

# SIP – Note of Visit 2016/17

## PART A

<b>SCHOOL:</b> Clyst Vale Community College	<b>DCSF NO:</b> ACAD4009
<b>SIP NAME:</b> John Shears	<b>DATE OF CONTACT:</b> June 21st 2017
<b>PERSON SPOKEN TO:</b> K.BAWN (PRINCIPAL); A.GREEN, (VP); D.WALTERS, P.SUTTON, P.COLIN, C.DORMAND (SLT); SOME MIDDLE LEADERS & STAFF.	<b>DURATION</b> 3.5 hrs

## PART B

### Purpose of visit:

- To review 2016-17 progress and provide an annual report for the governing body

### EVIDENCE BASE

- Detailed discussions with the Principal and senior leaders
- Discussions with middle leaders
- Review of school data.

### MAIN FINDINGS

- While it has been a challenging year, the school has a positive atmosphere and is demonstrating progress.
- Attainment with Year 11 should be above the national average while early indications are very positive for the current Year 10 if assessment with the new GCSE grades is accurate.
- Despite considerable efforts the achievement of PP students is not closing the gap.
- Teaching is good with clear gains in marking and feedback. In most lessons students are engaged, receptive and diligent.
- While there is a good climate for learning, the changing demographic with an increase in more challenging students means that adjustments in teaching needs to be made in some areas and also a review of pastoral approaches towards the most challenging.
- The behaviour policy has been refreshed and now needs consistent implementation so as to minimise low level disruption. The great majority of students are however a real credit to Clyst Vale.
- The NQTs have made a very good start to their careers and speak positively of their experience in the school.
- Post 16 recruitment remains a major issue.
- Senior leaders face a challenging year ahead so it will be important to have a simpler improvement plan with fewer priorities that can be monitored robustly.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Year 11 Achievement**

With the national changes, there has to be some caveats but the overall picture is broadly positive and outcomes should improve against 2016. Attainment is good and the A8 score is expected to be above the national average. In this cohort, higher attainers appear to be making expected progress. The boy-girl gap is relatively small, but a factor in this is girls' prior attainment and achievement being low for this cohort. Boys' progress remains a focus for closer tracking as it is a concern for middle leaders and most year groups are imbalanced towards boys. Predicted outcomes across a broad range of subjects are above national averages and despite the understandable nervousness should be good in English and mathematics. Despite the encouraging view of attainment, it is felt by some middle and senior leaders that the SAIF process has not functioned as well this year in terms of providing clear data for class teachers and Heads of School to facilitate interventions, follow up and discussions. A new SAIF model is planned for 2017/18 and in theory looks good in terms of greater accountability but it will only have an impact if it is used robustly and consistently and the array of data is used effectively in lesson planning.

While the school anticipates an improved Progress8 figure in 2017, and it is hard to predict this accurately in advance, there are concerns as a small number of students with challenging behaviour and poor attitudes or with complex social and emotional issues can have a very significant negative impact. This weaker performance of PP students and others is likely to be a negative factor.

The school is particularly vulnerable with pupil premium. Considerable efforts and a range of strategies have been made to narrow the PP/non-PP gap but to date the impact has been limited and the gap is too great. Staff awareness of PP students is much improved and the simple strategies are employed but has the teaching changed enough with this group so that their learning is enhanced. It requires greater emphasis on differentiation by task and resource supported by greater emphasis on individual needs.

Encouragingly all the early data is indicating that the Year 10 cohort is performing well above expectation at this stage and potentially good results are likely in 2018 if the momentum can be continued and the challenge maintained. The caveat is that many subjects are working with the new GCSE gradings and assessment for the first time.

### **Post 16**

The Sixth Form continues to be a strength of the school and should be so even with a change of leadership. Students are given excellent support in terms of personal development and their learning and most achieve their potential. Despite this, recruitment is a very major issue and the attractiveness of the large local provider in Exeter means that many students choose to leave Clyst Vale at 16 despite having a very positive view of the school. Increasing student numbers is recognised by everyone as a real priority as further falls will make much of the provision unsustainable.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Overall the great majority of the teaching is good and students are engaged and positive in most lessons. While there is some low-level disruption, it is relatively small and most students have a good work ethic and want to learn. There is still however, some variability and in a few lessons learning is passive and achievement is not driven forward. Marking and feedback is improved and in some subjects like English is particularly strong. Work scrutinies and reviewing books suggest a good attitude by most students but they are also show limited differentiation and that the majority of the students are all doing the same tasks when more

individual learning needs should be met. It is also hard to see in books good evidence of progress over time as opposed to evidence of success at the time of the individual assessment and being able to show this better would be valuable.

In terms of future planning the emphasis should be on greater differentiation while recognising a reasonable approach to this; on raising expectations of teachers and challenging them; and seeking strategies that teach less but learn more through demanding greater student independence as the move to much more rigour demands nothing less. The school would benefit from strengthening the learning aspects of transition so Year 7 really accelerates. In all subject planning, there is a need now for a 5 year approach to GCSE and GCSE skills and material has to start in Year 7 and be built upon. It will also mean that assessment in Years 7-9 needs to be robust and accurate.

