



School Improvement Review, Spring Term 2016

School: Chaucer School, Sheffield

Review date: 8 March 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)
- It was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2014 when it was judged to require improvement. Since that time it has had one monitoring visit in September 2014 when senior leaders, governors and the sponsor were judged to be taking effective action.
- At its last section 5 inspection, the school was set the following areas for improvement:
- *Improve teaching so that it is at least consistently good or better, so that progress quickens and standards rise, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 4, by ensuring that:*
 - *marking is regular, tells students specifically what they have done well and what they need to do next, and teachers give students the time to respond to their advice*
 - *teachers use carefully the information that they have about the levels at which the students work, to ensure that all students, especially the most able, are given work that is at the right level for them to achieve at least well*
 - *teachers' expectations of students' handwriting, presentation and layout are consistently high across the school.*
- *Improve students' engagement in their learning by ensuring that:*
 - *teachers' expectations of students' attitudes to learning and behaviour are consistently high*
 - *all staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.*
- *Improve students' attendance by making sure that:*
 - *all students understand the impact on their learning and progress of irregular attendance and the value that employers place on good attendance records*
 - *finding more ways of encouraging some students to attend more frequently.*
- *Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in raising students' achievement by making sure that:*
 - *all leaders' checks on teaching and students' work are regular and comprehensive so that the school has a fully accurate picture of teaching and learning*
 - *leaders check that all teachers are using information about students' progress when they plan teaching and learning.*
- At the monitoring visit in September 2014, an additional area for improvement was added, namely:
 - *Increase the impact of strategies to improve students' achievement, attendance and behaviour, and iron out the inconsistencies in the impact of teaching and leadership on students' learning and progress.*
- This was the first visit to the school by this consultant to undertake a School Improvement Review.

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 and members of the leadership team; the chair of governors and the chair designate; and a selection of middle leaders;
- undertook a learning walk across a number of lessons in key stages 3 and 4;
- whilst in lessons, spoke to students and undertook a scrutiny of their work;
- held separate discussions with groups of students representing Years 9 and 11;
- examined the school website;
- scrutinised a range of documents, including the school self-evaluation summary, the school development plan, and historic and current performance data.

3. Focus

- The purpose of the visit was to undertake a full school review so that the consultant could establish a baseline of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

4. Overview

- Although there are signs of improvement in various aspects of the education and care of students at Chaucer School, governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and classroom teachers have much to do if these improvements are to be secured.
- Senior leaders are well aware that the key issues revolve around ensuring high quality teaching and learning in every lesson to bring about improved outcomes for all students and especially for high and middle ability students and disadvantaged students.
- Staff morale is high and the headteacher, supported by his senior team, has done much to create a climate which enables effective teaching and learning to take place.
- Nevertheless, the opportunities offered by this increasingly workmanlike atmosphere are not yet being fully exploited by teachers to bring about improved achievement. As a result, too many students are not yet making the achievement expected based on prior attainment.
- It is possible that the school may well struggle to be judged as requiring improvement at its next inspection and that instead senior leaders may well have to argue strongly as to why the quality of education and care should not be judged to be inadequate.

5. Commentary

This review covered the following aspects:

- Outcomes for students
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- The effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programme
- The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outcomes for students

- The school's analysis of its own in-year assessments of students' performance suggests that outcomes appear to be improving. However, it is clear from this internal data, when put alongside externally validated historic data, that standards are not high enough and that students are not yet making sufficient progress.
- Results in 2015 were extremely disappointing. The school's Progress 8 figures was only just above the government's floor target. However, expected progress in English and mathematics was well below the national average, as was the school's value added score for progress in the best 8 subjects.
- The progress of disadvantaged students, which is those who are eligible for the additional pupil premium funding, is showing signs of improvement in English and mathematics. However, the gaps between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students in school and against national averages are not narrowing quickly enough.
- The current in-year data shows some signs of improvement. If predictions are realised, the school's Progress 8 figure will improve markedly from -0.48 to -0.23 and disadvantaged students are expected to do much better.
- The school is rightly focused on the progress of students who are regarded on prior attainment as high and middle ability because students in these groups have underachieved in the past and especially in 2015.
- Senior leaders are well aware that improved results are by no means certain and that much has to be done to secure these improvements this coming summer. This is because:

- improved progress has to be achieved across a range of subjects, notably English, science, history and ICT, and for a number of large groups, principally disadvantaged students and high and middle ability students;
- the quality of teaching and learning is not good enough across the curriculum for the school to be confident that improved outcomes will be secured.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. There are pockets of good practice but there are too few of them. The school's internal tracking data, though, suggests that the quality of teaching and learning is improving.
- The school has introduced the Teacher Enhancement and Effectiveness Programme (TEEP) to help all staff focus on the importance of systematic planning and coherent delivery of the teaching strategies selected. It also hopes

that this approach will engage many more students much more directly in their learning.

