

## NOVAC (Note of visit and contact)

School:	Whartons Primary School	Date:	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2016
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Visit Details:	Post Section 8 Whole School Review		

### Purpose of the visit and focus of the support or training:

The purpose of the visit was to conduct a whole school review in order to ascertain progress to date of the impact of actions taken in response to a requiring improvement judgement from the schools most recent Ofsted Section 5 Inspection (July 2015) and the less than positive findings from the HMI Section 8 monitoring visit of January 2016. The key areas for improvement included:

*The need to establish good or better teaching throughout the school in order to strengthen pupils' achievements and progress, by ensuring that:*

- *teachers check more carefully how well pupils are progressing and plan work that builds successfully on what pupils have already achieved*
- *teachers check that pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are secure and that they apply these accurately and confidently in all their work*
- *teachers set the right level of challenge for all pupils, but particularly the most able*
- *teachers have higher expectations of all pupils, particularly in their behaviour and effort*
- *disadvantaged pupils have timely and effective support and guidance to achieve as well as their classmates throughout the school*
- *children in the early years have activities that engage and challenge them sufficiently, particularly in their reading, writing and number skills.*

*Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:*

- *teachers' assessments to inform the planning of the work pupils do are wholly accurate and reliable*
- *leaders monitor teaching more rigorously so that it is consistently of high quality and that all pupils make good progress in every class and every subject*
- *middle leaders, including subject leaders, are more effectively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility*
- *school leaders hold teachers to account for the progress all groups of pupils make in their classes*
- *governors are more rigorous in the scrutiny of the information they receive from school leaders, and more effective in challenging senior leaders about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching*
- *the funds designated to support disadvantaged pupils have the impact they should in ensuring these pupils achieve as well as others in the school and other pupils nationally.*

The Review Team comprised 3 members; Trish Lowson (School Improvement Advisor), Kim Porter (Senior School Improvement Officer) and Peter Marsh (Associate School Improvement Advisor, experienced Ofsted Inspector).

Commensurate with Ofsted the school was afforded one day of notice prior to the visit. Likewise the activities undertaken corresponded as far as possible with an official inspection. Activities included:

- Discussions with the Headteacher
- Scrutiny of Single Central Records

- An 8.30am meeting with staff members.
- Lesson observations (9 observations in total) + feedback at the end of the school day.
- A Book scrutiny using maths, English and non-core subject books from each year group.
- Analysis of current assessment and tracking data.
- Discussions with children.
- Meetings with Senior and Middle Leaders
- Analysis of voluntary staff questionnaires (14 completed)
- Discussions with parents with a random sample of parents
- Scrutiny of Governing Body minutes
- Telephone conversation with an active Governor (Vice Chair)

The key aim of the report is to provide an external overview of how the school is currently performing against the identified areas for improvement and to provide school leaders, including JRG Governors, with a clear steer on key next step development points for further improvement.

### Outcomes/Summary of the visit:

The visit provided comprehensive evidence and acknowledgment of the hard work and its impact in addressing the majority of key issues identified by Ofsted. As with all schools there is still much work to be done but the pace of recent progress now provides for a positive outlook for the school.

### Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

- The Headteacher, with the support of her senior leadership team and a committed and determined staff have successfully improved issues relating to the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted. They now form a cohesive team and through the introduction of more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work is beginning to bear fruit. Without doubt they now have a better aptitude and confidence to bring about further improvements.
- The post HMI Section 8 Action Plan now not only includes measurable outcomes, it also includes a running record of the impact of these actions. Likewise the documentary commentary in Headteacher and Governor files are more robust in capturing evidence of work completed, subsequently leaders are now able to talk with confidence about next step actions and how these will impact over time.
- Although still more work needs to be done, Middle Leaders are now in a position to provide well-focused support as subject leaders. These leaders are now able to talk confidently about monitoring and evaluation procedures and more importantly about the impact of their work to date. Lesson observations confirm how this has led to better teaching and learning that is in line with the age related expectations of the new National Curriculum.
- Leaders have taken the opportunity to work in alliance with other educational partners including advice from the Local Authority, Red Kite Teaching Alliance and an outstanding school in Bramhope. In addition three has been intensive support from an Early Years SLE in Foundation. The alliances have strengthened leadership, classroom practice and improved outcomes for pupils
- The school's approach to assessing pupils' learning and progress ensures pupils' knowledge across a wide range of key performance indicators is more secure. Teachers are now accountable for the outcomes of pupils in their care. As a result teachers and leaders have a better degree of confidence in the accuracy of teacher assessments. This has been supported by frequent opportunity to moderate work both within school and at an inter school level with cluster partners. Although the information on pupil progress is regularly scrutinised it is the view of the review team that assessment systems still need to be more precise in allowing for the identification of gaps in learning even earlier so that some form of closing the gap initiative can be applied before end of year testing shows otherwise.

