

Focused Review Follow-through – Law Primary School

Introduction and Context

Having received a significant number of parental complaints and concerns from teaching and support staff regarding matters associated with supporting the needs of children, the Education Service carried out a focus review of Law Primary School in January 2018. The review was focussed specifically on how well the school was meeting the needs of all children. At the time of the review significant building works in Law Primary School were also causing disruption to the school. Following the review five key areas for improvement were identified and agreed with the school. It was also agreed that the Education Service would return to the school within a year of the report being published to evaluate the progress made with regard to the areas for improvement. As agreed, the Education Service provided additional support to the school including enhancing staffing to allow one of the DHTs to be fully deployed to pupil support, supporting the school in revising the senior management team remits, providing additional teaching support to P4 to provide additional support and ensure that all children are making appropriate progress, providing training for pupil support assistants on strategies and approaches to support children with additional support needs and exploring further specialist support for the school to build capacity in staff. Between March and May 2018, the Education Service provided the school with support of an Educational Consultant to provide specialist support to the school. This supported senior leaders and staff in ensuring clarity and coherence in their approaches to driving forward the range of improvements required in the school.

This report provides an evaluation of the school's progress in 10 months since the original review.

Since the January 2018 review, building work in the school has been completed and a new sports hall and dining room opened up to pupils. This has led to the school building being accessible to all children and staff and to a greater cohesive feeling across the school. The new areas of the school enhance the learning environment and provide spaces for children to come together, for example for whole school assemblies.

In the ten months since the review, the head teacher, senior leaders and staff have shown strong commitment and determination in making the necessary improvements. Improvements have been well thought through in an action plan and this has now been incorporated in to the School Improvement Plan. The pace of improvement and change has been brisk but appropriate. Staff have gained confidence in the ways in which they meet the needs of children. They spoke positively about a number of recent improvements including the development of restorative approaches. Children were very positive about their school. They spoke confidently about the schools approaches to 'safe, respectful and ready' and how this was making a positive impact on the learning environment. They were confident that staff would deal with any instances of bullying and they knew who to approach if they had a concern. Whilst many parents recognise the impact of the positive interventions the school is putting into place, a number still remain concerned about the behaviour of a small number of pupils and the impact this is having on the school.

Context

The current school roll is 771 with 121 in the nursery class. The census indicates that 20% of pupils have additional support needs. This is below both the local and national averages which are 25% and 24% respectively.

Areas for Improvement

Improve leadership of inclusive approaches and support for all children including those with additional support needs.

The school has made strong progress in improving the leadership of inclusive approaches and support for children including those with additional support needs. The head teacher has played a crucial role in leading the school community in addressing the areas requiring improvement. She has been well-supported by the senior leadership team who have worked well together to ensure there is a shared vision for inclusion and to develop a variety of approaches to secure improvement. The DHT (Pupil Support) has focussed on improving pupil support and has made very good progress in implementing a range of approaches. For example, supported by officers from the local authority and an external consultant, the school has improved staff understanding of inclusive practices. The school has provided training for all staff on restorative approaches and the primary school inclusive learning resource, 'CIRCLE.' Staff are now making much better use of the wellbeing indicators and using them in their classes. Children also spoke positively about the wellbeing indicators and could explain how they used them in their health and wellbeing lessons.

The Head teacher and Senior Leadership team are more visible across the school and playground. The change in remits of Senior Leadership team has given clarity to staff regarding roles and responsibilities. The recent restructuring and refocussing of support for learning has impacted positively on how well staff can meet the needs of all children. Across the school, teaching and support staff are more able to support children's learning within the classroom as a consequence of engaging well with the training which has been provided by the education Service.

The school has established five working groups focussed on the key areas identified for improvement from the review. These groups have representation from teachers across the school. Staff have acknowledged that there is 'cross-over' in the work of some of the groups and recognise the need to keep these under review to ensure no duplication and that appropriate connections are made and consistent messages are taken forward. Pupils have also been involved in the school's improvement agenda, e.g. the pupil Health and Wellbeing representatives.

