

Adviser visit to support Annual School Evaluation 2021/22

Name of School: Glyne Gap School

Name of Adviser: Bob Wall

Date of Report: Monday 11th October 2021

1. Self-evaluation

School's self-evaluation judgement for overall effectiveness:

The school judges their overall effectiveness to be outstanding. Sufficient evidence to support this judgement was seen as a result of a scrutiny of school documentation, discussion with the headteacher and senior leaders and observations during the adviser's visit.

The school has a very well-established, stable, and highly effective governing body, senior leadership team (SLT) and extended leadership team. The school's headteacher has just entered her ninth year of headship having successfully led the school through two outstanding Ofsted inspections in 2015 and 2019. The school has consistently strived, over many years, to ensure high quality educational provision and outstanding outcomes for pupils. The school is driven by a very strong moral purpose, supported by a clear ethos of constant reflection and improvement.

The governing body is aware that although they have considerable skills and knowledge in areas of finance, safeguarding, human resources and premises management, their skills and experience and available time is more limited in the areas of educational provision. To ensure that scrutiny, support, and challenge is secured in this key area, governors have employed the services of a professional adviser over a number of years to support them and particularly their teaching and learning committee.

The headteacher and the school's senior leaders have continued (despite the Covid-19 pandemic) to examine and reflect on the school's provision and pupil outcomes. Leaders engage widely in professional conversations and both invite and promote challenge. As a result, the school's Self Evaluation Form (SEF) is an extremely accurate record and evaluative analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development and improvement.

The school has a consistent and long-established track record of identifying areas for school developments, successfully leading change and implementing improvements which have a positive impact on school provision and pupil outcomes. The identification of the need to implement a (Covid-19 pandemic) recovery assessment and curriculum provision is one such example. The school's SLT drafted a detailed recovery assessment framework. This framework was implemented in Term 1 (2020) and used to inform regular liaison meetings with each class teacher during Term 1 and Term 2 (2020). These meetings allowed the school's three Assistant Headteachers (AHTs) to review the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on all pupils with every class teacher. This process led to the revised formulation of pupils' Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), further reflection and additional (remedial) provision for identified pupils (see details below). This assessment process (and resulting interventions) was highly successful and has been repeated twice more, in Term 4 (2021) following the Spring 2021 lockdown, and again in Term 1 (2021). The school's SLT have reflected further on the benefits of the assessment and adopted elements of the process to their (ongoing) Term 1 and 2 liaison meetings to allow the school to identify any impact on pupils of the 'normal' extended summer break. This attention to detail, constant reflection, and drive to improve is one of many available examples of the school's leadership approach to development and improvement.

The school undertook a SLES safeguarding review in March 2019 at which pupils were judged to be safeguarded well. The school's culture and safeguarding practice has developed further since that time. The school operates a safeguarding team consisting of a Designated

Safeguarding Leader (DSL), four deputy DSLs and a further trained DSL who is a member of the administration team and has responsibility for safer recruitment and a safeguarding team administrative assistant. This team is also supported by a senior teacher (member of the extended leadership team) who has responsibility for leading and managing on the school's culture and practice in meeting pupils' health and care needs.

There are highly effective arrangements in place to identify pupils who may need early help, or who are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming, or exploitation. The school operates a weekly safeguarding meeting where the safeguarding team review pupils at local authority levels 3 and 4. The school also maintains an overview of pupils they judge to be at level 2-plus, and who may well be at risk of more formal safeguarding referral and intervention. The school's safeguarding practice has recently been commended by Independent Reviewing Officers and chairs of child protection procedures in leading to positive outcomes for pupils.

The school uses the online Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) and all staff have been trained to use this platform. Staff have been provided with annual refresher training in September 2021, related to the Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) document, which the school has made mandatory for all members of staff. The school has commissioned SLES to provide full safeguarding training to all staff in January 2022.

The headteacher noted that the safeguarding demands on the school and staff team are continuing to increase. In reflecting upon and analysing this trend she noted that she believes that this is a combination of a reduction in safeguarding thresholds alongside the expectation of increasing levels of support from schools and a rise in the threshold for external support from social care colleagues and others.

The school has a very accurate and up-to-date SEF. The document is structured in line with the revised (September 2019) Ofsted framework and contains a very clear summary judgement of the school's overall effectiveness, drawing directly from judgements made in the following (separate) sections. Clear reference is made throughout the document to supporting evidence which is available for scrutiny either on the school's website or at the school.

