

Southampton School Improvement Officer Annual Visit Report 2021 – 2022

School	Redbridge Community School	
Headteacher	Jason Ashley / head@redbridgeschool.co.uk	
Chair of Governors	David Whalley / dwhalley@redbridgeschool.co.uk	
School Improvement Officer	Alan Taylor-Bennett	Date of visit: 17 Nov 2021
Other attendees	nil	
Last Ofsted inspection judgement / date	<p>Good, and good in all key judgement areas, in s5 inspection January 2018</p> <p>In April 2021, the school took part in a pilot inspection. Leaders regard the feedback received as very positive and felt that it reinforced their self-evaluation judgments.</p>	
Information about the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1042 students are currently on roll <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ this is 3 more than at this point last year • 28% of students have SEND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1.9% (of NOR) of students have an EHCP (included in above figure) • 9.0% of students have EAL • 49% of students are eligible for PP • 52% of students are currently FSM6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ this is 11% (of NOR) more than academic year 2020/21 • 5.3% students currently have/have ever had a social worker • 24% of students were persistently absent in 2020/21 • 5.9% students had 1 or more exclusion(s) in 2020/21 • 3.5% of students arrived in-year in 2020/21 • 3.2% of students were in-year leavers in 2020/21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 0.1% (of NOR) were EHE (included in above figure) • 1.1% of students had reduced timetables in 2020/21 	

Follow up review recommended?	Not necessary at this time.
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Area to develop	Timescale and intended impact
The school development plan and SEF.	Not urgent. Consider how using the 'success/impact to be seen' column in the SDP and the 'headline impact' column in the SEF to reflect the <i>impact</i> of each action point on students, your staff and the wider community can sharpen your developing planning processes throughout the school.
Student voice.	Over the next few months. Reflect on the benefits of extending and deepening the current culture of listening and valuing students' views to include some opportunities for them to contribute to the development of the quality of education in some subjects.
The expression of the school's strategic intent	Over the next year. It is worth reflecting on the advantages of a whole-hearted adoption of the structure and rhetoric of the current Ofsted curriculum model across the school.

and its implementation and impact.	This may simplify and further sharpen several statements of the mission and values of the school currently in place and their penetration into classrooms.
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How evidence was obtained

Meetings were held with:

- the headteacher
- the deputy headteacher and other senior staff
- core subject leaders
- students
- the HR business manager
- the Chair of Governors.

The following documentation was reviewed:

- the school development plan
- the self-evaluation
- the minutes of the most recent FGB meeting
- Covid-19 risk assessment
- an analysis of 2021 outcomes
- analyses of attendance and exclusions
- behaviour logs
- the school's website.

Several lesson visits were undertaken across a range of subjects and year groups.

Summary of key findings

The school continues to be led with passion, energy and vision. Leaders, staff, governors and students are proud of their school and its vital contribution to its local community. It has emerged from the lockdowns and various Covid spikes relatively unscathed and the expressions of its essential sense of mission have not lost much momentum. This is a school that takes problems as opportunities and always designs responses that place students at the centre of its work.

Leaders design all improvement strategies to reflect their context and its priorities very closely and could reflect on the advantages of making the expression and publicising of them briefer, sharper and therefore even more incisive. Subject areas are operating with reliably and securely good implementation mechanisms and with good impact. Some could consider which aspects of their work could be developed over the next year or two to become truly excellent.

The quality of education

- Leaders are pleased that the strong responses they put in place to the demands of lockdown, both pastorally and academically, meant that the great majority of students returned to school as confident and happy as possible under the circumstances. Nevertheless there are gaps in learning and challenges in many of these students' personal lives. Appropriate re-sequencing has been undertaken in each subject's statement of intent and the school is offering support to many individuals.
- The main improvement mechanism, and the foundation of the Covid recovery plan for this academic year onwards, is the Fundamental 5 concept placing literacy, assessment, Shine (challenge for all including the more able provision), knowledge recall and sequencing at the focus of the school's work. Of these, students' skills in reading and their knowledge of vocabulary are the key drivers. STAR testing gives leaders a strong grasp of relative strengths and where the priorities lie.
- Leaders are very keen to fully understand the full extent of the pandemic's influence on the quality of students' learning. They introduced MIDYIS and YELLIS tests at the start of last academic year. This has offered useful insights, including the slightly weaker capacity for learning in current Years 7 and 8.
- Provision for potentially vulnerable students has been well-coordinated and very successful for some time now, and particularly during the pandemic. On average, PP-eligible students are actually marginally out-performing others in Years 10 and 11 due to the strong support they received.

