with learning and teaching and assessment although we anticipated and planned to an extent for staffing losses and their impact the accumulative effect proved greater and our collective emotional stamina and energy critical to promoting personal development, behaviour and welfare denuded and the latter put at risk...
2. As described above the "blame culture" and the creeping lack of trust in and respect for teachers including unfair and escalatory and abusive behaviours in a very small minority of parents and carers generates powerful stresses and hurt and both saps staff energy and diverts it.

**Consequent reactive school improvement activity**

1. Governors engaged quickly with emerging risk and challenge and offered support. Leaders of all kinds established and emerging and the unexpected led by example. Genuine team-working and an esprit de corps long embedded sustained and motivated group.
2. As described above the school sought to be transparent and assertive and conciliatory and accommodating to preserve the positive home school relationships that promote good behaviour in the children

**The impact of that improvement activity?**

1. Vigilant and visible governance both in school and through regular communication provided support and encouragement and bolstered and sustained SLT and this healthy contagious positivity and mutual respect and support tapped into and enhanced established strong team spirit and in adversity team remained positive and problem solving and the good health of community protected.
2. Relationships were healed and bridges built.

**The impact of that improvement activity on pupil outcomes?**

1. The student community largely experiences school as "normal" despite described pressures and visiting governors note whilst it is clear things are hard the prevailing mood in school is stable and positive and good natured (this powerfully linked to our determination to model positive behaviours always)
2. The behaviour of those young people stabilised and improved in all but one case.

## **School improvement priorities 2017-2018: key challenges and opportunities**

### **Personal development behaviour and safety**

1. The proven power of positive role-modelling and the insights we have gained through exploring attachment disorder and the mental health and wellbeing of the children and we will seek to embed our understanding of what it means to be: playful; accepting; curious and empathetic with our EP Bryony.
2. Throughout the team and as a part of a core theme in our improvement efforts each individual across disciplines will relentlessly ask themselves how they are going to develop their understanding and practice to promote and embed positive behaviours in the children and young people? We replicate the priorities of personal change set out in learning, teaching and assessment.
3. We all consolidate and protect the rigorous habitual sharing of safeguarding risks generated by and around the children, by their lives, by us, by our systems and ways of working and critically act quickly and intelligently to manage and make those risks safe.

### **Pertinent Ofsted grade descriptors: personal development, behaviour and welfare; “good”**

- Pupils’ good conduct reflects the school’s efforts to promote high standards. There are marked improvements in behaviour for individuals or groups with particular behavioural needs.
- Parents, staff and pupils have no well-founded concerns about personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- The school’s open culture promotes all aspects of pupils’ welfare. Pupils are safe and feel safe.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the day, including at lunchtimes.
- In secondary schools, pupils use impartial careers guidance to make choices about the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.
- Teachers and other adults are quick to tackle the rare use of derogatory or aggressive language and always challenge stereotyping.
- Teachers and other adults promote clear messages about the impact of bullying and prejudiced behaviour on pupils’ well-being. Pupils work well with the school to tackle and prevent the rare occurrences of bullying.

Supporting documents	Pertinence
1. team feedback on leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This feedback not only pertinent to leadership and management but unseen by governors as collated post last report/meeting as a part of on-going self-evaluation</li> </ul>
2. team feedback levels of challenge and support	
3. Learning successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This distilled by Ben Wells school lead on learning progress data and not available at our September meeting.</li> </ul>
4. curriculum offer and impact-case studies 2017-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requested by CoG DH in the established spirit that whilst always carefully anonymised in our setting it is about individual children and what has happened to them not “data”.</li> </ul>
5. Pupil feedback behaviour and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A part of the school improvement drive to have the curiosity and humility and drive to recognise and understand what is going wrong and do something about it</li> </ul>
6. team task for week commencing 06.11.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tangible evidence of our response</li> </ul>
6a. SIP-PM 16-17 review and action Autumn 2	
7. parent and carer feedback 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To put complaint case studies in context</li> </ul>
8. complaint case studies anonymised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers insights into a range of challenges we face in our work</li> </ul>
9. behaviour and safety indicators Autumn 1 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence to support our assertion we have protected and promoted safeguarding, wellbeing and the positive climate for learning.</li> </ul>
10. exam success of a different kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Something not only to celebrate but evidence of a widespread and diverse “leadership”</li> </ul>
Access to all website published documents for example our safeguarding portfolio ( <a href="http://www.barleylane.devon.sch.uk">www.barleylane.devon.sch.uk</a> click “about us” section)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governors curiosity often leads to these documents for example scrutinising absconding naturally prompts a look at our guidance on its management.</li> </ul>