The document has separate sections for each of the Ofsted framework sections – quality of education; behaviour and attitudes, personal development; and leadership and management. Each section includes the school's overall judgement for their provision, with a clear reference to the Ofsted criteria to validate the judgement. The school has then provided an evaluation of the school's strengths in each area along with details of further sources of evidence to support the school's assertions. Each section concludes with details of the school's 'next steps' to further develop and improve provision.

The document is very well structured and presented, succinct and highly evaluative. The analysis of strengths is well-argued and evidence to support the school's analysis is clear and concise. The document has been presented, discussed, and agreed with governors at a number of relevant committee meetings and is due to be ratified by the full governing body before the end of October 2021. The structure and content of the document indicate that senior leaders at the school have an excellent working knowledge of the Ofsted framework, and can very accurately apply the Ofsted guidance outlined in the inspection handbook to an evaluation of the educational provision at the school.

The school's SLT are in the process of finalising two short additional sections of the SEF to record their self-evaluation of the school's Early Years and Sixth Form (Faculty) provision. This will add further quality to the document.

The SEF includes a very clear identification of next steps for school development in each of the Ofsted framework areas. These are presented as actions, tasks, or outcomes. In one case the school has identified a rationale for the next step. This provides an extremely informative and helpful evaluative explanation of the reason that the next step has been identified for

development. The inclusion of a similar short rationale for other identified next steps would significantly strengthen the quality of the SEF and provide evidence to a range of stakeholders of the underlying reasons for selected developments. It would also provide further strong evidence of the very high quality of leadership and management at the school.

Last Ofsted judgement: Outstanding (May 2019)

The school was last inspected (short inspection) in May 2019 and judged to be outstanding overall. The key issue identified for improvement at that time was:

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to develop the curriculum to enable pupils to leave with the skills and aspirations to become as independent as possible, pursue purposeful activities, contribute to their family and community and, where appropriate, gain meaningful employment.

This continues to be a focus of the school's development and considerable work has been undertaken to support learners at the earliest stages (using the Engagement Profile) and further embedding the school's supergoal approach to ensure that what is learnt is truly relevant and meaningful in a pupil's (later) life. The current SDP identifies plans for further work-related learning, particularly for a higher attaining cohort now attending the school's sixth form/faculty.

There is strong evidence of the impact of the work the school has undertaken in this area. Six pupils are now independent travellers to and from school, and a number of older pupils have taken on roles of responsibility within their homes. In addition, the school has worked with a supported employment provider to offer a supported internship for one pupil for whom this was relevant. This development has provided the school's staff team with considerable experience which they now plan to formalise into the curriculum structure for others, and to ensure that such provision is both manageable and sustainable.

The school is currently facing a significant financial challenge in the longer-term (2023/24) (see further below). The headteacher has requested support from the attached adviser to investigate, reflect and engage with staff and governors on the (possible) underlying reasons for this challenge and how the issue could potentially be addressed. It was agreed that the attached adviser would discuss this request with SLES colleagues.

The school is a member of the local authority's special schools' Strategic Management Board that meets regularly with Children's Services leaders. These meetings have been paused for a period. However, the school's headteacher is one of three headteachers who are working with Children's Services leaders to reinstate the meetings and jointly agree a clear focus, terms of reference, and agenda.

The school has previously been part of the Special Schools' Alliance which joined all East Sussex (both maintained and academy) special schools in school improvement focussed work. The future of this group is being re-evaluated following the opening (and planned opening) of a number of Free (special) schools. The headteacher reported that a meeting is planned to agree the focus of this group and to negotiate performance indicators.

The school does not currently participate in locality groups or EIP (Education Improvement Partnership). The reason for this decision is that the focus and agendas of these groups are not sufficiently aligned to the improvement priorities of the school.

2. School Improvement Planning

The school has an up-to-date School Development Plan (SDP) outlining the priorities / next steps identified within the SEF (see above). The current written plan is an overview identifying these priorities against the four broad sections of the Ofsted framework; quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; leadership and management. The headteacher

has clear plans for this framework to include leadership responsibility, specific tasks, resource implications and completion timescales. This more detailed plan is currently being drafted and, when completed, will provide a basis for governors and senior leaders to monitor the progress of development using a periodic RAG rating system.

The school has a highly structured curriculum and a detailed and comprehensive system for establishing targets for individual pupils. The school's use of a Supergoal approach to ensure that what is learnt is truly relevant and meaningful in an individual pupil's (later) life underlines the focus the school has on preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and later, adult life.

