

ACE PARTNERSHIP HEALTHCHECK VISIT TO IVANHOE SCHOOL WEDNESDAY 2ND AND THURSDAY 3RD MARCH 2016

Contextual information

The review took place as part of the ACE partnership Quality assurance process. The review team consisted of five senior leaders from five schools in the partnership with the review led by the Headteacher of one of the schools. The team members were:

David Phillips	Ibstock Community College
Judi Warren	Newbridge High School
Andy Binns	Ashby School
Mike Gamble	Castle Rock School
John Pye	King Edward VII College
Mick Seller	ACE Partnership Co-ordinator

The team held twenty learning walks, met with senior and middle leaders, spoke with a range of staff and students, observed behaviour at break, lunch and between lessons and visited registration sessions and an assembly. In addition, the team looked at samples of work from a number of subjects and year groups as well as information provided by the school in school documentation and the website.

The senior leadership team asked for the review to focus the visit upon the following:

What impact are leadership and structures having upon learning?

The team found the visit very valuable in evaluating the work of a partner school and the opportunity offered to reflect upon our own work in our institutions

Strengths of the school:

- The school articulates and implements its vision and priorities very clearly. This is shown through the work of the senior leadership, school documentation and the articulation of middle leaders. There is an enthusiasm for development which is apparent at all levels of the school structure.
- The school has faced the challenge of implementing a new curriculum and assessment structure with imagination and rigour and this has meant that there are clear structures to support learning and debate between learners and staff about how to progress.
- There is a positive attitude expressed by students in the school and the vision of achieving a “thirst for knowledge and love of learning” is seen in many lessons.
- Overall student attainment and the progress of pupil premium students is strong.

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Key areas for development:

- The planning of teaching and learning should consider how students are supported through the whole learning process, with particular attention given to how criteria for success for individual tasks is shared and embraced by students.
- Ensure that the commitment to school improvement and development is evident in all areas of the curriculum so that all staff can move forward together.
- Ensure that whole school data systems enable more effective identification of underachieving students to support the work of subject teams

Leadership and management

The college has a clear vision expressed through the college improvement plan. These areas are matched against the four OFSTED aspects.

The approach of the college is clearly articulated by senior leaders and there is also support and enthusiasm across middle leaders for the direction of the college. Middle leaders expressed support for the high expectations and value the responsibility given to them by senior leaders. Middle leaders expressed trust and respect for the senior leadership and evidence of regular support and intervention are evident.

There is rigour in the monitoring processes undertaken by the college. Monitoring grids and the monitoring cycle demonstrate a regularity and challenge for subject leaders. In addition, middle leaders are given flexibility in the manner in which they undertake college priorities. Evidence from discussions with senior and middle leaders is supported by classroom practice, where it is clear that the focus upon pupil premium students is supported by structures such as the use of "Mint Class" to identify target students. There is a college expectation to ensure equity for pupil premium students through ensuring that these students are addressed first and regularly in teacher support for learning.

Middle leaders are given responsibility for leading on initiatives and this is shown in the work of the task groups as well as in the Professional Learning Communities. Middle leaders are engaged with the college focus upon Chimp Management and see that as a positive development. Opportunities for distributed leadership are clear as many of the PLCs are led by staff other than SLT.

The Ivanhoe curriculum is engaging and challenging with the right balance between academic and enrichment. The curriculum enables students to be resilient and confident and become responsible members of the school and wider community.

SMSC and British values can be found in schemes of work and around the school. Recent audits have been carried out on both. These aspects are monitored through learning walks. The ACE partnership work is well developed and subject schemes of work have been adapted to support GCSE levels and the changing context at KS4. This will now be rolled out into other department areas.

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The school is on track with the implementation of the new pathway assessment system and feel this has had a positive impact. Department action plans clearly signpost this and is a major focus for all. Departments are at different stages but this is to be expected. There is rigour to them and they are helping to support student learning. Students are becoming more resilient and the pathways have encouraged dialogue between students and teachers. Year nine and eight students are also better informed regarding the link between pathways, FFT20 and GCSE grading. Some students in years eight and nine felt there was a lack of clarity regarding the pathways. Students stated that the statements were intended for staff and students did not always fully understand the criteria.

Students are signposted to GCSE skills and content at an early stage of education at Ivanhoe. This is shown in opportunities to explore PE theory and in focused preparation for English assessment. The majority of students are clear on what “developing”, “proficient” and “expert” mean. Departments have created their own internal systems to support this in lessons, for example in design with “Brain, Book, Buddy, Boss”.

