*2024 Tony Stephens, Education Support*

**Periodic subject area reviews – the process**

* It is important that these are not seen as Ofsted inspections, and that they cause as little stress as possible for staff. They should be presented as CPD experiences, and conducted as such.
* The review process should be outlined and explained to staff in advance
* They are a supplement to, and not a replacement for, the ongoing quality assurance programme conducted by SLT and subject leads, and should take full account of the information gathered from the latter
* What happens during the review is also likely to modify what quality assurance takes place in a subject area after the review
* Reviews may be based on subject areas, departments or faculties
* Before the review begins then, there will be available:
  + The development plan and DIP of each subject area/department/faculty
  + Subject area policies and documents
  + The analysis of the public examination results from the summer
  + Outcomes of completed lesson observations
  + Information from existing quality assurance procedures
  + Information from any previous reviews
* *Reviews can be negative and excessively critical experiences unless they are combined with CPD delivered in preparation for the review. There should be an advance meeting with all the subject leads some time before the reviews begin when best national practice is outlined, and also giving the subject leads the opportunity to self-review in this context. The subject leads then have the chance put some of this in place as seen as useful before the review begins. The value of this is also that each subject lead is then aware of the criteria that are being used as the basis of the evaluation which is built in to the review and what are the expectations*
* In addition to these generic criteria, there may also be other specific priority areas built in to the review for any one subject area based on the particular issues that have arisen from the available prior information
* The subject area/department/faculty reviews can be spread across the year, with the least well performing seen first
* The reviews could comprise all or some of the following:
  + An initial interview with the subject lead/hod/hof
  + Lesson observations,(but where possible using the outcomes of those that have already been completed) – these are best done by the reviewer and subject leader together
  + Learning walks
  + General book trawls looking at:
    - The quality of student work
    - The quality of marking/feedback to students on how to improve
* Book trawls of a number of students, with the students present while this is done
  + Report on extra- curricular activities, interventions and study support curriculum experiences and support for learning
  + Listening to student voice (their comments on the subject and the support for their progress).
  + Interviews with teachers within the subject area
  + Analysis of the leadership and management of the department
* Where possible there should be one external reviewer, supporting the SLT members allocated to particular reviews with the SLT line manager for a subject area usually included. The review should be conducted over a week
* The report will be shown first to the subject lead/hod/hof for comment before being made available to the governors and trust. The report headings will be the same for each review:
  + Review activities undertaken
  + Reviewers
  + Overall conclusions
  + More detailed analysis with suggestions for further development
    - Subject area documentation
    - Attainment and outcomes
    - Curriculum
    - Teaching, learning and assessment
    - Student behaviour and attitudes
    - Leadership and management
    - Issues pertaining specifically to this subject area