- Many lessons were visited briefly and this gave a good overview of the classroom-based experience of students. Classes are characterised by a sense of calmness and focus; students are attentive and teachers lead learning with a sense of structure and purpose. Working relationships between staff and students are pleasant, productive and trusting. In an English lesson, students were learning 'how to write like an academic' by developing their capacity to manage transitions between key ideas in their writing. Some science lessons involve practical work and practical demonstrations, remarkable in that it is still comparatively rare in many schools currently even at this point in the school year. A mathematics lesson was being conducted remotely by the teacher, for health reasons, and successfully supported in the classroom by other staff.
- Leaders have given considerable thought to their 2-year KS3 model, raised by the last Ofsted team as a point for consideration. They are confident that it serves the needs of all students, including the current Year 9, and that their mapping of students' knowledge and skills acquisition against the requirements of the KS3 NC reveals that no one loses out. The approach to KS4 is not to extend two years across three, but to enrich and deepen students' experiences of their core and elective courses. More explicit links between this whole-school curriculum planning and the statement of curriculum intent would be useful.
- Students in EduK8 remain well cared for and are therefore able to experience significantly more stability and make better progress over these turbulent times and had than had they received multiple FTEs or a permanent exclusion.
- Core subject leaders are keen to move the good quality teaching and learning on further. For example:
 - the mathematics subject leader is interested in working with the head of English around the use of writing in mathematics to develop mathematical reasoning and to generate keener insights into the depth of students' grasp of the mathematics behind the processes
 - the new leader of science is becoming aware that strong links with English may not simply assist her team to enable students to express themselves with more precision in longer answer questions but stronger oracy and writing skills will also give them opportunities to improve their scientific understanding in every lesson. She has already usefully mapped the curriculum onto a number of key scientific concepts although some reduction in their number in its next iteration may be useful to clarify this for students
 - English are keen to explore the use of subject-specific words in mathematics and science to illuminate students' need to use them with great care in various contexts.

Some areas have an enthusiasm to develop aspects of their work to the point where they could be regarded as areas of excellence and are beginning to consider their strategies. The opportunity to see outstanding practice elsewhere may assist them.

- Outcomes in 2021 were pleasing. The proportion of students achieving basics at G4+ was 58% and matched the gains made in 2020. The proportion achieving basics at G5+ improved by 3 points to 34% and there was a pleasing increase in the proportion of grades awarded at 7+ to 16%.

Behaviour and attitudes

- The great majority of students are calm and cooperative in lessons and in corridors. There is some absence of traditional formality, for example students sit on the floor in corridors to chat and eat snacks at break times, but no lack of respect for each other and staff is associated with this.
- The school does not have some of the more obvious behavioural problems faced by many other schools in England currently. For example, during lessons the corridors were quiet; there were no students internally truanting, seemingly unable to cope in lessons.
- Students show pride in their school. They recognise the quality of education here as a key strength and could only highlight the food in the canteen as an area for improvement!
- They like the fact that teachers listen to them and take their views into account but would like more opportunities to develop this contribution in subject-specific conversations with subject leaders.
- Students said that there are occasional racist remarks from some students but that this is considered exceptional and the great majority consider this absolutely unacceptable. Staff are supportive in such instances.
- Attendance is very well managed. The reasons for students being absent are scrutinised and the insights generated are used to direct the strategies of assistant HoYs. The attendance lead has identified the

importance of pushing more strongly with parents to identify precise reasons for absence and then specific ways of benefiting from the skills of the influential family engagement worker, and has formalised the responses to lateness (via a stamped 'loyalty card') that has led to a more effective use of rewards and sanctions. As a result, attendance, at around 90%, is broadly comparable with the current national average despite the very significant socio-economic challenge in the school's catchment area.

- More extreme sanctions are used less frequently here than average. Exclusions compared to the number on roll have been over 6% below the national figure for some years, and the proportion of students with at least 1 exclusion around 2% lower, and this trend continues. This is due to the positive culture established around the school and the good use of the alternative education room and EduK8.

Personal development

- The school works with an impressively wide range of local, national and international external bodies in the interest of students' personal development.
- Leaders' responses to the concerns raised in the Everybody Welcome website in relation to sexual harassment and sexual violence were rapid and well-focused. Leaders immediately surveyed students and used the results to inform an action plan and to engage with parents. The role of coordinator of Girl Exce' has been developed and has devised a 'blurred lines' campaign. Some usefully provocative posters feature around the school, encouraging thoughtful responses from students. The PSHE and assembly programme have been reviewed in light of the findings. Students spoken with showed a good grasp of the essential ideas behind necessary responses to peer-on-peer abuse both within and outside of school. The word 'consent' was used reassuringly early in the conversation by one boy and others showed a keen grasp of its meaning. Some demonstrated a mature grasp of the issue by remarking that 'it isn't a one-off thing – we all have to keep this conversation alive'. In conversation with the senior member of staff responsible we agreed that this work should be revisited frequently and explicitly in PSHE, RHSE and assemblies over the year for all year groups.
- A unique and bespoke policy has been written in response to the needs of LGBTQ+ students and many spoken with were proud that their school had decided to support these students. They said that this is a place where there is little bullying due to perceived difference: at worst there is tolerance and at best a ready acceptance of differences.
- The school has a clear and consistent careers programme embedded within the PSHE curriculum. The coordinator has 4 hours each fortnight for developing and maintaining careers activity. With strong support from senior managers there is a growing culture of careers as a priority within the school enabling every teacher to play a part.
- A strong process of monitoring risk of NEET from Year 7 onwards via the SERAT survey and toolkit, in conjunction with attendance data and tutor feedback, means that additional resource can be focused on specific youngsters.
- The school contract Hampshire Futures for careers adviser time to the extent of 1 day per week. Work experience is via EBP south.
- Transition data 16+ is tracked thoroughly and relationships with colleges are good. The number of Year 11 NEET during the autumn of Year 12 has dropped considerably.
- The Baker Clause is visible within the careers policy. However the access arrangements need a clear statement and route on the careers page. The careers program is within the policy document but this could be re-presented in a format more accessible for both students and parents.