The school's curriculum, individual pupils' IEPs, the supergoal approach and detailed transition support all ensure that pupils are extremely well prepared to move to the next stage of their education – from the school's nursery to the main school site, between the lower and upper school departments, and from the main site on to the school's sixth form/Faculty. NEET data indicates that 100% of pupils have successfully transitioned to the next stage of their education and/or training.

The school's three AHTs are responsible for termly (class) liaison meetings in their respective departments – lower school, upper school and sixth form/Faculty. These meetings ensure a rigorous, reflective, and challenging examination of individual targets for pupils in each class grouping with the pupil's class teacher. This robust leadership and management system helps to ensure that targets are robust and consistently challenging.

Evidence from discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders show that they have implemented considerable (positive) change and improvement in the school over an extended period of time. This has been recognised at two successive outstanding Ofsted inspections and through other external evaluation. These improvements are the result of a detailed, rigorous, and ongoing evaluation, and a committed and continuous drive to improve provision and pupil outcomes. It is clear that the headteacher and senior leaders have undertaken further evaluation and have plans for developments during the coming school year supported by clear planning. Based on the evidence of previous practice there is considerable confidence that the planned improvements will be implemented effectively.

3. Curriculum development and quality of education

The school has a very well-structured curriculum framework which is differentiated to meet the learning needs of pupils as they progress through the school, at early years, within the main school, and in the school's sixth form/Faculty. The school describes these three curriculums as progressive 'chapters' or 'steps' that pupils build upon as they move through the school. The school has designed each step to be "appropriate to the age, interests and developmental and environmental needs of each child as they progress from infancy to adulthood". Within each of the three broad curriculum 'steps' the school has identified Tier 1 learning, which includes essential skills for learning and life, with a changing focus as pupils become older, mature and move through the school. Tier 2 learning is also included at each of the three curriculum steps and provides pupils with a breadth of experience. The school has given considerable thought to their curriculum framework and the resulting structure provides an extremely well-considered and detailed matrix of skill development and experiences for pupils to access as they move through the school. The school has developed a comprehensive assessment framework which complements their curriculum framework.

A detailed curriculum policy is published on the school's website which provides a very clear, comprehensive, and detailed description of the content and structure of the school's curriculum offer:

https://www.glynegap.org/article.php/178/teaching_and_learning_policy/841538e1b888d103a720d4fa1cbf2648

The school's curriculum is a national exemplar and widely considered by practitioners in the special educational field as an outstanding model of curriculum development.

Glyne Gap is a special school, and all pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and are judged as having SEND. Pupils requiring additional interventions are quickly identified and tailored individual support is provided. Outcomes for pupils are particularly strong. Preparation of pupils to move to the school's main site and to the sixth form site is extremely well managed. The school's NEET data indicates that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and training.

The school's main curriculum areas of focus are communication and personal development. The development of pupils' communication skills are led and managed by a long-established and highly skilled communication team who have in-depth knowledge of the curriculum area and strive to improve curriculum provision and outcomes for all pupils. Personal development is equally well led and managed by a member of the extended leadership team.

Responsibility for leading and managing the wider curriculum is shared across the extended leadership team and particularly the school's SLT where the three AHTs have responsibility for each of the three curriculum 'steps' described above. This leadership and management structure ensures a detailed knowledge of the curriculum across the school.

The school has a very clear curriculum and assessment structure which is very well understood by all staff. Highly effective and comprehensive staff induction ensures that teaching staff understand the curriculum structure and can plan and deliver lessons effectively in line with this structure. The three AHTs closely monitor teachers planning and pupils' IEPs to ensure that planning at class and individual pupil level is aligned to the school's curriculum plans and is appropriate to individual pupil needs. The termly liaison meetings, focussed weekly on a different class, allow the AHTs to monitor discrete elements of teachers planning and (individual) pupil progress and outcomes. The focus of the liaison meetings is different in each term to ensure that all areas of curriculum provision are closely monitored:

Autumn – Curriculum intent and implementation; gaps; maintenance of skills and knowledge over summer break; review of communication systems, equipment, sensory diets, risk assessments, health care plans; identification of any further barriers to learning.

Spring – Behaviour and attitudes – mental health and wellbeing.

Summer – Review of core skills – literacy, numeracy, and ICT; communication and language.

In addition to the detailed and extremely comprehensive liaison meetings, the school's SLT undertake formal lesson observations of each teacher on a termly basis. Judgements of teaching and learning are validated by the SLT by undertaking paired observations on a regular basis. Formal lesson observations are supplemented by regular learning walks.

The rigour with which the senior leadership team monitor and ensure the very high quality of education at the school is outstanding.

