

Governing Body Report

(Interim) Professional Adviser to the Governing Body

Visit Report – Monday 26th February 2019

Background

I undertook the role of Professional Adviser to the (Glyne Gap School) Governing Body during the period September 2013 to September 2016. I have subsequently visited Glyne Gap School in the autumn of 2018 to undertake the annual "Standards Visit" for East Sussex County Council. I have a further visit booked for March 2019, again commissioned by East Sussex County Council.

I was contacted by Kirsty Prawanna in January 2019 with a request to undertake the Term 3 Professional Adviser Visit whilst the school is in the process of securing a replacement Professional Adviser to Governors. It was a privilege to be approached and a pleasure to spend time again at the school, observing practice and in discussion with school staff and Governors. The following is a report of the visit.

Introduction

The visit focussed on four main activities:

- A presentation and discussion of the rationale and organisational format of the school's multi-disciplinary progress and liaison meetings. This presentation/discussion was undertaken by the head of the lower school.
- Attendance at a progress and liaison meeting focussed on the "discrete" element of the meeting, Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare (PDBW).
- Attendance at a progress and liaison meeting focussed on the pupil progress and overall judgement element of the meeting.
- Attendance and discussions at the Governors' Teaching and Learning Committee

The remainder of this report will address each of these elements separately. A section covering the overall judgements on the school's Liaison Meetings is included along with a short section detailing changes and improvements observed at the school since I last performed the role of Professional Advisor to Governors.

This report is intended to provide a commentary for the Governing Body on the information provided and reviewed. It includes judgements reached; recommendations made and agreed action points.

1. Multi-disciplinary Progress and Liaison Meetings

This element of the visit focussed on an overview of the rationale, structure and organisational arrangements for the weekly Multi-disciplinary Progress and Liaison Meetings (Liaison Meetings). The presentation and discussion were led and undertaken by the Head of Lower School, who is relatively new to the school, having taken up her post in September 2018.

Liaison meetings are clearly a very well-established feature of professional practice at the school. They provide an outstanding "vehicle" for school leaders to ensure that high quality individual learning for all pupils is at the heart of every element of their practice. Indeed, it is clear from the presentation and discussion, that the weekly liaison meetings are one of the core elements, if not the core element, of the school's systems to ensure outstanding educational provision for all pupils.

The organisation and structure of the liaison meetings has been exceptionally well designed:

- Meetings are held three times a year for every class.
- Meetings are chaired and led by the respective (three) Heads of School - Lower School, Upper School and Faculty.
- Meetings are attended by the individual class teachers.
- Colleagues from social care and health services attend the liaison meetings and make an active contribution to discussions.
- Meetings provide a vehicle to discuss each individual pupil – focussing on overall pupil progress and drawing from a wide range of information.
- All issues which impact on individual pupil progress are discussed, including issues of health, care and welfare.
- The meetings are typified by mutual support and challenge from all participants with the shared purpose of ensuring high quality learning and teaching for all pupils.

Two additional features of the liaison meetings are particularly noteworthy:

Progress Judgements

Discussion of individual pupils conclude with a shared agreement, by all of those present, of an overall progress judgement, using the Ofsted four-point scale. This provides extremely secure and very well validated data for individual pupils. By aggregating these judgements school leaders also have data for individual classes, departments and the school overall. The highly robust nature by which these judgements are secured is an exceptional product of Liaison Meeting system.

Discrete Judgements

A second key element of each Liaison Meeting is a discrete judgement with a separate focus at each of the three annual meetings for each pupil. The focus of these discussions and judgements is different at each meeting:

Autumn Term - Term 1 and 2 – Communication, Core Skills and Science

Spring Term – Term 3 and 4 – Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare (PDBW)

Summer Term – Terms 5 and 6 – Full Participation and Personal Wealth

This is again an excellent aspect of the school's leadership and management of pupils development, learning and progress. The inclusion of a separate and complimentary review of (discrete) individual pupil development at each Liaison meeting ensures that these important areas are very robustly reviewed in an efficient and professional manner. An identical level of challenge and support is provided by utilising the Liaison Meetings for this purpose.

The robust and professional structure of the school's Liaison Meetings has a significant number of additional benefits. It provides excellent evidence of the exceptionally high quality of leadership and management at the school. A drive to ensure that every pupil makes the maximum possible progress is inherent in the system. Liaison meetings also provide a very significant "lever" for improving teaching and learning. The challenge and support provided by senior leaders has a substantial impact on the professional development of classroom teachers and provides a structured system for regular professional reflection.

It is important that Governors are not only aware of the practical detail of the Liaison Meetings but that the complexity and quality of discussions and outcomes provides highly robust evidence for the overall quality of the school's provision in all areas.