Leadership and management

- Staffing remains broadly stable. Two members of the senior team have left (due to promotion) and one AHT has been appointed. There are new leaders of science and English. There is manageable turnover on the governing body.
- Leaders know their school very well. They use clear statements of their priorities and can relate them confidently and accurately to their previous successes, the current challenges of their locality and the impact of the pandemic. Senior leaders are currently formulating a 7-year vision. While it is dubious about the extent to which one can include detailed statements of intent over this period, it usefully

refines and defines leaders' current hopes for the ways in which the school may move forward. Leaders may want to reflect on the influence of this thinking on the formulation of their whole-school statement of curriculum intent on the website, and the advantages of making a small number of priorities for the foreseeable future even more obvious there.

- Subject statements of intent on the website are not explicitly formulated in terms of knowledge and skills which is odd given their prominence in classroom practice particularly at KS3. When they are reworked over time middle leaders could consider the benefits of reshaping their expression of their statements of intent to emphasise their strong and explicit links with the whole-school statement, along the lines of paragraph 172 in the EIF. This is a relatively minor adjustment to practice but one that may help to make curriculum planning even sharper.
- The self-evaluation document is clear and useful. After some useful introductory contextual information, and an outline of the priorities (and the actions that underpinned them), it focuses on judgements made against the descriptors for outstanding in the EIF, and a summary of where the evidence lies. Some 'headline impact' statements are rather process based (eg 'Literacy Strategy flowchart complete' and 'careers interviews. took place all year, and over lockdown'. The rather brutal but very useful way of avoiding this is to ask yourselves and each other 'So what?' for anything in this column. Leaders may want to review them to phrase them in terms of the impact on students. Leaders are aware that they can judge the school to be satisfying these outstanding descriptors but must ensure that they do so to an *extent* that is inherently and demonstrably very impressive.
- Similarly, the school development plan is driven by a clear and powerful sense of vision and purpose. The primary mechanisms are outlined, eg the Fundamental 5 and details of curriculum approach, and then action points are broken down into specific actions, identified SLT lead, completion date, costs and impact to be seen. Again, there are sometimes items in the 'success/impact to be seen' column that are not impact-led, such as 'Each department develops their domain specific disciplinary writing style' and 'To survey students regarding experience of sexualised behaviour with a focus on 'blurred lines' programme and robust PSHE'. These impact statements should ideally describe desired changes in students' lived experiences and their learning here *as a result of specific actions taken* and better systems and structures being in place.
- Leaders are justly proud of their support for staff and ensure that the school's priorities are clear to everyone. Over recent years this has resulted in the achievement of Investors in People Platinum Award that places the school in the top 1% of all organisations, an Investors in People National Leadership Award and being a finalist in the Employer of the Year award.
- Safeguarding continues to be an appropriate priority in the school. All training is up to date for DSLs and all staff against KCSIE21. The single central record is maintained well; there are very few gaps in information (only around TRNs for two Teach First staff) and appropriate reasons for them. We discussed the benefits of establishing a simple record of checks undertaken on the SCR, detailing 'by whom, when, issues arising, and responses'. The HR manager agreed that this would be useful.
- The budget has been in a small surplus for revenue the last 10 years and is forecast to remain so for 2021/2022. There are healthy reserves of £700,000 that are allocated for capital projects.
- The Chair of Governors spoke confidently about leaders' responses to the pilot Ofsted inspection and how much it had led them to reflect on the impact of some of their work. The GB took particular interest in the recovery plan presented to them for their approval, and specifically in the ways in which good attendance is being required. Although they haven't yet tracked the impact of the school's work to address sexual harassment, they are keen to devise a way of doing so soon. They are aware that their capacity to experience the quality of education here 'on the ground' has been compromised by the pandemic and look forward to re-establishing their pattern of visits to lessons. Safeguarding has also had to be monitored remotely but the Chair of Governors is confident that there are appropriate checks and balances in place.