



## **POLARIS MAT MONITORING VISIT – 14/15/16 MARCH 2022**

### **Background**

This was the second formal monitoring visit of the Trust senior leaders – Steve Evans (CEO) and Matt Crowther (Director of School Improvement). The review was led by Carlton Midgley (Trust School Improvement Partner).

The focus of the review was the Quality of Education and the curriculum areas covered were: Science, Art & DT, PE and Music. Over the three days, a range of discussions were held with senior and middle leaders. Discussions were also held with some teachers in each curriculum area, and with a sample of students in years 8, 9 and 10. A significant proportion of time was spent on a series of joint learning walks covering year groups 7, 8, 9 and 10, amounting to 33 observations. In addition, the team scrutinised work from KS3 and KS4 students in each of the subjects.

### **Quality of Education**

#### **Curriculum Intent**

Regular discussions over the three days showed that senior leaders continue to have a clear vision for the curriculum, as reported in detail on the November 2022 monitoring visit. This is one of the three priorities in the School Improvement Plan 2021-22 – the associated objective is to deliver “an inclusive and ambitious engaging curriculum”. In summary, the school’s curriculum intent statement is strong. It is coherent, well planned and logically sequenced. In essence, it is designed to enable students to do more, remember more and achieve more. Senior leaders have a deep understanding of the strategies that underpin the delivery of the school’s curriculum.

Another key strength of the school is the effectiveness of middle leadership. In November 2021, we held discussions with the curriculum leaders for English, mathematics, humanities and MfL. They were all able to articulate their curriculum intent, and outline how their curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on prior learning through the use of the waypoint system. On this March 2022 visit, we worked with the effective curriculum leaders for science, art & DT, music and PE. Middle leadership has continued to improve and it was clear that there are regular, informal communications and increased working together; ideas are shared and different approaches are discussed. The move towards greater sharing of responsibilities and tasks within departments is leading to greater cohesiveness and improved teamwork. It is also an important factor in helping to address teachers’ health & well-being, and their workload.

#### **Science**

Jamie O’Callaghan has ‘grown into’ the leadership of the Science Faculty and he is leading this area increasingly well. Within this, he has led the development of the science curriculum, which is broken down into nine themes which run from Year 7 to Year 11. This allows the students to gain a better comprehension of how their knowledge, understanding and skills develop through their science lessons. Each topic forms part of a greater theme within the science curriculum. These themes are structured to enable students to apply the concepts and skills previously encountered and also to challenge themselves further as they delve deeper into the topic. This broad and balanced curriculum is coherent, well planned and logically sequenced. Its implementation is supported by a series of powerpoint lessons and waypoints, which help the students understand their learning journey. This is because they include links to previous work,



expected learning, key vocabulary and 'where the topic will take us next'. It is clear what the science department want students to learn and remember during their time in school. Most science teachers use the plans and schemes of work effectively, as could be seen in the range of lessons observed. Appropriate

CPD is provided, as confirmed in discussions with science staff, who are looking to be the best they can be. Where a teacher is not consistently good or better, the curriculum leader works with senior staff to provide appropriate support and challenge. A system of monitoring and evaluation provides evidence of improvement – otherwise additional support is given at a higher level. Subject expertise is a strength of the Faculty. Science staff have welcomed the move towards greater distribution of responsibilities; effective teamwork is another developing strength. Judgements and analyses of lessons are accurate and departmental self-evaluation has clarified the priorities for improvement. These include: accessibility of waypoints for lower ability students, differentiation within sets, monitoring the rate at which the topics are covered and presentation in books.

## **Art & DT**

Jimmy Dolan leads the faculty with passion and technical skill. He thinks deeply about how his leadership impacts on the performance of his staff. He has quickly built positive relationships with his team that are helping drive high expectations for the delivery of strong teaching in his faculty. The curriculum intent of the faculty is founded on being ambitious for students. This ambition was effectively communicated. The culture of high expectations can be seen in the detailed well sequenced medium-term planning.

Students reported that teachers' feedback helps them to improve their work. They all reported that teachers take the time to give them individualised feedback. The faculty's focus on marking at the point of learning and rapid feedback is a strength. Teachers use standardisation / moderation to support the accuracy of their assessments.

The use of and staffs' enthusiasm for SPS sessions is clearly adding value to the team's skillset. This systemic approach to collaborative marking and assessment, means that feedback to students is accurately targeted at what they need to do to improve. The use of SPS sessions is used skilfully to give staff opportunities to work collaboratively across discrete subjects taught in the faculty. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff is clearly having a profound impact on the development of pedagogy and subject related teaching in the faculty. This impact can be evidenced in the range of materials and media seen in students' work in subjects like Textiles, Art, and Product Design.

The teaching in Art and Design in almost all the lessons observed, was strong. Where teaching was not strong (one lesson) the leadership of the faculty are using the school's coaching programme effectively. They could identify what stage of the programme the member of staff was on and the detail around the programme of support they are receiving. The leader accurately identified the weaknesses in the lesson and had a plan to address them. In strong lessons the following positive factors were observed:

- Teachers had skilfully adapted the high-quality medium-term plan to tailor their lesson to the pupils in their class
- Teachers' subject knowledge was strong.
- The school's behaviour policy was used with skill and coupled with the pupils' thirst for learning, pupils' attitude to their learning and conduct was exemplary
- The enjoyment of the subjects being taught demonstrated by pupils in lessons was tangible.



The use of waypoints in Key Stage 3 support students' understanding of the assessment objectives and enables them to track what they have learned and what skills they will focus on next. The use of waypoints in Key Stage 4 is effective and its use is balanced effectively to reflect individualised support from the teacher and the different pace of learning each student makes. The Director of Faculty would benefit from more opportunities to refine his presentation of how waypoints positively impact on students in Key Stage 4.

