CONFIDENTIAL

Report of Activity

Establishment	Mill Chase Community Technology College		
District Council	East Hants		
DFE No	4139	**Area**	Eastern
Report Recipient	Jacqueline Adams	**Date**	25th and 26th June 2012
Author of Record	Simon Francis	**Term**	Summer 2012

Activity Reason: LA funded
Additional Focus: School Performance Monitoring

CONTEXT

This was the first local authority (LA) monitoring visit following the Ofsted inspection during February 2012, which resulted in the school being issued a *'notice to improve'*.

The purpose of this visit was to evaluate the progress the school has made against priorities identified during the Ofsted inspection. The priorities identified by Ofsted were:

Improve students' behaviour and reduce disruption to learning so that it does not hinder learning by:
- ensuring the consistent application of the effective behaviour management policy by all staff
- engaging and motivating students in all lessons through the provision of appropriately challenging tasks
- raising the expectations of positive behaviour with a small minority of students and their parents and carers
- securing a consistent teaching workforce for students, across the curriculum, so that good relationships that exist in many lessons are replicated across the college.

Accelerate progress and improve achievement across the curriculum to secure good and better learning in all lessons by:
- staff raising their expectations of students and consistently using assessment information to plan challenging learning activities for the full range of student abilities
- extending opportunities to develop students' skills in independent learning
- fully embedding the development of students' literary and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- ensuring that teachers' marking is more effective in facilitating faster student progress and is completed to a consistently high standard.

Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
- ensuring a consistent approach to target setting across the curriculum that provides stretch and challenge for all students
- reviewing the use of information systems so that the progress of all students and groups of students can be more easily evaluated against their challenging target
- using students to systematically evaluate where disruption to learning takes place and eradicate it.

Report of Activity

The visit was carried out by the district manager (DM) and a primary phase inspector (PPI) who is also the LA leadership and learning partner (LLP) for the school. Evidence for this report was gathered over two days. During the visit a number of activities were undertaken. These included observations of twelve part lessons, interviews with various senior staff, discussion with the headteacher, and a discussion with a small group of students from each year group. All lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or other senior staff. A summary discussion was held with the headteacher and senior staff at the end of each day. This focused upon the key findings of the monitoring visit. The findings in this report are drawn from the evidence base outlined above.

COMMENTARY

The school has made **satisfactory progress overall** against the identified priorities and is currently on track to address the key areas for development identified by Ofsted within the necessary timescale.

Improve students' behaviour and reduce disruption to learning so that it does not hinder learning.

The school has made **satisfactory progress** in developing this aspect.

Ensuring the consistent application of the effective behaviour management policy by all staff.

Evidence from both lesson observations and through discussion with students indicates that the school has improved in this area. When asked about the behaviour management strategy and its implementation by staff, students described it as '*most teachers apply it*' or the *'vast majority of teachers'*. Generally children in Years 7,8 and 9 were more positive about the behaviour strategy than older children. Students were able to describe teachers who had improved in their use of strategies and how this had improved the learning in lessons. All children described the strategy as being fair, when it is applied consistently. However, according to all the students, there are still a small minority of teachers who either do not apply it or apply it inconsistently and this needs to be addressed.

Evidence from lesson observations indicated that, where appropriate, teachers were applying the behaviour strategy. However, the simple application in itself does not result in good behaviour. In one lesson, learning and learning behaviours in particular were inadequate, and despite the appropriate application of the policy, behaviour was inadequate. This was primarily due to a poor task design that did not allow the students an opportunity to engage with the learning as the teacher dominated the lesson leaving the students too passive throughout. This led to boredom and eventual disengagement and poor behaviour.

Report of Activity

Engaging and motivating students in all lessons through the provision of appropriately challenging tasks.

The school has undertaken some specific professional development through an in-service training day focused upon differentiation. This was led by key staff including English and mathematics leaders and ASTs. The school's internal observations have this aspect as a focus and these are providing evidence that strategies for differentiation are being planned for. Heads of departments are actively working with their staff to improve this further and a box headed 'differentiation' has been added to the common planning proforma. It will now be important for senior staff to scrutinise this aspect in the planning, and particularly the quality of the differentiation indicated on the planning sheet, whilst undertaking their classroom observations. The evidence from this visit suggests that whilst the quality varies there remains an over reliance on differentiation by outcome and little through input or task design. Where this occurs students are not as motivated to engage fully in the session.

