



School Improvement Review, Summer Term 2016

School: Chaucer School, Sheffield

Review date: 3 May 2016

Reviewer: Dr Michael Maddison
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Dr Michael Maddison is an independent educational consultant, inspector and trainer. He has served as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (2006-2015) and as National Lead for history (2008-2015). He continues to inspect as an Ofsted Inspector, undertaking whole school inspections and working in particular with schools subject to special measures and with ITE partnerships. Since leaving Ofsted Michael has undertaken a number of whole school, faculty and subject reviews throughout the country. As a result, he has extensive experience of working with schools to improve standards and achievement.

As National Lead, he was responsible for leading Ofsted's curriculum and dissemination work in inspecting and reporting on history. He was the author of 'History for All', Ofsted's highly regarded national report on history in schools, and of Ofsted's first subject-specific professional development training materials for teachers. Michael has particular interest and expertise in school and subject leadership and management, governance, the curriculum, and teaching and learning. Besides history, his subject expertise includes humanities, English, literacy, and citizenship.

Prior to working for Ofsted, Michael held a number of senior leadership positions in secondary schools in the North of England. He is an experienced teacher having taught both history and politics for over 25 years and having served as senior examiner and moderator for GCSE history and as principal moderator for A level history. Michael has been awarded the NPQH. He is currently Deputy President of the Historical Association.

1. Context

- Chaucer School is a sponsored academy and part of the Tapton School Academy Trust (TSAT).
- This was the second visit to the school by this consultant to undertake a School Improvement Review.
- In between visits one and two, the school was subject a full inspection by Ofsted. The school is awaiting the finalisation of the report and the moderation of judgements.

2. Evidence

A wide range of evidence was seen either before or on the review day at the school. The consultant:

- held separate discussions with the headteacher, several members of the leadership team, and a selection of middle leaders;
- undertook a learning walk across a number of lessons in key stages 3 and 4 with a particular focus on Year 8;
- whilst in lessons, spoke to students and undertook a scrutiny of their work;
- held a meeting with a group of students representing Years 7 and 8;
- scrutinised a range of documents linked to marking and feedback; the quality of teaching and learning; behaviour and attendance; and the additional pupil premium funding.

3. Focus

- The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the progress made and the impact of actions taken since Visit 1 in relation to the points for consideration made at that visit. (See Appendix 1).
- Specific attention was paid to:
 - the impact of the Teacher Enhancement and Effectiveness Programme (TEEP) on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
 - the strengthening of marking and feedback procedures;
 - the education and care of students in Year 8;
 - the spending of the pupil premium funding.

4. Overview

- Following the first visit on 8 March 2016, the school responded quickly and positively to the recommendations made. A mid-year action plan was drafted so that work undertaken on the recommendations could be collated and tracked.
- The Ofsted inspection took place on 12 and 13 April. Pending receipt of the inspection report and confirmation of the final judgements, senior leaders have continued with this plan.
- Bearing in mind that the Ofsted report is not yet published, this review focused on the actions of the school following the first visit. The implications of the Ofsted inspection will be considered at the next visit in the autumn of 2016.

- Senior leaders remain focused on improving the school. Those interviewed knew their respective briefs, could explain the specific actions for which they had been responsible, and displayed an understanding of the impact of their work since the first visit.
- Overall, there is a determined spirit to bring about much needed improvements in the education and care of all students.

5. Commentary

This report covers the following aspects:

- the impact of the TEEP process on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- the strengthening of marking and feedback procedures;
- the education and care of students in Year 8;
- the spending of the pupil premium funding.

The impact of the TEEP process on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- In the classes visited during the first review of the school on 8 March, the TEEP process had clearly not yet been adopted as an overt part of the approach to teaching and learning by most teachers.
- Senior leaders noted that staff lacked confidence in the process and were not yet fully aware of how TEEP could inform their planning, strengthen their teaching and learning, and lead to raised outcomes for students.
- Over the last two months there has been a concerted effort to improve teachers' understanding and practice.
- A wide range of actions have been pursued; for example:
 - each teacher has to submit a learning plan for one of their classes each week so that lead practitioners can provide focused training for individual teachers and for whole departments on the TEEP approach as appropriate;
 - small cross-curricular groups of teachers meet in 'TEEP pods' to discuss common strategies;
 - best practice is shared with all staff at morning training sessions, the 'TEEP peeps';
 - support materials are being produced including the Teacher TEEP Planning Map and the Student TEEP Learning Map – these are aide-memoires for staff and students as to how the TEEP process can support learning.
- Senior leaders are supported in their observations of teaching and learning with a list of prompts and questions in the Learning Walk Foci which will enable them to evaluate how teaching is improving as a result of the TEEP approach.
- Senior leaders report that teachers understand the TEEP process much more and are incorporating it more regularly into their teaching and learning.
- Through discussions with teachers and subject leaders and from visits to classes on a learning walk, the evidence from this review is that the TEEP process:
 - is informing teachers' planning much more;
 - is understood much more by teachers and students;

- is helping students to engage more with their learning.
- Subject leaders noted that TEEP provides a helpful structure for planning and enables teachers to be more creative. They appreciate that it is important to look for the impact of this work and are adamant that it is leading to a much needed and much welcomed attitudinal change towards teaching and learning amongst students.
- Students interviewed remarked that through the TEEP process teachers have to 'break down what we learn' so 'it helps them as well as us'.
- Teachers are being cajoled successfully to adopt the TEEP approach and, where it is applied effectively as seen in some of the lessons visited, it is successfully helping students to make progress in their work.
- However, practice is still mixed and there is still much to do to ensure that all staff use the strategies of TEEP fruitfully to help their students improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

