

Review Report for Samuel King's School July 6th, 2016

The review focused on the progress made in addressing the recommendations of the section 5 Ofsted report (10-11 March 2015) and the subsequent section 8 Ofsted monitoring report (01 July, 2015) The section 5 Ofsted report judged the school to be 'requiring improvement' and the section 8 judged that 'effective action' was being taken

Therefore, this review considered the following recommendations:

1. Raise students' achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, and improve teaching and students' behaviour by:
 - i. giving students challenging work and moving them on quickly to more difficult tasks as soon as they are ready,
 - ii. improving students' attitudes to learning by insisting on high quality presentation and layout of work in books,
 - iii. ensuring that the marking of students' work gives them clear pointers on how to improve and making sure that students act on the advice given,
 - iv. regularly checking the impact of the school's policy on early entry to examinations to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all students.
2. Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
 - i. ensuring that the spending of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged students is fully effective in raising their achievement,
 - ii. ensuring that middle leaders monitor the progress of students accurately and rigorously and quickly bring about improvements in their areas of responsibility,
 - iii. making sure that the recording of staff safeguarding qualifications and incidents of students' challenging behaviour enables this important information to be retrieved easily and checked regularly and so that patterns of poor behaviour to be identified and addressed quickly.

And then two recommendations from the section 8 monitoring visit:

3. Strengthen improvement planning to make it clear who will lead actions, how progress with plans will be checked and how the impact on students' achievement will be measured and evaluated.
4. Ensure teachers know how students' literacy and numeracy skills are expected to be applied in other subjects and have the subject knowledge to do so.

The review team consisted of:

- Richard Cox, Senior Adviser – Learning Improvement Service (LIS) (Team Leader)
- Tim Robertson, General Adviser – LIS
- Jon Hayes – Headteacher of The Queen Katherine School

The main findings of the review:

1. Students' achievement has been raised in English, mathematics and other subjects as evident in the high expectations of teaching and in the good quality of student work as well as in effective

teacher marking and feedback seen in this review. Some inconsistency remains but this is very much the exception. There were some opportunities missed where greater use of differentiated tasks would have increased challenge for the students in their learning. The school's internal tracking, though, of student performance indicates that achievement has been raised as compared to the last academic year.

2. Leadership, management and governance have become more effective in the use of pupil premium to improve achievement, in the monitoring of student groups, in the recording of safeguarding qualifications and student behaviour. As a result student achievement and student behaviour have improved. However, leadership, including governance, were not always sufficiently precise in their explanations of how students are progressing in the school.
3. Improvement planning has improved in that the school improvement plan identifies those responsible, includes success criteria and is updated during the year. However, planning tends to identify the progress made in completing actions rather than the impact made by such actions.
4. The school has developed literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, particularly in the introduction of literacy and numeracy sessions during morning registration. Student work did include opportunities for extended writing but did not show in marking a consistent application of a literacy policy. The overall co-ordination and monitoring of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum were not clear.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the school:

1. Ensure that the prevalent good quality of work, marking and feedback is consistent in and across all subjects.
2. Plan more explicit differentiated tasks, and direct students to undertake them, to ensure there are increased opportunities for students to be challenged in their learning.
3. Ensure that all leadership including governance is able to explain and demonstrate with precision the progress students are making; the impact of policy and practice rather than solely their implementation. This includes ensuring governors receive the necessary training and concise information to enable them to understand and explain how students are progressing, as well as how to ask the challenging questions to make sure they do so know (i.e. progress of groups such as the disadvantaged, boys and any gaps in achievement between groups)
4. Evaluate and review, as planned, the accuracy of the school's assessment of student progress as compared to the actual outcomes of 2016 when they become known. As part of this review, revise target setting for the disadvantaged to ensure gaps with the non-disadvantaged can be narrowed.
5. Ensure that the School Improvement Plan includes an impact summary on student achievement after each 'area' in the plan which is then updated regularly.
6. Ensure numeracy and literacy policies across the school are so followed that the marking of student works reflects a consistent implementation of them and that the responsibility to co-ordinate and monitor them is clear.

