

THE KING EDWARD VI MORPETH SUPPORTIVE REVIEW

AUTUMN 2011



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

FINDING SOLUTIONS

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT

The King Edward VI Supportive Review

Context of the review

This review was carried out at the request of the school by a team of five Inspectors and an external SIP Headteacher from Education Gateshead on 17 and 18 October 2011. Thirty eight lessons were observed, discussions were held with students and key middle and senior leaders. A pre review commentary with key questions was developed with a key focus on:

1. Can the school demonstrate that the recent improvements in tracking and intervention is having an impact in improving conversions and rates of progress from levels 4/5 to Grade B/C and to improve the percentage of D grades to C grades?
2. Has the school tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection to disseminate outstanding practice and to improve the Post 16 curriculum?
3. Has the school modified the curriculum sufficiently so that it meets students' needs and progression routes?
4. How effective are the school's assessment and tracking procedures in identifying and then targeting interventions for students and groups of students at risk of underachievement?
5. How well do teachers use the school's assessment and tracking evidence when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are consistently met and they make progress commensurate with their starting points?

Information about the school

This is a larger than average secondary school with a wide range of student backgrounds and some out of catchment students. The school has low ethnicity and FSM with below average but an increasing proportion of SEN students. The school is a specialist Technology college which has determined some of their curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4. The school has many productive Partnerships with a hard federation of two middle schools and is in partnership with a Gaining Ground school and Collingwood Special School. The school was inspected in 2008 and graded as outstanding.

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school (Grade 1)

The school's capacity for sustained improvement (Grade 1)

Main findings

The King Edward VI School is an outstanding school in which students are provided with an outstanding quality of education. Leadership and management have been therefore outstanding in driving sustained improvement since the last inspection. The senior team have a strong sense of purpose and this is exemplified in the strong self evaluation structure and self challenge that hold the school to account. The review has highlighted that there is an opportunity to strengthen the impact of leadership and management to support student progression and transition.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are also outstanding. As a result there is a high consistency in the quality of learning experiences. The impact of the school's relentless attention to improving teaching quality, has improved the proportion of outstanding teaching since the last inspection. In the best lessons students make exceptional progress as a result of teachers creating extremely supportive learning environments with mutual respect at its heart. Progress and next steps in learning are accurately assessed by staff and openly shared with students. In a few lessons there are still elements of assessment practice which are not always consistently in place. The school supports all groups of students extremely well and monitors their progress carefully, intervening in their learning to give extra support when needed. However the review has identified the need to improve and extend the existing strategies for early intervention. The school recognises that the current curriculum model, although fit for purpose in delivering high quality outcomes; can be further enhanced by reviewing progression pathways and option choices.

Partnership is highly successful in accessing opportunities for enrichment, particularly the federation of schools and partners. Although the partnership dimension is strong it is possible to strengthen the partnership relationships at Post 16. Governors play a key strategic role in the federation and are therefore extremely well informed about the quality of provision across the federation of schools. Their contribution is outstanding in shaping the future of the federation and academy.

What does the school need to improve further:

1. Curriculum

Reshape the curriculum to better meet the needs of all students by:

- a. Implementing a curriculum review which should be more than additionality of courses but rather on key development pathways and progression for all student groups and aspirants to further prevent the loss of students at Year 12, and the consequent impact on finance.
- b. Seeing the shape of the curriculum and how it matches the needs and interests as well as aspirations for all groups

2. Intervention

Improve and extend the quality of interventions by:

- a. Using the well developed data systems. Intervention needs to be started as early as possible, involving all subjects, so that there is a sophisticated repertoire of intervention strategies which will build on the good practice that is already in place.
- b. Further developing a seamless learning journey through common assessments on transition, through the opportunity provided by the Hard Federation.
- c. Refining the intervention process through refocusing leaders and teachers to strengthen progression monitoring, using the existing school structures.
- d. Triangulating student progress with more precise learning walks and the sampling of specific student outcomes.

3. Teaching

Further improve the consistency of teaching as there are still elements which are not consistently practised by:

- a. Senior, middle leaders and teachers ensuring progress is monitored in class and teaching adjusted where necessary.
- b. Sharing the good practice through, for example, student self assessments, seen in Maths.
- c. Maximising the additional support provided by Teaching Assistants to secure good learning and understanding, whilst acknowledging Teaching Assistants are largely well deployed and highly skilled.

4. Partnership

Further strengthen partnerships by:

Linking key strategic partners and work place providers, as an integral part of the Post 16 offer.

5. Leadership and management

Strengthen the capacity of leadership and management by:

- a. Ensuring an identified individual who has the oversight to support student progression.
- b. Considering a seconded post to the senior leadership team to support student transition.