- The school's own analysis suggests that the TEEP cycle is having some success in improving staff planning and delivery in the classroom and engaging students more in their work.
- Learning walks undertaken during the visit, however, revealed a mixed picture. Too many students in classes in both key stages 3 and 4 comply with instructions and undertake tasks set but far too many students display a high degree of indifference to what they are studying. In addition, the TEEP approach appeared to be conspicuous by its absence from most of the lessons visited by the reviewer and the senior member of staff who accompanied him on each of the learning walks.
- High quality teaching and learning was observed. In one lesson, for example, it was effective because the teacher used his subject knowledge well to enthuse the students, develop their understanding, and, through focused questions, make them think carefully about what they were learning. The students responded in turn showing a high level of interest in the subject matter.
- In too many lessons, learning lacked a clear focus and students made limited progress because there was insufficient challenge and expectations were not high enough. The needs of the different abilities in classes were not being met because a 'one size fits all' approach was being adopted.
- Students report that the quality of teaching and learning is improving and that the written feedback they receive from their teachers is much more helpful than it used to be.
- The quality of marking and feedback, though, is somewhat variable. Teachers are adept at praising students' work by identifying 'What Went Well'. However, the 'Even Better If' comments and the responses by students to those targets are inconsistent. Too few targets lack precision and subject-specificity so that the students' rejoinders are too often bland and brief.
- Senior leaders responsible for developing teaching and learning across the school exude vibrancy. There is much activity to help teachers to improve, notably through the teaching and learning team; the training programme; the provision of teaching guidance, hints and tips; and the creation of a teaching and learning hub. Although a range of activities is in place, the evaluation of the impact of those activities is not as detailed as the description of them.
- The school has revised its assessment system and created a structure to allow for the assessment of students' progress across key stages 3 and 4 using the new GCSE grades. This work is at an early stage and its success will depend ultimately on the accuracy of the data gathered and submitted by staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- The school has well-developed systems and approaches for supporting students especially the vulnerable and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Students' attendance is poor and requires additional and urgent attention. It remains below the national average and is currently at the same level as last year. The attendance of disadvantaged students is not improving and persistent absenteeism appears to have deteriorated.
- The school has tightened up on students' behaviour and the number of recorded incidents of serious misbehaviour have understandably risen.

- The number of fixed term exclusions has also risen. Worryingly, a high proportion of these exclusions involves students in Year 8.
- Students reported that behaviour is much better about the school. However, they also reflected that there is still too much poor behaviour in lessons which is not dealt with quickly enough by teachers. Year 11 students were particularly frustrated by this because, as they pointed out, it meant that they did not learn as well as they should.
- Students also commented that some staff do not use the sanctions' policy consistently or fairly.
- Students are clear that they feel safe at school. However, they were concerned that:
 - the school's attention to key issues such as anti-bullying is a focus at a particular time of the year but it subsequently 'fades in importance';
 - many girls avoid the toilets because they are 'unclean';
 - life lessons cover the 'right issues' but as Year 11 has unfolded the content of these lessons has reduced so that they are now 'rarely used' for life issues.
- On the other hand, students spoke highly of the careers' education and guidance they had received.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

- Governors are evaluative and astute. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are keen to ensure that the quality assurance processes they oversee are robust so that senior and middle leaders are appropriately held to account.
- They recognise that better outcomes, including the progress of groups such as disadvantaged and higher ability students, and higher standards of teaching and learning are two of the most important issues facing the school.
- Governors provide support and challenge, though they admit that the rigour of challenge around how the school spends its pupil premium funds has not been robust or evaluative enough.
- Middle leaders could articulate the school's challenges and acknowledged that their weekly line management meetings not only helped them focus but also provided regular checks on the impact of their actions.
- They noted that the morale of staff is high and there is much support for the improvement agenda. They recognise that raising students' aspirations is an important but challenging objective. They commented that they valued the TEEP approach to planning, not least because it was encouraging greater collaboration between teachers and across subjects.
- Senior leaders know their briefs and, with varying degrees of success, could convincingly explain the impact of the work for which they were responsible.
- The headteacher leads the school well. He has brought about much improvement and students noted that the school had changed 'drastically for the better'.
- The self-evaluation document is thorough but rather descriptive. It lacks sufficient references to impact and evaluation and the coverage of Key Stage 3 is somewhat limited. The self-evaluation summary is more helpful but has even fewer references to Key Stage 3.
- The structure of the self-evaluation documents, which focus on responses to set questions, provides a useful checklist. However, such an approach can be limiting and can lead to avoidable omissions.

6. Points for consideration

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.

7. Next visit

Proposed date: Visit 2 Tues 3 May 2016

Foci – to be determined in discussion with the headteacher:

- Progress update and impact of specific actions taken since Visit 1 in relation to the points for consideration
 - Update on the education and care of students in Year 8
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