

Feedback on curriculum presentations

Melland High School: 4 February 2019

Firstly, thank you very much for the invitation to attend the afternoon session (I'm afraid I couldn't make it for the morning). The presentations were enjoyable and highly informative. I hope there might be an opportunity in the future for you to make inputs along similar lines to the governing body. They would be of great help in our work to better understand and engage with the school's curriculum models, as well as potentially providing us with a lot of insight into how well the curriculum is working.

Some brief feedback, in two sections.

What came across really well

- ☐ The presentations were all of high quality and expertly delivered, with great confidence. It seemed pretty clear from the content that all the work on the curriculum has been underpinned both by research and by a good deal of collaborative, professional dialogue. The latter, in particular, suggests that the final versions of the models will be well understood by those delivering them.
- ☐ There is clearly a developing 'house style' which is giving the documents a consistency of presentation which is actually very helpful to the reader/user. Following an agreed house style does not of course mean that every presentation is going to be identical.
- ☐ There is also an emerging consistency of content across the different presentations – the point was well made that certain themes and threads begin to come through. Again, there is no particular virtue in each presentation having exactly the same content, dealt with in exactly the same way, but it probably would be helpful for there to be an agreed schedule of common features which you would expect to see in each of the presentations – For instance, does each of the presentations illustrate how the curriculum will add to students' *cultural capital*?
- ☐ The trend towards keeping text to the necessary minimum and maximising the use of graphics and other visuals seems to be the right one in terms of communicating the messages to a wide audience. I liked the proposed idea, for example, of using talking heads of former students to bring to life the section around destinations in the transition presentation. Adopting this approach will also mean that the presentations, or at least a version of them, will sit really well on the school website and provide parents/carers, as well as other users, with a really clear picture around the intent for, and the implementation and impact of, the school's curriculum, with appropriate detail on different subjects and aspects of that curriculum.
- ☐ The exercise was a great opportunity for sharing expertise and to develop colleagues' broader understanding of how different curriculum pathways and subjects work across the school for different groups of pupils. As someone said, we don't really want mysterious, hidden corners of the curriculum known and understood only by the few.

- It was also good to see the emphasis on flexibility and fluidity, with connections made between different pathways, so as to avoid the situation of the student becoming 'trapped' on a pathway which might have met her/his needs and aspirations at one point in time but became no longer appropriate at a later point.
- The presentations illustrated well how the particular context of a special school can be shown to be delivering the excellence in quality of education set out in the grade descriptors within the new education inspection framework. This is not about pleasing Ofsted or somehow aligning the school's curriculum with what are supposedly Ofsted requirements – there aren't any such requirements, of course, despite the myths that circulate. It's rather more a case of demonstrating that the curriculum which has been very carefully matched to students' needs does indeed fulfil what is set out in Ofsted grade descriptors, just as it would in a mainstream school.
- What I heard yesterday, in the course of different presentations, was Melland's 'take' on many of the important concepts within the quality of education judgements: cohesion; structure; sequence; students learning and remembering more and more (this latter is Ofsted's new definition of progress). An additional one to think about is *clearly defined endpoints and starting points for particular years and key stages*. This seems to be a tricky one, especially as (as far as I understand it) it is very difficult to have predetermined endpoints for the less formal curriculum. Nonetheless, it will be important to think how to deal with this, given that the new education framework model for making judgements on outstanding quality of education makes it very clear that every single criterion (for outstanding and good) has to be met if quality of curriculum is to be judged outstanding. Exactly the same model applies for the other three main areas of the framework.
- I also valued the way in which all the presentations looked at *impact* on a number of *different* fronts, including pupil outcomes and progress but drawing on additional measures involving a wide range of evidence in order to give real weight and substance to any conclusions and judgements with regard to impact.

Even better if

- I think you made the point yourselves that pretty well every one of the presentations had at least one aspect that made it stand out, notwithstanding the overall consistency of quality. Examples included the way one presentation dealt with cultural capital and home learning, another was particularly strong in setting out cohesion between different aspects of the subject and links to other subjects and another seemed to capture curriculum fluidity particularly well. We all agreed that it would be good to use those kinds of models across all the presentations, as part of the process of reaching full consistency in quality.
- When dealing with CPD, it would be useful to research around the terminology used by Ofsted in this latest inspection framework of *pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)*. Here is the criterion (actually within leadership and management, rather than quality of education) which uses this term: *Leaders ensure that teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. Teachers' subject, pedagogical and pedagogical*

content knowledge consistently build and develop over time. This consistently translates into improvements in the teaching of the curriculum. It would be useful to think about how CPD at Melland actually does deliver PCK, as I'm confident that this is the case. It is a matter of teasing this out and making it explicit, rather than implicit.

- At a later stage, it will be interesting to give some thought as to how your curriculum SEFs will provide an evaluative *critique*, reflecting and drawing on the wealth of evidence that you are now building up in these presentations.

I don't know whether any members of staff got to the Manchester Schools' Alliance inputs on the new education inspection framework from an HMI. I didn't attend myself but I do have a hard copy of the notes. If Sue reminds me when I'm next in school, then perhaps a copy could be taken of these. I think you might find them interesting.

Incidentally, Sue, I wonder if there might be some mileage in tabling these notes at some point at a governing body meeting, under the standing agenda item that we have on feedback from training?

With thanks once again

Chris

Chris Beswick

5 November 2019