Achievement and Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils (Grade 1)

The vast majority of students enter the school with above average attainment. However, in more recent years attainment on entry is lower, whilst still above the national averages. Since the last inspection the school has continued to sustain very high attainment, with above and well above national average attainment at 5 A*-C and 5 A*-C (En/ Ma). The trend of both attainment and progress is at a very high level. Whilst standards have been sustained, it appears to have found its level and therefore is not increasing further.

At Key Stage 3 the percentage of students attaining both 3 and 4 levels of progress remains well above average and conversions from Key Stage 2 attainment at level 3, 4 and 5 are generally very secure with 86% of students in English and 76% in Maths making 3 levels of progress in 2011. At level 5, 6 and 7 the school continues to attain standards over three years which are well above national averages.

At Key Stage 4 the average points score whilst well above average is now moving closer to the average (APS 481 in 2010 to 452 in 2011). The school cites that this is due variation in results in Technology. Both English and Maths A*-C reflect the national pattern of attainment, with English being higher than Maths currently. Conversions from level 4 and 5 to Grade C and above are largely successful but there is still the opportunity to increase the proportion of C grades particularly in English and Maths. In contrast there is a high % of A*/ A grades in many subjects, including English and Maths, again well above national averages. Some subjects have shown lower attainment in 2010, specifically Spanish and Physics, but have now improved. There is still some in-subject variation, principally in aspects of DT and Core/ Additional Science.

The last Ofsted inspection judged the Sixth Form to be good. The 2010 validated results show significant increase in attainment and improvement in progress indicators. In 2011 it is equally clear that outcomes are now outstanding. Attainment at Post 16 is high, reinforced by the very good progress made by students who have already secured significantly positive added value at Key Stage 4. There has been a steady increase in higher grades since the last inspection. In 2011 one in three grades were A*/A and over 60% were at A*/B. This demonstrates an upward trend which confirms outstanding achievement and significantly positive added value. The average point score per student is lower than in 2010 (although some re-marks have yet to be included), perhaps because of a decision to reduce the number of subjects for some vulnerable students. The APS per student entry, although still unvalidated, is, however, slightly higher than last year reinforcing the judgement that last year's high progress levels have been at least maintained. The targeted reduction in AS level fail grades has made a positive contribution with the dedicated Sixth Form Mentor playing a key role. The school makes effective use of comparative residual data to determine the relative strengths and weaknesses of different subjects; supportive action and challenge then follow. The majority of subjects achieve higher grade scores above and well above the national average.

Progress of students with SEN/D is discretely supported through the school. The extent to which students acquire knowledge, develop their understanding and learn and practice skills is outstanding. Progress is at least good and overall, when compared to national indicators, is outstanding by the end of Key Stage 4. A good proportion of students are able to transfer to Post 16 because of their high attainment at Key Stage 4.

How effective is the provision? (Grade 1)

Teaching and learning is outstanding overall. 89% of lessons are graded good or better, 47% of lessons are graded outstanding and 42% graded good. Students make exceptional progress through teachers creating extremely supportive learning environments with mutual respect at the heart. The quality of relationships is exemplary leading to excellent behaviour. Progress and next steps in learning in the significant majority of lessons are accurately assessed by staff and openly shared with students. Students are active learners in often exciting and imaginative lessons, sometimes as student leaders. Lessons are planned with a clear knowledge of all students' prior attainment, which is then targeted to ensure students' make maximum progress and thus differentiation is well developed. The highly effective strategies of paired and group discussions support high challenge activities across the subjects. Quality resources for example, the use of the Visualiser in Technology, are skilfully and seamlessly used to have a positive effect on learning in the most successful of lessons. The impact of the school's relentless focus to improve the quality of teaching through CPD and the appointment of Lead Learners has been very effective, leading to the reduction in satisfactory teaching and the proportionate increase in outstanding lessons observed.

In the very few less effective lessons either teaching activities did not sufficiently focus on the next step of learning for students, thus evaluating the level of student understanding of the tasks completed was not facilitated, or, in lessons that were too task driven, the pace of learning was slow, reducing motivation or too quick, thus bewildering students.

Students with special educational needs have excellent attitudes to their learning which is indicated in their exemplary concentration on their work. They are, therefore, rarely off task, even when they are expected to work without the support of an adult. The Access provision is developing high quality support, a calm environment which meets both individual and small group needs and outstanding support to individual well being.

Curriculum (Grade 1)

The school recognises that the current main school curriculum model is now less fit for purpose given national demands such as EBac and local circumstances linked to the need to widen the Post 16 curriculum offer. It has a unique opportunity to configure option choices in a more coherent and inclusive way thus leading the way to a broader choice and improved progression either directly into the Sixth Form or in partnership with other providers.

