

Quality Assurance Report

Ridgeway Secondary School: Shires Multi Academy Trust

23 – 24 January 2024

Quality Assurance Team

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Evidence Base

Members of the Quality Assurance (QA) team visited 18 lessons on day 1 across the English (4), Maths(5), Science(5) and Humanities(4) faculties and 9 lessons on day 2 across Art(1), PE(1), DT(2), French(2) Humanities (2) and PSHE(1). During these visits, they observed the learning in the lessons, spoke with individual students, and looked through a range of student books. In addition, members of the team observed key stage 3 tutor time and a key stage 4 assembly.

Further evidence was gathered from meetings with members of the Senior Leadership Team focusing on the curriculum, safeguarding (inc. SSR check), pupil premium, behaviour & attendance, CPD, Careers and SEND provision.

In addition, team members met with a group of Governors and Curriculum Area Leads for English (including reading), MFL, Humanities, Science, Maths, PE & Creatives and SEND. In addition, team members met with a range of staff from specific subject areas including two ECTs. Students' voice was sought through a series of student panels across a range of subjects.

Finally, opportunities were taken to observe interactions during lesson transitions as well as break and lunchtimes.

Executive Summary

This is now a good school with some outstanding features. It was evident to all involved in this quality assurance process that Ridgeway Secondary School has been on a rapid and sustained journey of improvement. This has been achieved through courageous leadership from the headteacher, his senior team, and the governing body, as well as the commitment and dedication of the staff and the close support and guidance of those leading in the Shires Trust.

Quality of Education: Good

As a result of the improvements that have been introduced and quickly embedded, students can now enjoy a good quality of education. The work that has been done to design a curriculum that is clear in its intent and implemented with consistency, means that there is a realistic expectation that outcomes will also begin to improve rapidly. However, this is not guaranteed and the current focus

on challenging Year 11 students to improve 1 grade in 10 weeks underlines the fact that there can be no room for complacency in ensuring that all this dedication and hard work delivers the required impact on young people's outcomes.

Across the school, lessons have a common framework for learning which enables learners to benefit from being clear about what they are learning, how this connects to prior learning through well-constructed recap tasks and how they will build on the disciplinary knowledge and skills to progress further. Consequently, teachers present subject matter clearly, and in the best lessons, they also promote appropriate discussion about the subject matter they are teaching. Questioning contributes to ongoing checks on learners' understanding, though this is sometimes too superficial and reliant on volunteer responses. Thus, opportunities are missed to make more students think hard and deeply about their learning. This said, most teachers identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct checks on knowledge and understanding. The curriculum has been designed with appropriate formal assessment points which, when used well, are accompanied by clear and incisive teacher feedback and an opportunity for students to reflect on their progress and improve upon it. Strengthening approaches to both formative and summative assessment through in-depth questioning and targeted feedback will not only help teachers check understanding and inform their teaching but will help learners embed and use disciplinary knowledge fluently.

The determination to deliver 'quality first teaching' is effectively supporting students who have additional or special educational needs, have a disability, or are disadvantaged. Consequently, most teachers respond and adapt their teaching as necessary, without unnecessarily elaborate or differentiated approaches. SEND information and strategies are shared through pupil passports so that teachers are clear about what additional support or adaptations are needed. The Pupil Premium lead not only tracks and monitors this vulnerable group but also makes available additional funding to ensure students with a financial disadvantage can fully access both the formal curriculum and targeted extracurricular activities. The recent introduction of a comprehensive reading programme is also helping to ensure that all students, including those with a disadvantage, have the necessary literacy skills to not only access the curriculum but also develop their wider cultural capital.

Having established such a strong offer for SEND and PP students, along with the reading strategies and the intervention strategies in place for those who join the school with low prior attainment, the focus now needs to move to increase the level of challenge in students' learning. This can be achieved primarily through developing and embedding Rosenshine's principles. Unlike embedding the basic learning routines which can be established relatively quickly, this focus on pedagogy requires a deeper understanding of what works in the classroom and why. Beyond understanding the theory, this will need developing and embedding through high-quality professional coaching and a willingness to take risks, have a go and learn. Indeed, the school is now at the point where having 'tightened up' and embedded strong routines, it needs to consider how it will 'loosen up' to promote more individualised professional development around these key principles. Achieving this will not only build greater confidence and competence among the staff but will raise the level of stretch and challenge in the classroom. It is the journey from good to great that now lies ahead.

