



School Improvement Review, Spring Term 2017

School:	Chaucer School, Sheffield
Review date:	31 January 2017
Reviewer:	Dr Michael Maddison Director, Maddison Education Consultancy
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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). Since leaving Ofsted as a permanent member of staff, Michael has undertaken a number of whole school, faculty and subject reviews throughout the country as an independent consultant. He also continues to undertake some inspection work with Ofsted. 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 fourth visit to the school by this consultant to undertake a School Improvement Review.
- The school was last inspected in April 2016 when it was judged to require special measures. The first HMI monitoring visit took place in November 2016 when leaders and managers were judged to be taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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, a selection of middle leaders, and a group of classroom teachers;
- held a separate meeting with a group of students representing Year 9;
- scrutinised a range of documents including current performance data and the school improvement plan.

3. Focus

- The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the progress made and the impact of actions taken since the previous visit and since the Ofsted inspection.
- Specific attention was paid to:
 - the progress of all students especially those in Year 11;
 - the impact of pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged and more-able disadvantaged students;
 - effectiveness of leadership and management;
 - the progress in improving behaviours and learning attitudes of students in Year 9.

4. Overview

- Although there is much to do to bring about sustained improvement, there is clear evidence of several green shoots which indicate that the school is moving forward.
- An analysis of current performance data shows that more students are making more progress across the curriculum in each year group in Key Stage 3 and particularly in Year 7.
- However, students in Year 11 are not yet making sufficient progress, nor are disadvantaged students in this year group and especially those who are more-able disadvantaged.
- Through Positive Discipline (PD), leaders and managers are successfully creating the optimum conditions for teaching and learning; it is now up to individual teachers to exploit these favourable circumstances to ensure that students make at least expected progress.
- Visits to a number of lessons during the review day indicated that, although most teachers observed are beginning to make the most of the more settled climate in classrooms, this is not yet universal.

5. Commentary

This report covers the following aspects:

- Overview: progress, teaching and learning, leadership and management
- Impact of pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged and more-able disadvantaged students.
- Progress in improving behaviours and learning attitudes of students in Year 9.

Overview: progress, teaching and learning, leadership and management

- At the time of this review, during this academic year students' performance data has been collected once for Years 7 to 9 and twice for Years 10 and 11.
- This data is increasingly robust because of the quality assurance measures in place. These include in-school standardisation and moderation procedures and external checks from staff across TSAT, subject-specialist consultants and awarding body examiners. Together these measures are helping to assure the accuracy and validity of this data.
- The data is analysed with increasing rigour and the messages disseminated to middle leaders and classroom teachers. However, not all teachers are yet using this information in their planning to help them pitch their teaching appropriately for the students in their classes.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders as to how this data might be made more accessible to them when they undertook learning walks and thus more significant for classroom teachers in their planning and ongoing assessment of students' understanding and progress.
- The performance data indicates that more students are making expected progress across the curriculum in each year group in Key Stage 3.
- This promising position is marked in Year 7 with positive progress scores for all students including those who are disadvantaged and those with high, middle and low prior achievement.
- Students with low prior achievement, including those who are disadvantaged, are also currently assessed as having positive progress scores in Years 8 and 9. This indicates that the support in place for these students is effectively helping them to make progress.
- The performance data for students in Years 10 and 11 is disappointing. Although there is some improvement in progress in Year 10 between the first and second data collection points, in Year 11 the negative progress scores have regressed.
- This is particularly due to the results attained in the mock examinations in English and mathematics which were taken between data collection points one and two. The message is clear that teachers have much to do to ensure that all students make at least expected progress in the final months of their GCSE course especially in these two core subjects.
- Students with middle and especially high prior achievement, including those who are disadvantaged, are judged to have negative progress scores in each of Years 8 to 11. This implies that the level of challenge for these students is not yet high enough to help them, and especially the most able, to achieve well and make more than expected progress. The message here is that teachers need to be more aware of the students who fall in these groups and have higher expectations of them in their learning.
- Analyses of performance data by subject indicate underachievement in Years 11 and 10 but that more students making positive progress at Key Stage 3. In Year

7, for example, positive progress scores are recorded in English, geography, history, mathematics, music and science.

