

Summary Report of 'External Audit'
review visit to Gatley Primary School
(Academy), Stockport.



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Date :	12 th and 13 th March 2018		
Head and Deputy Head of School:	Vanessa McManus / Gemma Norman		
CEO – Education Learning Trust:	Michelle Murray Also present: Helen White, representing ELT Board of Trustees		
Date of last Inspection :	22/23 March 2010	Overall Effectiveness :	Outstanding

Context / organisation of the two-day visit and evidence taken into account:

- This external audit was commissioned by leaders to contribute to their regular self-evaluation processes and external scrutiny of the school's overall performance.
- Key changes have taken place in the last year: two local primary schools have joined the ELT Academy Trust, one of which is being monitored and supported by Gatley leaders as it is in the Special Measures category; the Trust Board has been established, and a significant changeover of governing body members took place in September due to several terms of office coming to an end. Consequently, most are parent governors who are new to the role.
- Key documents checked prior to the review were: Gatley Self Evaluation Summary 2018; ASP 2017 data summary; mid-year review target setting summary.
- Prior to the start of observations on the first day, Senior leaders gave a 'presentation of the school's position', including data outcomes 2017, learning priorities and self-evaluation.
- The afternoon of day one focused on governance. Five governors attended to present information from their recent 'vision and action-planning' development work. They then accompanied the leadership team on observations of learning in classrooms across the school, contributing to discussions about this at the end of the day.
- The second day focused on middle leadership and the curriculum. Interviews were held with phase leaders, members of the curriculum and reflective teams, and groups of pupils. It included the joint scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work and topic books, alongside the formative and summative assessment data for each year group. More observations of learning as well as the lunchtime provision also took place.

Effectiveness of leadership and management:

- Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance is exceptionally thorough and accurate. No inaccuracies or over-positive judgements can be found in the school's self-evaluation summary, which is in itself an effective example of clarity and conciseness, backed up by strong evidence in every aspect.
- There are no negative patterns to be found in the national data reports of pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage. Nevertheless, leaders still identify 'areas of investigation' to see whether any lessons can be learned that would further increase rates of progress for any group(s) of pupils. The constant dissemination of best practice and research findings are ongoing features of leaders' work to maintain the school's outstanding performance.

- Similarly, leaders also challenge robustly the school's internal teacher assessment information and use it to formulate focused development points for teaching and learning that are informed by the data.
- Curriculum teams and phase teams work collaboratively and ensure that there is a whole-school approach to monitoring and evaluation. Team meetings, to which teaching assistants are also invited, promote professional discussion and peer reflection as well as reviewing progress against action plans.
- Interviews with leaders at all levels demonstrate an impressive level of consistency in the high quality and impact of their leadership. The strong skills and enthusiasm for their roles and responsibilities are testament to the school's strategic vision and succession planning over time. As expressed by phase leaders when asked to summarise factors that contribute to the school's success, 'we are all *constantly thinking*' and it is clear that pupils are their first priority.
- Teaching School opportunities and bespoke CPD enable the in-house development of excellent teachers and future leaders. The impact of senior leaders' work with [REDACTED] school can be seen in the much improved provision and leadership that has been developing there in the last year.
- Governors, most of whom are new to their role, are maintaining the high expectations of the school's performance in order to hold leaders to account. They are developing a strong understanding of wider aspects of their role and priorities, including of the balance between challenge and support.
- Following the joint observations and discussions conducted during the review and with the support of leaders, the governors present expressed an increased awareness of the significant strengths in teaching and learning across the school. Comments were made on: how articulate, confident and independent the children were; completely engaged in their learning and going straight to their tasks; collaboration and self-help strategies used; clarity of reasoning; wanting to talk about their work and why they like it; and challenging themselves towards the 'could' statements rather than just going for the first level of achievement.
- Governors were also able to see how pupils could direct their own learning in tasks that are underpinned by six key skills: problem-solving, communication, teamwork, ICT/Research, reflection and application.
- The school's vision for its broad and balanced curriculum has further evolved with the post-2014 national curriculum changes. It continues to respond to pupils' needs and provide them with the skills to transfer and apply their learning in different ways. The curriculum is further enhanced by the involvement of consultants and subject experts, working alongside staff who also extend their own skills and record key points in learning journals. This is one of the ways in which Gatley's vision of 'enjoying, learning and achieving together' is realised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment:

- A unique element of the teaching and learning at Gatley is that pupils themselves are closely involved in the curriculum design, implementation and assessment, at a level appropriate to their age. Consequently, as they move through the school with this consistent and innovative style of learning, they become confident and articulate in talking about and reflecting on their work and the progress they are making.
- Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and provide well-planned lessons that quickly build progressively on their prior knowledge to challenge their thinking and learning. It is enhanced by the independent learning environment in which adults do not need to control the learning, but rather facilitate it.
- Skilled teaching assistants work in partnership with teachers and the pupils themselves to assess their progress in clearly-expressed intended learning objectives. Adults come together to

discuss and cross-moderate formative assessments that arise from the 'directed' and 'focused' tasks undertaken in lessons during the week. They also check that the tasks provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to demonstrate mastery principles.

