

Marriotts School LA Review Draft Report

The review was conducted on Tuesday 17th and Wednesday 18th November on behalf of Herts for Learning by four advisers: Andy Clark and Stephen Lavender (HfL), Liz Hitch, Headteacher, Beaumont School and Karen Roche, independent adviser. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the progress made by the school since its last inspection and to help identify its next development priorities.

During the review, 52 lessons were visited, either as formal observations or through learning walks. Most observations were carried out jointly between the team and members of the senior team in the school. Judgements about the lesson were agreed between both observers and feedback was given to teachers by members of the SLT. Other review activities included interviews with groups of leaders, book scrutiny, evaluation of the school's performance data and interviews with groups of staff and students.

Conclusions:

'Effective action is being taken to secure rapid improvement since the last inspection'. Leadership and management has shown determination to secure effective teaching and learning across the school. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is the focus of staff training and performance management and this has secured improving outcomes for students in many areas of the school, although this is not yet evident in all curriculum areas. Outcomes for students in the sixth form remain good, particularly in vocational subjects. Students behave well around the school and lessons are conducted in a calm and orderly manner, with very little off task behaviour seen. Students feel safe around the school and effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. However, there still remains a gap between the performance of the strongest subjects and those that have yet to improve. Most notably, standards in mathematics remain lower than is necessary and there are some areas of the school where teaching requires further improvement to reach the standard of the best.

The Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

The Headteacher, Governors and senior team provide strong and effective leadership for the school which has transformed the culture and ethos over recent years. They have articulated a clear vision for the school summed up in its motto of 'Aim High. Work Hard. Be Kind.' This is now embedded across the school and is evident in displays and modelled by senior leaders. Positive relationships between staff and students were a real strength of the school. The Headteacher is highly visible and models positive and relationships with students and staff alike. Ambition and challenge for all students are evident in the range of intervention and support strategies implemented within the school and outside the normal day. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress in English, although it has yet to do so in mathematics. The school's current data indicates that this is improving.

Teachers are well supported through a programme of continuing professional development. During the review, training sessions for staff were visited by members of the review team. These were seen

to be focussed on securing further improvement and staff participated enthusiastically. The staff briefing focused on stretch and challenge and the growth mind set. This gave teachers new ideas and areas for development for able students. Middle Leaders spoke highly of the training and development programme and were keen to say that it provided development for teacher of all levels of ability. The coaching programme has had a notably positive impact in developing depth and strength in teaching.

Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance and provide appropriate and effective challenge to the leadership team. They have a clear view of the school's development priorities and are able to evaluate the use and impact of resources such as the pupil premium. They take an active role in monitoring the performance of the school.

Middle leaders show great enthusiasm for the progress that has been made by the school in recent years. They were clear about how their role in performance management, targeted professional development and monitoring has been used to support progress. A culture of open accountability has been created which helps all staff have a clear grasp of their strengths and areas for development.

As an associate member of the Meller Trust group, the school benefits from additional support from this source, for example in the mathematics intervention programme, which is delivered after school and on Sunday morning. Effective Head to Head support has also been provided through this source. The support provided by Herts for Learning has been well received and highly regarded by staff at the school at all levels.

The school curriculum has been revised to meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Religious Education has been re-introduced to the regular teaching programme at key stage 3 and is delivered elsewhere through theme days and the pastoral programme elsewhere. The curriculum has been revised to meet the learning needs of all students at key stages 4 and 5, based on a pathways approach.. The school has made effective use of vocational courses to support students' needs. This reflects the prior attainment of students in the school at Key Stage 2, which is significantly below national figures.

The quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

During this review, lessons were co-observed with all members of the senior team. Reviewers agreed with the views of the strengths and areas for development they saw.

All teachers follow the school's policy relating to lesson planning. Clear learning objectives are shown and explained at the start of all lessons. Teachers' folders identify students with special needs and those supported through the pupil premium. In the best lessons seen, effective strategies were evident to support disadvantaged students and those with additional learning needs. This was particularly evident in some very effective English and History lessons seen.

The quality of marking has improved dramatically in recent years and has improved since the last Ofsted inspection. Teachers follow the school's assessment and feedback policy in accordance with their agreed departmental procedures. Feedback given to students is clear and, in the large majority of areas, is seen to have a positive effect on their progress. Most teachers follow up students'

responses, but in some cases, the impact of this feedback is not as consistently clear in some subject areas.

At key Stage 4, assessments are validated through departmental moderation and external validation. Where predictions last year were less accurate, assessment was accurate, but changes to grade boundaries had made predictions inaccurate. Assessment in vocational subjects has been accurate and helped students understand what they needed to do to improve.

