

TERMLY MONITORING VISIT: MELLAND HIGH SCHOOL 21 November 2023

Personnel: Sue Warner, Principal and John Wm Stephens, CEO and the school leadership team

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Items of celebration:

Overall the expansion has gone well as a result of deep engagement by the school in pressing for the best provision for children and young people
Destinations of students from a particularly challenging cohort demonstrate the great impact of the work of the school.
Curriculum: clear consistency in pathways (not necessarily 'linear' but matched to individuals) resulting in meaningful national accreditation with currency for students (as evidenced by destinations)

Expansion:

Employing TAs from summer was a huge benefit – enabled good, staged induction
School now adjusting to having a much increased number of families to relate to and increased consultations for admission.

Outcomes:

School is ambitious for all students – aspiration is built into the curriculum
School is restless for improvement and ensures that any new approaches are equally ambitious – some partners have underestimated expectations of students but the school ensures that partnerships are managed well so that students encounter consistently high quality provision
Some of the highly successful partnerships are: Factory (performing arts) and Hide Out Youth Zone. There is good reciprocity in working with partners – the school helps them to improve their offers.

Attendance:

Whilst overall attendance compares favourably with the sector the school is keen to improve. There are well defined systems and the senior team demonstrate an impressive knowledge of the individual children with the poorest attendance.
Strategies are individualised as are escalation pathways e.g. some children are impacted by poor transport arrangements, others by significant illness. The school targets the approach and understands 'what works' in each case.
The link with safeguarding is explicit and multi-agency approaches are used effectively. Innovative approaches are used including support in overcoming barriers to attendance that are, for example, linked to poverty.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Robust systems are in place and good multi-agency working. The DSLs and wider staff are knowledgeable, confident and proactive and always seek decisions in the best interest of the child even when this means challenging colleagues across the sector.

Governance:

This is a significant strength of the school.

Of particular note is the innovative practice of the 'Impact Group' – parents/carers, cross section of staff, a head from another school, ed psych and a local authority QA officer. The scrutiny provided by this group enables the school to continue striving for excellence.

CPD:

School works with humility. Despite the consistent and sustained high quality of the work leaders are open to new ideas and embrace opportunities for learning and development for all staff. Gary Auben's training for teaching assistants, for example, has been a powerful driver for improvement.

A number of staff are engaged in NPQs and have found mentoring a particularly useful aspect of this.

Summary:

Leaders have an accurate, detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are relentless in their efforts to drive improvement and work well as a coherent – but not complacent – team.

Leaders act with professional authority and personal humility in equal measure.

Developments are based on well informed, research-based approaches that are also carefully evaluated for their impact.

Leaders are generous in sharing their learning – relationships with other schools and wider partners are based on reciprocity and students (and staff) benefit from a rich, well planned and appropriately personalised curriculum.

Safeguarding is a significant strength; there is a clear culture of openness in which people can speak out and raise concerns safe in the knowledge that they will be heard and appropriate, timely actions taken.

The expansion is a success story and also brings some challenges not all of which are yet fully articulated – but the school's careful processes of evaluation are managing that well.