The team also recommend that the LA / LASL :

1. Continue to support the school through the Strategic Improvement Meetings (SIM) to monitor progress, to evaluate, agree and broker support to address specific issues.

The findings of the review in more detail

The review team met with the headteacher (HT), the deputy headteacher (DHT), the senior leader recently responsible for 'Student Outcomes', with governors and with two groups of students from Key Stage Three (KS3) and Key Stage Four (KS4). They scrutinised documentation including the school's improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, records of the Strategic Improvement Meetings (SIM), minutes of governors' meetings and various documents related to performance data. Six lessons were observed, three of which were joint observations with the DHT. Students' work was also scrutinised across the curriculum both in lessons and as a separate work sample.

1. Raise students' achievement*, particularly in English and mathematics, and improve teaching and students' behaviour by:

i. giving students challenging work and moving them on quickly to more difficult tasks as soon as they are ready,

- A good level of challenge was seen in all the lessons observed. In all lessons observed there were high expectations of students. Students responded well both in their participation within lessons and in their comprehension. It was evident that the students' ability to respond well was because these expectations have become embedded through improved quality of teaching. In English, for example, students were repeatedly challenged to use, assess and identify literary methods used in poetry and Shakespearean texts. These they used with insight to evaluate a poem new to them, so discerning the ironic tragedy intended by the poet. In Design and Technology, in another example, line drawing of objects was contrasted with the work of an artist who creates 'cartoon' characters of such objects. In mathematics pair work was used effectively to review algebraic principles and address any misconceptions. Students, in the groups interviewed, were unanimous that teaching had improved and were positive about how the school supported them in their learning.
- There was, however, limited evidence of explicit planning and preparation of different materials and work to meet the various learning needs of the students. As a result opportunities, on occasion, were missed to further challenge students' learning and move them on to more difficult tasks. For example, in one lesson extension work was suggested to the class rather than specific groups directed to attempt them so that few took that opportunity when some did have sufficient time so to do. Nevertheless, as noted above lessons had high expectations of all students to which they were able to respond. The less academically able were receiving appropriate support.
- Teaching in nearly all cases did re-inforce learning and assess the students' understanding of what they were doing through good questioning. Skilful questioning in Science, for example, on the relationships within the periodic table ably led students from their prior knowledge to consider ionic bonding. There were a few occasions, however, where questioning could have been further extended to ask the students the purpose and importance of doing a particular task as well as understanding how to do it.

ii. improving students' attitudes to learning by insisting on high quality presentation and layout of work in books,

- High quality presentation and layout were seen in students' work across the curriculum. Examples of where presentation still needed improvement were very much the exception. The quantity as well as the quality of students' work reflected conscientious attitudes to learning and, as noted above, the high expectations from teachers which evidently involved much work by them as well.

iii. ensuring that the marking of students' work gives them clear pointers on how to improve and making sure that students act on the advice given,

- Many good examples were seen of marking which gave clear pointers to students about how to improve and required student response which they did complete. Some examples were exemplary. Within most subjects marking, feedback and student response were embedded practice. The use of the 'yellow box' was being consistently applied and it was evident that this was assisting students to make better progress in their learning. It was being used to provide further challenge. In French, for example, the 'yellow box' was not only being used to address mistakes or reinforce learning but also to challenge students to proceed further in the use of tense and vocabulary. In the well-presented portfolios of Yr.11 in Art & Design there were feedback sheets that clearly gave students the next steps to improve their work. All of the KS3 student group interviewed judged that marking and feedback were useful in supporting their learning. Good detail was given on how they could improve.
- There was not full consistency across all subjects in the use of the 'yellow box', although this was the exception. Some examples were seen where the 'yellow box' was being used mechanically to give generic comments. Other examples were seen where the 'yellow box' was not yet being used extensively so feedback tended to be comments of encouragement or general statements about how to improve, but no guidance given about how to do it. This meant that in these examples student progress was less evident. Some examples were seen where students had been asked to make some response but had not done so and this had not been picked up.
- It was also not clear how target grades were being used consistently to help students to improve. Some work seen, but not all, had target sheets or stickers in them; some completed, some not. Other work had the target grade written on the cover of the book but there was then no explicit reference to this target within the marking and feedback.

iv. regularly checking the impact of the school's policy on early entry to examinations to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all students.

