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Achievement Team - Secondary
Herts for Learning

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Dear Mr Lewis

Thank you for inviting us into your school to carry out a one-day review of current provision in the school and progress you have made since your inspection in March 2011.

We observed a number of lessons, which covered a wide range of subjects and all key stages. The majority of these were jointly observed with members of the SLT. Interviews were held with pupils, parents, senior leaders, governors and chair of the trust to look at various aspects of school provision.

The findings, which have already been shared with you as verbal feedback, are as follows:

Teaching, learning and assessment

In the lessons seen there was evidence of strong teacher subject knowledge which is skillfully imparted to the pupils. In almost all lessons questioning is highly effective and pupils are encouraged to contribute to this process which develops deep subject specific understanding.

Teachers use lesson time well and high expectations alongside tasks offering high levels of challenge are clearly evident. As a consequence, the vast majority of pupils thrive and make exceptional progress. Sometimes, especially in high ability sets, more time could be allowed for some pupils to embed their understanding, so that none gets left behind.

In a large number of lessons and in particular in lower ability sets, the understanding of pupils is systematically checked which ensures that these pupils make secure progress and learn well. Peer and self-assessment aids this process and is a feature of many lessons.

Marking and 'next step tasks' provide useful feedback which pupils use well to aid further progress and the impact of your school wide focus on this was evident in all lessons.

The high expectations of the school are reflected in the challenging target grades set for pupils at GCSE and A level. These targets are well received by pupils and staff and pupils try hard to reach their targets. One pupil, when asked what his target is in Btech Creative Media replied "I am just aiming for the highest grade possible".

Joint observations with the SLT showed agreement around the strengths and areas for improvement in the lessons seen.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners; they respect each other's ideas and are keen to learn from each other and work very cooperatively in class.

Key Stage 3 and 6th Form learners are extremely complimentary about the careers advice they have received to make the next steps in their learning and future careers. At KS4 the pupils spoken to felt that the new A levels had created some uncertainty, as they could pick only three, and although they had already received careers advice, would like some further reassurance that they were on the right track for their chosen university course.

Whilst the pupils seen in school clearly value the education provided by Yavneh, historic (2016) data shows that the groups FSM and SEN had attendance which was in the lowest 10% nationally. The school is actively seeking to address this and has put a number of measures in place including appointing a new member of staff to the SLT part of whose remit it will be to rectify this issue. Attendance on the day of this review was 96.4%. Case studies are available to evidence the efforts that the school made last year to support a small number of pupils with persistent absence issues. The school should also produce some parallel data to show the impact that a very small number of pupils had and on historic attendance data.

Behaviour around the school is impeccable overall but at times can be quite noisy outside of classrooms; the pupils are polite to each other and to adults whom they know and to visitors to the school. They wear their uniform with pride and are both welcoming and confident.

When asked, the pupils reported that bullying is very rare and would always be dealt with immediately. They all said that there are a number of teaching staff who they could go to for help and that there is a trusting relationship between staff and pupils.

They feel very safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations including on the internet. They understood well the dangers of extremism of all kinds and said that they regularly have safeguarding briefings.

Pupils in the school demonstrate thoughtful and reflective behaviours and are encouraged by the school to develop an understanding and tolerance of a wide range of cultures and beliefs. They are also given the opportunity, which is willingly undertaken, to care for others in the community.

Outcomes

Historic (unvalidated) data from Raise on line and the Data Dashboard show that the overall Progress 8 figure places the school in the top 10% of schools and is ranked in the eighth percentile at 0.48. SEND pupils show progress that is in line with national expectations as does the overall Progress 8 figure for disadvantaged pupils in the school. The overall progress figure for English was in the top 25% of schools and for Mathematics in the top 10% of schools. This figure demonstrates that excellent progress was made by almost all pupils in the school in these subjects.

The school however has identified that a group of disadvantaged middle attainers (5) made significantly negative progress in the bottom 10%, in both Mathematics and the Ebacc pillar. Much of this can be attributed to two pupils who faced significant personal challenges and who the school supported as far as possible. The school is resolute that everything must be done this year to ensure that disadvantaged pupils in the school, of which there are 21 in the current Year 11, make progress not just in line with national others but as far as possible, in line with their peers in the school. The newly appointed Assistant Headteacher for groups will have this task as a clear focus.

Current progress data presented by the school shows that to date the predicted attainment of this group for 4+ is at 86.4% for English and 81.8% for mathematics. For all in the school this figure is predicted to be 88.4% for English and 92.4% for mathematics. The gap for disadvantaged pupils in Mathematics is small, representing about two pupils and is being closely tracked and monitored.

Outcomes for the pupils in the school are on track to be very strong again this academic year.

Leadership and management

Leaders and governors have exceptionally high expectations for pupils in the school; this ensures that almost all the pupils achieve their very best and excel.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and pupils say that “all teachers really care about how well you do”.

The school has had a renewed focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and have increased the capacity of the senior team to support this key action through the aforementioned appointment of a new Assistant Headteacher.

Governors report that they are systematic in their challenge of the Executive Head and senior leaders and in particular about standards and the use of pupil premium funding. They understand school data well and challenge any variations in performance across groups or subject areas; the

issue regarding the progress of some disadvantaged pupils in mathematics is an example of this. Although the governors clearly understand well the provision that the school makes for pupils, they now wish to focus more clearly on the information that comes from parental surveys to further inform this view.

The performance management system is highly effective and teachers commented that it is clearly linked to CPD opportunities to address identified needs. Teachers say that they discuss classroom practice and that there is a well-developed culture of using best practice to further improve teaching in the classroom.

The curriculum provides an appropriate range of learning opportunities for pupils and is enriched by a large number of timetabled activities to take part in including, sport, the arts, technology and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. However, at A level students reported that the range of subjects on offer is limited and opportunities to consort with other schools to widen the offer are difficult.

Pupils clearly understand the deeper meaning of British values and this was further enhanced by a recent visit to the school by a senior member of the Royal Family.

Governors and senior leaders understand well their statutory obligations regarding safeguarding. The formation of the MAT and the new primary school on site, along with imminent building works present an opportunity to refresh and review safeguarding practices to ensure that these continue to fulfil the needs of both the school and statutory requirements.

Safeguarding was not fully reviewed during this visit.

Overall the school has demonstrated during the visit that it continues to provide an extremely high level of provision for pupils in the school across all areas as previously.

I would like to thank you again for the very warm welcome and cooperation we experienced from both staff and pupils during the day.

Kind regards