

TELA Partnership Challenge

Groby Community College



4-5 November 2015

The Programme:

This programme is following on from another successful Partnership Challenge programme across Leicestershire. Participating secondary schools cooperate in mutual quality assurance by undertaking lesson observations and discussions with senior leaders in each other's schools and colleges.

The group of schools taking part in this programme are:

Brockington College
Groby Community College
Leysland High School

Robert Smyth Academy
Thomas Estley Community College

The Participants:

Two members of the senior leadership teams from each institution were given an introductory session on the methodology behind the programme and the lessons learned from previous programmes.

The team that undertook the partnership challenge at Groby Community College were:

Richard Taylor	Vice Principal	Robert Smyth Academy
Chris Southall	Principal	Brockington College
Nick Cassidy	Assistant Head	Leysland High School
Mandi Collins	Vice Principal	Thomas Estley Community college
Katie Rush	Headteacher	Brookvale High School
John Taylor	TaylorGill Ltd	(Ofsted Trained)

Methodology:

The two day visit consisted of 49 lesson observations, each about 25 minutes long, and the vast majority of staff in the college were observed. All of the lesson observations were done jointly with members of the college's senior management team or heads of faculty. Individual lessons were not graded, but feedback was offered to all staff observed on the particular strengths seen and any areas for development.

Members of the team had nine meetings with staff with different responsibilities, one meeting with the Chair of Governors and two meetings with the students.

Evidence from these observations and meetings, together with other data and information provided, was discussed at the team meetings, for which the college Principal was present. Strengths and areas for development were agreed in each of the four main areas covered by the latest Ofsted inspection framework, and judgements were agreed based on the evaluation schedule.

Verbal feedback was given to the Chair of Governors, senior leadership team and the Headteacher at the end of the two days.

Leadership and Management

The Leadership and management of the college is Outstanding.

- The headteacher and his leadership team model a culture of high trust and challenge and an absolute and rigorous dedication to sustained improvement. There is honest and open transparency around areas for improvement. This approach has engaged the hearts and minds of the whole college team.
- Staff have bought into the vision of 'Achieving Excellence Together' and work with unflagging energy towards this goal. Leaders are determined to maintain the highly inclusive nature of the college and to ensure the success of each individual student, aided by personalised provision, intervention and support.
- Self-evaluation by the headteacher and leadership team is exemplary and accurate. Senior and middle leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the college, informed by students, staff, parents and governors. These areas for improvement are embedded throughout the college.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic, passionately committed to improving outcomes for students and prepared to work hard together to achieve this. They hold team members to account, using data effectively to drive improvement. A culture of shared leadership and autonomy, supported by a wealth of leadership opportunities and clearly delineated responsibilities, has enabled them to grow their experience and develop into strong leaders.
- Leaders use performance management incisively and effectively, with measurable achievement based targets, leading to professional development and swiftly implemented personalised plans that encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement.
- A climate of innovation and measured risk taking in teaching and learning has been created to support the improvement of outstanding practice in the classroom. Teaching staff feel supported by the attitudes of leaders and appreciate the opportunities they are given to sharpen their skills.
- Teachers at all stages of their career engage in relevant professional learning opportunities as part of a well-planned and cohesive professional development programme, which has embedded research and reflection. Staff reflect regularly and with considerable impact on their teaching; they are highly committed to developing their own practice both personally and collaboratively.
- The college has already secured substantial progress in narrowing the gap for disadvantaged students, through sharply focussed, personalised interventions and quality first teaching. Achievement of current cohorts indicates that this determined focus will narrow it further. The progress and interventions team, together with the pupil premium mentor, is well led and shares a common vision of removing barriers for disadvantaged students to secure the highest possible outcomes. Interventions are well targeted, personalised and securing measurable improvements for students in English and mathematics.
- The governance of the school is highly effective. Governors systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources secures high outcomes for students, challenging variations robustly. Through an effective committee structure, involvement in the examination analysis of their link department, and regular, targeted visits, they are able to have a clear understanding of improvement priorities, measure the impact of these, and actively challenge and support leaders. Governors have an accurate and detailed knowledge of the strengths and areas needing development in the college. They ensure safeguarding is of a very high standard, are fully involved in performance management of the headteacher, and audit the performance management of the staff. They are committed to their own continual development, auditing their extensive and

varied skill base regularly and seek to undertake appropriate training opportunities to maximise their effectiveness. Governors play a key role in designing college spending priorities, aligned well with the college and campus development plans. Recent governor challenges resulted in an improved college safeguarding policy and corrections to financial processes