The presentation of this aspect of the School's work by the Head of Lower School was of very high quality. She has understood and absorbed the key elements and detail of the Liaison Meeting system in the relatively short period of time since her appointment. Her in-depth grasp of the complexities of the system are impressive and she is able to clearly articulate and argue the importance of the various elements in an open and free-flowing discussion. Her skill in ensuring that she covered all of the key elements in the time allotted for our discussion was very impressive. Her emphasis on the **impact** of the system and her ability to provide individual examples strengthened her presentation considerably. The strong leadership and management skills of the head of lower school were clearly shown throughout the presentation. This detailed understanding provides clear evidence of the quality of induction provided by the headteacher and other members of school staff.

2. Liaison Meeting – Discrete Element – PDBW

This element of the visit involved attendance at a Liaison Meeting which focussed on a review of the discrete element for the Spring Term/Terms 3 and 4. The meeting was chaired by the Head of Upper School and attended by the class teacher for Junior 2 Class. The social care representative was attending a parallel Liaison Meeting being held at the same time (usually only one Liaison Meeting is held each week and two running on the same day was to facilitate the Professional Advisor visit).

The discussion for this element of the Liaison Meeting follows a clear, detailed and comprehensive form devised by the school to review aspects of personal development, behaviour and welfare for each individual pupil. The discussions on each pupil follow the sections of the form:

Possible Issues of Special Vulnerability

This covers a very comprehensive range of contributory issues such as a pupil having, for example, a health need, or having English as an additional language. Governors should be aware that safeguarding concerns are considered as part of this aspect of the review.

Evaluation of Personal Development Outcomes

This aspect allows a detailed discussion of pupils' attainment and progress in the separate (Glyne Gap) curriculum areas of personal development, personal autonomy and personal learning, culminating in an agreement of an overall progress grade for personal development, again on the four-point Ofsted scale. The discussions observed focussed particularly on this aspect of pupils' development and progress. The class teacher gave a clear, sensitively evidenced and well-argued case for her judgements, drawing on discussions with her class team. The head of school showed in-depth prior knowledge of each individual, drawing from written records of previous Liaison Meetings and personal observation. They jointly engaged in searching discussions and mutual challenge to agree overall progress judgements. In some instances these discussions led to important agreed action to change a teaching approach or individual target for a pupil.

The observed discussions provided individual progress grades for each of the three elements of personal development as well as an overall judgement. The current format of the school form does not allow for these individual grades to be recorded and the school may wish to consider a revision to include this additional detail.

Overview of Behaviour, Feeling Safe and SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) (Welfare) Outcomes

This section of the form and discussion includes three distinct elements. The **first** is a review of the pupil's behaviour and whether this impacts positively or negatively on their learning. The overriding importance of learning is evident throughout and this is a further significant

example. Discussions of this element in the observed Liaison Meeting provided further evidence of highly professional judgements based on clear evidence from both participants. These discussions were typified by a clear articulation of views, self-reflection and constructive challenge. The judgement scale used for this element of the discussion is again four-point but does not follow the Ofsted format. In this case the judgement is whether behaviour impacts on learning:

Very positively / Positively / Negatively / Other

The school approach to behaviour management and individual support is highly positive and very well structured with pupils allocated (if additional support is required) to either an A or B List. Separate systems to review these allocations exist. However, the school may wish to consider the inclusion of a more structured review in this section of the (discrete) Liaison Meeting.

The **second** item which is discussed and judged relates to whether the pupil understands and feels safe. The observed discussions again highlighted a substantial use of supporting evidence, considerable reflection and challenge. The resulting judgements, based on the same four-point scale as for behaviour, are extremely secure.

This **third** item of discussion is a review of a pupil's development in the four areas of SMSC. Again, the evidence from the observed Liaison Meeting is that the discussions are searching and highly. In this case judgements are made as to whether a pupil is developing in the individual four areas, or not.

Overall Judgement on PDBW

The final judgement made in this discrete section of the Liaison Meeting is summative, drawing on the individual grades for personal development and those for behaviour, feeling safe and SMSC. In the observed Liaison Meeting this judgement was straightforward for the pupils under discussion, given the preceding detailed discussions (and judgements reached) in the separate areas. However, given the level of challenge and reflection it is very clear that this may not always be the case. The judgement, is the pupil doing as well as he/she can in PDBW, is again made on a four-point scale:

Very Much So / Mostly / Some / Other

The resulting judgements are clearly exceptionally useful for comparisons at a number of levels – individual pupil, class, department and whole-school, as well as over time. The system is clearly used with skill, professional expertise, challenge and excellent judgement. The system has a clear impact, enhancing pupils PDBW and ensuring outstanding teaching in this area.