Behaviour and attitudes: Outstanding

All staff have high expectations for learners' behaviour and conduct and apply these expectations consistently and fairly. This is reflected in students' behaviour and conduct, including quickly accepting the move to quiet corridors. Consequently, classroom routines are supported by consistent behaviour for learning routines with students moving around the school calmly and respectfully, being welcomed into lessons, and engaging with their learning without delay, debate, or distraction. The new initiatives to support behaviour and develop positive attitudes were strategically planned and effectively led and communicated by the deputy overseeing this aspect of

school life. Students are quite rightly proud of their school and are committed to their learning, they are growing in confidence as to how to study effectively and improving rates of attendance and punctuality demonstrate that they are keen to learn, and much more resilient to setbacks. This is underpinned by the positive and respectful relationships that staff have built with students where every student is known by name, their homelives understood by relevant staff and they are given every opportunity to thrive and take pride in their achievements. Indeed, the focus on rewarding student progress and achievements has made a significant contribution to students' determination to work hard and succeed.

In the classroom, instances of low-level disruption are rare and addressed quickly and effectively. Consequently, classrooms have become a place where teachers can teach, and students can learn. Moreover, the consistency and calm atmosphere contribute significantly to students feeling safe and secure in their learning environment. Notwithstanding this, the school has robust systems in place for promoting safeguarding and has ensured that all staff are well trained and understand their role in respect of keeping children safe in education. The development of the safeguarding team has been instrumental in ensuring the school can act effectively when concerns are raised, or referrals are required. Together, leaders, teachers, other staff and students have created an environment where bullying, peer-on-peer abuse or discrimination are not tolerated. If they do occur, staff deal with issues quickly and effectively, and do not allow them to spread.

In short, there is a clear sense that school staff have cultivated a strong family feel where all students feel that the adults know them, can be trusted, and have their best interests at heart.

Personal development: Good

The curriculum extends beyond the academic providing students with opportunities for broader development and enabling them to discover additional interests and talents. Students enjoy these opportunities as was evidenced through a range of activities from core PE, pottery in DT and the opportunity to conduct experiments in science. In addition, the number of extracurricular opportunities such as clubs and off-site visits is growing, though the students are keen for this to increase further as they recognise the value that this has in developing them as learners and broadening their cultural horizons.

Assemblies and the PSHE curriculum play a key role in supporting the school's 360 framework and contribute to students knowing how to stay mentally and physically healthy. These opportunities are carefully planned, sequenced and delivered to better equip students to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society; developing their understanding of fundamental British values; developing their understanding and appreciation of diversity; celebrating what they have in common and promoting respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law.

The challenge going forward is to build on their growing resilience and confidence to enable them to access a wider range of experiences and in so doing, develop greater independence and the desire to move beyond their current ambitions and expectations.

Leadership and management: Good with outstanding features

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education and training to all. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practices. Those responsible for governance clearly understand their role and carry this out effectively. They ensure that the school has a clear vision and strategy and that resources are managed well. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education or training. Leaders have created an open and positive culture around safeguarding and child protection that puts students' interests first. This means they protect their

students from serious harm, both online and offline. There is a culture of vigilance, where an attitude of 'it could happen here' is maintained, and there is openness and transparency where information is shared with other agencies and, where appropriate, expert advice is sought.

In this school, senior leaders walk the talk. They are not only visible and approachable at break and lunchtime, but they are a constant presence in corridors and classrooms, reinforcing routines and supporting the positive learning culture across the school. They are skilled in understanding and assessing the quality of education across the school, impressing the QAR team with their analysis of what was working well and what needs further improvement. This is underpinned by a philosophy of 'see it and say it', ensuring transparency and promoting an open culture where staff's achievements are acknowledged, and support is well targeted. As the school grows in the coming years it will be important to determine how leadership can be further distributed as the risk of burnout after such an intense period of change is very real.

The successful focus on staff recruitment in the previous year, coupled with a well-thought-through and well-targeted CPD programme, has helped strengthen the effectiveness of middle leaders as well as the leadership of learning in the classroom. Staff feel well supported and valued. As a result, staff morale is high and their buy-in is strong. This is evident in the way they have responded to the routines and initiatives that have been introduced and the things they have embedded in such a short space of time. Discretionary effort is also high, with staff willing to give their time to run additional activities, trips, and clubs beyond the formal curriculum.

Going forward, it will be important to ensure that there is a robust induction programme to enable new staff, who have not been part of the journey, to quickly get to grips with the standards expected. Crucially, leaders, especially middle leaders, will need to focus on continuing to improve staff's subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment to ensure that classroom practice and subject knowledge of staff are built up and continue to improve over time.

Report compiled by John Sanderson

January 2024