- The shared senior leadership team of Groby College and Brookvale High School is committed to working collaboratively to maximise student outcomes. Recent merging of modern foreign languages departments to meet student needs is already resulting in measurable improvement for students.
- A carefully crafted balance of external relationships maximises internal improvement while supporting improvement across the education system. The college works effectively with outside agencies and extended services. Coordination and efficient use of their internal 'Achievement Centre' improves outcomes and life chances for vulnerable students.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and inclusive, meeting the needs of all students, and is personalised according to individual interest and need. The range of courses on offer motivates and engages students. EBacc take up is well above national averages at GCSE. A Level Fine Art - Graphics has been the highest performing centre in the country for three years running, and is a beacon of good practice. Personalised packages have been effectively developed to meet individual student needs.
- Successful college wide initiatives in literacy and numeracy have a high profile in the college and are beginning to contribute to the rapidly improving outcomes in Mathematics. Agreed systems for marking for literacy are beginning to be embedded in practice across departments but are not yet consistently in place.
- Beyond scheduled lessons, there are extensive enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities for students, contributing to the development of strong student leadership.
- Students receive high quality, impartial careers, education and training advice from external agencies and employers, as well as effective support for transition to employment, higher education and training.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and within the promotion of fundamental British values is well led, and is embedded within the curriculum. It is regularly evidenced through learning walks, audits etc. Its impact is demonstrated by a reduction in logged incidents of homophobia, racism, etc., which are minimal and well dealt with, indicating that students have high levels of tolerance and valuing difference. There is a strong culture of acceptance and challenges discrimination at all levels, and leaders work to protect students from radicalisation and extremism through raising awareness and ensuring that awareness is up to date through training by PREVENT and other agencies. Students leave school well prepared for life in modern Britain. In 2014, the college became the first school in Leicestershire to achieve the comprehensive Equalities award.

Areas for development:

- Monitor and evaluate the impact of cross-curricular literacy initiatives, to ensure they are implemented consistently across the college and effective at improving standards.

Quality of Teaching and Assessment

Throughout the two days 49 lessons were observed, which included scrutiny of work and discussions with students and teachers. The vast majority of lessons, although not graded for teachers were at least good and many lessons were outstanding. Only 6 lessons (12%) were observed that were not good.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now on the cusp of outstanding.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved due to the relentless focus on the professional development of teachers, alongside quality assurance processes. This is a challenge driven by the senior leadership team, but taken up by teachers across the college.
- Assessment and feedback are extremely strong across the college. Whole-school policies are embedded for marking and student dialogue, which are applied consistently. This makes a significant contribution towards rapid student progress in most subject areas.
- There are a variety of activities provided for students within lessons, which ensures that students remain engaged in their learning and in many cases are developing a love of learning.
- Vulnerable students are known by their teachers and, where required, receive additional and individualised support. This results in them making progress that is equivalent to all students nationally.
- Teachers work exceptionally hard to prepare high quality lessons for the students, and also to ensure that students receive high quality feedback and intervention support. They care deeply about the progress of their students.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and provide a high level of challenge throughout the lessons.
- In the very best lessons, teachers have become facilitators rather than directors of learning. This is due to their high expectations of and relationships with students, as well as the use of tasks and teaching methods designed to encourage independent learning.
- In these outstanding lessons, teachers are adept at using probing, open-ended, questioning to challenge students and to encourage deeper thinking.
- Students regularly commented throughout the two days that they enjoy being at the college, and they appreciate the support they receive to encourage their independent learning skills. They value their teachers, many of whom “go way beyond what could be expected”.

Areas for Development

- To secure being ‘outstanding’ in this area, the college needs to eradicate teaching, learning and assessment that are not yet good, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - develop the use of in-depth and challenging questioning that is open-ended,
 - provide in-depth, specific, verbal and written feedback to students, and demand structured responses from students to this feedback, and,
 - provide opportunities for students to lead their own learning and to work with peers, so that all students develop as independent learners.
- Ensure that rapid progress can be made from the very start of Year 10, by taking advantage of the strong working relationship and proximity to Brookvale High School enabling more teaching staff to be physically involved in Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, transition prior to the start of the Autumn Term.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare

The Behaviour, Personal Development and Welfare provision for students at Groby College is outstanding.

Students feel safe and cared for. They learn well in lessons and make good outcomes as a result.