**Appendix**

1. **Example of a self- review template to be completed before the review**

**Secondary department/faculty Self –evaluation**

**Department, faculty**

**Date**

**Key**

1 – Fully in place

2 – Substantially in place

3 – Partly in place

4 – Not in place

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **High Low** | | | |
| **ACHIEVEMENT** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| * **Establishment of a culture of high expectations and achievement** |  |  |  |  | |
| * + The department has a strategic plan for raising staff and student expectations |  |  |  |  |
| * + This Is seen in all aspects of the departments work |  |  |  |  |
| * + Quality of most students’ work matches these expectations and targets, and is improving over time |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **KS3** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Enhanced attainment achieved through a planned programme of revising schemes of learning |  |  |  |  |
| * + Expectations and standards are set for students as learners |  |  |  |  |
| * + Literacy and numeracy being developed across schemes of learning, (as is also the case in KS4) |  |  |  |  |
| * + Learning and thinking skills development within schemes of learning |  |  |  |  |
| * + Focused skills preparation for KS4 and the new GCSEs, with use of progress grids/ladders |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Y11** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Intense and personalised raising attainment initiatives in place as then reflected in public examination results |  |  |  |  |
| * + Analysis of results from the previous year and lessons learnt and applied to secure higher attainment the next year, including analysis of ASP and data |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Y9/10** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Everything that is done in Y11 started with the same intensity at the beginning of KS4 |  |  |  |  |
| * + For Ys 9,10 and 11, data tracking evidence shows that there is good progress being made this year, and that it reflects that higher attainment than last year is now being achieved |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Underachievement intervention** |  |  |  |  |
| * + All students having very challenging but still realistic targets |  |  |  |  |
| * + Rigorous and sustained interventions in place in the classroom as part of teaching in response to identified individual student underachievement for all students in all years as shown by data tracking |  |  |  |  |
| * + Performance of ASP student groups monitored – Pupil premium; Gender; ability group; SEND; EAL |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Higher ability, Gifted and talented** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Personalised provision to meet the needs of these students as learners in the classroom based on schemes of learning as part of overall high quality differentiation with clear evidence of impact |  |  |  |  |
| * + Whole school support activities available for these students |  |  |  |  |
| * + Good outcomes being achieved for these students |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| **--- SEND** |  |  |  |  |
| * Personalised provision to meet the needs of these students via the SENCO and team |  |  |  |  |
| * High quality differentiation in the classroom to meet the needs of these students, with clear evidence of impact in terms of student outcomes |  |  |  |  |
| * Rigorous and effective development of reading and other key skills |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| **TEACHING and LEARNING** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| * **Teaching and learning** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| * + Lesson observations and learning walks focus on all the key aspects of teaching |  |  |  |  |
| * + The developing of the teaching and learning offered by each teacher through personalised CPD following lesson observations, which is also reflected in appraisal |  |  |  |  |
| * + Each teacher has a personal teaching development plan covering teaching skills, quality of student work, assessment and marking |  |  |  |  |
| * + Continuous use of exemplars so that students can understand what is outstanding work |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Assessment** |  |  |  |  |
| * + AFL fully used in teaching and overall assessment |  |  |  |  |
| * + ARR is systematic, and there is up to date assessment of high quality based on feedback from which students then respond. |  |  |  |  |
| * + Regular checks on the quality of student work in terms of presentation, matching the targets of students, opportunity for deep learning and extended writing and evidence of real progress over time |  |  |  |  |
| * + Assessment systems are designed to minimise staff workload |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Schemes of learning/lesson plans** |  |  |  |  |
| * + These are detailed and show progression and that all the elements that produce differentiated, challenging learning are in place   + Schemes of learning are linked in KS3 with progress ladders and assessments   + There is a calendar and process for the continuous review of schemes of learning |  |  |  |  |
| * + **Homeworks** of different types are integrated into schemes of learning, differentiated, linked to the ability and needs of individual students and set and marked as per the agreed timetable |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| * **Student behaviour and attitudes** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Department policies and processes in place to ensure that there is the very best behaviour for learning and support as needed for department staff |  |  |  |  |
| * + Students are usually on task, focused, can work in teams and can plan and develop their own learning |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Departmental praise recognition and rewards and student voice** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Praise and recognition culture in place in classrooms and with department support, planned systematically with the aim of developing student confidence and self-belief as learners |  |  |  |  |
| * + Full attention to student voice as regards their learning |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Skilled leadership and management** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Well- developed middle management skills and good use made of a large number of regular department meetings |  |  |  |  |
| * + Full attention to staff welfare and morale |  |  |  |  |
| * + Provision of high quality professional development opportunities |  |  |  |  |
| * + Sensitive but rigorous appraisal |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Department Quality and Assurance** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Planning, monitoring and review processes in place with an emphasis on impact |  |  |  |  |
| * + Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of teachers so that personalised support and CPD can be put in place |  |  |  |  |
| * + Listening to student voice |  |  |  |  |
| * + Recording of evidence in a QA file |  |  |  |  |
| * + Outlining of areas for development in the context that the department is; |  |  |  |  |
| * + - Using self- evaluation to identify areas for development |  |  |  |  |
| * + - Taking appropriate actions |  |  |  |  |
| * + - Evaluating the impact of these actions |  |  |  |  |
| * + - Modifying actions in the light of the impact analysis |  |  |  |  |
| * Case studies or examples of where the department is making good progress in relation to areas of development are available |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Curriculum and Schemes of Work/Lesson Plans/Examination syllabi** |  |  |  |  |
| * + **c**ontinuous monitoring and update based on applying best practice in all key stages, including full attention to guidance from Ofsted |  |  |  |  |
| * broad, exciting curriculum |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **ICT provision and e-learning** |  |  |  |  |
| * + Department use this to enhance teaching and learning |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **Extra Provision** |  |  |  |  |
| * Primary links and enrichment in place |  |  |  |  |
| * + Extra-curricular activities provided |  |  |  |  |
| * + Community engagement in place |  |  |  |  |
| * + Business links; enterprise; work related learning are developed |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| * **SMSC** |  |  |  |  |
| * + SMSC features in all aspects of the department’s work, including in the writing of schemes of learning |  |  |  |  |
| **Areas for development** |  |  |  |  |
| ----**EAL students** |  |  |  |  |
| * Personalised provision to meet the needs of these students |  |  |  |  |
| * High quality differentiation in the classroom to meet the needs of these students, with clear evidence of impact in terms of student outcomes |  |  |  |  |
| * Rigorous and effective development of reading and other key skills |  |  |  |  |