- Teachers are effective in their explanations and modelling of new concepts or ideas and in their questioning to promote pupils' understanding and identify misconceptions. As a result, pupils can be seen confidently applying the taught strategies, for example in mathematics to solve worded problems. This also happens in literacy problem-solving, for example when Year 1 children were asked to explain how and why they had sorted sentences in a particular way.
- Well-timed 'mini plenary' opportunities happen at the right time for the right reasons during lessons. They are used to re-shape learning and involve the pupils, helping them to make connections between different aspects or subjects.
- The impact of the school's 'journey marking' and effective feedback strategy is that pupils are clear about when and how they are meeting the success criteria in lessons and what they can do to challenge themselves further. Pupils become aware of their preferred learning styles and the teachers' planning and organisation of independent learning tasks provides them with the opportunity to apply these.
- This begins right at the start of their school life with Early Years provision that is increasingly pupil-led, promoting their curiosity and self-motivation within purposeful learning opportunities.

Pupils' Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare:

- It is clear, and supported by a wide range of evidence from the school's self-evaluation and external audits, that pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are confident and self-assured. This has a positive impact their progress both academically and personally, as a result of the high quality of the school's provision.
- A group of pupils who brought their topic books along to a meeting were able to discuss examples of work they were particularly proud of and why. Their interest and enthusiasm for the subjects covered are enhanced by the fact that they have a say in the themes and content. They are proud of their books and talked about some of the things they had learned, covering knowledge and skills in art, history, geography, science, British Values and French, for example.
- Pupils work together effectively to tackle challenges, understanding the importance of being able to 'think, learn then apply'.
- A typical example of pupils' motivation and thirst for knowledge across the curriculum is the response: 'We like learning more about things we know a bit about!'
- Pupils value their education; they work hard and attendance levels are high. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted across the curriculum. Pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility and make a strong contribution to the school and its community.
- Surveys of parents' views are consistently positive and typically unanimous in agreeing that their child is happy and safe at school.
- Provision during lunchtimes has to be very carefully planned and managed due to the limitations of the school's space for the large number of pupils. For example, staggered times for sitting down to lunch and dividing playground areas into three zones according to year group.
- This system is well led and effective in respect of timetabling, staffing, training of pupil play leaders, and use of available equipment and organised games or clubs. Adults promote the 'leadership ambassador' awards and check pupils' progress charts towards this. They are always looking for ways in which improvements could be made, particularly in the winter months when the grassed area is out of use so space is even more at a premium.

Outcomes for pupils:

- Leaders' evaluations of pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage are accurate. Attainment trends have been high across the core subjects for several years, with progress scores above or significantly above the national average. This reflects the fact that pupils typically make substantial and sustained progress to develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Any cohort-related variations in the standards or progress of particular groups of pupils are identified to look for possible areas for investigation that could then be built into action plans for development. For example, an EY priority to narrow the gap between boys and girls in their achievement of GLD in the specific areas of literacy and mathematics. The resulting focus on planning and interventions has shown a positive impact so far and will be checked again at the next standards review.
- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and in-year assessment outcomes, as well as discussions with pupils, all contribute to a positive validation of leaders' judgements.

Recommendations/actions to strengthen:

There are no areas of the school's performance that fall below what would be expected of an outstanding school that is constantly looking to make things even better. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plans already cover any identified areas for attention or 'fine-tuning', and take into account the developments related to the growing 'family' of the ELT trust.

A few topics were discussed during the review as possible ways to enhance provision further:

- Within the limitations of the structure, space and condition of the school building, look for ways to enhance the overall appearance of the learning environment in places. Ideally, first impressions that have a 'wow' factor would better exemplify the outstanding practice that goes on throughout the school. Similarly, things to consider in classrooms could include the display of the term's curriculum maps, rearranging some of the learning areas to enhance the 'thinking environment', and reflection on subject-specific matters.
- Continue to refine the school's assessment process, for example ensuring that for all prior attainment groups, the tracking system can nevertheless demonstrate their personal progress journey.

Marguerite Murphy
17th March 2018