Curriculum enrichment days are viewed very positively across the school. Student voice, the impact statements and teachers support this view. The extra-curricular programme is extensive. They all help to make the transition to upper school easier.

The website content on the curriculum is thorough for external stakeholders. The vision is clear and integrated with each department vision. All subject areas have topics for year groups, literacy and numeracy links, SMSC and PLTS links and enrichments day plans.

Dialogue with the upper school has informed the development of school priorities and this is seen in the focus on pupil premium. Further analysis of outcomes has seen the development of new approaches to tracking. Leadership of SEND has led to effective approaches to managing intervention.

The college’s commitment to delegated leadership means that there is within the model a potential for ‘looseness’. In the majority of cases the opportunities that this structure offers are maximised but it also means that college priorities and structures are not always being implemented consistently.

There is a need for central identification of underachievement where this is across more than one subject to assist work of subject teams. This is developing but at present there is a potential gap that might allow student needs to be missed. In addition, whilst monitoring systems are rigorous, not all middle leaders show a confidence in judging effectiveness of subject teams and developing the practice of rigorous evaluation themselves.

There is clear purpose and direction in the work of English and science teams. The college needs to ensure that there is consistency of commitment to ensure that college priorities are in all areas

Students interviewed identified French as a subject that they did not enjoy. The evidence found by the team, however, was that students were challenged and responding well in lessons.

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The homework policy is inconsistent across departments and teachers. Students are confident with homework expectations in the core subjects but not in the foundation subjects. A number of students did not see the value of homework.

Development points:

The college should consider how to further support students' learning through a range of feedback mechanisms, especially in the learning period between assessments, to ensure that students have a clear map to help them progress.

Ensure that data systems enable more effective identification of underachieving students to support the work of subject teams

Ensure that the college priorities are rigorously implemented in all areas of the curriculum.

Ensure that CPD programme gives the most effective opportunities to support college developments by building in clear outcomes for all staff through professional learning communities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Students learning in the majority of areas is supported by a system of clear criteria. This was evident most strongly in physical education, English and design. Expectations from teachers are high and students are supported in acquiring new skills and knowledge. Students in science and humanities were readily able to discuss their pathway expectations. However, the systems are not rigorously used in all lessons and across subjects. As a result, students were not always readily able to discuss their work in relation to the criteria, or have the criteria available.

Subject staff are confident in their subject knowledge and tasks set offered challenge and development. Examples of very strong practice in lessons was seen in design, physical education, English and geography. Assessment sheets seen in use in a range of subjects related to targets and were useful to students to identify current attainment and next steps.

Students are given plenty of opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. The use of the pink pen was effective in highlighting where this took place. Most students had evidence of this in their work. Students stated that they were supported well by teachers and were informed of where they are and what they need to do to improve. They liked the pink pen and follow up tasks as they valued the opportunity to improve upon a piece of work.

Faculties are experimenting with various approaches to the college priority of smarter marking; lists of pathway linked success criteria which are ticked as they are met; focussed teacher comments; students assigned a numerical follow up task (FUT) related to a gap identified by the teacher. This was seen very effectively in English, science and geography, where FUT linked directly to students' prior work and asked them to address the problem.

Year nine students were unanimous in asserting that written feedback helped them to improve. Students stated that there were many subjects that they enjoyed – particularly practical subjects and the freedom to explore open ended tasks. In contrast, some students in

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years eight and nine stated that written feedback was too late in some subjects and from some teachers as it was at the end of a topic.

Feedback is not always specific and the college should investigate expectations of teachers and students in terms of the intention and outcomes as a result of feedback. Checklists of success criteria are used. There were, however, a number of examples of students not engaging with them.

The quality of student response to feedback is not consistent. Generic links of follow up tasks which are not sufficiently tailored to individual needs have limited impact on progress. There is a consistency of conventions within subject areas, but across the college there was a range of different approaches, such as GLOW / GROW comments, WWW / EBI and FUT but sometimes with no obvious link to previous work.

Students were confident that support is in place for students not on track. This was both in lessons and in the learning zone.

The deployment of teaching assistants is inconsistent across the school. In English, teaching assistants were seen to be very effectively deployed, but less so in mathematics and science.

Whilst teaching across the school generally shows a clear link between the priorities and principles communicated by senior and middle leaders, in mathematics there is a need for a more coherent strategy to address the school priorities and to move away from using the historical national curriculum levels.