The previous Ofsted inspection prompted actions by the school to tackle the identified priority need 'to ensure the curriculum is well-suited to the needs of all students.' Up to a point this has been successful. Some recent additions to the A/AS offer such as Art Graphics, Photography and Media. Photography has been highly effective and best ever results in 2011 confirm the added outcomes value of the curriculum changes already made. Parental pressure in support of a largely academic curriculum offer has been reflected in the introduction of Applied A/AS courses with a vocational element. High level vocational areas such as medicine and dentistry are well catered for.

It is the case that even large Sixth Forms such as this are unlikely to meet the needs of all potential students. However, a more wide-reaching review of the curriculum is needed if the impetus to increase the number of potential Sixth Form aspirants is to be realised. Some students are already

'lost' to the school at 16+ and 17+ students where there is no progression for students with only two AS results. No Level 2 courses are available beyond English and Maths re-sits.

The school has embarked on a radical review of the curriculum. It has made judicious improvements since the prompt provided by Ofsted which has improved the curriculum diet and added value to outcomes. The risk, however, is that choice has been widened for the usual pool of students and has not met the needs of the minority of students who historically have gone elsewhere. In the current funding climate the school has even more incentive to provide a curriculum model that extends to 'new' students who require something other than the largely narrow (if immensely varied) A/AS curriculum on offer. It is, therefore, important to respond to local circumstances, student needs and aspirations, employability issues and, where appropriate, collaboration with other providers. Piecemeal changes can be effective but as the failed introduction of Science in Society has shown this is not always the case.

Leadership and Management (Grade 1)

Leadership and Management is outstanding in driving sustained improvement since the last inspection. There is a strong staff morale to ensure that all students, in this highly inclusive environment fulfil their potential. The senior team have a strong sense of purpose and this is exemplified in the strong self evaluation structures and self challenge that hold the school to account. They have rightly identified the next stage of the school's development and key actions to support this stage. The headteacher and senior leaders are determined to continue to raise the very high standards already achieved. Analysis of the school's performance information is both accurate and thorough. Their analysis correctly indicates where there is some underachievement of specific individuals and they have acted quickly to provide additional provision or a range of intervention strategies. This is proving to be particularly effective in subjects, including English and Maths. To further improve outcomes for some students to fully reach their potential, leaders now need to strengthen existing monitoring systems and provide earlier intervention. In addition the focus in the monitoring of lessons should more precisely include the progress of targeted students.

Through an appropriate line management structure senior leaders have developed a clear expectation for middle leaders, evidenced in the school's quality assurance documentation. The school has sustained high student outcomes through a rolling programme of departmental reviews, and have acted incisively with good effect where there have been subjects where standards have dipped, such as in Spanish, DT Graphics and Physics. Discussion with middle leaders indicated that departments have employed different solutions to their concerns, and have developed a shared approach to finding solutions within their own departments. Middle leadership have become very skilled in analysis of data and pinpointing those students who are in danger of underachievement and in identifying departmental priorities, such as improving the quality of moderation. This has led to the production of exemplar materials for different levels of student attainment. In addition middle leaders work well with their linked senior leader to engender a shared understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in the department, leading to a quality standards framework.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning is also outstanding. As a result there is a high consistency in the quality of learning experiences. The impact of the school's relentless attention to improving teaching quality is apparent in the improved percentage of outstanding and good lessons especially in the Sixth Form. The impact of the Lead Learners in modelling high

challenge, and expectations and student involvement in learning is confirmed in the extremely good progress students make.

The school's induction programme is designed to ensure that all staff are aware of school values and ethos, ambition, priorities and expectations. A combination of common and specialised elements ensures that corporate and individual staff needs are met. The induction programme feeds into a comprehensive and extensive CPD programme, which is driven by staff requirements through the role of Lead Learners.

Partnership (Grade 1)

Partnership is highly successful in ensuring students can access opportunities for enrichment, particularly the federation of schools and partners. Governors play a key strategic role in the federation and are therefore extremely well informed on the quality of provision across the federation of schools. Their contribution is outstanding in shaping the future of the federation and academy. This highly skilled governing body are informing robustly the new arrangements for financial and other business developments, such as a shared ICT VLE facility. The partnership dimension is strong and is most strong in the partnership within the federation. It is however possible to strengthen the partnership relationships at Post 16 to extend the Post 16 curriculum offer.

