

Academy Review

School name	XP School
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Date of review visit	9-10 February 2017
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Review Team	
Lead Reviewer	Rob Jones

The school's self-evaluation and outcomes of this review

	School self evaluation grade	Review grade
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Leadership and management	1	1
Teaching, learning & assessment	1	1
Personal development, behaviour & welfare	1	1
Outcomes for pupils	1	1

Judgements are fine graded. For example, grade 2a is firmly good and potentially outstanding. Grade 3c indicates weaknesses that may signal a grade 4 (category) judgement.

Information about this review

- This review was carried out with one day's notice as per the request of the principal and governing body.
- The review was carried out by one consultant over two days. The programme consisted of the following :
 - Meetings with pupils, senior leaders, governors, staff and the SEN co-ordinator.
 - Scrutiny of documentation relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, performance management, development planning, self evaluation and achievement.
 - Attendance at a curriculum review meeting with the principal and middle leaders.
 - Observations and short visits to various classrooms including scrutiny of pupils' work.
- While the Ofsted handbook was used to judge the quality of the school's own evaluation, this was not a 'mock inspection'. Throughout the process, advice and support was given including suggestions of moving the school forward. As such, this was a developmental review.

Executive summary

- Leadership and management are strong. Particularly robust are procedures for designing, implementing and reviewing the curriculum to ensure pupils receive a balanced, experiential curriculum. A potential risk of such a creative curriculum is that academic rigour and coverage of generic and subject specific skills are diluted. This is most certainly not the case at XP, where subject skills have been meticulously mapped against the National Curriculum, underpinned by the strong development of mathematical and linguistic skills. School systems to record assessments, performance management, the curriculum run like clockwork, are under constant re-appraisal and ensure strategic as well as the day-to-day running of the school are extremely efficient. As such, school leaders are proactive in their approach rather than reactive. While SEN pupils make at least good progress, procedures for managing and leading SEN need strengthening, particularly in relation to helping pupils that need to catch up with reading skills. Safeguarding is strong, but some procedural elements of safeguarding would benefit from strengthening further.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are significant strengths which in turn have impacted positively on the progress pupils make. Expectations are high of pupils. Work that is set is demanding for all abilities including the most able. Teaching assistants support the work of teachers well. Dialogue, through speaking and listening are strengths in lessons which enables pupils to express themselves clearly and articulate their understanding. High quality modelling is also a distinctive positive aspect of teaching. In many lessons seen, pupils made good use of teacher models to grasp difficult concepts and learn new knowledge. Pupils' application of skills is strong as a result of the links that are made between subjects. The high quality teaching ensures all groups of pupils make strong progress including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are exceptional. This is abundantly clear in pupils' high levels of confidence, their ability to communicate effectively and express themselves through various media. These things do not just happen, they are the very fabric of the school's ethos and the assessment systems which evaluate pupils' contributions to the school and their attitudes to learning. The school is a tightly knit community where success is openly celebrated but also where pupils feel comfortable making public apologies to their peers and to teachers if they feel they have done wrong. This gives pupils a strong moral purpose and consequently pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are strengths. Among the many strengths, weaker elements are pupils' understanding of LGBT issues and careers.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is exceptional. The site is litter-free, pupils display excellent manners to each other and to staff and in class, pupils behave very well, applying themselves diligently to their work.

Things the school should think about

- Strengthen safeguarding arrangements further by:
 - checking and recording the identity of staff who have been DBS checked by a third party as discussed in the review
 - ensuring the safeguarding policy is more comprehensive in its coverage of key elements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
 - ensuring that staff sign to say they have read part 1 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* so that the governing body are certain this has been done.
 - ensure that any potential risks, such as pupils walking over to the MUGA across the public car park are fully covered by risk assessments
 - ensure an independent external review of safeguarding is undertaken.
- Ensure there are equality objectives in place and published on the website, as per legislation. This needs to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) agreed by the governing body, updated annually and objectives reviewed every four years.
- Strengthen leadership for SEN by ensuring that :
 - arrangements for identifying SEN and that measuring the impact of interventions are more robust
 - non-negotiables are in place for weaker readers; for example, that they are heard reading every day and that they are provided with a reading log to record key things they need to do to improve their phonic knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the PSHE curriculum further by ensuring pupils have a good understanding of LGBT issues and improving independent advice and guidance for careers/further study.
- Improve the pupil premium strategy so that potential barriers to learning are clearer and that impact of actions are tied more closely to breaking down these barriers
- Strengthen how pupils understand the different strands of British values, perhaps through inclusion within expeditions and through displays.
- Ensure that arrangements are made for the performance management of the CEO.