- The improvements in progress are essentially due to improvements in teaching and learning, notably more staff having higher expectations of younger students, and focusing on greater student engagement, thorough planning and diagnostic marking and feedback.
- These developments are becoming possible because of the improved climate across the school.
- PD is effectively bringing about a more settled and workmanlike atmosphere in classrooms as shown in the fall in incidents of in-class misbehaviour.
- However, as noted on the learning walks undertaken on the review day and by the group of Year 9 students who were interviewed, not all staff are consistently implementing the PD system.
- Overall, teachers are able to focus more effectively on their teaching and students are able to focus more effectively on their learning.
- Thirteen lessons were visited on two learning walks, each of which were undertaken jointly with middle leaders.
- It was pleasing to see that, overall, in the seven Year 11 lessons and in one of the Year 9 lessons students were engaged in their learning, were tackling work targeted at their ability, and were being made to think about their new learning.
- However, in four Year 9 lessons and one Year 10 lesson, teaching was not effective enough because students were observed to be tackling work they clearly did not fully understand or were being asked to undertake the same work irrespective of their ability.
- This aspect of teaching still needs focused concentration by the school to ensure that teachers consistently differentiate work to support and challenge students as appropriate.
- In general, marking and feedback is more diagnostic because it indicates not just what students need to do to improve but also how they might achieve these improvements.
- In relation to teaching and learning, though, the overriding concerns are the lack of challenge for the more able and the tendency of teachers to set the same work for all students.
- Middle leaders and managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and they are being made increasingly more accountable for this work. Overall, those interviewed are responding well to this challenge.
- Senior leaders are focused on improving the school and they are moving ahead on each of the areas for improvement. They are clear on actions being undertaken but need to be more analytical and precise in relation to impact.

Impact of pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged and more-able disadvantaged students

- The school has appointed a Pupil Premium Champion and, together with a number of other leaders, she is actively engaged in implementing a range of actions to support those students for whom the school receives additional funding.
- Leaders could describe and explain the activities which are in place and many of the ways in which the pupil premium funding is being spent. However, they were less convincing in how they have and will assess impact.
- They are rightly focused on raising the profile of pupil premium students with staff and on raising disadvantaged students' aspirations and ambitions.
- The actions in place are appropriate though leaders need to be much more ambitious in this work if they are to ensure that all disadvantaged students, including the more able, make the progress expected of them at Key Stage 4 and especially in Year 11.
- The current performance data of students in Years 10 and 11 is such that it suggests that the ways in which the pupil premium funding, amounting to c.£460,000 this year, is being spent might not have the impact desired for these students.

Progress in improving behaviours and learning attitudes of students in Year 9

- Senior and middle leaders involved in this work are able to point to a range of actions and how these activities are bringing about improvements in the behaviour of students in Year 9 and in their attitudes to learning.
- The close mentoring and coaching of individual students and groups of targeted students is having a positive impact, as are the meetings with careers' advisers for all students returning from fixed-term exclusions.
- The tweaking of PD systems to allow for some element of flexibility for students with acute additional needs is an appropriate strategy.
- The prioritisation of progress data before attendance and behaviour information when reviewing Year 9 students is also a welcome move.
- The opportunities for student leadership for those in Year 9 is being extended and targeted to draw in an increasing number of students.
- All this work is having a positive impact as seen in the improvement in students' attitudes to adults and each other in classrooms, in the moderation of their behaviours on corridors and in social areas, and in the green shoots in achievement as noted by the positive progress scores for students with low prior achievement in the available performance data.
- However, the attendance of Year 9 students is below the whole school attendance and well below the national average. Senior leaders are well aware that this remains a major focus for the school.
- Year 9 students interviewed welcomed the improvements in behaviour and reported that the quality of teaching, marking and feedback are improving.
- However, they felt that not all teachers implemented the PD system in the same way and this they saw as being unfair. All students believed that marking and feedback could be even better if all teachers made it clear how they were to improve as well as telling them what they needed to do to improve. They added that work in lessons was not always challenging and that they found much of what they were set to be easy. This was a particular concern of the more-able

students. They were critical of the fact that although they completed the homework tasks set last term, not all teachers had collected them and they wanted Life lessons to be more useful by focusing on such topics as finance and money management.

6. Points for consideration

The school has a clear list of priorities identified at the inspection in April. To help it respond effectively to the areas for improvement which have been set, it is recommended that leaders and managers:

1. ensure that all teachers use the performance data which is collected much more effectively in their planning so that teachers differentiate work so that students receive the level of challenge which is appropriate to their prior achievement;
2. ensure that the PD system is implemented by all staff in a consistent way so that it has the desired impact of creating the optimum environment in which teachers can focus on teaching and students on learning;
3. focus relentlessly on improving progress for all students, especially the more-able, the disadvantaged and the more-able disadvantaged, and particularly those who are currently in Year 11;
4. ensure that all leaders and managers have a tighter grasp of each of the aspects for which they are responsible and are more analytical and precise in relation to the impact of all actions taken within their remits.

END OF REPORT
