

## NOTE OF VISIT

### Stockport Local Authority

<b>School: Stockport School</b>	<b>Education Consultant: John Gornall</b>
<b>Date of visit: 16 March 2017</b>	<b>Circulation: Ian Irwin; Alan Beswick</b>

#### Introduction

At the request of Stockport Local Authority, in partnership with Ian Irwin (Headteacher), I conducted a one day visit to Stockport School. The focus was leadership and management.

#### School Context:

Stockport school is a large 11-16 co-educational maintained secondary comprehensive serving its local community. The school's popularity has grown steadily and the number of students attending has grown significantly. The school's Pupil Admission Number (PAN) increased in 2015 from 215 to 240. The school expects there to be approximately 270 students joining Year 7 in 2017. The school serves a very diverse socio-economic catchment area including a high proportion of students with some form of additional need including approximately a third of all students having special educational needs, disability or disadvantage.

The school was judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' in all areas of its work in November 2013. There was only one Area for Improvement (AFI) identified: *further improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and increase the proportion that is outstanding.*

#### Evidence:

Prior to the visit the following was examined:

- Previous Inspection Report.
- School's website
- Action Planning documentation
- Self-evaluation document
- Performance information

#### During the visit:

Interviews were conducted with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, heads of key stages, directors of subjects, SENCO, directors of intervention, pastoral managers and the administrative manager.

Areas of responsibility of interviewees included: pupil premium/ disadvantaged students; attendance behaviour and rewards; literacy and SEN; curriculum; teaching and CPD; safeguarding and child protection including oversight of the single central record; pastoral support and intervention; careers guidance; progress attainment and outcomes; student tracking and the role/impact of middle leaders.

(The visit was predominantly focused on the school's strategic leadership and management, rather than an examination of the impact of the work leaders and managers do at school level. Therefore, no lessons were observed and none of the students' work was scrutinised).

### Leadership and Management

#### Strengths/Positives

- The Headteacher, demonstrates a clear vision and determination to make Stockport School a provider of 'outstanding' education. Since taking over the headship of the school he has been clear about the school's priorities and its direction of travel. The headteacher knows the school, its staff and students very well. He has shown confidence in successfully developing a structure that has

more distributed leadership and accountability. Given the growing size of the school, its diverse catchment and the complexities of changes nationally, the move to a more distributed pattern of leadership and accountability is well judged. All staff spoken with commented positively about the extension of leadership roles across the school and the opportunities this has brought for individuals to make a positive impact. There is a tangible sense of 'ownership' and shared passion amongst senior and middle leaders to make Stockport School the best it can be.

- Documentation supporting the school's strategic leadership is comprehensive, detailed and sets out unequivocally the priorities for the school's continuous improvement. The 2015-17 school development plan is carefully structured around six key priorities: curriculum, closing the gap, leadership and development, finance buildings and resources, communication, teaching and learning. Within each priority area are several stated objectives that lead to school actions and activities. The plan benefits from a simple but effective colour coding system to indicate the extent that objectives have been met.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are clear about the school's current priorities and there is a high level of synergy and consistency across the group. Members talk confidently about their individual roles and responsibilities and how these link to the school's broader improvement planning strategy. Although each senior leader has a well-defined role, it quickly becomes apparent that senior leaders work collaboratively and effectively as a team. Some leaders are stronger than others in being able to signpost evidence to demonstrate their impact against the school's six main priority areas. They are all, however, able to highlight initiatives that have led to improved outcomes for students be that pastorally or academically.
- A particular strength of the school's leadership and management is the excellent way in which the school's pastoral systems and procedures are combined with its academic/curriculum provision. Communication between leaders responsible for each aspect is excellent. The school's monitoring and tracking systems both academically and pastorally are robust and sufficiently refined to enable leaders and managers to identify underperformance or concerns about individual students in a timely way. This information is then used to inform a holistic discussion about individual students to ensure 'intelligence' is pooled thus leading to bespoke intervention programmes.
- The Headteacher meets with senior leaders regularly to ensure focus and accountability are maintained. Line management structures are explicit and this encourages good channels of communication. Leaders talk about having good opportunities for professional development both personally and at whole school and departmental levels. A third of all staff, for example, have accessed the Aspiring Middle Leaders' course. The Extended Senior Leadership Team programme has allowed aspiring middle leaders to shadow and work alongside experienced senior leaders. Talking with senior and middle leaders one gains a sense that the bedrock of this school's success lies in its high level of collegiality and mutual support leading to sound professional judgement.
- Leaders have strengthened self-evaluation systems and this has reportedly led to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Performance management is an integral part of the school's drive to improve teaching and raise standards. Good quality Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports are produced and these are shared and discussed among leaders and governors.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The single central record meets requirements and is meticulously updated. Safeguarding and child protection leads have accessed appropriate training and can demonstrate they are up to date with national and local guidance and developments. Training has been provided for all staff and this is supported by appropriate in-school documentation and guidance. New entrants to the teaching profession also receive bespoke training so they are fully aware of the safeguarding procedures within school.
- The subject leads for English, mathematics and science were clear about the school's priorities and those of their individual subjects. Each could articulate a successful initiative within their subjects to strengthen student engagement and progress.

- Areas of the school's provision that came across as particularly strong in discussions were: assessment and tracking, curriculum, teaching and learning, identification and intervention strategies for students requiring support, careers/post-16, safeguarding and pastoral support.
- In 2016, the school improved its GCSE results with strong performance in English and mathematics reflected in a 75%+ A\*-C pass rate in both subjects. A similarly impressive performance of 45% of students passing the English Baccalaureate. Progress overall has also improved over time with a Progress 8 score of +0.26 in 2016.

**Areas to consider** (these are offered in the context of the final statement in the summary further below)

- Senior and middle leaders were clear about their roles, responsibilities and the impact they had made on supporting the school's broader improvement plan as well as their own areas of responsibility. Some however, were stronger than others at being able to signpost the evidence to support their assertions and thus demonstrate their impact in real terms. When considering evidence to demonstrate impact, leaders may want to think about qualitative as well as quantitative indicators/outcomes.
- Pupil Premium (PP) planning and linked expenditure is well thought through and many of the initiatives appear appropriate to the school's context. The end-of-year evaluation of PP spend would benefit from more detail in respect of the impact of expenditure on eligible pupils. This information should then inform and help to justify decisions about future PP spending.
- The school's current development plan has many strengths but would benefit from:
  - inserting a 'success criteria' column that for each objective describes in simple, but robust terms, what the intended qualitative or quantitative success measure will be. Try to avoid using broad descriptors like 'a wider cohort of students offered support' and 'gaps in progress and performance closed' to more specific criteria.
  - in the 'outcomes' column record the evidence that demonstrates if the success criteria have been met, partly met or not met.
  - consider mapping out each of the school's priorities onto a monthly or termly timeline chart so it shows when the initiative is 'live' and a 'focus'. Also on the timeline add a period for consolidation of the change/initiative. Use the mapped-out programme to look for the pinch spots in terms of which months or times of the school year may present staff, students, year groups, or key stages with manageability difficulties and re-adjust accordingly.

## **In conclusion**

This visit was to review the school's leadership and management and evidence was based on discussions with the headteacher and a range of senior and middle leaders together with an examination of key school documentation. Within the parameters of that introduction, I have no doubt that the headteacher, senior and middle leaders have moved this school significantly forward from the time of its last inspection. There is a passion and a desire at all levels to do the best for the students and this has shown measurable impact and strong capacity for the future.

**John Gornall 17.03.17**