Homework is set regularly in core subjects with books marked. Students are aware of sanctions if homework is not completed. However, the application of homework is inconsistent across the college. The purpose is not always clear to students. There is currently no overview of homework and when and how it is set. Students reported long intervals of no homework and then receiving a number at the same time. Students also reported that homework was not always useful and was a repetition of what had been undertaken in class.

Development points:

The school should consider reviewing expectations of homework and consider what minimum expectations are and the nature of the tasks that are set to develop and extend learning. This review would include considering the independent study habits that the school wishes to promote and the impact of homework upon progress across subject areas.

Ensure that marking and feedback is more consistent across and within departments so that the teacher's comments effectively lead to progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leadership, systems, communication and use of up to date data are very effective to enable early identification of students with issues and for bespoke support. As a result the school is very calm during lesson time and students and their parents know where to go for support.

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Students were articulate about the behaviour steps and are confident that if someone misbehaves that it is dealt with. A minority of students felt that some teachers missed out some steps of the behaviour steps.

The tracking systems used, the accommodation available to the Student Support and Learning Support teams and the meetings structure with the Vice Principal enable timely intervention and support. Tutors are informed of situations that arise by Student Support.

Themes used as a foci in House assemblies are viewed as appropriate and useful by students e.g. resilience, world book day, understanding pathways and well-being themes.

The variety of provision for students in and out of lessons to be creative, to enjoy sport and music, to be involved in special theme days and events, student leadership in sport and student responsibility in Houses etc. is vast and provides an opportunity for them to find their talents and interests and make friends. Of the students interviewed about provision, all had accessed at least one activity during their time at the school.

Students were positive about trips and are able to make links to their learning within and outside of the classroom. Students were also positive about the level of student responsibility – all felt their views and opinions were listened to and taken on board. They felt they had lots of opportunities to learn about different cultures and faiths and gave a range of examples from a range of subjects.

Tutors appreciate the freedom they are given to organise their tutor group and activities as they wish with mixed or year group seating, choice of activity on each day etc. and the students are positive about how the vertical tutor group system works. They were especially positive about transition, helping each other with homework and social/personal support e.g. year 9 girls reassuring the younger girls that the HPV jabs don't hurt too much.

Students in all year groups expressed that they enjoyed coming to school. Year sevens were particularly positive about transition and how quickly they were made to feel safe, welcome and comfortable.

The school is well organised and routines effective with visible supervision at break and lunchtime. As a result there is very little litter and students seem to enjoy their free time.

Common themes are taught in tutor groups across all Houses and work on well-being, safety, understanding pathways were valued by the students as is the learning in Life-skills which the students find relevant and interesting. They were less aware of the SMSC involved and the PLTs development although this is overt in some groups and a pilot is testing a move to self-awareness of learning through these foci.

Good leadership of life-skills is leading to high quality planning and learning with trials in place for effective assessment.

Movement between lessons with no bells worked well for the general population but a small number of incidents of barging and pushing (all year nine boys) were seen and children talked

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about feeling concerned about this. The students were secure that this and incidents of swearing were dealt with by staff if it is spotted.

There is a variety in quality of how stimulating the morning tutor time is for students. More advantage could be made of the vertical tutor group mixed year opportunities in tutor time to be a stimulating start to the day, SMSC activities etc. e.g. paired reading etc.

A number of students see no consequences for some transgressions saying they don't really care as it just means they don't get a house point e.g. late to tutor time, eating in corridors, no book for silent reading, not bothering with the class quiz. Some students complained about the toilets.

Development points:

Central co-ordination of the registration time in the morning would allow the school to ensure a more consistent and high quality start for all students in the morning.

Outcomes for students

The schools' own data shows that progress and outcomes are above national averages. This is borne out by the quality of work observed and in lessons.

In the majority of the classrooms visited, a high level of motivation and interest was evident. Good systems are in place to keep track of where students are and what additional needs they have – these systems are routinely employed by teachers to ensure progress.

The eDRL and WAWN ('Where are we now?') monitoring systems are used by most departments with a commitment to evaluating their own practice and identify priorities for improvement. The improvement plans clearly drive expectations and standards. Students have adjusted well to the new expectations of pathways, although when asked they were able to describe how they had grappled with the new systems.

Outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable students are good in most cases. Occasionally where a student is underachieving in a number of areas, the school needs to consider the best way of ensuring the wider picture is captured in one place and closely monitored.

Development points:

The school should consider how Ivanhoe and Ashby work together to ensure a holistic picture of a child's progress is shared and tracked, especially across transition, in particular to the most vulnerable students.

The school should ensure that all subjects continue to develop students' secure understanding of the pathway system.