

Head-teacher's narrative report to governors for the summer second half-term 2015

1. Context for the school

Governors agreed this would be a light touch report with critical sharing on learning outcomes and end of KS4 results and what our precious year 11s actually achieved, where they have headed next and what was the extent of their progress and achievement in their years with us as learners and as people all shared and scrutinised in September.

The half term began with, and is dominated by, GCSE examinations; a two week period of intense activity to make sure our youngsters attend and are supported throughout. That support is diverse and considerable with every detail of their movements to and from school, where they sit the exam, who is with them and who invigilates and supports. There is a great deal of preparation by AB to secure readers and writers for those with significant literacy difficulties and throughout AB deals with a whole range of administrative and emerging practical challenges. The school was as anticipated with AB in her first year leading the exam process subject to a visit and scrutiny and whilst AB made sure all the boxes were ticked again off the record the visiting examiner shared his admiration for the “extra miles” travelled to facilitate and support the process for young people who are already complex and risky even before the added and considerable stresses formal examinations bring.

At the heart of this then of course were the young people many of whom showed great composure and determination and a few who did not...but those who doggedly went for it I know inspired the staff invigilating and supporting. Then there were of course the goodbyes to year 11s some good natured, some not, many poignant and in one case a youngster continues to attend voluntarily to complete a course module that will provide an additional vocational qualification...what a star he is!

This GCSE push impacts on the school powerfully with staff committed to invigilating and supporting so the wider school is impacted (sorry Mr Gove) and disrupted and that moves us into the next section...

1i. Current risks and opportunities

Behaviour and good order and discipline rooted in the predictable and familiar rituals, routines and rhythms of school life are inevitably disrupted and a somewhat undone by the GCSE effort and we experienced a sharp spike in incidents and disruptive and challenging behaviours in weeks two and three that will be described in more detail in the “Behaviour and Safety” section that follows; we have responded creatively and recovered strongly.

Pupil numbers remain a challenge even though we are over numbers and growing overall and have a number of live referrals; it is in the very nature of our children and young people and their lives to be mercurial and complex and some times that means planned change is necessary and unexpected change unavoidable so pupils leave as well as enter the school throughout the year and numbers are not stable so in the current model neither is funding. This then impacts recruitment decisions as the major cost and we are sensibly more cautious.

Safeguarding issues in the lives of our children and young people emerge thick and fast and the volume of work and its critical nature has prompted the need for staff development and a dedicated support officer to work with me as the nominated lead in safeguarding. A project to review all records and ensure they are suitably organised will be tackled in the summer.

2. The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school (current self-evaluation “good”)

As described previously; *“Safeguarding issues in the lives of our children and young people are emerging thick and fast”* and all have been poignant and some deeply worrying ranging from families struggling to cope to significant disclosures and we are working with many social work colleagues in Devon and in one case beyond and in another case the police. I will make a verbal report when we meet such are the sensitivities in some cases.

I keep a daily record and prompt of all safeguarding events and take a more developed look each weekend and it would be good to welcome governors on unannounced visits to go through anonymised records. This should also include scrutinising serious incident records and looking at the times we have held children and why.

All safeguarding events then are known, monitored and the appropriate professionals are engaged and the school contributing as it should. Feedback from social care colleagues remains positive as reported to governors last time. The school has again closely supported a social work colleague in placing a child in care.

“I just wanted to say an extra special thank you for all of your help this afternoon. You all played your part in making, what was a very difficult situation, into something that was manageable and positive for the child. When I left his placement he seemed happy and starting to settle. We may have a rocky road for the next few weeks but rest assured I will be doing my best to support both school and placement.” **Social Worker 19.06.15**

After a significant spike in challenging behaviour across all key stages in weeks two and three a considered, creative and robust response that brought greater vigilance and accountability and meant behaviour was robustly challenged when poor and praised and rewarded when good and this led to a rapid recovery with incidents decreasing very dramatically. It is pertinent to the leadership section that follows that it was and has been the vigilance of the emerging leaders and leadership team that drove this positive and effective response. There is an implication then of course or the inference could be made we should have been on our “A game” anyway but it is human to incrementally and almost imperceptibly slip from your highest levels of vigilance and effectiveness; what is important is to recognise this and act.

This narrative will be supplemented by specific numbers and context and trends in key behaviour and safety indicators as the half-term draws to a close and the half-term review of all indicators is tackled and the whole year will come into view.

Serious incidents and holding (these are now positive after effort described to respond to a “behaviour spike” and in the last two weeks four and five we have had one recorded incident each week) Fixed term exclusions remain stubbornly stuck year on year in the measure of days lost and frequency used but with usual decline and positive trend term on term as the academic year unfolds and as described in the school improvement review there have been zero PEX. Attendance will be impacted by year 11 study leave during examinations and there are some pockets of concern around individual children but we anticipate a significant majority hitting 90% or better.

3. Achievement of pupils at the school (current self-evaluation “good”)

As described above; *“Governors agreed this would be a light touch report.”* and in the context and spirit of improving leadership and management, something embedded in my PM and that of the emerging leadership team, SR will lead

in this reporting to and sharing with you a stand alone document when we return and meet in September.