- Behaviour systems are applied rigorously. The leadership in the College have been pro-active in reviewing systems so that students get the best opportunities to learn in lessons. An example of this is the creation of "Behaviour Lead" roles within faculties, to monitor how the "Consequences" behaviour system is applied, and the forensic analysis and review of this, which is led by leadership team. This results in the calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning throughout the College.
- In observed lessons, there were very few instances of low-level disruption. Where they did occur, the College has identified this can be linked to the quality of teaching and effective action is taken.
- Students show high standards of behaviour, and their impeccable conduct reflects the College's effective strategies to promote these. They are encouraged to be reflective and self-disciplined. Excellent behaviour between lessons gives the College a mature working atmosphere. There is a sense of calm, even at busy times.
- Detailed records are kept of bullying incidents, including those of a racist or homophobic nature. Data shows that bullying incidents have fallen year on year. The College acts in a timely manner in resolving issues, keeping detailed records. The College analyses this data regularly and has shown that they are prepared to make changes to procedures to promote good outcomes for individuals.
- Attendance shows a year-on-year improvement, exceeding the College's target which was set last year, and in line with national Key Stage 4 data. Persistent absence is falling. A new Attendance Improvement Plan is being implemented to continue this improvement.
- The number of exclusions this year is slightly higher than last year, but data shows that this is still below the average for the local authority. The College is aware of, and acting to address, the imbalance in the number of disadvantaged students excluded compared to other students.
- Alternative provision is used in a considered manner, taking into account the circumstances and needs of individuals. The College has a dedicated 'Well-being' Team. From case studies, it is clear that the College works with students, parents and other agencies to ensure students are working to get the best educational outcomes. Progress, for students on alternate provision, is tracked and reviewed in a timely manner to make sure the provision is effective.
- Responding to the needs of some students, the College has created its own alternative provision in the 'Achievement Support Centre'. This includes an ad-hoc drop-in service for all students. The ethos for this centre is well thought-out, and indicative of the College's willingness to adapt and review procedures for the welfare of students. External alternative provision is also used, if considered more appropriate for individual students.
- The College works hard to promote student well-being through the pastoral system. One assembly observed dealt sensitively with Remembrance Sunday, its meaning and the people behind the stories, and incorporated many aspects of British values.

Areas for Development

- Monitor the impact of the attendance improvement plan and adapt if necessary to ensure it is effective.
- Review the causes of the increase in reported incidents of cyberbullying and implement a strategy to reduce these.

Outcomes for Students

The outcomes for students were judged to be on the cusp of outstanding.

- In Key Stage 4 the progress made by students in English and mathematics is very strong. In English the disadvantaged students achieve better in English than mathematics. In English, their achievement is broadly in line with other students in the college and well above the national average. In mathematics these students are achieving in line with disadvantaged students nationally.
- The nature of monitoring and interventions, particularly around pupil premium, is forensic, personalised, relentless and multi-layered. There is an effective focus on 'quality 1st' teaching, through college staff briefings on teaching and learning, and regular meetings with team leaders focusing on student achievement data.
- The college ensures that groups of students do not underachieve by, focusing parental engagement on these groups known to be at risk, trips designed to raise aspirations, close monitoring of attendance and associated home visits, as well as relevant work experience.
- The predicted levels in mathematics have been accurate in the past. The forecast for current year 11 projects a ten percent improvement in the proportion of disadvantaged students making expected progress.
- Staff record and use student achievement data effectively to monitor progress against comprehensive and challenging targets, which have been set for all students. They closely monitor interventions, to ensure students in danger of falling behind are effectively supported.
- Monitoring of students' progress is rigorous, and interventions are quickly implemented and co-ordinated across the school. Staff mentors are used to support disadvantaged students where appropriate. This ensures that progress for disadvantaged students in English is as rapid as other students in the college.
- There is no significant gender gap in outcomes across GCSE subjects.
- The link between outcomes and teaching and learning and progress over time, as seen in lessons, is clearly very strong.
- Students in Key Stage 5 make strong progress, especially in vocational subjects

Areas for development:

- Ensure there is greater consistency in student achievement across all areas by ensuring that all subject areas perform at the same high levels of the majority.
- Ensure the student's progress in mathematics is as strong as it is in English and that the gap for disadvantaged students is reduced by embedding the current practice on individual targeting of students and developing links across the campus to drive the improvement of outcomes for disadvantaged students

The effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes

The effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes was judged to be on the cusp of outstanding.

- The number of students following study programmes in this area is growing and inclusive. An appropriately wide range of academic and vocational pathways are provided, along with structured programmes to develop employability and leadership skills, and a wide range of enrichment experiences.
- The pathways are appropriate to the students' abilities and needs, resulting in a very high proportion of students successfully completing their courses with good outcomes. All students go on to higher or further education or employment.
- At the start of the course, staff quickly identify students that need support or are at risk of underachieving, and implement a range of small group and individualised approaches to ensure no student is left behind.
- The effective student feedback on their work, embedded across the college, is supporting the high attainment and progress.
- In the vast majority of subjects, students are skilfully encouraged, by their teachers, to become independent learners. This results in them gaining a good understanding and firm grasp of their subjects.
- Post-16 teachers show good subject knowledge, which they use confidently to enhance progress and increase challenge.
- Learners receive high quality careers guidance from a range of sources; this leads to them all finding suitable pathways when leaving the college.
- Post-16 attendance has improved since last year, as a result of enhanced challenge and support for students.
- All students are following maths and English at GCSE if they have not already achieved it.

Areas for development

- Ensure monitoring is used to rapidly identify curriculum areas that could potentially underachieve.
- Ensure the new systems to improve punctuality are effective.