4.Outcomes

Progress for pupils at the school and their educational outcomes are consistently outstanding. The school uses seven 'instruments' to measure pupil progress ranging from termly judgements of progress made at liaison meetings to judgements of learning in formal lesson observations. The information from these seven instruments are combined to create an overall judgement of progress for pupils at the school.

Detailed judgements of pupil progress and outcomes has been significantly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The school has undertaken considerable reflection and a detailed review to

develop their approach and response to the current circumstances. The last detailed analysis using the school's seven measures of progress was reported in autumn 2019, based on the 2018-19 school year. The school reported that 62% of pupils had made outstanding progress and 22 pupils had made transformational progress by achieving their supergoals. All other pupils were judged to have made good progress.

The school undertook a further detailed analysis of pupil progress based on data for the eighteen-month period from September 2018 to March 2020 (the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic). The rationale for this approach was that the selected period provided a more secure and robust set of data over a longer time span. Pupil outcomes were again judged to be outstanding overall.

School leaders' most recent review of pupil outcomes was undertaken in September 2021. This involved a review of individual pupils' Pupil Progress Indicators (PPIs). These indicators draw together a broad range of progress judgements from liaison meetings and elsewhere to provide an overview of progress for each individual pupil. School leaders noted that the information provided was useful in analysing the progress made by individual pupils through the Covid-19 Pandemic but did not provide sufficiently reliable whole school data. The impact of two lockdowns and a high variability in pupil attendance had significantly affected pupil progress and outcomes.

The school is expecting to return to their 'normal' data collection and analysis programme over the 2021/22 school year and are currently expecting to report outcomes, as before, at the end of the year.

Pupils develop independence, communication, and advocacy skills, build friendships, and develop their own social, moral, spiritual, and cultural understanding that achieves the school's moral purpose. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of life whether that be education, employment, or vocational training. NEET data indicates that 100% of pupils have successfully transitioned to the next stage of their education and/or training.

The school devised and implemented a recovery assessment framework in September 2020 to identify pupils that had lost learning and identify gaps in learning. This assessment was repeated again in Term 4 (2020/21) for a number of pupils due to the second Covid-19 lockdown and is being used again in the current term with all pupils. This assessment procedure has enabled class teachers and senior leaders to introduce appropriate individualised measures to meet pupils' learning needs.

In addition to the above the school has recognised three groups of pupils who have lost skills, or been particularly challenged during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown/s:

The first is pupils with physical needs who have not had regular (or 'normal') access to therapy programmes / equipment during lockdown / extended absence from school. The school purchased additional physiotherapy provision throughout 2020/21 to support these particular pupils.

The other two groups overlap and are (usually) younger pupils at the earliest stages of following an 'adult-led' agenda and / or those at early stages of Alternative or Augmentative Communication (AAC) use. In Terms 5 and 6 of 2020/21 the school piloted a six-week programme for a pupil and her family to receive weekly input on AAC use. This pilot was successful and is now operating for a second pupil. It is expected that each pupil identified as needing this additional input would have access to the programme in their reception year.

This highly evaluative approach is further evidence of the strong leadership and management of the school and indicates the drive within the school to continually evaluate practice and provide innovative solutions which have a clear impact on pupil outcomes. Covid-19 catch-up monies have been very well used by the school for both these remedial interventions.

The school has an exceptionally robust and rigorous system for tracking pupil progress, which is detailed in the school's Assessment, Recording and Reporting policy which is available on the school's website.

https://www.glynegap.org/article.php/177/assessment_policy/97352ea2156a6419333954af01527b76

The measures used for tracking pupil progress include:

- Evaluated supergoals
- Evaluated termly goals
- Evaluated IEPs
- Pupils' zigzag books (A cumulative record of a pupil's most significant progress and achievements)
- Pupils' individual Glyne Gap assessment files, including:
 - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
 - Communication and Language
 - Speaking and Listening
 - Functional Literacy
 - Functional Numeracy
 - Functional ICT
 - Science
 - Essential Physical Skills for Learning and Life
 - Employability
- Annual Review reports
- Progress judgements at (termly) communication meetings
- Progress judgements at (termly) liaison meeting

This matrix of assessment is very skilfully used by class teachers to target, assess, and track pupils progress, and also provides senior leaders with a very clear structure to monitor and challenge the work of classroom staff. This system, devised and continually refined by the school over many years, is an example of outstanding practice.

