



Curriculum & Outcomes Committee

23 January 2020, 4 pm

Minutes

Present: Sallie Peacock (committee chair), Camilla Argyle, Adam Breakwell, Lyn Broom, Wes Coleman, Jane Keenan, Kerry Martin, Emma Morgan, Mark Simmons (clerk)

1. Welcome & apologies

Apologies from Lucy Rossiter.

2. Forest School

Governors were updated on Forest School, which was introduced 6-7 years ago and gives children the experience of going off into the woods and exploring. There is no specific curriculum, but there are specific protocols particularly around health and safety. It was initially offered to KS2, and was widened to KS1 and EYFS after TA Charlie Morland had been trained up (using Pupil Premium funding); Rachel at pre-school has also had training. Forest School happens either on the school site or at the rec; after circle time and activities, children are given the opportunity to experience something new (e.g. collecting leaves, learning knots, etc.). These activities are voluntary, and most children tend to go off and do something they've done before e.g. den-building. There is a 6-week rolling programme, and it has proved really successful; governors also noted that is also an important way of helping children to begin to understand how to manage risk.

3. New assessment system update

The new assessment system (following the withdrawal of the School Pupil Tracker) had been very well presented and sold, but there are some serious flaws in the system. It had been understood that much of the existing data on the previous system (and from SIMS) could be uploaded automatically, but this has proven not to be the case, and it has taken a lot of time to upload data more manually. The system is also not user-friendly, particularly in comparison with School Pupil Tracker, which worked well and provided what the school needed. The school and other Wye Valley schools have written to complain and to request timescales for the improvements required.

a. Computing and Art assessments

Given the challenges with the new system, Adam and Charlotte have had to do additional work with data in SIMS and Excel to measure progress, to understand whether for example a lack of progress in Computing is a proxy indicator of literacy. This is working now as an interim solution, while Classroom Monitor is improved. One barrier with using spreadsheets is that photos cannot be uploaded, which makes it more difficult to demonstrate evidence in subjects such as Art. The school now has government funding for rural connectivity, given that the current download and upload speeds are 29 Mbps and 6 Mbps respectively. This means that the school has been using outdated coding programme versions, even though coding is 50% of the curriculum. The higher speed will also be cheaper.

b. Interim progress grids

It was agreed that while Classroom Monitor is not working properly, and given that much of the relevant information is available in the existing interim tabular system, it is not worth investing further in the additional data input required to develop interim progress grids. Governors were shown an example of this for the Art curriculum. This has helped teachers to keep re-focusing on the curriculum objectives. Adam has read OfStEd reports under the new framework and will also check with Sarah Somers. Governors discussed current OfStEd expectations and were satisfied that this system is sufficient for the time being.



4. Reading update (Lyn & Adam)

Lyn thanked the staff who gave up their time for a review of reading. Children learn sounds in a set pattern, but the curriculum is delivered in a way which a love of reading is embedded. Y1 Read Write Ink scheme to develop the love of reading, with phonics every morning and a “best I can be” challenge to encourage reading at home (e.g. 7 reading slots at home). All are tested in phonics at the end of Year 1, with usually a 80-90% pass rate. Year 2 uses Reading with RIC (reading, inference and choice). There is reading every morning for roughly half an hour, with some group discussion; this is really good for grammar and vocabulary. Reading with RIC is much better at instilling a love of reading than Cracking Comprehension, which sets questions and is based more about what is required to pass tests. Sarah Somers is due to come in to do a ‘deep dive’ in February.

Emma and Sian have worked very hard to put together the Reading Impact Statement which has been shared with all governors.

OfStEd will look in detail at the bottom 20% and will pick up on those who have not passed the phonics test, investigating what the school is doing to support these pupils. The school is researching and testing the “Toe by Toe” scheme, which works on repetition reading. So far, this is working well with one child, but it is an expensive intervention. It does expect parents to work with children at home, but in some cases the school would need to provide this additional support in school. Governors queried why some children do not pass, and this is usually because the phonetic approach only works for 80-90% of children. Those with dyslexia or who memorise whole-word patterns will tend to find putting together phonemes more difficult, and some may be catching up what was not embedded in earlier years.

Ginny is sorting books (including new books) into phases which reflect the order in which phonics are taught in order. Governors were really appreciative of this massive task, and for all the work by the staff, TAs and parents involved in the teaching of phonics and reading.

Several books go missing, and the school is planning a book amnesty to encourage parents to bring books back to school (and donate new ones). A parent has provided £1,000 through a charitable trust to buy new books. There was some discussion about a further application to the Richards Castle Educational Trust and the possibility of applying for funding through the Dolly Parton Trust, and about the high cost of hymn books. A suggestion was made to give each child a hymn book when s/he starts school to look after through primary school, to reduce wear and tear.

5. Feedback & findings from Kington School OfStEd

Kington School has had an OfStEd inspection recently. The process was the same as before (one day’s notice, then a two-day inspection). It happened six months before the school was expecting it, and OfStEd said that there was no particular reason for this. There were three deep dives: Reading, Maths and Science (the latter due to the inspector’s interest and in spite of the school’s particular strength in MFL and music). Phonics was observed in EYFS. Governors were asked about how they maintain accountability and challenge, and were questioned about bullying, off-rolling and gaming, culture, attendance and (briefly) PP. The inspector’s emphasis was on looking for evidence in books, and on cross-curricular writing and maths (but not so much on co-curricular subjects). For teachers this made the inspection feel detached, but there was a lot of interaction with children, asking about how they know they are doing well, how they feel in school, etc.. The inspector did look at Breakfast Club, perhaps because this is a strategy for improving PP attendance. There was a parents’ survey and staff well-being survey.

It was clarified that if an inspection is likely to lead to a change in judgment then it will be followed by a further inspection within 18 months. As a Good school, Orleton would also expect a Section 8 inspection (1 inspector over 2 days).

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6. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

7. Matters arising

- i. The EYFS baseline data survey was completed and sent off. There has been no feedback yet (probably because this is a pilot).
- ii. Tapestry is taking a long time to set up and has not yet been monitored. This will be followed up before the next meeting.
- iii. Re: exit interviews for students, there has only been one child who has left, one who moved to France (who gave positive feedback), and one who is now missing from education, which school has registered. Lyn will put together a draft questionnaire for exit interviews with children who leave.

8. Any other business

None

9. Date of next meeting

14 May 2020 at 4pm – Lyn to chair in Sallie's absence if necessary.