Leadership and Management

- Self evaluation is strong. The Ofsted descriptors are suitably broken up into strands so that each strand can be separately evaluated. This gives a very detailed breakdown of what needs to improve. For example, under leadership and management, the strand on safeguarding was found not to meet the outstanding descriptor until procedures for training staff on radicalisation and extremism had been strengthened. This formed a clear action point to add to the development plan.
- Development planning is strong, identifies key areas for improvement based on five key performance indicators. Development plans are regularly checked by governors to evaluate the impact of actions.
- Procedures and documentation for assessing, meeting with parents and reviewing provision for SEN pupils appear to be reasonable. However, procedures for identifying pupils with SEN, screening them on entry and reviewing the SEN register are not as strong as they might be. This said, SEN pupils are making strong progress as a result of exceptional quality first teaching.
- The curriculum is structured around broad themes (expeditions) which involve a great deal of experiential learning, culminating in a final project. Skills are meticulously mapped so that linguistic, mathematical, scientific and artistic skills are all developed to a high level. All pupils take the Duke of Edinburgh awards which, by their nature diversify the curriculum considerably with all pupils taking part in voluntary and sporting activities, including leadership skills. This ensures pupils' preparation for the next stage in their education or employment are strong.
- The design of the expeditions ensures that subject skills are systematically developed across the three year groups. The national curriculum has been used to map skills across all subjects. The inclusion of the Duke of Edinburgh award for all pupils adds a welcome dimension to the curriculum.
- Leaders and managers routinely evaluate the effectiveness of each expedition. At the end of each expedition, there is a team meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of each curriculum area. One of these was attended during the review, where the English, mathematics, arts, humanities and science skills were rigorously evaluated for effectiveness within the expedition. Each component was graded for effectiveness. For example, the text selection within the expedition was evaluated on four different criteria. Evaluations of expeditions are then fed through to the next team to deliver the expedition so that the necessary changes can be built into the work.
- There are good links with Doncaster Rovers, who coach all pupils PE on Fridays to allow staff to meet and share expertise.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Quality assurance measures are very robust and under constant review to ensure the quality of teaching is as strong as it can be.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust although when checked, the single central record did not meet statutory requirements in relation to prohibition order checking and the checking of identity for those staff who are DBS checked outside the school (and so whose identity documents have not been checked by the school as part of the DBS application process).
- Safeguarding case files were discussed in the review. Robust chronologies are kept of any case files. External agencies are used well where appropriate to support child protection cases. Training for staff is appropriate for DSLs. Training for staff takes place each year or more regularly if there are specific issues that occur during the year. 'Staff crew' sessions on Friday offer good opportunities to update staff on such matters.
- Performance management arrangements are robust but arrangements for the performance management of the CEO need to be developed. We discussed that as

the school grows it might be useful to identify key groups of pupils within the achievement objective.

- CPD for staff is strong. Each team has a good deal of time dedicated to evaluating work, meeting, planning and sharing expertise.
- Governance is strong, offering expert overview of the curriculum, through links with Sheffield Hallam University Education department, close scrutiny of performance management, high quality real-time information on any concerns that might arise from senior leaders and good overview of safeguarding. Some advice was given as to how this aspect of governance might be strengthened during the review.
- Music is strong in the school with around a third of pupils having instrumental lessons in school.

Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching across the academy is strong. This secures at least good progress from all groups of pupils.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They do this mostly through using assessment information to annotate their seating plans, some of which are immensely detailed and gives the teacher the information they need to customise learning to pupils' needs.
- Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to get the best out of pupils. Often this is directed at individuals, again using teachers' good knowledge of pupils' abilities. Often pupils are asked to give extended answers to questions which ensures they fully justify their answers but also ensures that they are in a good position to put together a well-articulated answer into their writing work.
- Much of the learning is experiential. There are ample opportunities in class for pupils to discuss their work, collaborate on projects or discuss the final practical project which puts learning into a real-life context. For example, in one maths lesson, pupils were well engaged in Pythagoras theorem as they considered how this would be used in the construction of a bridge.
- Many teachers in the school use modelling highly effectively as a teaching tool. This has clearly been refined so as to maximise the impact of teaching on pupils' skills. In a number of lessons seen, pupils reworked examples provided by the teacher, or highlighted examples of how exam rubrics were being met through the model answers provided.
- Assessment information is used well to indicate the next steps in learning. Pupils seen in the review were very clear that teachers' marking helped them improve at a pace, particularly when they were asked to draft and redraft their work as a result of teachers' comments.
- Challenge is high. The most able are well challenged and make good progress as a result.
- There were occasionally weaker elements of teaching. These can be summarised as follows :
 - Unnecessary writing out of objectives, particularly when pupils are slow writers
 - Low ability pupils sometimes being asked to write on unlined paper, when they struggle with letter formation
 - The teaching of spelling

