

## Meadlands Primary School

### Purpose of review:

The headteacher, together with the senior leadership team and governors commissioned this review. The following areas formed the basis of the review:

- Early reading including phonics
- Humanities
- Writing
- School self-evaluation

### Methodology:

- The review was carried out by three school improvement advisors from AFC. One of whom is the newly appointed school improvement partner (SIP) and the other is the longstanding SIP of the school.
- This was a one-day review conducted on Wednesday 15 September 2021.
- The quality assurance activities were conducted jointly with senior leaders and subject leaders within the school.
- The quality assurance activities undertaken included the following: lesson observations, work sampling, talking to pupils, listening to pupils read, discussions with senior leaders and subject leaders, a meeting with representatives of the governing body and examining a range of the school's monitoring records as well as the school's website.

### Context:

- 'Work hard, be kind' is the simple yet powerful culture that permeates all aspects of school life at this one form entry primary school. Meadlands Primary is a dynamic and inclusive school, that puts its pupils at the heart of everything it does.
- During the pandemic, leaders noticed an increasing trend of vulnerability amongst its families and therefore leaders had to make deliberate decisions to support its pupils and families during this challenging time.

- One member of staff is an early career teacher (ECT), another 2 teachers are in their post NQT year. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken leadership responsibility for Humanities as of this academic year.

### **What's working well:**

- Leaders and staff know their pupils and families extremely well. As a result, pupils' vulnerabilities were identified at the start of the lockdown and leaders took decisive action to design a curriculum offer that ameliorated these vulnerabilities. In addition to ensuring pupils experiencing a broad curriculum offer, pupils also received daily sessions that addressed both their mental and physical health.
- Leaders were adamant to minimise the impact of 'lost learning.' Consequently, within 24 hours of the start of the lockdown, leaders ensured that all pupils had the necessary technology to fully access the remote learning offer. As a result, 97% of pupils consistently engaged in the remote learning offer, right from the outset. Leaders continued to demonstrate the high expectations that they always set, despite the challenging circumstances that they were in. Leaders' actions have paid dividends and can be evidenced in the seamless transition of pupils back into full time school life. Pupils' behaviour across the school was impeccable.
- Pupils are courteous and kind to each other and to the adults they work with. They are confident and articulate. All adults model courtesy and respect in their interactions with pupils and with each other. Consequently, a positive behaviour culture is well established at Meadlands. The review took place at the very start of the school year with pupils displaying exemplary behaviour for learning across year groups, including the newest school children in Year R.
- The learning environment across the school is bright, rich, and inviting. Displays showcase pupils' work, celebrating all aspects of school life. The principles of developing a Growth Mindset are firmly embedded in everyday practice across the school. It is almost impossible to not read or see a positive affirmation as you move across the school.
- Leaders understand the importance of enabling every pupil to become a fluent reader. The school uses Read, Write, Inc as its systematic, synthetic phonics (SSP) program. Pupils who are falling behind the program are identified early and given additional support to help them to catch up with their phonics. All staff have received phonics training. Pupils are read to daily so that they are exposed to a wide range of genres and authors. Reading areas in classrooms and the dedicated library areas boast a plethora of carefully selected books. The reading areas are warm and inviting spaces, further valuing the power and magic of books. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 spoke with great enthusiasm and insight about the favourite authors and books of choice.

- Assessment for learning is effective and directly impacts on how the curriculum is tailored. Writing was identified as an area that pupils regressed in most over the lockdown. As a result, leaders have developed a progressive writing curriculum taking into account key words and year group spelling lists. The etymology and morphology of words are also considered to help pupils improve their spelling.
- Writing units of work are planned progressively. Lessons are sequenced through text immersion and teaching transcriptional skills . Consequently, pupils will acquire the cumulative knowledge they need to write compositional pieces.
- Knowledge and skills organisers have been created to easily identify the key knowledge and skills that pupils will acquire in each topic that is being taught. Tier 3 vocabulary is also identified so that pupils learn these words in their appropriate context. Further, to encourage pupils to make connections with their learn (build schema) curriculum links have been deliberately planned. The cross curricular links also act as retrieval practice opportunities for pupils. In History, Heroes have been identified for each topic. The aim of this is to challenge stereotypes and champion diversity through the curriculum.
- Many governors have joined the governing board in the last two years. Governors' regular engagement with the school has been interrupted because of the pandemic, however they have endeavoured to continue to carry out their roles and responsibilities as much as possible. Governors are highly supportive of school leaders. They regularly undertake training for the various areas of responsibility that they are allocated. They are aware of the strengths of the school and are considering the areas for further development. Governors are fully aligned to the vision and ethos of Meadlands.
- Leaders know their school well and are therefore able to correctly identify the many strengths that Meadlands can be rightly proud of. Similarly, leaders are deeply reflective and seriously consider how various aspects of school life that can be further refined.

## Recommendations to consider:

- Remind all staff about the expectations when teaching phonics to ensure that pupils receive a consistent offer.
- Teaching assistants to work with their class teachers to reconsider how they could be effectively deployed to maximise all learning time.
- Further refine the knowledge and skills organisers in (the school's focus this year is to do this for History and Geography) by taking into account pupils cognitive load (identify what the sticky knowledge and skills are).
- Governors to consider how they will further implement the CPD that they have received now that schools have fully reopened.

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