- The school's curriculum is lively and engaging and, as the book scrutiny evidenced, provides plenty of opportunity for pupils to use their literacy skills when learning other subjects.
- Following an external review of the school's use of Pupil Premium Funding the school's Deputy has recently invested wisely in promoting the self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of disadvantaged pupils. The Deputy was able to provide clear evidence of the impact of this work on the emotional wellbeing of this vulnerable group and although actions have still to be evidenced through closing academic gaps, these children are in a far better place to regard learning in a positive light.
- As the minutes of JRG meetings and a telephone conversation with a Governor confirms, Governors are now better informed about the schools work and show an awareness of what still needs to be done to ensure current progress is maintained. Recent changes to the Governing Body have supported the pace of progress. The GB is conscious of the need to develop pupil support scrutiny quickly so that their own analysis of vulnerable children's progress is sharper.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- It is the view of the review team that teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers are now a more highly motivated corporate team who are constantly seeking ways to improve on what they already do well. The review team were impressed by the enthusiasm of the teachers, their general delivery of lessons and of their willingness to embrace development points from feedback.
- Through having ownership of data, teachers are in a far better position to use assessment detail to support pupils' learning and inform teaching.
- Aside from some of the early morning Guided Reading sessions, where activities for groups beyond the core reading group were holding activities that had little impact on learning, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and this enables the curriculum to be taught in line with age related expectation.
- Professional development in the area of questioning has been particularly productive. Teachers are now extremely skilled at eliciting pupil response through higher order questioning. Particularly impressive was the opportunity for children to participate in 'no hands up discussion' whereby pupils contributed to the learning debate by independently agreeing or disagreeing with the previous child's statement. In discussions with pupils they confirmed that they were more secure in their learning. In particular the Year 6 pupils spoke eloquently about how their learning had improved by having clear targets for meeting Y6 age related expectations, collaboration in mixed ability groupings and opportunities to challenge themselves when selecting their own level of work. As reported by the children, these systems are not yet consistent across the school, yet they all agreed that their learning would be better if they were!
- The book scrutiny exercise confirmed how work on the same content in maths is differentiated. In English differentiation is largely by outcome. Nevertheless the scrutiny evidences that pupils are working on the new curriculum at broadly the same pace with expectations, regardless of ability, that all have access to age related content. The scrutiny also clearly evidenced progress for all groups in both English and maths over time. Marking and feedback commentary has improved significantly from the spring term onwards and the impact from child response to marking is more tangible.
- A neat cursive style is introduced early in KS1 and this is without doubt having a positive impact on presentation further up the school.
- Pupils also commented on how much they learn from the mistakes they make. Feedback from teachers has improved considerably and pupils are now clearer on how they can improve their work. Time is now afforded before the start of each English and maths lesson for children to address any misconceptions or complete an additional challenge.
- Pupils spoken to during the review also suggested that in some classes the challenge of work could be even greater and particularly so for the most able.
- An observation of a Phonics session demonstrated good teacher subject knowledge and effective delivery of content.

- Although observations confirmed that the majority of teaching assistants provide good support for the teachers and pupils, further training would benefit the impact of their work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare:

- The introduction of a new SMSC scheme (Jigsaw) has had an immediate impact on promoting the personal and welfare development of pupils. Generally during observations pupils followed the teachers' instructions carefully and were eager to further their knowledge and skills by working hard on the tasks set. The books scrutiny confirmed how over the course of the academic year, pupils are now presenting their work with a greater sense of pride. The Headteacher confirms that fewer pupils are losing the privilege of weekly 'Golden Time'.
- The investment of an emotional literacy package to support those pupils facing disadvantage or low self esteem is beginning to bear fruit in terms of supporting those few pupils who find self control more difficult. The addition of a nurture room has further supported this cause. The impact of recently introduced P4C philosophy programme has yet to be seen.
- On the day of the review the pupils were polite and courteous to each other and to adults. In discussion with pupils it is clear that they have a sense of pride in their school however, in agreement with some of the staff questionnaire returns, they would like to see greater consistency in behaviour management from teachers. In spite of this the children enjoyed talking about how learning and behaviour has improved immeasurably over time.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying, including that related to modern technology and they were adamant that it does not occur but they would tell an adult directly should anything concern them.

