

HCC Brokerage Visit Report

School	Rickmansworth Park JMI School (708)	Date	Wednesday 26 th June 2019
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Length of visit (including preparation and follow up): 1.5 days

Focus of visit & activities undertaken:

In preparation for the visit, I reviewed the school's Inspection Data Summary Report (ISDR), the school's website and a range of documentation sent to me by the headteacher. This included the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation (SEF), internal data analysis and recent independent consultant reports.

It was decided that the visit would include a focus on:

- the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school with a focus on, but not limited to, mathematics.

The visit included:

- a discussion with the headteacher regarding the monitoring and development of teaching and learning and the school's curriculum;
- a joint learning walk in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and a discussion with the EYFS leader on the impact of improvements to provision;
- a joint learning walk through key stage 1 and key stage 2;
- a meeting with a range of subject leaders to ascertain expectations of pupils across the curriculum and the extent to which these are met;
- a discussion with the SENCo to explore the provision and outcomes for pupils with additional needs;
- a discussion and summary with the headteacher and a Governor.

Discussions/ main findings /observations:

Evidence from today's joint learning walk and discussions on the monitoring of teaching and learning indicate that the headteacher's expectations are high, monitoring is robust and that leaders' judgements are accurate. Leaders' and teachers' assessment judgements are accurate – I was able to view three recent external moderations: key stage 2 writing moderation in 2019; key stage 1 moderation in 2018; Early Years Foundation Stage moderation in 2018 (where, if anything, some judgements were seen to be a little cautious). The range of first-hand teaching and learning seen at today's visit and the evidence seen during characteristically frank and open discussions with leaders at all levels wholly align with the school's self-evaluation (SEF).

School development planning is effective – the strategic overview is underpinned by senior or middle leaders' improvement plans where more detailed actions are tracked. Leaders have a highly accurate understanding of the achievement of individuals, groups and cohorts. The headteacher demonstrated that, alongside a range of monitoring, senior leaders use data well to plan improvements. In answering questions about outcomes, senior leaders showed a strong understanding of trends but also of detail. For example, leaders authoritatively discussed individual circumstances that impacted on the proportion of pupils that reached age-expectations in mathematics at key stage 2 in 2018.

Leaders' monitoring is robust – they regularly see learning in action, feedback systems are structured and I saw how leaders act immediately to further improve practice. Leaders seek external challenge and draw on expertise. This is evident in the school's ongoing work with consultants, including a mathematics specialist and a Read, Write, Ink consultant to further develop practice. Improvement plans and reports directly link to the practice seen today and to improvements in outcomes. On the day of the visit, the headteacher confirmed that 100% of year 1 pupils have reached the expected level in phonics this year. Staff reflect on videos of themselves teaching / leading a provision and develop wish lists for skill development. Leaders have created a 'leading practitioner' role to share the best practice within the school and continue to drive the high standard of teaching and learning, for example through skills workshops. The impact of this work is seen in the consistency of staff subject knowledge, effective modelling, pupil progress in books and in pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have been very successful in driving improvements to attendance, now at 97% for this academic year. No groups are disadvantaged by poor attendance.

In discussion with the SENCo, I enquired about the provision and progress of a number of pupils with additional needs that I identified randomly. For each selected, provision was matched to need and each pupil has caught up, now working at age-expectation. Evidence indicates that leaders are very prompt in both identifying pupils' additional needs and in their response, including through rapid liaison with outside agencies and/or third parties where appropriate.

Governors are regularly provided up-to-date monitoring and achievement data by the headteacher. Evidence seen prior to and during the visit indicates that Governance is effective. I recommend that the Governor minutes more explicitly highlight Governor challenge to leaders, including their questions regarding any trends seen in outcomes data.

Curriculum

Learning at Rickmansworth Park is underpinned by a whole-school ethos as a Rights Respecting School. The school was awarded Silver in 2018 and is now working for the Gold standard. This work has a high profile in the school and children's work on display throughout reflects their strong understanding of rights and responsibilities. Pupils are given a wide range of meaningful roles as they progress through the school (for example Digital Leaders, Play Leaders, Elite Play Leaders, Young Leaders locally).