The faculty's commitment to consistently delivering high standards can be seen in the high-quality extracurricular programme. The programme is run for all students but is particularly utilised by Art and Design GCSE students. Key Stage 4 students spoke with enthusiasm about the benefits the programme gives them and how they complement the high-quality lessons they receive.

## **Music**

The Director of Music is clear around the curriculum intent and is leading this well. There is an ambitious, fit for purpose curriculum overview which is coherent and well thought through. Music staff have been actively involved in this process so therefore staff have a deep understanding of the curriculum sequence and what must be taught. This has supported their newest member of staff. They have introduced waypoints well to allow staff and students to discuss this sequence in lessons. Medium term planning and lesson planning is detailed and supports staff delivery well. There is an appropriate balance among the components of Music including performance, theory and composition, but with a strong understanding the students enjoy the practical element of the subject.


Teaching in Music throughout the review was strong. All lessons were effective and well taught. This consisted of appropriate and effective relationships and classroom routines leading to strong student engagement. There were clear learning objectives, which were met through a variety of pedagogical approaches that engaged students i.e., an appropriate mix of theory and practical application. Teachers skilfully question students' understanding, and marking and feedback follows the whole school policy and is of high quality, both in the booklets and at the point of learning.

The music department needs to continue to develop its approach to waypoints. They are used well within lessons, in that teachers discuss them with pupils effectively; however, the current approach could be streamlined further to allow more efficient annotation so that students are not copying statements from the board. The department should also consider approaches to differentiation to support different cohorts of pupils e.g., LAPS and SEND, in planning documents and work booklets then ensure these are consistently applied across all schemes of work.

## **PE**

The Director of PE is clear on the curriculum intent and, with some prompting and questioning, was able to articulate the curriculum approach in PE. This is based on ambition through, acquiring key skills and knowledge and pupils experiencing a breadth of curriculum offer. The PE faculty has used SPS sessions to articulate this ambition, consistency and understanding of the curriculum offer in PE to support staff understanding.

Overall, the teaching in PE is effective, however, there was some variance observed in the quality of teaching in BTEC PE and in the teaching of a less experienced teacher. Where teaching is strong, there are established lesson routines, appropriate pace and challenge and the components of the curriculum are being broken down and taught well e.g., the key components of a two-man tackle in rugby. This allowed students to apply the skills and knowledge acquired in a game situation. There were high levels of engagement that reflected the Director of PEs approach around 'Head, Heart, Hands'. Where teaching was less strong there was, at times, a lack of clarity of instructions, pace and urgency within the lesson. This led



to students not being sure about the expectations of them or understanding the learning objectives or tasks that had been set or any success criteria where they would know what they need to complete and by when. Some students were disengaged through either passivity or low-level disruption and off-task behaviours; this was not always picked up on. The components of a particular learning sequence e.g., a bounce pass in basketball had not been effectively demonstrated. There was a lack of an appropriate range of drills to allow pupils to practice the skill before entering a game situation.

The PE faculty should ensure that staff who are not consistently 'working at' are receiving the correct support with their planning and delivery. It should also ensure that in medium-term planning, small progression steps are clear and then followed. This would ensure that the key skills and knowledge are taught explicitly e.g., through appropriate skill drills, before entering a game situation. In BTEC lessons, the faculty should ensure that instructions and success criteria are shared with students so they understand the expectations and progress to be made in lessons. More thought could be given about how instructions around coursework tasks can be broken down and displayed to ensure all students understand what they need to do. An appropriate seating plan in place would support a conducive learning environment that helps to prevent low-level disruption.

### **Implementation (Quality of teaching)**

Further improving the quality of teaching and learning is another of the three priorities in the School Improvement Plan 2021-22 – the associated objective is to develop “a culture of professional growth for all, that ensures that the students have an outstanding educational experience”. Senior leaders are clear that the drive to further improve teaching, supported by CPD and performance management, should enable teachers to provide appropriate challenge to all different groups of students.

As in November 2021, the curriculum leaders interviewed were clear that all their staff wanted to get better and that the departmental discussions and CPD sessions were vitally important. They knew their teachers well and joint observations demonstrated the accuracy of their judgements. In addition, their analyses of strengths and weaknesses enabled them to clarify 'what worked well' and what elements would be 'even better if'. Most of the teaching seen in the five curriculum areas was 'working at' in almost all aspects and, if this was consistent across all their classes and over time, they would be judged as outstanding

### **Improving teachers who have previously been judged as RI**

Leaders have a deep understanding of the school's coaching programme. They all accurately identified at what stage of the programme each member of staff was on and could talk with detail about the support and challenge being delivered to the member of staff for them to improve. In almost all cases staff receiving support through the programme have improved their practice and as such moved onto a less intense phase of the support programme. Where staff are not improving the school is taking appropriate steps to ensure that their future career is well supported elsewhere.

Moving forward, senior leaders need to decide the pace at which staff who have been on the programme for a considerable amount of time are moving to the standard expected at Rastrick – the key question is “Do these staff have the ability to be solidly good (delivering consistently good teaching all the time)?”

### **Main findings**

- The Quality of Education of the five curriculum areas reviewed is strong overall with regard to Curriculum Intent and Implementation (NB: Curriculum Impact was not within the scope of this review)
- Senior leadership of Curriculum Intent remains outstanding
- Middle leadership of Curriculum Intent (in the curriculum areas reviewed) is excellent overall
- Implementation (Quality of teaching) was very good in most of the lessons seen



### **Suggestions for the June 2022 monitoring visit**

- A focus on other aspects of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, for example:
- Behaviour and attitudes, including attendance
- Personal development
- Form period