- The school has been checking the impact of the school's policy on early entry. As a result the early entry policy has been reviewed and revised. Next year's Yr. 11 will not be taking early entry in English and mathematics. Certain other subjects also will now only be taken later.
- However, tracking of students' achievement between early and final entry does indicate that many students have gained by having the opportunity to take these examinations

more than once. The school recognises, of course, that such a policy adversely affects their official outcomes data, but has judged that this is less important than giving students as much opportunity as possible to exceed. The school, though, as noted above, have revised their policy.

- The policy of early entry overall, however, remains in practice to allow students as much opportunity as possible in a small school to take courses and qualifications over a wide curriculum offer. This allows students to do a total of six option GCSEs throughout years 9, 10 and 11. The opportunities given to students are extensive. Increased numbers of students are studying the separate sciences and further mathematics with all students studying both English Literature and Language. This wide curriculum offer has been achieved despite the school also removing a significant budget deficit.

The school's internal assessment of student achievement and early entry indicates that final outcomes will improve in 2016 from those in 2015 for Yr11. It is expected that 'progress 8' will significantly improve from -0.56 in 2015 to +0.46 in 2016. First entry in mathematics is expected to improve from 50% (2015) to 61% (2016). First entry in English is expected to improve from 58% (2015) to 70% (2016). In both subjects there will be an increase in the percentage of students achieving grades A-A.

2. Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:

i. ensuring that the spending of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged students is fully effective in raising their achievement,

- The spending of the pupil premium funding has been reviewed (including an external review) and as a consequence its use is improving disadvantaged students' achievement. School leadership and governance were able to give an account of how the funding is used.
- The tracking of pupils in receipt of the funding has improved through the work of the DHT. Systems to track and monitor progress of the disadvantaged, which include behaviour, attitudes to learning and homework completion, are used to support and intervene where necessary.
- As a result of the above actions, school tracking indicates that there will be increased attainment and progress for disadvantaged students in the final outcomes for Yr.11 in 2016. There also is evidence that in each cohort, except Yr.11, the gap in the school with the non-disadvantaged has been narrowed, although small numbers mean that data does fluctuate. Achievement of the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged will both improve in Yr.11 outcomes but the gap will widen as compared to 2015.
- It was not evident, however, that target setting for the disadvantaged students is yet sufficiently challenging to ensure expectations are raised so that the gap with the non-disadvantaged is progressively reduced.

ii. ensuring that middle leaders monitor the progress of students accurately and rigorously and quickly bring about improvements in their areas of responsibility,

- Tracking of student progress has continued to develop so that the school has improved sources of data to monitor the progress of groups of students as well as achievement overall. The school has identified that although student achievement is improving, there

remains a persistent gender gap with middle and lower ability boys performing less well than their peers. Monitoring activities by school leadership are planned and scheduled.

- There has been significant work in further developing interventions to support and challenge those students who are not doing as well as they should. The monitoring of how these students progress has become more extensive and is reviewed frequently to ensure they are receiving the right 'tier' of support. The monitoring of such intervention does indicate a general improvement in their progress although the number on each 'tier' can vary according to need.
- The school now has a range of monitoring data which, as noted above, is being used to inform additional support for students. However, during the review it was evident that some leadership was not always able with confidence and with sufficient speed, clarity and conciseness to respond to the questions asked about student performance. This included the governors who were knowledgeable about the processes involved but less so about the impact on student achievement. It is acknowledged, though, that some in leadership are new to the role of explaining student outcomes. Minutes of governor meetings do include questions they have raised, but on occasion these could be more probing.
- The leadership of the school recognises that its present tracking and predictions of student performance will need assessing and evaluating as against the actual outcomes for this academic year when known. This is already being planned.

iii. making sure that the recording of staff safeguarding qualifications and incidents of students' challenging behaviour enables this important information to be retrieved easily and checked regularly and so that patterns of poor behaviour to be identified and addressed quickly.