I spoke in some detail with a range of subject leaders about their curriculum intent, including how they define age-expectations in their subject. Curriculum leaders have strong expertise in their field and the school invests in their professional development – this is a notable strength that really underpins the school’s curriculum planning and provision. For example, through the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Ambassador programme, the Science leader has engaged with the National STEM Learning Centre in York. This work has focused on identified school aims, such as to ensure pupils from vulnerable groups achieve highly in Science, as well as to drive the recent whole-school focus on Women in Science. The computing leader is a centrally trained Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Ambassador. When I discussed with the computing leader what progression in coding looks like at Rickmansworth Park, she provided clear examples of the software and physical devices that children use in each year group to develop their understanding of algorithms and sequencing. The History and Geography leader evidenced their documented examples of expected knowledge and skills at each stage. As a next step in 2019/2020, we discussed how a whole-school portfolio of pupils’ work would further support teachers’ assessment.

Learning seen and work displayed indicate a broad and balanced curriculum for all. The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of visitors and trips, as well as regular pupil access to their forest school in adjacent land.

Learning walk

The headteacher and I conducted a joint learning walk, visiting each class and joined by the mathematics leader for some lessons. I agree with leaders’ judgements of the quality of teaching and learning seen. During the morning, we visited mathematics, English and phonics. In all lessons seen, very strong subject knowledge enabled precise teaching and high-quality discussions. Work set was challenging – pupils are well-supported to rise to high expectations in order to be successful.

In mathematics, in line with improvement planning for this academic year, there is clear evidence of the effective use of visual representation in calculation and problem-solving. Pupils’ use of manipulatives in mathematics is now more regular though this continues to be a work in progress. The mathematics leader is committed to further broadening resources available in classes. Those resources should be readily available for children so they can be taught how to access manipulatives independently. There is evidence of structured pupil reasoning in books, made clear by the use of ‘reasoning thought bubbles’. Talk scaffolds on display in some classes provide structure to pupils’ discussions. As a next step, it is agreed that children’s reasoning does need to be more consistently evident throughout the school – the headteacher, mathematics leader and I discussed what this might look like further down the school, including the use of displays and whole-class examples.

Throughout the visit pupils’ behaviour was impeccable. As the result of whole-school improvement, pupils’ work is well-presented; they take pride in their learning. The frequency, quality and effectiveness of pupils’ discussions with their learning partners are of particular note.

In EYFS, staff work to provide as many opportunities to develop writing and mathematics outside the classroom as inside – learning is linked well across the setting. There is a wide range of activities within given areas and we saw a mix of adult-led and child initiated learning being used effectively. We visited Reception at various points across the morning – children were consistently highly engaged. Staff adapt and refresh provision in line with pupils’ interests as well as priorities for the cohort and school. Ongoing tracking of children’s achievement is very thorough; staff use a red, amber, green (RAG) rating for each child against objectives and use this to inform planning and provision for groups and individuals. Samples of written communication to parents seen were very informative, sharing in detail what children will be learning about each week. Pupils make strong progress through Reception.

In EYFS and further up the school, phonics teaching seen at the visit had purposeful pace and well-honed routines, all underpinned by the professional development provided to teaching and support staff.

The school's website

The school's website provides a welcoming picture of life and learning at Rickmansworth Park and, at the date of review, complies with current requirements. Staffing is up-to-date and easy to find. Policies are reviewed in line with requirements. The most recent Ofsted report and performance data are easily located. The site is packed with very useful information for parents, including through the parents' handbook page. The dedicated 'Safeguarding' area usefully draws together relevant policies, information and resources.

Actions agreed / recommendations: (identify by whom and timescale):

- Further develop the teaching and learning of mathematics by:
 - ensuring consistency and progression in pupils' opportunities to develop and record their reasoning (*mathematics leader, autumn 2019*);
 - embedding the use of manipulatives and make them accessible for pupils throughout (*mathematics leader, autumn 2019*).
- Implement subject leaders' next steps:
 - build portfolios of work in identified subjects to provide examples of curricular expectations at each phase (*identified subject leaders, autumn 2019*).
 - further develop meaningful curricular links with local secondary schools (*identified subject leaders, 2019/2020*);
- Refine minutes of Governor meetings to highlight Governors' challenge to leaders, including their questions on any trends seen in outcome data for groups and cohorts over time (*Governing body, autumn 2019*).

Report to be copied to:

Jane Linch (Headteacher), Lindsay Unsworth (Chair of Governors), Simon Newland (HCC), Tania Rawle (HCC), Tracy Warner (HfL), Kelly Moss (DSEA)

Name of consultant	Matt Johnson	Date	30/06/2019
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