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- Behaviour around the school is described by pupils as being strong. Compassion, integrity and respect are attributes that were mentioned by pupils as being at the core of behaviour in the school.
- Pupils talked about 'community meetings' where they have the opportunity to talk about any concerns that they might have. During these community meetings, pupils have the opportunity to put right some things they may have done wrong, appreciate one another and apologise for anything they might regret. Pupils say that this is time well spent in the week.
- Bullying is not seen as an issue in the school. One pupil said that the staff are very open and approachable. Another said that issues are nipped in the bud quickly before they become a bullying issue. Other pupils talked about the 'immediate' response of staff to any hint that bullying might be happening.
- British values, as a term is not universally understood by pupils. However, the individual strands of BV have been delivered through the curriculum. For example, pupils talked in detail about the work they had done about the meaning of democracy, such as a visit to the houses of parliament, study about conflicts, for example North and South Korea. Some discussions in tutorial times (known as 'Crew') have supplemented pupils' understanding of BVs. Pupils have a reasonable understanding of individual liberty, but interestingly talked about this and other strands in the context of a wider curriculum. For example, pupils related freedom of speech to Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockinbird'. Pupils do have a strong moral understanding and so were able to talk about tolerance and respect.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the potential dangers of alcohol and the dangers of drugs in society, and are able to discuss such things as prescription drugs, legal highs and dangers of class C and B drugs. This shows a very good understanding of such topics for their age. Sex education is delivered through an external agency and crew leaders supplement this well. However, pupils' understanding of LGBT issues is patchy and they are not so clear about how to obtain advice and guidance in relation to careers.
- Pupils are graded on their HOWLs (Habits of work and Learning) on a 3 point scale : be kind, get smart, be kind which assesses pupils' personal traits and behaviours for learning. In addition there are character traits which are regularly discussed in class, : respect, courage, integrity, craftsmanship and quality, compassion.
- Pupils are clear about the assessment systems in the school, such as talking about the minimum expected grades and how personal attributes and HOWL grades work together.
- At lunchtimes, pupils' conduct is impeccable. No litter was seen and pupils willingly tidied up after themselves. There is no uniform, in the traditional sense at the school although there is a dress code which all pupils were seen to be following.
- Pupils' high sense of responsibility was illustrated during the review at lunchtime, when a large box of used cutlery came crashing to the floor. 9 pupils dropped what they were doing to help tidy up the mess.
- At breaktimes, pupils behave impeccably, playing games, including chess with members of staff, or use the large atrium to use computers or chat. Pupils take responsibility for tidying up after themselves. However, few use the library at breaktime to read for pleasure.
- Attendance for all groups is above average, including disadvantaged and SEND pupils. Persistent absence rates are below average.

Outcomes for pupils

- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress and projections are that in each subject pupils' progress is strong against subject transition matrices which were checked on site against the 2016 matrices. Disadvantaged boys' writing was picked up as an issue last year which prompted some intensive work (24 hours) based around South African Folk music. The impact of this was that all pupils improved so that all are now making at least expected progress.
- The most able are making strong progress. Currently all pupils are making at least expected progress with 59.3% are making better than expected progress in English with 77.8% making better than expected progress in maths.
- Of the most able disadvantaged, all pupils are making at least expected progress, with 57% making better than expected progress.
- SEN pupils are making strong progress across the board. In maths and English, 83% are making at least expected progress with 50% exceeding.
- The school has projected P8 on the basis of the 2016 logic which has calculated positive outcomes in all subjects.
- Pupils' reading habits are generally strong. 'Crew time' (tutor time) is used well so pupils have the opportunity of reading for pleasure. Accelerated reader is used in school to promote reading. However, there is scope to raise achievement for those who need to catch up with reading and may have SEN for reading related reasons. The pupils who were heard reading struggled with their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words and would have benefitted from more incisive intervention than Accelerated Reader can offer. This could be done through ensuring these pupils are heard reading aloud every day and the provision of reading logs where any weaknesses in reading are recorded and addressed.

Suggested further support

- An annual external safeguarding review
- An annual overall effectiveness review
- A full website compliance check