

Notes on SIP visit to Woodlands Community College on Wed. 7th



Report to Governors

The programme for this SIP visit consisted of the following:

Lightman Consulting
Education Consultancy Services

1. Update with headteacher and preparation for performance review.
2. Meetings with SLT to review SDP sections on quality of education, leadership, behaviour attitudes personal development
3. Learning walk
4. Meetings with lead staff on CPD and attendance
5. Meeting with SENDCOs
6. Student voice session
7. Feedback to Head and Governors.
8. PM meeting for Headteacher (reported separately)

Key points from the day:

General:

Since my last visit the school has been inspected and deservedly awarded 'Good' gradings in all categories. This reflects the strong progress over recent years which I have witnessed during my visits. The school's reputation in the community has been transformed with all year groups now full. In my conversations with students their pride in their school was very evident.

During the day we reviewed progress towards the wide ranging and ambitious 2-year development plan. There are very few objectives which are now well on the way to being met in spite of the well-known challenges facing all schools over recent years. Nevertheless, there is no complacency and it is fully recognised that there will continue to be more to do to ensure that these important developments are fully embedded beyond the three year cycle of the plan. The school is now well placed to begin the process of developing its vision for the next stage of its development in the form of a new 5-year development plan. This could consider aspects such as the wider preparation of Woodlands students for lives in world which is rapidly changing in terms of the green agenda, developments in technology etc. The development of this vision is reflected in the headteacher's performance objectives for the next year.

- Attendance remains a massive challenge for all schools with figures affected at Woodlands by the reduced immunity of children following the pandemic. However, since my last visit strengthened procedures of high quality for the management of attendance and punctuality have been put in place. Data is analysed forensically and strong systems exist to investigate and follow up absence. The attendance lead reports regularly to the SLT and this data is shared with governors. The attendance team regularly visits homes and a vacancy for a family liaison officer is being advertised. Attendance is an example of very effective collaborative work across the secondary schools in the trust where ideas and strategies are shared.

- Quality of Education – The developments and improvements in classroom practice continue to be informed by departmental reviews and lesson visits underpinned by an open-door culture. During my visits to lessons across a range of subjects I saw very good examples of feedback from regular assessments enabling students and teachers to understand which areas required further consolidation. Students and their parents are well informed about the curriculum with useful leaflets summarising planned learning in each term being published. In my student voice sessions children were very clear about the benefits of this clarity and felt confident that they were well informed about how they were progressing and what they needed to do. They clearly valued the quality of teaching as well as the very positive relationships with staff which I was able to see in all classrooms. I also saw good examples of questioning using techniques such as ‘no hands up’ and an approach to reading aloud by students, the teacher and whole class which ensured that everyone was engaged. Further priorities include work on those students who are more passive in the classroom, practice of tier 3 vocabulary and the achievement of further consistency of practice. Subject development weeks with the departmental teams and SLT inform subject improvement plans by identifying strengths areas for development, immediate and medium-term actions. Year 11s have recently completed mocks with current predictions giving an early indication of an improvement in the P8 score.
- Systems for the management of behaviour are strong with the SLT providing high profile support via an on-call system. The impact of these systems was evident in the classrooms I visited where behaviour was very good and students were engaged in their learning. Provision for those children who present challenging behaviour makes good use of some external programmes including partnership working across 3 secondary schools for temporary placements. Though some external programmes are costly they are enabling some potential NEET students to remain engaged in their education. The ‘team around schools’ initiative has the potential for the various agencies to benefit students by working together. The use of ‘Class Charts has been welcomed by staff and facilitates immediate communication with home and well as useful tools for students and staff. *At present the attendance function has not been purchased leading to some duplication with existing systems.*
- CPD continues to be a strength of the school with all staff with leadership responsibilities being given the opportunity to undertake NPQs and the headteacher leading from the front on this by following the NPQEL. These external programmes are complemented by carefully planned school based CPD programmes for all teaching and non-teaching staff informed by their needs and requests, teaching and learning reviews and learning walks.
- The students I met spoke highly of their school, the staff and the teaching they receive. They felt that they were challenged appropriately in lessons and helped to master difficult topics. The range of options in KS4 has enabled them to study new subjects including some more vocational options such as Hair and Beauty. The reintroduction of extra-curricular activities including transition week has been valued greatly. Trips such as the Isle of Wight, Paris and theatre trips were highlighted. Year 7s were involved in a number of clubs but *year 9s upwards less so.* This seems to be reflected in the very informative and useful pupil perceptions survey used. It was clear that the year 7 students had enjoyed a much easier induction into the school than the year 9s who had missed out on that opportunity though all had settled in well and felt fully supported when here. Students also valued the careers programmes on offer and the opportunities to hear from colleges and employers. They felt that behaviour was good and issues dealt with effectively *though did report a recent spike in incidents in year 10. The only things students didn’t like were the PE kit and the quality of food/portion size since the contractor has changed.* Several of the students I met were prefects or members of the School Council. They appreciate these opportunities and fulfil an important role welcoming visitor etc. as well as helping the school to identify and move forward developments. They felt that their contributions such as discussions about the need for a pedestrian crossing are valued and listened to.
- The SENDCos have achieved a great deal since my meetings with them soon after their appointment. Procedures discussed previously have been developed including the way students are allocated to nurture and high needs groups and staff allocated. Work on support for students with autism and wider awareness of staff and students is an important development with the potential to help teachers to develop their expertise and understanding of a range of needs. The coordinators have also been

running very useful CPD for staff. Work is taking place to meet the needs of transient pupils. *The ALPS provision is separate from the SENDCo brief and I wondered whether their closer involvement might help to address some of the underlying learning needs of these students.*

- The school does well to provide for EAL students in spite of a lack of additional resource. The demographic of the school's intake has changed and it would be prudent to review the impact of current provision on the outcomes of these students. *Is the mainstream curriculum meeting their needs?*
- In several of my conversations it was clear that collaborative work across the Cooperative Trust is proving valuable. I understand that the SLA with the Thornden MAT has been less productive. With the current uncertainty around DFE policy and the withdrawal of the Schools Bill as well as the school's current strong position there seems to be little rationale for moving away from the status quo.

Personal note: I have informed the school that I plan to retire at the end of this academic year after my June visit. It has been a pleasure to work with the school in this capacity.

Date of next SIP visit: June 14th

Brian Lightman