1. **Example of best practice to be put across to all subject leads before the reviews**

**To be leading an outstanding subject area, the following needs to be in place**

**The Essential**

* The subject area aims to benchmark every aspect of its practice against an external measure of excellence, e.g, by working with staff from outstanding schools, use of the very best consultants, data comparisons, etc
* The department has a strategic plan for raising staff and student expectations, and this is seen in all aspects of the departments work
* There is an insistence that nothing less than outstanding will do for every aspect of the subject area, but without putting undue pressure and stress on staff and students
* The department understands that success come from the relentless use of rigorous and highly effective systems, with full attention to detail**,** which are personalised in that they are focused on raising the attainment and achievement of individual students. The department identifies systems and practices that just don’t work or are seriously flawed and makes changes until they become totally effective

**KS3 and KS4**

* Subject leaders are well aware of the importance of KS3 terms of setting standards and expectations and also skill development for KS4, and this is reflected in the quality of the schemes of learning, (and the best teachers are not all in KS4)
* Y10 lessons and support are delivered at the same level of intensity as Y11. In KS4 there is the clear relation of the teaching to the requirements of the examinations with, e.g, use of past papers, exam question practice and student use of mark schemes
* All students are being entered for exams who could be, and they are entered at the correct level where this is relevant. Where a student is clearly failing in a subject, there is the opportunity as early as possible to swap to another subject
* There is a high level of personalisation of learning programmes in KS4
* Students are able to compile revision friendly notes that they can use in the period before the final exams. All GCSE teaching stops in Y11 about eight weeks before the exams, and this period is used for intensive classroom provision
* Departments are not obsessed with 4+ and 5+ - with A8, every grade improvement at any level boosts the figure
* Department member become examiners and/or have meeting with lead examiners. There is also close contact with exam boards to get all possible clues and tips to what is expected from answers – exam board courses; visits from exam staff; regular in-house moderation; partnerships with departments in other schools who are following the same exam spec
* Departments being aware of what were the national attainment averages in their subject last year and with a determination to meet and beat them
* Vocational courses rather than GCSES are in place where it is likely that students will achieve better on these courses, (as is often the case)

**Data tracking and underachievement intervention**

* Subject leaders are supplied with traffic lighted data after each data tracking showing which student are underachieving, and don’t need to access this themselves from the data system
* Subject leaders ensure that for every underachieving student in every subject and year, the class room teacher has an intervention strategy in place as part of their teaching. The intervention needs to be personalised, based on diagnosis in each individual case as to which are the barriers to learning and how these are best tackled.
* The school provides cpd to help teachers give more accurate predictions
* Students know their targets in all subject in all years, which are challenging but realistic; know how they are performing in relation to the targets; know what they have to do to bridge the gap between present performance and the targets
* Student targets in the “practical” subjects are not based solely on KS2 English and maths SATs scores, but are also based on an initial diagnosis of the students’ existing skill levels in these creative subjects
* Full attention given to catering for the needs of higher ability students, boys and SEND students
* The Pupil Premium gap is being closed by recognising that there is only the need to make special provision for those PP students who are actually underachieving, and then it is a case of effective intervention as with any other student; many PP students are doing fine and do not need extra support