Raising the expectations of positive behaviour with a small minority of students and their parents and carers.

The school is taking a more active role in informing parents about the behaviour of their children and trying to develop a greater sense of partnership between home and school in addressing any behaviour problems that exist. Parents are kept informed of initial issues such as 'removal' from a lesson via a text message the same day. Where behaviour does not improve, a clear system of contacting parents and having a joint meeting to discuss strategies for improving behaviour are used. Senior leaders report these strategies to be having a positive impact on these students. The considerable drop in the number of fixed term exclusions from 44 in the autumn term 2011, to 35 in the spring term and 8 in the first half of the summer term, is an indication that this is so.

Securing a consistent teaching workforce for students, across the curriculum, so that good relationships that exist in many lessons are replicated across the college.

The school has been robust in its attempts to address weak performance where it exists. Detailed support programmes are in place, and described in more detail in this report, for supporting teaching that is weak. There have also been a number of staff changes, with ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ Further strengthening of staffing in the science department is in place from September. It is important that the school remains resolute in its approach to improving the quality of teaching across every class in the school.

Accelerate progress and improve achievement across the curriculum to secure good and better learning in all lessons.

The school has made **satisfactory progress** in this aspect. During the monitoring visit, twelve part lessons were observed. These observations were of approximately 40-45 minutes duration using Ofsted criteria with professional feedback provided for the observed staff. The headteacher or another member of the senior staff observed these lessons jointly with the DM or PPI. Feedback was provided to all individual teachers by the DM and PPI. The judgements reached by the LA staff and those senior staff from the

FOI - 11767 - Marshall - Appendix 9.doc

Report of Activity

school closely matched each other and provide re-assurance of the accuracy of judgements being made by the senior staff within the school. Of the twelve lessons observed, one was judged to be outstanding (8%), five were judged to be good (42%), four were judged to be satisfactory (33%) and two were judged to be inadequate (17%).

Where teaching was good or outstanding there were a number of common features. Good subject knowledge ensured teachers were aware of the next steps in learning. When this was coupled with good assessment for learning within the lesson the learning needs of individuals and groups were well met. Strong and positive relationships were key to any class where good progress was made. As a result students remained focused, engaged and motivated because they respected the teacher and were keen to work hard for them. Teachers demonstrated a range of good teaching and classroom management techniques that ensured the lessons flowed and little or no time was wasted. Pace was another feature of these lessons. A good balance between teacher input and student activity ensured that students remained focused and on task. Questioning was used effectively too both as a means of assessment but also a strategy to challenge and extend thinking.

Where teaching was satisfactory there were many positive features but there were a number of factors that limited progress. Limited use was made of on-going assessment in the lesson to allow the teacher to adjust the lesson in response to the knowledge and understanding of the students. As a result the pitch of the work was not always appropriate and the level of, and opportunities for student engagement, were not as strong. Differentiation was commonly limited in these lessons with too many children asked to do work that was either too easy or too hard. A lack of modelling by the teacher also meant that some children were unclear as to what to do and therefore were limited in their ability to work independently.

Where teaching was inadequate a number of key factors were particularly weak. A lack of clarity about the learning objective and a focus upon getting the answer rather than understanding the concept, led to many children being confused and making little progress. Relationships in this class too were not as strong as they needed to be and as a result, students did not engage with the learning in a meaningful way. In another class a low level task and a complete imbalance between the work of the teacher and the work of the students resulted in limited progress being made. There was too much focus on the teacher imparting knowledge and an overuse of 1:1 questions which resulted in many children being passive throughout the entire lesson. As a result the behaviour of a small but significant minority of students was poor.

Staff raising their expectations of students and consistently using assessment information to plan challenging learning activities for the full range of student abilities.

A system of staff 'action teams' existed and these have been re-focused since Easter. The role of these teams is to explore an area of need and identify associated training needs, development opportunities and monitoring to evaluate improvement. The focus of these teams are improving rates of progress, developing links within and beyond the school community and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The teams report to the senior leadership team half termly. Senior leaders have ensured the focus is on identified needs from the Ofsted inspection which is appropriate. This is good practice,

however, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work but the school is well placed to do so when the time is right. It is important for the work of these teams to be closely linked with the other developments around differentiation and data systems.