5. Key strengths in the school

The headteacher and senior leaders recognise the following key strengths of the school at the current time:

- The school's **leadership and management** is outstanding. The headteacher and her senior leaders continue to provide strong and consistent leadership along with a drive to constantly review provision and seek to improve the quality of provision at the school and secure outstanding outcomes for pupils.
- The school's **curriculum intent and implementation** is a strength of the school's provision. There is a clarity about both what the school is seeking to achieve, and how the school is working to achieve it. This very clear and strong ethos provides a solid basis for further curriculum development such as the school's use of the Engagement Profile and extension of work-related learning.
- The **resilience of staff** at all levels is exceptional. This has enabled the school to remain open and focussed on meeting pupils' needs throughout the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and through successive lockdowns.
- The **strengths of relationships** at all levels is a key feature of the school including pupils and staff, between parents, carers and staff, senior school leaders and other staff and between governors and senior leaders. These relationships help to support resilience, ensure that the school's vision and ethos are securely embedded and are constantly developed and fostered at all levels.

6. Key challenges that the school faces

The headteacher and senior school leaders have identified a series of challenges that the school faces within various time-frames:

Short term:

- Maintaining a **resilient workforce** in light of the pandemic. 95% of all staff are double vaccinated and the school is seeking to increase this to 100% by Christmas 2021. This will help promote staff attendance when they are identified as close contacts. However, many staff are also working parents which can increase dependent care absence. The school has already had to close one class for two days in the current term as all class team members were absent. The school continues to maintain their own supply staff to support staff absence, but this resource is limited. Parents / carers are generally very understanding if the school has to resort to partial closures.
- Maintaining a **teaching and learning culture** when staffing levels are more limited than 'normal' and staff are (as a result) less resilient than at other times. Whilst this can be a challenge at other times, for example during the summer term at the end of a school year, the school notes that they have not faced such a sustained pressure previously. The headteacher recognises that the school has long had a strong culture and highly dedicated staff team but is mindful that all staff have their limits.

Medium term:

- The school has identified **fatigue of senior leaders** as a significant challenge in the medium-term future. The school has ensured that all senior leaders have planned (weekly) periods of time to work off- site and additional whole days each term for dedicated work / reflection. The AHT / DSL (acting) is provided with very beneficial external supervision. The headteacher is in process of securing coaching /supervision provision for herself and the same offer has been made by the school to the other AHTs. The governing body is very aware of pressures on senior leaders and are very supportive to the headteacher.
- **Pressure on the school's SLT** has been caused by the maternity leave of one of the school's AHT (and DSL) which has commenced and will likely continue for the remainder of the school year. The school has appointed an interim senior teacher (who was previously an AHT) to support the school's senior leadership team. Another (current) AHT has taken the role of acting DSL for this period. This temporary change of circumstances places an additional burden on the capacity and resilience of the school's headteacher and senior leadership team.

Long term:

- The school's very effective financial forecasting indicates that if current income / expenditure continues, **school reserves will deplete in three years**. The school has started intensive work to scrutinise this and have asked for adviser support from SLES to investigate the position further and engage with ISEND to move this issue forward. The school premises have been used creatively to increase pupil numbers (and income), but the school cannot admit further pupils due to the restrictions on the site.
- The school's position as a **single standalone academy trust** has been identified as both a strength and a challenge. The headteacher and governors are mindful of both aspects of this analysis and the need to ensure (over time) that these are in balance and the school continues to prosper.

7. Annual school evaluation summary

The leadership and management of Glyne Gap School is exceptionally strong and highly robust. Governors, the headteacher, senior leaders and the extended leadership team have a clear

understanding of the strengths and areas for development and improvement at the school. The SEF provides a detailed, accurate and highly evaluative summary of the school. Leaders have very clearly identified the aspects of school provision which they have targeted to improvement over the coming school year.

Details of developments previously led and managed by the stable and long-established leadership team during 2020/21, particularly the development of a recovery assessment system and remedial interventions, provide very considerable confidence that further planned developments will be successfully implemented and will impact on pupil outcomes.

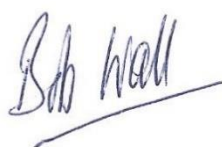
Leaders have very accurately identified the strengths of the school, the challenges that they face, and are well prepared to address them.

8. Next steps

Agreed actions

| Action | Who | By When | Success Criteria |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| SEF Complete planned updates to the school's SEF: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Years self-evaluation.• Sixth Form / Faculty self-evaluation.• Include short rationale for all next step areas of school development. | Headteacher and AHTs | 30 th November 2021 | School SEF is complete, approved by governing body and ready to be published on school website. |

Adviser sign-off



Bob Wall

Tuesday 12th October 2021