We do know already that currently all our year 11s have confirmed destinations from college, through apprenticeships to work. Less dry and probably infinitely more important to the young people we have won recent special school cricket and football tournaments and done so in style and with dignity and grace. 😊

Powerful too is WH and SR are gathering what is so far overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents and carers and at a recent annual review one parent wanted the following more widely shared; *“I would just like to say thanks heaps for all the help and support you give all of us. You guys truly are a fantastic school and I’m so glad my son is with you all. You’re doing a fab’ job teaching my little boy, he’s coming on in leaps and bounds and that’s all down to you guys and all the support you give him.”* **Parent 01.07.15**

4. Quality of teaching in the school (current self-evaluation “good” with some “outstanding” teaching)

Governors have in the course of the academic year had access to observation outcomes and the external moderation of those judgments and those outcomes encouraging and reassuring as always good and sometimes outstanding. What this time of year does bring to add to governors’ picture of the quality of this core and critical function is feedback from the students and the learning support team and self evaluation from the teachers.

I have shared with KF to distribute to you a summary of that feedback; what it tells us is the children and young people and the grown ups supporting in class with only one exception (that is one subject, one teacher) consistently experience lessons where they are engaged and challenged in their learning, clear about what is expected of them around behaviour and the rituals and routines of the classroom that underpin a positive climate for learning (not only in that classroom but accumulatively for the wider school) and they are challenged and disciplined when their behaviour is poor and praised and acknowledged when they are good.

It is notable too that teachers’ perceptions of their work in class and how their students and colleagues perceive and experience their lessons are in step again with one and the same exception. Notable too then is in any enterprise we are likely to be more effective if our view of the world is continuously tested and tempered and modified and tweaked by the views of those around us; the reflective teacher is the best teacher.

The feedback was shared in the context of the experience, rank and relative cost of teachers and it is important that the leadership team rated highly and therefore represent good value as did the least expensive teacher who scored highest and this a prompt to revisit and assert again as a key contextual element of ongoing school improvement;

“Team culture and values: *There must be proportionate rigour and differentiation by outcome: the more you earn the better you must perform and UPS teachers must aspire and feel compelled to be securely outstanding teachers and those on MPS good ones striving for outstanding and though undoubtedly tough to achieve in BESD setting there can be no excuse for or tolerance of a lack of ambition and drive to be so.”* **SIP 14-15**

It is a lack of ambition we must challenge as the work is indeed tough and the children and young people often mercurial and complicated and even the best and most committed teachers can have bad days...bad weeks and that is the cloud of anxiety and stress that persistently rains on their morale and confidence. What governors can reinforce is the collective commitment to be outstanding and a reasoned and essential intolerance of “comfort zones”.

In staff feedback that has been shared with KF and will be explored further in the leadership section that follows it is

notable that 100% of staff “agreed” and 21/25 “agreed strongly”; *“I am challenged to work hard and be rigorous and to do my absolute best for other people’s children”.*

5. Quality of leadership and management (current self-evaluation “requires improvement”)

As shared before and important to revisit consistently and acknowledged in our SEF leadership requires improvement, *“leadership and stability too dependent on head-teacher limiting and damaging wider strategic leadership and operational leadership must be effectively delegated and distributed.”* School SEF

BP’s comment and judgment, *“You have some really good teachers and a very strong, supportive senior management team”* must be made incrementally more impactful on the reliably safe operation off the school day to day...

We have now appointed and so retained and developed as SIP 14-15 set out leaders in the primary unit in MM and CM and as the SIP review describes; *“Three teachers have emerged as “outstanding” one has already secured promotion and the other two have strong cases for accelerated movement into UPS. Another experienced and measurably effective teacher is to lead an initiative across school around ASD; new leaders are emerging...”*

This distribution of leadership is embedded in PM for me and senior colleagues have achieved their goals and an anonymised PM document is shared to evidence to governors the mechanisms of school improvement and performance management are being used to deliver this key development. The speedy recovery from the recent behaviour spike, whilst given a nudge by me, was driven and sustained by school leaders across key stages.

Feedback from the emerging leadership group is encouraging also and this has been shared and senior colleagues unanimously “agreed strongly” across the three statements; *“I have been exposed to my leadership role and responsibilities and feel challenged, I am supported both as a professional and a person in my development as a school leader, I am a part of a strong leadership team where we all support each other.”*

The key weekly prompts that shape the leadership team dialogue; Risk, Progress, Response have consistent themes including “embedding leadership” and most recent feedback reproduced below.

“Progress: *DJ and MM, MMcD and CM have day in day out shown their integrity, talent and work ethic...but they are not alone Miss TG2 has been quietly leading with great skill and familiar emotional intelligence and LT just brilliant with our challenging Y11s so leadership extends beyond those of us with titles. KCC and AH work autonomously and to good effect...WH stretched and so developed by her CP work. There are others of course notably MH who now with a necessary niche in ASD to develop and grow...SR does a ton of unseen work always with insight, wit and intelligence so leadership is deepening and widening because of the talent pool we have.”* **SLT feedback WE 03.07.15**

6. Overall effectiveness: the quality of education provided in the school (current self-evaluation “good”)

SR’s report on the extent of good or better learning progress and critical end of KS4 outcomes the essential element in any self-evaluation because without good learning outcomes anything else that is “good” is usurped and made redundant but so far all the indicators we have and have incrementally shared this year argue we remain “good”.

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



Barley Lane School

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Proud to be a part of the and in partnership with



Michael

05.07.15

Barley Lane School Exeter EX41TA
admin@barleylane.devon.sch.uk
www.barleylane.devon.sch.uk
01392 430774



www.devoneguardingchildren.org

