

Southampton School Improvement Officer follow-up visit report

School	Redbridge Community School	
Headteacher / email	Jason Ashley / head@redbridgeschool.co.uk	
Chair of Governors / email	David Whalley / dwhalley@redbridgeschool.co.uk	
School Improvement Officer	Alan Taylor-Bennett	Date of visit: 22 February 2021
Other attendees	nil	

Context
<p>This was an additional visit offered to all Southampton secondaries. It was undertaken virtually. It focused on the organisation and quality of provision for online learning. There were two meetings, both with the headteacher and the DHT in charge of remote learning, and three opportunities for joining online lessons, all of which were successful. The headteacher provided useful documentation ahead of the visit.</p>

Agreed actions	
Agreed action	Deadline and intended impact
Consider the use of externally available tools for evaluating remote learning.	Over the next few weeks. Sharpen middle and senior leaders' views around current strengths and the reasons for them, and potential areas for development (specifically how to move forward with aspects of remote learning after the full physical opening of schools).
Continue the appropriately assertive approach to working productively with other agencies to addressing serious social problems in the local community.	Ongoing. Remove hurdles to learning and serious risks to the welfare of a small but significant group of students; improve the quality of life for all.

Brief report on work undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically of leaders at Redbridge, the challenges of remote learning have been construed as an opportunity to develop best practice in a new context and to move thinking around teaching and learning onwards. The response has thus been positive, and there is an evident sense of pride in the quality of the school's work currently, and in the ways in which staff have been able to rise to the challenges. The aim has been not so much as to simply manufacture a workable response to the need to provide remote learning, but more a desire on leaders' parts to, 'Offer the whole of the Redbridge experience online as far as possible'. For example, remote approaches to the development of cultural literacy, extra-curricular activities (including a Year 7&8 sea shanty club!), the development of non-subject-specific wider vocabulary, and parental communications are well established. At the same time, the many small scale, thoughtful and imaginative responses to students' needs continue. For example, many students received the gift of a book for Christmas. A book vending machine is planned to be installed soon. Remote learning strategies are based on a very good understanding of students' learning needs and of the essential principles of pedagogy. This approach has made the selection of global platforms and workspaces more natural, with Zoom and Google Classroom being the two primary mechanisms, and has also enabled middle leaders to make good choices of both generic and subject-specific online resources. Provision has moved from the early stages of lockdown 1, in early summer, when there were no

live lessons but some use of videos and the building of existing strengths in the use of Google Classroom to the point where the great majority of lessons have a live element, are fundamentally interactive and involve the use of a wide range of resources well-suited to the learning context.

