Report on Geoff Walls' Consultancy Visit to Brune Park, 17th – 20th June 2019

Introduction and Context

The key aims of the visit to Brune Park Community School were as follows:

- To provide senior and middle leaders with the opportunity to discuss, evaluate and reflect on curriculum intent in the core areas of English, Maths and Science;

- To gather staff, student and curriculum leaders' ideas and feedback on the implementation and impact of the curriculum in Maths, English and Science;

- To provide opportunities for leaders to develop further understanding of changes to the Ofsted inspection methodology with respect to curriculum and the 'Quality of Education' judgement (for example, through consideration of the 'Inspecting the Curriculum' document, May 2019 and the Education Inspection Framework [EIF], May 2019).

Methodology and Approach

A range of activities were conducted by the consultant as part of a 'deep dive' curriculum enquiry. These included:

- Peer and unaccompanied visits to a deliberately and explicitly connected sequence of lessons in Maths, English and Science (16 parts of lessons were visited in total);
- Evaluation of curriculum leaders' long- and medium-term thinking and planning, including the rationale for content choices and curriculum sequencing;
- Evaluation of senior leaders' intent for the curriculum and their understanding of its implementation and impact within the subject teams of Maths, English and Science;
- Evaluation of learners' work in books or other kinds of work produced by students during lesson visits;
- Discussions with teachers to understand how the curriculum informs their choices about content and sequencing to support effective learning;
- Discussions with learners during the lessons observed;
- Evaluation of a range of 'Ofsted readiness' folders and documentation, including subject Self Evaluation documents from the Maths, English and Science leadership teams.

Key Findings

Curriculum Intent

- The Headship team articulate clear ambition and consensus regarding the qualifications, knowledge and skills that learners should be achieving at key end points in the curriculum. The 'Top Level View' and curriculum justification by the Headship team is well conceived and presented, giving clear rationale for the curriculum offer and the 'inclusive' approach to ensuring all students have equality of access to a broad curriculum programme in KS3 and good GCSE qualifications in KS4;
- An alternative curriculum provision continues at The Enterprise Academy in September 2019 which will provide a blended, bespoke vocational and academic programme to a small cohort of Year 9, 10 and 11 students who are at risk of underachieving and potentially becoming NEET. These students are identified through an academic profiling programme and all are expected to study a core of Maths, English and double Science coupled with personalised vocational option choices, such as construction;

- The curriculum is clearly planned to take account of the school's local context, for example, through the importance placed on the STEM curriculum at KS3 and the delivery of Engineering at KS4 – this provides students with the capacity to gain employment or further training locally in engineering-related fields – the local community, including local businesses, contribute to the delivery of this curriculum;
- Subject leaders and AHTs can clearly articulate the detailed curriculum planning and 'overhauling' that has happened over the last 18 months and are continuing to develop clear medium and long term planning which ensures that the curriculum content is taught in a logical progression in a systematic and explicit way – short term planning is not standardised although there are plans, particularly in the case where non-specialists are teaching Maths, English or Science, to provide more detailed short-term planning to support the development of less experienced staff;
- Discussions with Subject Leaders and the AHT links for Maths, English and Science revealed a lack of confidence and clarity, on occasions, particularly in responding to questions regarding 'curriculum intent' – not all leaders were able to articulate what end points the curriculum is building towards and what pupils need to know and be able to do to reach those points;
- Senior and Middle Leaders' ambition to increase the proportion of students taking discrete, triple science, coupled with the insistence that all students sit AQA English and Edexcel Maths is a strength of an ambitious academic curriculum offer;
- The broad offer at KS3 which takes account of the national curriculum as well as the centrality of the EBacc (with 100% of students having access to the EBacc) ensures that all students, including the Disadvantaged and those with SEND, do not experience a narrowing of their curriculum choices over the 5 years.
- Decisions to avoid early entry in GCSE and to maintain a 3-year Key Stage 3 ensure that the curriculum remains as broad as possible for as long as possible;
- The use of data to effectively and diagnostically address gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills is in its infancy, and has not been sufficiently targeted to ensure that the curriculum addresses social disadvantage adequately. The English intervention strategy clearly includes a key focus on targeting Disadvantaged learners but this is yet to have a demonstrable impact on securing better outcomes for these students.
- Schemes of Learning are in a range of developmental stages across the two Key Stages in Maths, English and Science with significant improvements and changes having been made during this academic year. This means that the school's curriculum in these subjects is becoming increasingly coherently planned and sequenced to ensure that learners develop the required knowledge and skills over time;
- In the five-year English Curriculum planning, there is a clear integration of assessment at key end points across Key Stage 3 and 4 and this assessment has started to provide regular opportunities for moderation, standardisation and the use of question level analysis to inform intervention and lesson planning;
- There is high ambition for all pupils in Maths, Science and English which is exemplified in the whole-school target-setting flight path and in curriculum choices such as the Maths Mastery curriculum in KS3 and the selection of high-level academic texts in English.