Support staff value the regular assemblies reporting that these increase consistency across the school and have helped to develop a stronger school community. They also noted that there were improvements in the consistency of approach across the school. They were positive about more proactive approaches and fewer reactive instances. They welcomed inclusion in training opportunities. They thought that, whilst communication had improved, it was an area which needed to continue to develop.

Children were positive about their leadership opportunities. They felt that they could raise issues through the pupil council and that the pupil council was helpful in taking key decisions. Leadership opportunities have also been provided through the pupil Health and Wellbeing group and Rights Respecting Schools programme.

Developing staff skills in supporting children with specific needs including developing a range of strategies for supporting children

A wide range of CLPL has been undertaken by staff (CIRCLE inclusive practice, restorative approaches, visual support project, ASD) which has increased the capacity of staff to support and develop children's engagement in learning. These approaches have led to an increased understanding of positive relationships and the ways in which barriers to learning can be removed at the universal level. Visual timetables were evident in all classes. Moving forward, the school should consider developing a consistent expectation around how these are used.

The new support for learning systems and process has given much greater clarity with regard to staff responsibility and pathways for accessing support. For example, staff are clear about the universal support offered by all, it starts with the ethos, climate and relationships within every classroom and is the responsibility of all practitioners and partners. The Pupil Support team has improved the documentation contained in Support for Learning (SfL) folders and maintains an overview of pupils who may need additional support. They have also clarified their roles in relation to engagement with other agencies. Weekly meetings are more structured to enable the Pupil Support Team to respond to requests for support from staff. An additional 'Wellbeing' meeting is held every Friday involving the SfL teacher and the DHT (Pupil Support) and class teachers to provide a timely response to current concerns. The SfL teacher's duties have been re-aligned to give greater focus on the 5 roles of Support for Learning and to ensure staff are clear about their role and responsibilities. This has enabled greater capacity building with staff through the SfL teacher's advisory role. The Individual Education Plans are more focussed and children are aware of their targets and what they need to develop their skills and behaviours. Differentiation is evident in most classes and class teachers are taking more responsibility for meeting learning needs at the universal level. There is a greater use of assessment data to inform interventions and target resources to those who need it most. Improved systems for sharing information have been put in place ensuring that staff have access to key information when they need it. The school is using SEEMIS to record I.E.P.s . They intend to build on this to integrate the pastoral and wellbeing module.

A range of additional and targeted interventions have been developed and clarity has been provided regarding the access to these interventions and the intended outcomes of the support provided. A greater focus for support has been directed to Health and Wellbeing needs of children. The nurture provision is providing high quality support for a small number of targeted children. Children are appropriately assessed and selected and this information is directly linked to the interventions provided. The nurture staff are highly committed to supporting children and can provide a range of examples of success and impact.

Improving the training, support and deployment of support staff

As stated above, a pupil support team has been developed with clear roles and responsibilities. A Support for Learning policy is now in place and the associated paperwork (e.g. support for learning folders) is of a high standard, it is better organised and more helpful for staff. This has provided additional clarity for staff and allowed them to access appropriate information and support. Staff report that the restructuring of pupil support has been very helpful and responsive to the needs of children. Staff report that better use is being made of the resources available leading to improvements in children's learning and behaviour.

Support staff meet regularly, a support staff noticeboard has been set up and there is evidence of increased communication between all staff. Staff report that this has allowed them to better meet the needs of children as they are now more aware of the wider picture of needs and how changes in children's lives can impact on wellbeing. Support staff are now involved in developing IEPs and they report that this has increased their confidence and engagement in meeting learners' needs.

The school's development of nurture has impacted very positively on those children who access this support. The school should now consider how to expand this work in applying nurture principles across all stages.

Staff and children felt that children's behaviour in the playground had improved. They felt that this was having a positive impact on children's readiness to learn in class. Children reported that there were members of staff, including members of the school's leadership team, available to support them in the playground. They did recognise, however, that the size and scale of the playground space sometimes made pupil supervision challenging. Parents had mixed views about the how well children were supported in the playground.