**Teaching and Learning**

* Each department reviews it curriculum offer each year, with research in to best practice, and full regard for the Ofsted framework advice on curriculum
* The teachers have clearly had explained to them the features of an outstanding lesson taking full account of Ofsted
* Lesson observations do not only cover the lesson being observed and do also include analysis of:
  + The quality of student work generated by the teacher
  + The quality of feedback to students
  + The progress students are making in terms of achieving their targets
* Following a formal lesson observation, there is never negative and over-critical **f**eedback which damages teacher self confidence
* Each subject area has a plan which allows as many schemes of learning as possible to be revised over an academic year, as the key to rapid improvement in teaching and learning is the use of enhance schemes of learning, and these also can help reduce staff workload if they are well resourced
* Student voice related to learning is developed by it being academy practice that at the end of each scheme of learning, the teacher seeks and record the views of the students about all aspects of the s of l, with these views being taken in to account when it is revised
* There is differentiation built in to all schemes of learning and thus lessons. “Academic” subjects are not delivered in wherever teachers are unable to provide enough differentiation to allow all the students to make the maximum possible progress, and there is still good differentiation within sets
* Where there is subject setting, student have every opportunity to move to higher sets if they are making good progress
* SMSC is built in to all schemes of learning
* There is a priority to developing student behaviour for learning in the classroom – skills in group and team work, concentration, focus, good learning habits etc
* Quick action is taken against those who are disruptive in lessons, and also the breaking up of groups of students who may be making any particular class dysfunctional
* There is evidence of independent learning teaching methods in use, without excessive teacher control of the learning experience in most lessons. The staff are good enough to “let go” a little, and allow the students more opportunities to lead and develop their own learning, and especially in KS3 There are also plenty of lessons providing a creative/motivational/wow factor
* There is evidence of teachers making use full use of AFL in their conversations with students
* Teachers know the paramount importance of students making as much learning progress as possible in any lesson in relation to the learning objectives in terms of skills, concepts and knowledge
* Teachers ensure that the learning is really challenging for all students and based on pupils having aspirational targets and high teacher expectations?
* Teachers achieve real student engagement and involvement in their learning
* In lessons, students are given every opportunity to demonstrate and develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy, and all teachers see themselves as teachers of literacy and numeracy, and show this in their teaching
* Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and pedagogical skills
* Teachers use personalised praise in motivating students and boosting their confidence to take on more challenging work, with full use of “WAGOLL”, and the use of exemplars to show students what outstanding work looks like
* Q and A is based on teachers asking personalised questions to individual students; using challenging, open questions; using follow up questions to individuals or across the class
* Students are taught from Y7, and get plenty of recall practice as a feature of lessons starting in Y7, with this built in to lessons, (past papers, assessments, quizzes, verbal Qs), so that there is a culture whereby students know that they have to make an effort to learn what is covered because they will always be tested
* There is good use of ICT software to deliver aspects of the curriculum in lessons and to enhance learning
* Lead lessons by department members to combined groups are used when helpful
* All staff have embraced assessment via feedback rather than bulk written marking, which is more effective for students and also for reducing staff workload. However, with this system there needs to be student response to feedback. The school has achieved the right balance of assessments, deep dive marking, verbal feedback, self and peer assessment and written student response
* With self and peer assessment the students receive training in how to do this, as well as always being given the criteria that is likely to make this type of assessment more accurate
* Students always know the learning outcomes/objectives for every lesson
* The homework and extended learning policy allows monitoring of how much is set across the curriculum, the purpose and type of the homework, the degree of differentiation and how student work is monitored and assessed
* Based on school collected information, the departments know who has not got wifi and/or computers at home when work/homework is being set which requires use of ICT at home- there are alternative arrangements for these students
* There is the best possible use made of TAs in the classroom
* Extra-curricular activities are provided, along with good business links and use of enterprise and work related learning

**Leadership and management**

* The school has as many department meetings as possible each half term, and these are not swamped by SLT imposed items. With these in place, faculty and subject leads are empowered, so that they become significant and crucial forces for development and improvement within the academy/school, working with a SLT line manager. Where there are a large number of these meetings within the meeting cycle they then have the opportunity to work with their staff to raise achievement, enhance teaching and learning etc
* Everything possible is done to reduce staff workload. Meetings only take place when needed and are well chaired. There are no unnecessary bureaucratic tasks for teachers; Data analysis is at a minimum. Staff writing reduced to the bare minimum, e.g, no need for teachers to write down the intervention strategies that they have in place for individual students if this is checked verbally via department meetings; no need to produce extensive monitoring reports etc
* Each department has a strategy plan which shows how it is setting out to raise staff and student expectations, and also to show how it is fighting the swot syndrome
* Subject leaders know clearly what is expected of them in terms of their planning, monitoring and evaluation role, and have a quality assurance system in place
* Review and evaluation, including the SEF, are based on impactrather than just provision
* Subject leaders have full involvement in observing lessons of their staff; observations of lessons are not just about how good was the generic teaching but also how well was the subject taught; lesson observations are also looking at if the teaching takes every opportunity to raise attainment; there is a lot of time spent on looking at the quality of student work so that there can be an evaluation of the extent to which the teaching is producing progress over time
* Subject leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of each of their staff, and are working on their individual areas for development; there is no blanket monitoring of any area when particular staff are known to be highly successful and effective in that area
* Change is managed sensitivelyso that staff do not come under too much pressure
* There is full attention to staff welfare and morale, with plenty of praise, appreciation and thanks
* There is provision of high quality professional development opportunities for staff
* There are a range of opportunities given subject leaders to develop their leadership skills
* The department is fully aware of what is expected in terms of the current Ofsted framework
* SLT line managers have a major role in helping develop subject leaders and in school quality assurance, with careful matching of SLT manager to the subject leader
* Maths and English in particular, but also other subjects, always benefit from closer and more regular liaison with feeder primary schools

Tony Stephens