

**WHITLEY ACADEMY**  
**Ofsted Style Developmental Review 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

In March the Principal commissioned an Ofsted HMI Lead Inspector to carry out a practice 'Ofsted' style review over 2 days. As an Outstanding school we are not subject to Inspection regularly, so this process will inform further improvements to teaching and learning in the next academic year and give a spot check on current practice. Staff had a days' notice and students were told 3 Inspectors would be part of a team in school.

**Evidence base**

A total of 47 lessons were observed. There were learning walks in English and maths lessons with a focus on behaviour for learning and the progress data. A range of the Academy's documents were scrutinised. Meetings were held with staff that have leadership responsibility for aspects of the Academy, including the BASE, the sixth form, safeguarding and leaders of Maths and English. Meetings also took place with students and members of the governing body. The students were joined in assemblies.

**Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning observed was at least good, overall. **More than a third of the teaching and learning was judged as outstanding and nearly 90% was good or better.** The evidence from the learning walks in English and Maths reflects excellent practice. The Academy is data rich but this could be used more effectively in some lessons.

**Strengths**

- The well-established and embedded core of outstanding teaching and learning. In one lesson the observer wrote that, 'the high challenge was met with relish' – clearly many of the students thoroughly enjoy their learning.
- Enthusiastic teaching that is infectious and the highest expectations help to extend and embed raised aspirations – there is a 'buzz' to learning. This is key to the outstanding practice in the school and reflects outstanding progress despite adversity!
- Much of the planning is very thorough and sets a standard for all teachers in the Academy. Learning objectives/outcomes provide a precise measure of progress and are used to inform skilled ongoing and summative assessment.
- It is best practice when at the start of a lesson, students assess the grade of a piece of work and are able to give reasons for the grade not being higher. A wide range of very engaging starters is used, for example, there is innovative practice in the use of new technology.
- The excellent development of student leadership in some classes, as they take increased responsibility for their own learning – well done!

- Self and peer-assessment are an embedded aspect of the best lessons.
- Most of the classrooms are attractive learning environments.
- The best teaching and learning and tailored curriculum promotes excellent behaviour – common sense!
- Where there is personalised support to keep students on task. This promotes excellent relationships and the highest levels of mutual respect.
- The promotion of the students' literacy skills is excellent in many lessons and good in most.
- In the best lessons the data shows that the students' progress is outstanding and includes – their starting points (KS2), their current levels, targets and interventions. There are examples of best practice.
- When the overwhelming majority of students know their targets, working at grade and how to improve – excellent practice!
- There is some excellent marking of students' work – exemplary practice.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength in most lessons

**Ensure that the quality of all teaching and learning is good and an increased percentage is outstanding by;**

- Continuing to use the Academy's excellent practice as an exemplar to improve aspects of teaching and learning across the Academy;
- Ensuring that outcomes are measurable, students are fully aware of the learning objectives and good progress is 'obvious' in every lesson. Progress needs to be made 'blatant';
- The available data needs to be accessible and show – the students' starting points, their current levels, predicted outcomes (RAG-rated), targets and what is being done to boost progress. To be outstanding the progress needs to be good or better across the Academy;
- Ensuring that there is a balance of teacher talk and student activity so that the pace of learning is brisk;
- Ensuring that the marking of students' work is at the level of best practice in the Academy. The students' previous work, including homework, needs to support the judgement that progress is good and better;

## Leadership and management

There is sufficient evidence to support the judgements that leadership and management are outstanding. This judgement is reliant on further improvements in teaching and learning and, as a result, strong results this year.

- The principal provides very determined and inspirational leadership. Her outstanding leadership has been sustained over an extended period, yet the focus on excellence remains central to the Academy's ethos. The principal has a proven track record in leading support and challenge for improvements in other schools.
- The senior leadership team has excellent strength in depth and adds significant value to the vision, direction and energy of Academy improvement. Self-review is rigorous at all levels across the Academy and helps to direct very effective strategic planning. The Academy's Improvement Plan 2012/13 is an exemplar of best practice.
- Governance is outstanding and they hold leadership fully accountable for their responsibilities. Members of the governing body have an excellent understanding of the students' achievement. They are also totally up-to-date with the staff's performance management. The way the Academy's confidential information about performance management is presented is excellent preparation for Ofsted. Governors make a significant contribution to the Academy's outstanding capacity to improve. They also ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met. There is a very strong focus on aspects such as health and safety and risk assessments. High quality policies are in place and appropriate training is accessed.
- This is a very inclusive Academy and this is reflected in the excellent practice in the BASE. Their individualised and coherent interventions are very effective at avoiding exclusions and this is a major strength in the Academy.
- Senior leaders should consider introducing the use of predictions for attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 as part of their data management process.
- The provision and outcomes for students with disabilities and/or special educational needs are outstanding. The line management and performance management of the LSAs are rigorous.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well at department and whole-Academy level. Enrichment programmes are inclusive and varied and offer an excellent contribution to SMSC. The Year 7 enrichment programme is particularly impressive. Older students are excellent ambassadors for the Academy. National links through the RSA and international links are good. The students expressed very positive views about life in the Academy.
- Behaviour is good and has the capacity to move to outstanding. This requires a particular focus on behaviour for learning.

- The curriculum is outstanding. Curriculum leaders are setting aspiration targets. They use the data very effectively to direct intervention strategies in the drive to raise attainment and close the gaps in performance of vulnerable groups.
- The leadership of performance management is outstanding and shapes excellent continuing professional development. Weaker teaching and learning is managed by a blend of support and challenge.

**Dave Smith (HMI)**

**March 2013**