<u>Curriculum Implementation</u>

- Senior and middle leaders acknowledge that there is significant variation in the subject knowledge of the teachers across the three departments and this is being addressed, to some degree, through a range of strategies, including subject knowledge audits in English and online independent learning in Chemistry;
- In the best lessons seen, teachers present subject matter clearly and encourage appropriate pupil discussion about the subject matter being taught. In less effective lessons, overly teacher-led 'ping-pong' questioning and some 'guess what's in my head' teaching limits the number of pupils who are engaged and means that not all learners are deepening their knowledge, skills and understanding;
- Co-planning and partnering of teachers are supporting some teachers to address gaps in their knowledge although this is yet to be systematically or rigorously evaluated in terms of impact on the quality of teaching;
- In the best lessons seen, there was clear evidence of teachers checking pupils' understanding effectively and opportunities to challenge and correct common misconceptions and misunderstandings were well exploited;

- There is some good practice in the use of knowledge organisers in science which are being used effectively to allow pupils to revisit and transfer key knowledge to long-term memory;
- The effective use of interleaving 'Do Now' starters in some lessons is also providing students with the opportunity to revise, review and commit key knowledge to memory;
- In less effective lessons within a learning sequence, pupils were unsure of how today's lesson content linked to their prior learning and the overall assessment framework;
- Pupils reported that they value the summative and formative feedback that they receive in some lessons as it helps them know what they need to do to improve but in several lessons visited pupils reported that they receive very little feedback on their written work – this was borne out in the work scrutiny;
- The use of assessment data to inform teaching is currently in its infancy although there are some examples of targeted subject-specific intervention stemming from diagnostic assessment (e.g. influencing the intervention work of the AATs with Disadvantaged learners);
- In the most effective lessons, the work given to pupils was demanding, encouraged learners to 'think hard' and to develop resilience in their learning - there was a clear sense of stretch, challenge and progression over time across the series of lessons;
- Reading attainment is assessed at key points within the 5-year curriculum although it is unclear how this data is currently being used to address gaps and increase the proportion of pupils who read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age.
- There was good evidence of the effective and explicit teaching of reading skills in the English lessons visited – there is, however, further need to address the reading and literacy gaps across the curriculum.

Curriculum Impact

- The current curriculum is in its infancy with some subjects having only recently started to develop coherent, sequential, logical, knowledge-based schemes of learning – this means that the impact on outcomes of elements of the current curriculum is not yet discernible or demonstrable;
- Performance in Maths, English and Science (Triple and Trilogy) in 2018 in terms of attainment at Grades 9-4 and 9-5 remain significantly below national averages, this also, therefore, reflects in a low Progress 8 score;
- During discussions some leaders were unable to clearly articulate the current progress or attainment of specific cohorts of pupils and relate this to the school flight path or national averages (some colleagues struggled with questions such as 'Tell me about the current progress of Year 9 in your subject', 'How do the Year 11 results in 2018 compare to the national data?' 'What proportions of students in each year group are achieving expectations in terms of progress and attainment?', 'How are Disadvantaged or SEND learners doing in comparison to their peers in Year 10?);
- Post 16 destinations are closely monitored and Year 11 students have access to independent, impartial advice and careers guidance – in 2018 only a very small minority of pupils did not go on to education, employment or training (5 out of 210 Year 11 students). Current data on the Year 11 2019 cohort suggest that the vast majority of students will continue on to Post 16 destinations (16 Year 11 on-roll students currently do not have a confirmed education, employment or training destination out of a cohort of 256);
- Significant proportions of learners are not yet reading at age-related expectations and therefore require further intervention and a clear strategy to address the reading gaps;
- The Headship team are realistic in their assessment that the curriculum implementation and securing curriculum impact are key priorities for the coming academic year – whilst significant work has been achieved in defining curriculum intent over the last 18 months, there is now a need for a robust and rigorous whole-school quality improvement strategy which secures the implementation of consistently high-quality teaching, learning and assessment across all curriculum areas and year groups. An effective quality improvement framework will help to ensure that progress and outcomes improve across both Key Stages and there is demonstrable impact resulting from clear curriculum intent and highly effective curriculum implementation.