Systems to engage parents and stakeholders are robust, inclusive and reinforce the collaborative nature of the school in support of students. In return the parents are highly supportive and appreciative. Information and guidance to help parents support their children's learning is continually reviewed and revised in response to feedback. The school triangulates parents' views, students views and staff viewpoints in order to confirm their evidence base and as a basis for action. Effective communication is routed in a range of approaches including focus groups, parents' evenings, information accessed through the learning platform, written communication, telephone contact and home visits. Parent engagements are closely monitored and action taken where specific intervention is required, such as home visits. Student voice views are actively sought, taken seriously and they have impacted on the Attitude to Learning and the design of the transition process. Students take an active role in enrichment experiences which are wide ranging, inclusive and extend into the wider community. This enrichment gives students a regional and national perspective.

Post 16 (Grade 1)

Outcomes, provision and leadership at Post 16 are now outstanding. The school has accurately identified the contributory factors in this improvement which include meticulous and productive data analysis; the value added by the broader curriculum; highly personalised monitoring, tracking and use of aspirational targets; improved advice and guidance; carefully guided subject combinations; more focused entry policy; directed study demands on student non-contact time; significantly improved teaching and learning prompted by supportive departmental review and professional development centred on learning styles and independent learning. Parents are also involved and well informed about their child's progress. The school continues to seek further

improvement, for example by appointing a Lead Learner to promote independent learning and by further development of the VLE platform which was seen to be put to good use during the Review Visit. Student involvement in the wider community has also been developed. All but a very small minority of students have already enrolled for the Active Student Award and the decision to enrol all students in the local Morpeth library has prompted a noticeable increase in use and a more focused pooling of resources between the school and library.

The quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is outstanding and lesson observations carried out as part of this Review support the school's own view that almost all Sixth Form lessons are now good or better with no inadequate teaching. This represents progress from last year when close to 1 in 4 lessons were deemed satisfactory by the school.

Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and up to date expertise at a level consistent with effective teaching and assessment. The emphasis of school- led training on independent learning was evident in a large majority of lessons where students were very supportive of each other and articulate in their individual response to challenging teacher demands. The personalised approach to transition ensures that students are well prepared for the increased expectations of independent work they will meet in higher education.

Guidance and support is comprehensive, fit for purpose and highly personalised before, during and after Sixth Form. IAG related to course choices, career destinations and entry to higher education is exemplary and impacts positively on UCAS acceptances. The experience and expertise accumulated by key staff in this area is a real strength and adds positive value and opportunity. The 'after-care' provided to students who have completed courses are exemplary with follow-up that ensures no students are left unsupported.

Enrichment opportunities are many and varied and there is an increased expectation that all Sixth Formers should engage in the Active Student Award. There are many opportunities to broaden horizons as varied as regular debating events, a pre-dentistry club, a War Hammer group and a dissection society!

The Sixth Form Leaders work symbiotically as a team to provide outstanding leadership in a large Sixth Form. The school has a clear vision for the sixth form which reflects the school's values and ethos of ambition, aspiration and high standards. Outstanding outcomes are the result of highly effective practice; this is particularly evident in the school's monitoring and evaluation systems, support for personal development, and information, advice and guidance processes. Rigorous monitoring and exhaustive tracking, including regular progress checks ensure that early warning and intervention strategies can be implemented swiftly and with maximum impact. A good example is the speed with which some suspected lesson truants were identified electronically and pursued!

The management of provision is highly effective and can be evidenced by; outstanding outcomes; high retention rates; the attractiveness of the Sixth Form for students not in the school and very successful progression rates. Sixth Form students comment very favourably on the quality of teaching they receive. They recognise that the school works hard to provide a wide range of strategies to support learning. They judged the support they receive in the Sixth Form to be excellent

and feel that they are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. School engagement with parents and carers is excellent; with the school offering a wide range of opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning.

Capacity to Improve (Grade 1)

The headteacher and senior leaders have very successfully developed the capacity of staff since the last inspection. Through a programme of external consultants, departmental reviews and through performance management structures, outcomes have been sustained and in the case of science at Key Stage 4 have been increased. The governors and the senior team are now well placed to develop the school for example through developing the ethos of a Language college to promote Languages across the Federation as well as the move to academy status. Existing relationships across the three feeder middle schools is providing an opportunity to strengthen transition at Year 8 through common assessments and will also enable a shared professional view in re shaping the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Senior leaders recognise that capacity could be strengthened by standardising the best quality line management. There is also an opportunity from this review to consider senior leadership structures to monitor student progress, so that the overview of targeted students is not diluted. Capacity could also be refined by the creation of a more standardised departmental agenda to monitor student progress. There may also be an opportunity to develop a leadership post to support Year 8 and 9 curriculum transition and perhaps to create secondments to the senior leadership team.