Extending opportunities to develop students' skills in independent learning

The school has been focused on this aspect for the last few years and has developed the 'I learn' project with Years 7 and 8. This is a four weekly based project to which departments contribute. With Year 9 the 'I link' project operates as preparation for GCSEs which has an English, mathematics and science focus and is to be linked to homework from September. Senior staff report that many students are more conscious regarding the need to manage their time. The school has decided, however, to introduce celebration certificates alongside sanctions such as detentions to encourage more students to engage more fully. Year 7 have also participated in a 'project management institute' project where chartered members of the institute work with the students to develop skills such a collaboration, time management and project management. Student and tutor feedback was very positive and the school has identified the next step to be building on these skills year on year.

Where teaching was at its best the balance between teacher exposition and student activity was well judged so that students were actively engaged in the learning for significant amounts of the lesson. As a result they were on task, motivated and displayed good learning behaviours. Where this approach occurred, it was underpinned by strong relationships. Students were trusted and expected to work independently. Where task design was good and matched the learning needs of the students they responded positively and made good progress. However, this was not the case in all lessons and the lack of opportunity for students to work independently was a significant weakness in some lessons. This aspect needs further development.

Fully embedding the development of students' literary and numeracy skill across the curriculum.

The focus has been on raising the profile of reading and how to identify and target students in need of support. This has been done through external and AST support. Reading levels are now monitored over a year using a standardised reading test, KS2 outcomes and internal monitoring. Training for house tutors is in place and book boxes have be circulated to houses for September. The school has identified the next step is to support other departments to adjust their materials for these students, which may be done during part of an inset day with the English department providing resource packs and advice. Currently the group of local schools are working on writing and moderate across the school termly. Work has been undertaken, with LA support, to develop mathematic skills across the curriculum although this is in the early stages. Heads of departments are to identify where mathematic skills fit within their various subject areas as a next step.

An extra tutorial period per fortnight is planned to focus on enhancing this aspect and independent learning skills and one of the Action Teams is to focus on this development. This is good practice and it will be important for the school to ensure the impact on learning and progress is carefully evaluated.

Report of Activity

Ensuring that teachers' marking is more effective in facilitating faster student progress and is completed to a consistently high standard.

There was not a specific focus upon this aspect during the monitoring visit. However, reviews of students' books during lesson observations did indicate a mixed picture in terms of quality. Whilst there was some good evidence of *next steps* marking, it was by no means consistent across the majority of teachers. There appeared to be a considerable amount of peer marking and in some books the teacher's marking was minimal or sometimes non-existent. This aspect needs addressing as a priority.

Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning.

The school has made **satisfactory progress** in this aspect. A comprehensive monitoring programme to review the quality of teaching and learning is in place. The school believes that it has taken a more critical and rigorous approach to judging the quality of teaching and learning to reflect the increased focus within the current Ofsted framework. All teachers are observed half termly. Where any teacher is judged as satisfactory or inadequate, a package of support is provided to improve the practice of that teacher. This support is varied and includes external support from the LA, opportunities to team teach alongside senior and good teachers in the school, work with an AST, and links to other departments and schools. Each teacher identified for support has a mentor. Where teaching is judged as satisfactory, the support is managed by a head of department (HoD). Where quality of teaching is inadequate, support is managed by one of the senior leadership team (SLT). Initial monitoring of the teachers receiving this support has indicated that it is having a positive impact as the quality of teaching has consistently improved for these staff.

Ensuring a consistent approach to target setting across the curriculum that provides stretch and challenge for all students.

The school has undertaken an overhaul of the data systems used with support from the LA. This has included introducing average points scores (APS) to set targets and track the attainment and progress of students. The school sets an expectation based on two sub-levels per year from KS2 outcomes although this is to be translated into APS under the new system.

End of key stage targets are generated for each student in APS format and these are broken down to indicate where a student should be at the end of each year. Performance at the end of KS3 is to be reviewed and higher targets set where appropriate. In KS4 the APS targets become predicted grades.

Currently the school does not have a system to adjust targets for students who were identified as underperforming at KS2 in order to achieve accelerated progress. The school is to consider how such students can be identified through transition activities and how aspirational targets can be set and monitored for them.