## Outcomes for pupils:

- The review evidenced that pupils are now working harder and making good progress in reading, writing and maths. Historically pupil progress at the Whartons has been strong. Teacher assessment data for the current Y6 cohort suggests that, due to being below national at the end of KS1, attainment results may fall however progress is still expected to be strong.
- As teaching is now stronger across the school, data confirms that pupil progress and attainment is more equitable across all year groups. Although some challenge could be even greater it is clear that, as teachers develop their understanding of the new National Curriculum, they are beginning to provide the most able pupils with more challenging tasks and this apparent from book scrutiny evidence. Engagement with programmes supported by the National Centre for the Teaching Excellence in Mathematics (NCTEM) has certainly had an impact in maths.
- There is good evidence of pupils being afforded the opportunity to write for purpose through other subjects. Where this is strongest (Year 4 and Year 6) the marking and feedback in topic and other books relates back to the age related writing expectations of the National Curriculum.
- Data shows that for the majority of pupils with special educational need or disability, progress from their starting points is good with the majority keeping up with their non SEN peers.
- Data clearly evidences that the gap between disadvantaged Pupil Premium groups and their peers is still too wide. Leaders are aware of this and nurture programmes to develop self-esteem have already been alluded to within this report. The aim of growing self-confidence and esteem has yet to be realised in attainment terms for this group however the chances of this coming to fruition have been boosted by this approach.

## Early Years provision:

- Following a high degree of SLE support and guidance the provision in Early Years had developed rapidly. Likewise a leader new to Early Years has been effective in improving provision and the quality of teaching. Provision is now far more effective in meeting the needs of the pupils, consequently more pupils are making good progress from their starting points. (In 2014, 15 and 2016 an above average proportion of pupils

reached a good level of development; however, as leaders accept, considering the backgrounds of the majority of children this should be the minimum expectation.)

- Having made the point above it should be noted that some role-play areas are still under developed and therefore not always affording potential learning opportunities. The EY Lead has an understanding of how this needs to progress to ensure a range of experiences across the year that will allow children to embed, develop and extend their basic skills.
- With support the Early Years leader has ensured that the outside play area is more effective in enhancing children's learning. From an observers point of view more opportunities to mark make and engage with the written word need to be developed but overall the outdoor provision has improved immeasurably.
- When gates are closed the environment is safe and conducive to pupils discovering through play. Learning Journey profiles clearly indicate good progress for the majority. These comprehensive records demonstrate how adults observe and know their children well. It appears that information is used carefully to plan activities and build on what they already know and can do. During observation it was apparent that a more able child was ready to extend their writing further, the next challenge for the Early Years team will be to consider how the most able can be challenged to exceed expectations.

## Recommendations:

- Intervention programmes that by the leadership's own admission 'haven't worked' need to be reconsidered and rebuilt in order to close the learning gaps of a minority of pupils (predominantly Pupil Premium). One approach may be to introduce a system of pre-assessing pupil's knowledge and gaps in understanding prior to the introduction of a concept. This approach, followed up by some pre-teaching (intervention **before** the lesson), would enable a wider group of pupils to access teaching from the top. A further advantage would be that teaching is more precise to the learning needs of the pupils rather than to the demands of the curriculum. The icing on the cake could be greater impact on attainment for the disadvantaged group!
- Hand in hand with the above point is to provide further training for the teaching assistant workforce. Their role, including better subject knowledge and an understanding of how to assess accurately, will be pivotal in supporting the closing of learning gaps. The review team would urge leaders to use teachers (i.e. the experts) to lead and support any intervention until full confidence in the abilities of teaching assistants can be substantiated.
- Progress in English could be even better if the lesson objective or accompanying success criteria adhered more tightly to the demands of age related expectations for example, Intended Learning to 'Draft narratives to describe a setting and atmosphere' backed up with some key learning points from the age related blue prints e.g. build cohesion between paragraphs, link your ideas with adverbials, etc. In maths a common to is practice, practice, practice then apply my learning. The new curriculum affords the same principle for English, practice a statutory requirement, practice again, then show me you have mastered it by applying in your next piece of extended writing.
- Although only brief, observations seemed to suggest that further training or Local Authority support is required on Reciprocal Reading and on the type of work that should be provided for children under a carousel model. The essence of the latter is that it has to have some purpose and it has to have some degree of challenge.
- The Year 6 pupils spoke with confidence about their knowledge and understanding of their age related content. This rolling out of such understanding to other year groups would be hugely beneficial in allowing pupils to have clarity of their learning, target setting and for self assessment. This could the form of a simple chart with 'I can' statements.
- Continue work to further develop high quality provision in Foundation.

- Leaders at all levels, including Governors, need to maintain the focus on monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work and from there to challenge when standards don't come up to expectation. Consistency is the word oft used by Ofsted for outstanding schools and it is clear from the Review that certain systems, although starting to have impact, have yet to be embedded with a high degree of consistency e.g. application of behaviour policy, marking and feedback, matching teacher assessment to test data. Most importantly the issue of current gaps in learning for the Pupil Premium group needs to be high priority and challenged at every turn.

## Distribution list

Headteacher

Kim Porter (Senior School Improvement Officer)

Trish Lawson (School Improvement Advisor)