

“Leadership for Learning” focus day - feedback

St Peter the Apostle Academy



Tuesday 10 December 2013

Note: The points in this validation summary are intended to provide a helpful response to the reflections and activities arranged on the “leadership for learning” day. This is not an attempt to re-report what was shared on the day, but instead to highlight areas that resonated with the visiting team and to provide useful challenges to your school’s thinking to help with effective school improvement planning.

It is expected that the school will respond to this document with what action it intends to take resulting from these points for consideration.

1. STACS Analysis

- The commitment and professionalism of all staff are particular strengths which will ensure that the school continues to develop skills for learning, life and work for all pupils through a broad curriculum which focuses on quality learning experiences.
- The key messages identified by the school from its own detailed STACS analysis are accurate and show a detailed understanding of the key issues of consistency in learning and teaching across the school and performance within particular subjects as areas to be addressed across the school. Where there are pockets of identified good practice across the school, these could be shared to try to address these issues and develop action plans for improvement.
- There is a well-developed process of tracking pupil performance which is embedded across the school. This is a strong tool which can track learning as well as progress. Through the analysis and scrutiny of the evidence gathered all departments should use this to set clear targets which impact upon pedagogy and pupil performance.
- There has been a redevelopment of the SLT which is seen to be a driver of change and improvement through a link approach to particular departments with an identified DHT. The challenge is how you support departments requiring development whilst continuing to raise the bar with others. Consideration should be given to Professional Learning which includes shadowing, coaching and mentoring for those who are leaders of learning for staff as well as pupils.
- Although gender issues have not been identified as being significant at this time, it would still be prudent to participate in any future WDC working group to identify and share strategies which try to address this issue.

2. Departmental Focus

- The Acting PT's passion, energy and commitment to improvement were clearly evident and well focussed on strategies and targets to achieve outcomes. Careful consideration should be given to areas where there are significant performance issues identified which would benefit from focussed CPD, targeted involvement of the Raising Attainment Coordinator and use of data to consider pupils' presentation level.
- As a result of staff changes there are timetabled opportunities for the sharing of practice within the department as well as with other schools across WDC. It would be useful to reflect upon the methodologies identified as being best practice at a departmental level so that the development of these can be incorporated into the improvement plan.
- Whilst the department is committed to developing skills for learning, life and work by offering an extremely wide variety of certificated courses it may be necessary to re-evaluate the value of this practice particularly as we move onto the new courses within the Senior Phase.

3. Raising Attainment

- There was a comprehensive presentation on a range of engagement strategies which demonstrated a positive intervention for a number of pupils across the school.
- The role of the Raising Attainment teacher has evolved since its inception through effective partnership working, supporting staff and pupils as well as strong links with all departments through the commitment to attend DMs when possible. Of particular note was the seamless joining of the Learning Support role with that of Raising Attainment.
- Consideration should now be given to extending the role of the Raising Attainment teacher in the support and delivery of the Broad General Education.

4. View from Students

- Pupils were very positive about their school experience and had confidence that staff were both supportive and approachable. They spoke highly of the variety of opportunities for them to develop academically and vocationally.
- In describing their learning there was a varying picture of experience in formative assessment strategies. The challenge here, which has already been identified by the SLT, would be to ensure that there is a consistency of experience for the pupils across the whole school.
- The pupils spoke highly about the variety and frequency of supported study available and the commitment of staff to provide this targeted support.

5. Improvements in Action

- **Learning for Life:** The pupils took delight in sharing their learning and demonstrated that there was a need to continue building on this work. There was discussion around the place of IDL/LfL within the curriculum - however the planning for this should take account of the BGE and SP. Writing teams have included a range of staff and this approach should continue to be developed as responsibility for all staff to be involved in some way over time.
- **Primary/Secondary Transition:** There were well developed arrangements for transition based upon a clear set of principles. There was a comprehensive support structure in place for potentially vulnerable pupils. There were planned opportunities for joint partnership working with other secondaries to develop literacy resources and with associated primaries for the sharing of good practice. Areas have been identified for development which includes reciprocal reading, Common Wealth Games programme and Formative Assessment tools. There are plans to include other departments within the school.
- **Raising the Bar:** There was a snapshot of a variety of initiatives aimed at supporting targeted groups of learners across different stages within the school. There was partnership with SNAP to develop confidence and future lifeskills with a group of high ability S 3 pupils. The pupils spoke well of their experience and of the skills that had been developed from this. As the school now has one of the four national SNAP Tutors within its staffing team, are there plans for this to be developed across this year group for all children? The Aspire initiative developed transferable study skills for 40 S 5 pupils sitting 5 Highers when it was recognised that these skills had not been developed during Standard Grade. All pupils spoke well of the programme and felt that they had benefited from it. The school intended to track the progress. Again, there is potential for this to be further developed across the school. The Braw Boys initiative had been developed to target disengaged girls within S 3. Like the Braw Boys Initiative, it was research based and used a number of strategies to engage each gender group. The results were significantly positive and both groups of pupils talked extremely highly of their experience.

The Visiting Team appreciated the work and organisation which the staff had undertaken to make their visit to the school a particularly positive and productive experience. The pupils and staff who were involved in the discussions clearly presented the practices and methodologies which the learners experienced and benefited from.