- Good progress has been made in reviewing and revising the recording of staff safeguarding qualifications and incidents of students' challenging behaviour. Training of staff in safeguarding qualifications is monitored and updated appropriately. The school now has an integrated behaviour system which includes the consistent recording of incidents of students' challenging behaviour.
- As a result of better recording and subsequent action there has been an improvement in student behaviour. There has been a significant drop in behaviour incidents. There has been only one permanent exclusion (for an incident that occurred in the previous year) and one fixed term exclusion this academic year as compared to thirty-eight fixed term exclusions during the last academic year. The report card is valued as an effective means of communication between parents and the school.
- The school council has been re-instigated from September 2015 and has become active and effective in expressing student suggestions and concerns, under the guidance of the DHT.

3. Strengthen improvement planning to make it clear who will lead actions, how progress with plans will be checked and how the impact on students' achievement will be measured and evaluated.

- Improvement planning has been improved. In the school's improvement plan members of staff are identified to lead actions and there is a column about how progress will be measured as against the actions.
- However, the progress reported in the improvement plan is predominantly about the

completion of actions. As a result, it can be clear in the plan if an action has been completed but is not so clear to what degree the impact measure has been realised.

- Different editions of the plan during this academic year were seen during the review so it is evident that the plan has been periodically checked and evaluated. However, it was not clear how frequently the plan was evaluated. The most recent edition seen was dated as of January this year. No more recent one was seen.

4. Ensure teachers know how students' literacy and numeracy skills are expected to be applied in other subjects and have the subject knowledge to do so.

- Literacy and numeracy sessions have been developed by the English and mathematics subject leads for use in the morning registration sessions. Numeracy was observed during the review. All tutor staff were involved in delivering these sessions with their tutor groups. It was evident that this practice was effective in quickly establishing a working environment at the start of the school day. It was also observed that in these mixed year vertical tutor groups students did assist each other to address the questions set. The students commented positively on these sessions.
- Differentiated work was set to meet different needs in these morning sessions. The questions included problem solving as well as calculations. In what was observed, however, it was not clear if the work was sufficiently differentiated to meet the very diverse needs of the vertical tutor groups consisting of students from Yr.7 to Yr.11 (Yr.8 to 11 during the review as all years had stepped up in preparation for the next academic year)
- Examples of extended writing were seen in work across the curriculum. Numeracy work was seen in Art and Design as well as in Science. It was not evident, however, in the work seen that a standard policy was being followed across the subjects for literacy, specifically about spelling and punctuation. It was, therefore, also not clear who had the responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Conclusion:

- The school is making good progress in addressing the Ofsted recommendations. Leadership capacity has been increased through the appointment of the DHT and more recently the senior teacher with responsibility for 'student outcomes'. The Headteacher now has more support in leading the school forward. In such a small school as Samuel Kings' virtually all teaching staff are subject leaders. Their commitment, professional knowledge and conscientiousness were evident in the review
- This is the third review of the school. The school now is very different from when the first one took place, when the school was then emerging from significant issues. Now leadership and management across the school and the quality of teaching and learning are consistently of a higher standard. Expectations are consistently much higher. This is a tribute to the commitment of leadership including governors and the staff, especially those who have been with the school throughout this journey.
- There are, of course, things still to be done but the school recognises such and has the capacity to address them, seeking specific support where it is still needed.



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School's response to the review:

Those at the feedback at the end of the review were asked if the review, and how it had been undertaken, had been fair and balanced. They said it had.