The strengthening of marking and feedback procedures

- Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluations that marking and feedback are improving in that the quality of teachers' diagnostic comments are becoming more direct and specific. However, the quality of students' reflections and responses to what teachers write is still too variable.
- Support for teachers in ensuring that time spent marking and giving feedback is used to maximum effect continues apace.
- Time was used wisely during the Ofsted inspection to continue with staff training within departments to develop their own marking and feedback action plans.
- Initial analysis indicates that the plans are of variable quality and that some subject leaders and teachers need to be much tighter in what they expect to be achieved within a stated time frame. Where necessary, support to improve these action plans has been identified.
- The 'Making Marking Matter' booklet for staff provides them with much valuable advice and guidance on what is required for each subject as well as what is expected by senior leaders.
- Discussions are rightly underway as to how fixed school expectations can be achieved whilst allowing different subjects flexibility so that they can develop systems which best meet their needs and that these can be illustrated by subject specific exemplars.
- Scrutiny of students' books, as part of the learning walk across seven subjects representing each year group, reveals that 'Even Better If' (EBI) targets are of variable quality. However, a greater proportion of tasks set are more focused than previously on giving students concrete and immediate assistance on how to improve.
- Discussion with students revealed that they enjoy the dedicated improvement and reflection time (DIRT) because it allows them to 'get better at what we do'. They added that the EBIs are much more helpful when 'we have to add new information and not just do corrections' and that 'it is best when we are given harder question to figure out'.

The education and care of students in Year 8

- It is clear that senior staff responsible for the education and care of students in Year 8 have a sound grasp of the concerns with which they are faced.
- They know the year group, the various sub-groups within it, and the individuals well.
- They report that, during the current academic year, the attendance of the whole year group has improved but it is still below the national average. It has also improved for most key sub-groups, apart from girls which has declined.
- Although behaviour has improved in that fixed term exclusions have declined, the behaviour of students in Year 8 is still mixed both in lessons and about the school.
- The recording of behaviour incidents has been revised and this allows staff to be more prompt in their response to the issues raised and the individual students involved.
- Guidance is being provided as needed to help staff be more consistent in the application of sanctions.
- Greater emphasis has been placed upon the quality of tutoring and the school is reviewing who might be the best tutors when the students move into Year 9 in September 2016.
- The monitoring of achievement indicates some improvement for students in Year 8 but it also reveals that high attainers are not yet achieving to their full potential.
- From the evidence gleaned on this visit, it appears that senior leaders are aware of what needs to be undertaken to improve the achievement of students in Year 8, as well as their attendance, punctuality and behaviour, and that a range of actions are in place to help achieve the desired outcomes.

The spending of the pupil premium funding.

- Senior leaders have responded well to the point for consideration from the visit on 8 March that the school should ‘ensure that the evaluation of the additional funding for pupil premium students is rigorous’.
- The monitoring of past, proposed and actual expenditure, and the evaluation of the impact of spending, have been reviewed. An action plan showing projects, associated activities, allocated spending, success criteria, and the review process has been created.
- This approach is welcomed because it is enabling senior leaders to be better informed so that they can discuss with much greater confidence the actions to support pupil premium students and the effectiveness of this work.
- In effect, the school is no longer pursuing a number of disparate strategies but is developing a coordinated and consolidated approach.
- Senior leaders are aware of the importance of discussing impact as an on-going aspect of their work so that they can assess in time which strategies should and should not be rolled over into subsequent years.
- They also appreciate the need to present the action plan and details of current spending to governors so that all governors can be better informed of how this considerable amount of money (2015-16: £418,310) is being spent.

6. Points for consideration

- Bearing in mind that the school will soon have to respond to its recent inspection and the areas for improvement identified by inspectors, no additional points for consideration are recommended following this visit.
- Senior leaders are recommended, though, to keep in mind the points identified at the first visit in March 2016 (see Appendix 1 below) as many are still pertinent.

7. Next visit

Proposed date: Visit 3 Mon 10 October 2016

Foci – to be determined in discussion with the headteacher:

- Progress update and impact of specific actions taken since Visits 1 and 2 in relation to the points for consideration.
- Update on the improvement agenda in the light of the Ofsted inspection.
- Review of outcomes for academic year 2015-16.

Appendix 1:

Points for consideration from Visit 1, 08.03.16

As a result of this school improvement review visit, it is recommended that leaders and managers:

1. maintain the focus to secure the predicted improvement in students' achievement across all subject areas in key stage 4 and especially in English, science, history and ICT;
2. ensure that the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged and all other students narrow at a faster rate;
3. ensure that a greater proportion of higher and middle ability students achieve the highest grades possible;
4. ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve and that the investment in the TEEP system leads to immediate benefits for students in classrooms;
5. maintain the focus on seeking to engage students more directly in their work so that they become enthused rather than indifferent;
6. ensure that in all lessons teachers have the highest expectations of what students can learn, understand and do and that activities set provide challenge and support as appropriate;
7. continue to improve marking and written feedback so that targets set have precision and subject-specificity so that the students are able through their responses to strengthen their learning and understanding;
8. ensure that all leaders clearly evaluate the impact of their actions so that they are clear about what has worked well and what needs to be revised;
9. ensure that students' attendance is at least at and preferably above the national average;
10. review approaches taken to reduce levels of persistent absenteeism to see if they are having the impact desired;

11. continue to improve students' behaviour and especially of students currently in Year 8;
 12. ensure that all staff apply the behaviour sanctions code consistently and fairly;
 13. ensure that the evaluation of the additional funding for pupil premium students is rigorous;
 14. review the self-evaluation documentation to ensure that it is comprehensive yet succinct;
 15. consider all these points as part of the current work to improve the school – no additional action plan is expected or desired; however, senior leaders must be in a position to comment on each of these points at the next School Improvement Review Visit.
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