



16th July 2019

Mr James Harris
Headteacher
Walton le Dale High School
Brindle Road
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Flagship Review Date: 3rd July 2019

Summary

Walton le Dale High school is a smaller than average 11-16 secondary school. The proportion of disadvantaged students is a little above average at 32% and students who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or receive specific SEND support amount to 10% of the student population.

In June 2018, the school was inspected by Ofsted Inspectors who found that the school is "...a place where inclusivity is a strength." The school's website celebrates the school's inclusive ethos and provides an unequivocal statement which contains the following, "Walton-le-Dale is proud to have held the prestigious INCLUSION QUALITY MARK since 2007."

The current Head has been in place since September 2017 and during that time he has steered the school carefully and has ensured that developing high quality, inclusive teaching is the main priority of the school. This renewed focus is timely and there is great integrity evident in his leadership of the school. Middle leaders described how delegation of responsibility was genuine and that they felt more accountable and able to hold their staff to account. Monitoring and evaluation processes have been strengthened but importantly, through distributed leadership. They were equally clear that the inclusive ethos of which the school has been so proud continues to be a strength of the school.

I was able to meet with a good number of students who represented a cross selection of the student population. One of my meetings was with students from key stage 3. I found them to be polite, enthusiastic and articulate. They were very positive about their school and offered a number of largely curriculum based suggestions that they felt would improve the school still further. I also met three of the ten Well-being Ambassadors who attended a ten week course, 'The Well-being Challenge', facilitated by Lancashire Minds, a mental health charity. Since completing the one hour weekly course, Well-being Ambassadors have put in place 'Well-being Wednesday' which is open to all students after school one Wednesday per month. There is a theme identified, for example exam stress, body image, mindful activities, self-esteem, to name a few.

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Each week, the Ambassadors meet with the member of staff overseeing the initiative to plan events and discuss plans. After my discussion with the Ambassadors they were whisked away to attend a well-deserved celebration event at Preston North End Football Club.

A number of staff have gained the Mental Health First Aider qualification and there is a comprehensive and detailed development plan for mental health provision in the school. From September, a new Head of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) will take up post and will use the PSHE curriculum as a vehicle to continue raising awareness of mental health and well-being. Other professional development has included courses and training on anxiety management, children who are distressed, angry and upset and leading a mentally healthy school.

The school has a good network of external agencies such as Addaction, various therapy providers such as percussive therapy and the services of a school counsellor, school nurse and the support of Kooth, an online resource free for young people who require online counselling. The school also provides a six week nurture style group through a process of withdrawal for a small number of vulnerable year 7 students. The programme seeks to help develop social skills and runs at lunchtimes. The school also runs a buddy system in which year 7 students are buddied up with year 6 students and they introduce themselves with a personal letter.

In transition from year 6 to 7 and also post-16, school leaders have incorporated additional support for more vulnerable youngsters aiming to build their resilience. In addition to the traditional transition days for year 6, in collaboration with primary schools, more vulnerable year 6 students are identified who would benefit from additional transition support. This has taken the form of two extra sessions at Walton le Dale comprising a breakfast activity and a 'Come dine with me' morning through to lunch. For Year 11 students moving to post-16 provision, support is provided on transition days and a number of visits to a range of places of employment and colleges. Masterclasses for the most able are run by the local Further Education College.

The school is proud to have amongst its student population a Youth Ambassador for Blackburn. The Youth Ambassador Project is a ten week programme with the aim of empowering them to make a difference through social integration and social action projects. The year 10 student who is one of only thirty Ambassadors around Blackburn, is a young person undergoing transition from male to female and she has initiated and leads a weekly LBGT group at the school set up to discuss gender issues. The meeting is aptly called The Inclusion Meeting or TIM for short.

During the day, I spent time touring the school and sampling the many activities taking place on one of the school's 'Enrichment Days' when the timetable is suspended. In all of the areas I visited, I was impressed by the engagement of the students as they discussed the concept of 'consent' in the context of the professional footballer, Ched Evans rape case, tussled with the mathematics of sport and considered 'choices and consequences' in a number of scenarios presented by the Fire Brigade. There was even a 'Dragons Den' type activity with a store full of materials from which students could create and sell their innovations to a team of dragons! Behaviour was excellent and students were obviously enjoying the activities.

The building is well maintained and there is a good amount of display celebrating student's achievements as well as information boards. I was also able to see how the recently appointed Deputy Headteacher is planning to bring together behaviour and attendance teams with SEND staff in one block of the school.

Staff from the school have attended both cluster meetings so far this year and the Deputy Headteacher is attending the third and final meeting of the year later this term. It was good to hear how staff who have attended were positive about the cluster meetings and I was told how despite having achieved Dyslexia Friendly School status, the school was able to bring back some practical ideas from one of the cluster meetings that had the theme of Dyslexia Friendly Schools.

The school continues to move successfully through its transition under the astute leadership of the Headteacher and his senior leaders. There are significant staffing changes this year as some staff retire and others move to promoted posts. Their legacy is acknowledged and celebrated. The changes are seen as opportunities to continue developing and improving the school and to bring a new perspective and ideas. The school remains loyal to its core aim of providing an inclusive schooling and recognises that it must raise expectations for all students. I am of the opinion that the school has developed significantly over the past two years and that it is poised to increase momentum over the next year.

Walton le Dale High School continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its inclusive practice and I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship review. I recommend that the school retains its Inclusion Quality Mark Flagship Status and is reviewed again in 12 months. The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Flagship status.

Assessor: Mr Barry Carney

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:



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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



Assessment Commentary on Flagship Project

- The school has modified the title of their Flagship project to replace “outstanding” with “brilliant” for good reason as explained in their evaluation.
- “This is to integrate the project into the overall improvement plan for the school and not to limit the outcomes to those in the changing definitions of outstanding in the Ofsted framework.”
- The project title now reads: “Brilliant teaching in an inclusive classroom.” This is a subtle but highly sensible change and it retains the focus on improving the quality of teaching for all students whatever their needs.
- Staff have carried out a large amount of research and have created a new ‘Learning for Life Skills Framework’ that becomes a pervasive part of the newly developed toolkit for brilliant teaching. The school is ahead of their original time plan and have already rolled out the new toolkit and afforded middle leaders the opportunity to create a subject based interpretation of the toolkit. There is a good process for professional development and a School Improvement Group comprising middle leaders who review progress.
- What is highly commendable is that this project is seen as a whole school improvement project and therefore places inclusion as central and the responsibility of all.

Further Developments:-

- Next year, school leaders should monitor the progress of the project by tracking the impact of the toolkit on an identified, representative sample of students. Additionally, school leaders should consider monitoring progress by tracking impact through a subject to be determined.
- Mental well-being is clearly a focus for the school and they have made good progress in this area. It is suggested that it might be improved by more overt promotion of the Ambassadors and their role, creating a succession plan and linking this with anti-bullying and LGBT stands.
- Continue to drive down exclusions and low level disruptive behaviour and improve attendance.
- Continue to improve outcomes for students which will be underpinned by all of the above.

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