It is very clear that this is recognised by the VP overseeing T and L who understands these issues and that he has to do even more to drive this forward in 2017/18.

### **Newly Qualified Teachers**

The NQTs interviewed spoke positively about their experiences at Clyst Vale and are clearly happy and enjoying, despite all the hard work, the start to their teaching careers. They feel well supported in their subject areas particularly in the emotional needs of teaching and with students and enjoy being engaged in discussions on pedagogy and practice. They all had different experiences of professional development and this did not feel consistent or coherent to them. As they enjoy their teaching hugely and are keen to improve they would benefit from more time given to them with lesson observations and visits to see and aid their teaching being especially helpful. They spoke warmly of the willingness of the staff generally to help them.

New and often young teachers are a very precious resource and the early years of their careers are critical if they are to successfully grow and in time be our leaders of the future. The role of mentoring and supporting them is crucial and this should continue into the future so they are not left in a vacuum. They need clear career progression and good mentoring, target setting and follow up, which they perceive colleagues in others schools benefit from.

### **Student Support and Pastoral**

It is very clear that the school works hard to support its students and from most parents and students it gets good buy in. It is also clear that the school has a changing demographic with a wider ability range and more young people with challenging needs. It is working hard to respond to this despite reducing resources and which also requires approaches to be different. It does mean however that a number of relatively senior colleagues still have a heavy operational load. There is a feeling that we are still not challenging the students enough and we should be expecting more. The Heads of Schools and the Pastoral Leaders do face some challenges:

- They are heavily pastoral and supportive of those needs and have not been able as yet to develop fully the achievement aspects of student support.
- How to support disadvantaged and SEND students with a fewer resources?
- There is too much inconsistency among staff in general of expectation with student attitudes, standards and ethos and there is a need for greater clarity supported by follow up and impact. Everyone believes that Clyst Vale students have great potential and will perform accordingly if there is greater expectation. A minority of colleagues refer relatively low level behavioural issues to the Schools with limited intervention of their own.
- The behaviour policy has been revisited. Implementation next year is a priority to ensure consistency and clarity.

## **Leadership and Management**

There is little doubt that this has been a very challenging year for the senior team and credit is due to the way that they have tackled difficult staff reductions; been sympathetic to staff work load issues; supported colleagues with their new specifications and overseen improvements in Year 11 performance.

In terms of looking forward and with a smaller team there are a number of issues to respond to:

- Planning needs to be simpler with fewer priorities and greater clarity. Have a relentless simple message and keep following it through. A relatively small number of actions done well would make a difference. SLT is aware of the main challenges such as PP, improving SAIF and differentiation for example but often in the busy operational world lose sight of them.
- Being more strategic and monitoring more effectively. Good ideas are often initiated but not followed through to ensure impact. Holding themselves and others to account is crucial. Sometimes the central strands of improvement are lost by being busy and not followed up.
- Fewer priorities would mean SLT can have a higher presence and visibility focussing on them. Keep it simple and be very clear about expectation and challenge any underperformance more robustly while being generous to the success stories. With new SLT roles established and clearly defined for 2017/18, it will be crucial that individual members take ownership of their portfolio and drive it forward.
- Meetings and consultation at all levels needs to be more effective. Momentum is often lost in discussion and building consensus; actions take too long and sometimes the end product is not clear. While staff value being consulted they also want clear direction. Middle leaders' meetings need a better balance between consultation and direction and overall there is still too great an emphasis on management and organisational matters rather than a focus on strategy, T and L or raising standards.
- As with SLT, middle leaders need also to focus on fewer priorities and this is crucial as they establish the new GCSE specifications. The focus will be to ensure that T and L and assessment deliver good achievement and this must be central to planning and meetings. It also means that middle leaders must hold colleagues to account and SLT will need to model and support this as earlier visits have indicated inconsistency between middle leaders outside the Core subjects over the monitoring of teaching and learning.

There is considerable goodwill within the school and for many a real desire to do more for the students and a genuine belief that the students will respond accordingly and yet there is a frustration that we are not reaching our potential and we can all do more to contribute to this if the direction of travel is clear. Most staff are working very hard with a high level of commitment but need to work smarter and a simpler clear direction that is supported by rigour, challenge and support is the key.

### **Some recommendations:**

- Simplify the College Improvement Plan with far fewer priorities (a max. of 3 per Ofsted section perhaps?)
- On achievement, the focus needs to be pupil premium and boys
- In terms of T and L there needs to be a very explicit focus on differentiation/ individualised approaches as well ensuring that the new SAIF process and data is used to inform teachers and pastoral leaders simply and efficiently so that interventions are effective
- Ensure that the implementation of the Behaviour Policy is a priority
- Review approaches to the most challenging students at a time of diminishing

resources

- Ensure that all meetings are sharper and outcome driven with wherever possible a focus on T and L and achievement issues.

**HEADTEACHER'S or PRINCIPAL'S COMMENTS:**

(If you wish to make any comments, as agreed in the Protocol Governing Visits made by **Babcock LDP** Advisers to Schools, please use this space and return a copy to the author of the School Visit Notes.)

**CIRCULATION:**

Please circulate this visit note to headteacher and chair of governors, and also to Sally.Watts @babcockinternational.com on behalf of Babcock LDP