Subsequent discussions with the headteacher highlighted a number of possible amendments to the system arising from the proposed changes to the Ofsted Framework for September 2019 currently under consultation. ***Governors will need to be aware of these proposed changes and the impact that they will have on the current systems of review and monitoring.*** In this case, the current proposal is that PDBW is removed from the Framework and replaced by two sections, Behaviour and Attitudes, and Personal Development (including SMSC). The "welfare" of pupils is not directly mentioned in the proposed revised Framework. If these changes are implemented, then it is likely that a restructuring of this discrete aspect of the Liaison Meetings will provide a clearer and better-aligned system of monitoring.

3. Liaison Meeting – Pupil Progress/Overall Progress Judgements

This element of visit involved attendance at a Liaison Meeting which focussed on a review of pupil progress and the overall progress judgement. The meeting was chaired by the Head of Lower School and attended by the class teacher for Wrens Class. The social care liaison officer was also present. Three pupils were reviewed during the observed section of the meeting.

The discussions undertaken were highly professional and extremely reflective. All those present clearly knew the pupils exceptionally well and were able to draw on a broad range of evidence and information, both current and from detailed records. Discussions were highly focussed but also broad-ranging, including in-depth analysis and considerable detail. Time is used very efficiently to analyse progress in relation to current goals and Super Goals alongside other aspects of learning. Obstacles to learning are analysed and a highly proactive and constructive problem-solving approach is adopted by all of those present. The Liaison Meeting was very well chaired by the newly appointed Head of Lower School, in only her third term in post. She led discussions on the overall progress judgements for each pupil ensuring a summative judgement was reached based on clear evidence. The level of challenge and support for professional reflection was excellent, providing significant evidence of high-quality leadership and management.

The Liaison Meeting agreed action of differing types to be undertaken for all three pupils, to support and enhance their learning opportunities. However, there were no specific timescales set for undertaking this agreed action. Establishing such expected timescales at the Liaison Meeting would further enhance the excellent joint-planning observed throughout.

4. Liaison Meeting – Overall Judgements

- Liaison Meetings provide an outstanding vehicle to monitor and ensure the learning and progress of all pupils.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and Heads of School in their work in Pupil Liaison Meetings is exceptional. They are able to support and challenge colleagues and maintain an oversight of the learning and progress of all pupils.
- Liaison meetings make a significant contribution to the professional development of all staff and particularly classroom teachers. The meetings provide a key forum to discuss the quality of teaching and learning and the impact on pupil progress.
- Discussions at Liaison Meetings draw heavily on significant evidence from a range of sources; discussions are reflective and challenging; all participants welcome challenge; staff are positively self-critical; discussions are highly professional; overall judgements are summative and corporate.
- Safeguarding and ensuring pupil welfare both have a high profile in Liaison Meetings. The meetings provide excellent oversight and an ideal forum in which to agree proactive action.
- The discrete elements of Liaison Meetings, such as those observed for PDBW, provide an outstanding opportunity for detailed oversight of other aspects of pupil development and school provision.
- The overall judgements reached at Liaison Meetings provide strong and secure data for a range of stakeholders to monitor the performance of the school at a variety of levels and over time.

5. Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee

The Teaching and Learning Committee meeting was well attended and considered a wide range of reports and issues in considerable depth. The quality of discussion, challenge, support and reflection was of a very high order. The quality of minutes is very good and the separate identification and recording of challenges from the Professional Advisor provides governors with a clear, detailed and accurate record.

The following commentary covers the significant issues discussed:

a. Achievement and Teaching – Review of Terms 1 and 2

This report was presented with skill and expertise by the Head of Upper School who showed a high level of in-depth knowledge of the data presented.

Two issues of note were discussed:

The first related to the percentage of goals achieved and an apparent dip in whole school achievement. The data presented indicated that 66% of goals had been achieved in Terms 1 and 2, compared to 71% in the previous period, a reduction of 5%. The Head of Upper School explained that 66% represented the “usual” annual percentage for goals achieved and that the summer term (Terms 5 and 6) generally had a higher percentage of goals achieved.

The second related to the summary presentation of lesson observation grades. In this case the whole school data “masked” the underlying fact that all four lessons where achievement and progress was graded as (only) good had been recorded in the Upper School. All other grades were outstanding. The Head of the Upper School explained clearly the reasons for these grades, the interventions she had implemented, and the improvements already seen.