Ensure the school's approaches to promoting positive behaviour are reviewed to reduce punitive sanctions and to be more focused on children's needs and their rights.

The school has taken forward very positive work on their vision, aims and values. These are conveyed in the classroom as 'safe, respectful, ready'. This 'engagement in learning' approach is being consistently reinforced by staff and children. This has allowed a shared language to be developed across the school and has been key in developing a more inclusive and positive ethos. Staff and parents report that the school is a calmer environment and more situations are being supported and managed in class.

The school has engaged with the Rights Respecting School approach, achieving 'Bronze Level' and has started to embed children's rights in the life and work of the school.

The school's current work on curriculum rationale presents an opportunity for staff and parents to review the focus of the curriculum to include a stronger focus on health and wellbeing and positive pupil relationships. The restorative approaches now underway will also support this approach.

Staff training on restorative approaches has impacted positively on deescalating situations and building and maintaining positive relationships between staff and children. Staff reported very positively about the ways in which the Senior Leadership Team have supported them to engage in restorative conversations with children. The climate for learning across the school has improved significantly and children are positive about how this is helping them to engage in their learning. A few children noted that their class had to leave their classroom from time to time, however these instances had reduced significantly since last session. Moving forward, the Senior Leadership Team should continue to keep this under review to ensure that disruption to children's learning is minimised. A few parents remained concerned about the levels of disruption and perceived bullying in the school.

Whilst behaviour has improved, the number of pupil – pupil reported incidents remains higher than other schools. The Senior Leadership Team should continue to monitor this and continue to develop and embed further the positive relationship strategies in place in order to reduce these instances.

Improve parental confidence in the school and the approaches in place to support the needs of all children.

The school is continuing to take forward a range of positive ways to improve parental confidence. Staff have improved communication, for example, pupil support updates; its work with the parent council; the meet the teacher events and opportunities for parental feedback. Parents reported a number of improvements in the school and were very positive about teaching staff and their commitment to children. They recognised that the school needed to continue to build the confidence of children and parents and embed recent improvements to support children in their learning. Parents noted improvement in communication and would like to see this continue to develop. Parents reported positively on the newly introduced learning conferences and the subsequent increase in time to engage with teachers

The HT and DHT Pupil Support hold weekly ‘drop-ins’ for parents. This provides opportunities for parents to access senior leaders as required. Parents have more regular opportunities to be involved in more formal aspects of improvements in the school. For example, parents are involved in the Rights Respecting Schools group, the group working on curriculum rationale and are involved in school assemblies. Parents and children’s views are also part of the Child’s Planning Process. The Parent Council has a key role to play in supporting the school as it takes forward its improvement agenda and support from the local authority will be provided to assist it to do so.

The school has revisited its policy and approach to the use of parent helpers. The PTA are funding PVG applications for parent helpers.

The parents/carers of children with additional support needs talked very positively about the changes in the school. They reported an increased confidence in the school in terms of meeting their children’s needs and specifically mentioned improvement in communication (e.g. increased frequency of contact and reporting of negative and positive events). They were also positive about the increased clarity around the supports that are in place for their children.

Since the January 2018 review, there has been a reduction in the number of complaints and concerns raised at school and local authority level with none being received in the first term of the session.

Conclusion and next steps

Overall, the school has made strong progress in taking forward the areas for improvement since the January 2018 review. The Senior Leadership Team and staff have shown strong commitment and have taken forward a number of important improvements at pace. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the climate for learning and approaches to supporting the needs of all children across the school. The leadership team have worked well together and are united in their focus on securing improvement.

The school now needs to build on these positive improvements. It should review, reflect and embed new approaches to ensure they have a consistent positive impact across its community. The Senior Leadership Team should maintain momentum and continue to work with parents to build their confidence and understanding of the work it is taking forward.

The Education Service will continue to provide support to the school. It will continue to evaluate its work and how this impacting upon its stakeholders.

Local Authority Officer _____ Date of visit: _____