Examples of very effective and engaging classroom practice were seen. In one English lesson, pupils discussed challenging issues articulately as part of their preparation for persuasive writing. In one very effective Drama lesson, students demonstrated great engagement and insight into the assessment criteria by assessing and feeding back to individuals who had performed solo speeches to the whole class. This was done in an insightful and sensitive way. In PE, student leadership, peer assessment and highly engaging and motivating activities led to very enjoyable and stimulating lessons. Teaching is improving in mathematics. In one lesson seen, a student was so engaged with her learning that she was disappointed when the lesson ended. Strong teaching was also observed in History. There were also examples of very good feedback and engagement in Art, where, in a sixth form lesson, students showed evident pride in their work and were able to explain how they had improved it as a result of feedback from their teachers. Students interviewed all reported improvement in teaching across the board, including in Science.

“Students demonstrated positive attitudes to their work and behaviour in lessons was good”. There was very little off task behaviour seen and this was only where teaching strategies were less engaging. Behaviour for learning was excellent where teachers had successfully engaged students in their learning activities. Students report that relationships between teachers and students are a strength and have had a significant impact on building their confidence in all subjects.

The setting of homework was less clear to observers during the review. The school is advised to ensure that homework tasks are clearly labelled in books and its setting emphasised in lessons.

The school reports back to parents well about the progress that their children make. Reports have been revised in the previous year and the new report has been well received by parents /carers. The school’s own surveys report an increasing satisfaction with the information that the school provides. The information provided to parents by the school is highly regarded by them.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare

The behaviour of students seen around the school was good. Students were courteous and polite and demonstrated positive attitudes towards other students and adults in the school. At times of movement around the school, including arrival in the morning, break, lunchtime and lesson changeovers, the atmosphere was orderly and purposeful.

“In discussion, older students felt that the school has improved tremendously during their time and this process was continuing and accelerating.” One student said that, when she arrived in Year 7 she had been disappointed to be coming to Marriotts as it was her third choice school. Now she was pleased and proud to be a pupil at the school. Her view sums up the increasing pride in the school felt by many students interviewed and is a measure of the tremendous improvement achieved by the school.

The school promotes Modern British Values through its programme of assemblies and in other areas of the curriculum. Tolerance and respect for the views of others are promoted through the tutorial programme. For example, the 'Humanutopia' group helps students to develop an awareness of the impact of their words and actions on others and promotes the ethos of being kind.

Effective action is taken to challenge stereotypes and derogatory language is rare. Teachers take active steps to promote equality through teaching programmes – for example in assemblies – and through the pastoral programme. Students report that bullying is rare in the school and that it is dealt with effectively when it occurs. They feel safe and the school takes active steps to promote students' welfare. Very good relationships between students and teachers were seen.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The single central record was checked during this review and found to be up to date and sound.

Effective action is taken to support students at risk of exploitation. Appropriate steps have been taken to protect students from radicalisation and staff are aware of their duty to prevent this, carrying out this responsibility effectively.

Attendance for all students has improved strongly over the last year and is currently close to or above national averages for all groups, including disadvantaged students. A wide range of strategies has been used by the highly effective staff team who monitor attendance and are persistent in pursuing the diminishing proportion of students whose attendance is not yet what it should be.

Outcomes for students

The prior attainment of students on arrival to the school has traditionally been significantly low compared to national figures. The current year is very low but year 7 is broadly average. This represents an increasing roll in each year as the confidence of the local community the school has grown.

In 2015, Year 11 outcomes were better in some subjects than others. Notably, English, Humanities and Languages subjects have improved strongly and students make progress that is close to or above national figures. Mathematics remains a priority for improvement. The school identifies significant improvement in the performance of students currently at the school and predicts outcomes that will be closer to the national average in 2016. This is as a result of focussed interventions for students and training and development for staff.

In a wide range of subjects, the school's current data suggests that pupils will make progress that is in line with similar students nationally this year. In most lessons seen, this progress was evident. In many subjects attainment is improving.

In the vast majority of teaching seen students made expected progress as a result of well-planned and targeted teaching strategies. In some lessons, a greater focus on the learning and progress of groups such as the more able and those with special educational needs would lead to better outcomes.

As the school has developed, the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved. The gap between the performance of disadvantaged students and others nationally has narrowed. Their attainment has risen as has that of other students, so the gap within school has widened.

Pupils demonstrated fluent reading in most lessons seen. Year 7 catch up funding and pupil premium is deployed to secure positive outcomes for students and effective progress.

Pupils reported that they had received good guidance and information about the next stage in their education. The Key stage 4 students interviewed had a clear view of their next steps, including sixth form, apprenticeships and college options.

Recommendations for further development

Maintain the focus on improving teaching and learning by:

- Improving or increasing challenge so that most able pupils make more rapid progress.
- Share questioning strategies in all lessons so that it provides further challenge to students' thinking and matches the best practice seen in the school.
- Continue to develop the strategies that are effective in enabling students with lower ability / SEN to enable other students to make progress.

Raise the progress and attainment of students in mathematics so that it matches national averages.

Andrew Clark

25.11.15