FOI - 11767 - Marshall - Appendix 9.doc

Report of Activity

Reviewing the use of information systems so that the progress of all students and groups of students can be more easily evaluated against their challenging targets.

The school has done considerable work on this aspect and has revised and strengthened systems. Many of these have just come into operation or will do so from September.

Form tutors are to be known as 'Learning Mentors' from September and will meet with parents and students during review days twice yearly to discuss attainment and progress in addition to discussions at parents' evenings and curriculum evenings. Heads of departments will be held more to account for student progress from September and will analyse and report on student progress half termly to the SLT. Teacher assessments are to be collated each half term and compared to the targets set to identify performance levels and any concerns.

Teacher assessments are to be collated half termly and the analysis completed by one week after collection. Wave one, two and three interventions and strategies are entered onto SIMS which enables teachers to access these efficiently when performance levels indicate a need. Teachers and heads of departments review and monitor these through data and observations.

In addition the end of year attainment and progress report has been reviewed and will now contain levels for effort and attitude to learning as well as the students' targets and outcomes. These will be discussed with the students.

Using students to systematically evaluate where disruption to learning takes place and eradicate it.

The SLT were able to demonstrate how they regularly get feedback from students, through house meetings to gain information about the consistency of practice in this area. Students are encouraged to name those teachers not applying the strategy, and this is then followed up with those individual teachers. Where individual staff have had a weakness identified, they have received specific support from the LA to improve practice. Internal observations indicate that this is having a significant and positive impact on their practice. From September the student focus groups will be changed to widen membership and make the discussions more representative.

The school is also monitoring the impact and effectiveness of its behaviour policy in a strategic way. Various data sets are collected, including within year groups, within subjects and across different half terms. The increased number of 'removals' during the spring and first part of the summer term is attributed to teachers applying the process more consistently and setting a bench mark for all students. Initial data for the start of the second half of the summer term may indicate that students are responding more positively as the number of removals is reduced.

Number of 'removals' for each of the first two weeks of each half term period.				
	Spring term A	Spring term B	Summer term A	Summer term B
Number of removals	75	75	48	39

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The school is also addressing the issue of 'punctuality' to lessons. A consistent and robust message is being given to students where lateness is seen as disrupting the lesson and the same sanctions can be applied. Monitoring of lateness indicates a significant improvement from February 2012 to June 2012. On the 20th February 2012 there were 128 students late to lessons on the 18th June this had reduced to 21 students late to lessons.

Conclusion:

A great deal of work has been undertaken by the school since the Ofsted inspection which has been well focused. Staff are focused and determined to bring about the necessary improvements. Understandably much of the developments to date have been concerned with putting systems in place or adjusting existing systems and as such insufficient time has lapsed for these to have an impact. It will be important for the school to rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact as soon as it becomes evident and then to swiftly address any implications which arise.

Report of Activity

ACTION

In order to bring about further improvement the school should:

- Develop a summary CPD provision map linked to the school action plan for all staff.
- Record the range of support provided to individual teachers to improve practice that includes, the support given, who and when it was given, subsequent monitoring and the impact of this support.
- Extend the range of monitoring activities used to judge the quality of teaching, to allow a broader view of teaching over time. This will include work scrutiny, planning scrutiny, analysis of class based data and interviews with students and form a triangulated model.
- To eradicate any inadequate teaching as quickly as possible through continuing to provide specific and focused support for individual teachers.
- To continue to strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that an increasing proportion becomes good, with a particular focus upon:
    - ensuring the correct balance between teacher exposition and student activity
    - providing appropriate levels of differentiation to meet the needs of all students.
- Develop greater consistency of practice in the application of school based behaviour management strategies.
- Review with and remind all staff of the school's marking policy and ensure that there is far greater compliance with its implementation.
- Introduce a system, for those students identified as having underperformed at KS2, of setting aspirational targets to support accelerated progress and how this is to be monitored.

Signed:

Date:

Copy To: Head teacher
Chair of Governors
Brian Pope (AD)
Pam Simpson (DM)
Simon Francis (LLP)

Author of Record				
	Duration	**Preparation**	**Follow Up**	**Charge Code**
Day(s)	2			9631M
Hour(s)				
Total Time Author of Record			**Day(s)**	**Hour(s)**
			2	

FOI - 11767 - Marshall - Appendix 9.doc