The openness of these discussions and acceptance of challenge are clear signs of outstanding leadership and management by the school’s senior leaders.

b. Heads of School Reports

The three reports written and presented in this section of the meeting are of very high quality and indicate a significant strength of leadership and management. The reports follow a common format, and all contain detailed, important, and pertinent information for Governors. There are some small inconsistencies in presentation and content. In particular, the following:

Some reports contain the names of individual pupils. This is probably entirely appropriate in relation to significant achievements, such as the attainment of Super Goals, which Governors would wish to recognise and celebrate. However, for the purposes of data protection and GDPR, other occurrences should be redacted in these documents.

The inclusion of a section for professional development (of the respective author/Head of Department) is a positive inclusion and allows for a reflective account of the individual (Head of School) professional development. Greater consistency of the use of this section will provide governors with an insight into the development of leadership and management capacity of the school.

Head of Lower School

The report from the head of lower school detailed a comparatively low level of goals achieved by pupils in Skylarks class compared with other classes in the department. This difference was discussed in depth at the meeting and explained. The planned departure of the long-standing teacher responsible for the nursery was highlighted in the report and discussed at the meeting.

The arrangements that the headteacher and Head of Lower School have planned for her replacement were explained in depth.

Head of Upper School

The four lessons where learning was judged to be good had been previously discussed (see above) but were noted in relation to this report. The current layout of the "summary of lesson observations" allows for the identification of strengths of teaching and is consistently used across all reports. However, the addition of a further column which identifies the areas for development (of teaching), especially in lessons where learning is not outstanding, would provide governors with further relevant information.

Head of Faculty

The Head of Faculty's report was read and considered.

c. Communication Team Report to Governors

The most significant strategic item discussed in the communication team report was the agreement of a Glyne Gap School Communication Charter, the outcome of discussions at whole school twilight training session in Terms 1 and 2. It was noted that the charter would be displayed prominently across the school. ***I would commend the charter to governors and recommend that a copy is provided to you for your information.***

The issue of therapy support from CITS was raised and discussed as an item of any other business. (see below).

d. School Development Plan

A copy of the school development plan was circulated with detailed colour coding to indicate current levels of completion/progress. This practice allows governors to closely monitor the strategic development of the school and is evidence of excellent leadership and management. The detail of the report outlined an understandable delay in a small number of curriculum and assessment developments.

e. Monitoring Plan update

Consideration of the school's monitoring plan was delayed until the next meeting/meeting of the Full Governing Body.

f. Support to Pupils who have behaviours that could be a Barrier to Learning

A comprehensive report was provided to Governors giving details and an analysis of behaviour incidents in Terms 1 and 2. The information provided is of very high quality and provides Governors with excellent information in order to monitor behaviour incidents and physical interventions. The inclusion of comparative (historical) data will further enhance this document in the future.

Two significant items were discussed. The first related to a behaviour incident involving a member of the public. Governors should be especially concerned at reputational risk to the school and the incident was very carefully managed by staff that the time. The second relates to the fact that 13 of the 22 physical interventions, more than 50%, on the main school site related to a single pupil. This situation relating to this pupil was discussed in depth.

g. CITS – Therapy Provision Support

The headteacher raised the issue of the extremely poor therapy support being provided to pupils by the current NHS contract and delivered by CITS. This support extends to physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. All of those present supported the view of the headteacher and expressed their dismay at the current situation. The committee approved a request that the headteacher takes forward these concerns with

the NHS and commissioners. This is a matter of significant concern for the school and pupils. ***I would strongly recommend that Governors request regular updates on therapy provision and provide the headteacher with strategic support to resolve the current poor provision.***

6. Significant Developments/Improvements

It is almost two and a half years since I last undertook the role of Professional Advisor to the Governing Body. There have been a significant number of developments and improvements during the intervening period which are of note. Those that were apparent during this visit were:

Super Goals

The introduction of Super Goals for pupils is an exciting, innovative and noteworthy development which further underlines the school's sharp focus on learning.

Team Development Meetings

The introduction of class development meetings is having a significant impact on professional development, the quality of teaching and learning, and on pupil learning and progress.

Functional Literacy, Numeracy and ICT

Developments in the curriculum and assessment in these areas have further strengthened the breadth and **relevance** of the Glyne Gap curriculum.

Work Skills

The growing emphasis on the development of pupils' work skills is clearly evident in the work of the school and, in particular, the Faculty. This is, again, an innovative and exciting development which is worthy of a wider audience.

Behaviour Management/Team Teach

The already highly structured and professional approach to behaviour management has been further enhanced and strengthened by the introduction of accredited training for staff and the detailed analysis of behaviour incidents and physical interventions.

Conclusion

I would very much like to acknowledge the openness and commitment of headteacher, heads of department and Governors to reflection in undertaking this review. It has been a privilege to once again be connected with the School in the capacity of (Interim) Professional Adviser.

Bob Wall

(Interim) Professional Advisor to the Governing Body
4th March 2019