- Staff training has played a key part in this. A new approach of 'providing less more frequently' has been adopted alongside the establishment of a library of high-quality on-line CPD resources from which staff have benefited while developing their IT and pedagogy skills over the last 6 months and will continue to benefit from when schools physically re-open for all. The link provided to the 'Going Live' continually-updated slide resource illustrated the type of high-quality information and guidance available to staff.
- Around 70 students are physically in school currently and the attendance rate for EduK8 is 50%.
- Leaders are particularly pleased with:
 - the positive responses from parents to the provision to support the learning and the welfare of their children: in a recent survey 80% were supported with half of parents describing the schools as 'incredibly supportive' and the great majority saying they are comfortable with their children returning to school at some point soon
 - the provision of IT equipment to families to support learning – 416 laptops have been provided by the DfE and they have been supplemented by around 100 from the school's budget
 - the broader adaptations made to the learning process to support disadvantaged students
 - the high levels of engagement with learning (around 84% currently)
 - current provision to keep in touch with the approx. 15% who may otherwise 'go off the radar': phone calls are made once or twice weekly according to perceived need
 - the response of staff to the challenge of remote learning provision: an overall 4.2 star score was achieved, with the overwhelming majority agreeing that they have developed significant skills that will be used post-Covid and many saying that student behaviour has been good (a 4.3 star rating)
 - their decision to have a consolidation day 'off screen' to enable students to catch up and consolidate learning
 - the quality of provision for, and the engagement of, students with SEN
 - the involvement of governors in observing remote learning and gaining very useful insights into the leadership issues surrounding this mode of teaching and learning.
- The challenges are:
 - ensuring that the minority who have not engaged with remote learning are supported to catch up as far and as quickly as possible on their physical return to school
 - working with the local police and the local community to address the significant rise in crime in the area which directly affects some families and students and at least indirectly affects many.
- The key T&L focus remains on the use of assessment to drive secure learning. A recent INSET day was devoted to this topic, the 'Going Live' CPD package is updated to point to good resources, new website and apps are being explored to replicate best classroom practice (eg mini-whiteboards) in the remote context, Google Forms are used for the submission of more substantial pieces of work and the Chrome extension *mote* is used to provide personalised verbal feedback.
- Three lessons were visited for around 25 minutes each. All were characterised by a spirit of calm cooperate learning, well-structured and well-paced delivery, a good choice of resources and useful opportunities for interaction.
 - The Year 11 mathematics lesson involved students working on the internal and external angles of polygons.
 - The link to the Corbettmaths materials was useful.
 - The teacher viewed students' responses in real time and made reassuring comments eg, 'Like the way you are doing that X...' and also prompted some to work faster or more efficiently eg, 'Can't see you cursor in the workspace, Y'.
 - There was a useful 'walk-through' of some polygon angle questions led by the teacher. There was a concentration on the detail of the process and I

- wondered about the benefits of stepping back sometimes to check students' overall grasp of key ideas eg, 'Someone remind me *why* the external angles all add up to 360 degrees for ALL polygons' and, 'So why does the sum of the *internal* angles not stay the same as the number of sides changes?
 - Students' mental maths seemed weak: halving 72 was a challenge. What techniques are taught and continually rehearsed to address this?
 - The use of Blooket was very successful – it encouraged the development of pace in students' responses to mathematics problems which is always a good thing when done well.
 - The Year 10 English lesson explored how close reading of a text can inform us of a character's qualities and motivations.
 - The text was presented clearly, along with two or three appropriate questions, on each screen.
 - There was a useful blend of individual questions of students and an invitation for general comments. This worked well....
 -however there was a sense of a lack of confidence from some students about the text and the teacher usefully checked their grasp of (some fairly standard but nevertheless key) vocabulary (eg the William Trevor quote seemed to floor them)
 - The task set around writing about an influential other child followed on from the close textual analysis well and was modelled usefully by the teacher.
 - The Year 9 dance lesson was based on an exploration of the way in which movement in 'Young Men' portrayed life for soldiers in WW1.
 - The video is a powerful one and could have elicited deep and personal responses from students.
 - Students demonstrated a degree of insight into what they had watched and several comments were mature and thoughtful.
 - Sometimes the teacher enhanced a student's contribution rather further than was ideal, and included subject-specific language in what was an accurate and useful reinterpretation of what was said, without always underscoring the importance of using such words and phrases in the context of analysing of a piece such as this. However, the writing of the key ideas of the discussion board gave opportunity for students to copy them down.
 - The final observed section of the lesson, on the power relations between the sergeant and the single soldier remaining, elicited good responses from students.
 - This was an interesting and affecting dance lesson and I guess that many students would have found it memorable.
- Leaders haven't used any external self-evaluation tools to gauge the impact of remote learning. We discussed their potential benefits and agreed that they can stimulate thinking and sharpen development planning. I shared two such tools: the DfE version available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-your-remote-education-provision> and the Aspire Trust (shorter and more summative) version. The headteacher spoke of Redbridge's 'unashamedly insular' approach; what this means in practice is that the school faces specific challenges and problems and the solutions are to be found in and through the local community, not that external help and guidance of the most useful and appropriate kind is not sought and greatly valued.