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Department
for Education

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Dear Wendy

DfE External Expert First Visit to Two Rivers Primary School on 10 December 2020

I would like to thank you for welcoming our External Expert, Jeff Hart, to his virtual meeting with you on 10 December.

Following this, I am writing to share feedback from the meeting:

Overall

The school has opened well: children settled and happy; families working well with the school; learning taking place and progress being made. The temporary build has been well equipped and a pleasant environment created. The staff are cohesive and support each other well – the executive head and head together have delivered a successful new school. The 16 reception pupils are extremely well supported through generous staffing levels. Links with the local church are already well embedded. The next challenges include: consulting on the vision and values of the school with the wider community; promoting the school so that it does over time recruit 420 pupils through various means (virtual tours; leafletting; local radio programmes; etc.)

Pupil numbers

Children are being admitted mid-year to add to the 16 reception pupils in place. The school will shortly have a new housing estate to recruit pupil and is confident it will reach PAN over time. The new build in September 2022 will be a further impetus for the school's growth. The school is currently marketing itself well. Pupil numbers need to be at the heart of the school's efforts but changes in the local demography bode well.

Leadership

Leadership is good. The executive head and head comprised a cohesive and committed team who meet weekly to measure progress. The primary adviser from the Trust visits each fortnight and adds further challenge and support. The SDP is being developed by the leadership team as well as responding to Covid demands from the Trust. The job share teacher is highly experienced.

Being sited next to an infant school, means the school can seek advice and support from specialists in the nearby infant school. The interim governing body is generating positive feedback reports on leadership and also receiving favourable messages from the local community. The performance management of the head has been usefully established. Leadership is innovative and effective.

Recruiting governors

The interim board has been busy recruiting new governors successfully through encouraging interested governors to attend as observers. The chair has an education background and is highly experienced. Four foundation governors have been appointed and two parent governors (both teachers in other schools). Governance is being well established and promises to be good. There are no plans for nursery provision currently.

Staffing levels

Staffing levels are highly generous with only 16 pupils in the reception class. The pupils are having a rich education with two job share teachers and also teacher assistant support. The school is recruiting early for the new teacher and TA – January. Half the week involves the head teaching the class so the pupils are benefitting from rich expertise and experience. Staffing levels are very good.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is at least good. The temporary site layout enables the head to continually see the practice and reflect on progress. Formal observations take place and are duly recorded but the head can witness the quality of the teaching each day and intervene appropriately. Strengths in teaching include: relationships with adults and each other; the head modelling excellent practice; appropriate scaffolding of learning; evidence of progress carefully captured. The executive observes the head and records visits formally. The quality of teaching in the context of the generous staffing levels is high.

Vision

The school inherited a vision from the Education Brief but is now testing this with the wider community – a good strategy. Values, such as caring and sharing, are also being formalised through consultation. A weekly celebration assembly focuses on these values and Golden Rules encapsulate respect and listening to each other. The church nature of the school is reflected in the vision with appropriate input from the Diocese. Much work is taking place to define the final vision and values for the school and this will result in a successful shared understanding. The quality of work around the vision is good.

Assessment and curriculum

The school is using Development Matters and Tapestry to measure assessment. This is working well with a baseline established and appropriate progress rates predicted. The school is using two popular and effective commercial schemes (Read Write Inc and White Rose maths) which both contain assessment tasks. Insight

assessment tracker further supports the tracking of progress. Assessment work is good and developing well.

The curriculum is being developed over time to closely meet the needs of the 16 children. Topic areas are covered each term which deliver the demands of the National Curriculum. The school works closely with the nearby infant school on the curriculum and the Trust inputs heavily here. A Trust-wide 3-19 curriculum plan is helpfully in place and careful, planning reflects age and stage and next steps. The curriculum has encouraged the pupils to see Two Rivers as 'The best school in the world' as the staff believe the pupils develop into what you teach them. Growth mindset and resilience are further planks in the curriculum offer. The curriculum is developing well and meets statutory requirements.

Safeguarding

Initially the executive head was the DSL until the head had been appropriately trained. The exec head is now sensibly the deputy DSL and the job share teacher is also being trained. CPOMS is the system used to record concerns which is working well. A governor focuses on safeguarding and monitors its effectiveness.

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all meetings. The Trust uses Safer Recruitment practices to appoint staff. The SCR is managed by the head and admin officer and checked regularly. There are no LAC nor pupils allocated a social worker. Training for safeguarding takes place alongside staff at the nearby infant school which makes good sense. All staff have undertaken level 1 accreditation. The risks are small: a secure site that has good signage and rarely accepts visitors. Safeguarding is secure and fit for purpose.

SEN

A number of pupils are having SEN interventions although only one child has notable SEN. This pupil was granted some transition funding which enabled TA support for several hours each week. The head is the SENCO currently but this will be passed on in time. She has been a SENCO previously and experienced in recording needs and interventions. The school needs most of all support with speech and language and is working with the LA to provide this. The SEN needs of the cohort are low but the school is providing good SEN support.

The Trust

The Trust is providing a good balance of support and challenge. A fortnightly visit by the Trust's primary adviser is extremely generous provision and helpful for a new school. The Trust adopts a clear challenge role: an annual Raising Improvement Day has a group of Trust officials and headteachers reviewing the school; weekly virtual Trust meetings monitor provision; specialist groups meet across the Trust to update and train subject and phase specialists. Deep dive activities are planned and the SEF being generated. The Trust has generated policies which the 13 schools can adopt or adapt. The Trust is supporting the school well and undertaking quality assurance effectively.

Next steps and priorities

- Consulting on the visions and ethos of the school with the wider community.
- Promoting the school through various means so that it recruits 420 pupils.
- Maintaining the high standards of the school as it grows in capacity.

If you have any questions about this feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your continuing hard work, and for all you have achieved in the difficult circumstances of the past year.

Yours sincerely

Tommy John
Lead contact, DfE Regional Delivery Directorate South West