

Merrywood House School Review
Date of pre-inspection: 10th and 11th November 2020

Outcome:

Merrywood House School is a good school with outstanding features

● Context

Strengths

- This is a unique school where the vision to provide a nurturing space for children to grow educationally, emotionally, morally and socially using a trauma informed model is embraced by all involved.
 - The school officially opened in April 2020.
 - There are now 16 children on roll attending daily and another child who is home educated, supported by the school.
 - There are 19 staff who are committed to the education and wellbeing of the children. All of those spoken to feel valued, appreciate the positive team work and the 'family feel' at the school.
 - The children enjoy attending the school and recognise all that the staff do to support them.
 - The Self Evaluation Form (SEF) gives an accurate picture of the school and has identified priorities for improvement.
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● Quality of Education

Strengths

- The school is appropriately developing a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the specific needs of the children.
- A feature of the school is the strong Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) curriculum that is embedding well.
 - A clear long-term plan is in place for each of the classes. Core subjects are taught in the mornings and children were observed actively engaged in their learning.
 - Foundation subjects are taught through a carousel approach during the afternoons. Through a thematic approach, children are making strong links across the subjects.
 - Using the Early Years Effective Characteristics of Learning to approach learning is appropriate to close developmental gaps that are as a result missed opportunities.
 - The curriculum benefits from the multi disciplinary approach developed by teachers and therapists and is a unique strong feature of the school.
 - Opportunities for phonics teaching and for children to read individually with the teacher are planned daily. Progress is monitored rigorously.
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- Teachers have dedicated foundation subjects to plan for the whole school each week. This is building a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the children. They value the opportunity to work together on Friday mornings when ideas can be shared and teachers can work collaboratively.
- Teachers use creative approaches to engage the children in their learning. They are committed to enabling the children to be successful and use a variety of approaches to encourage them.
- Progress is monitored through work scrutiny and data entry takes place termly. Marking is clear and children can be seen responding to marking in many cases.
- B squared data base is a useful tool for monitoring small steps of progress in the core subjects. Teachers identify gaps in learning and build in opportunities to close them.
- Work scrutiny shows that children have mainly made good progress since September.
- The use of Seesaw ICT package on the iPads has motivated the children and year 6 children have particularly benefitted from this. The children showed confidence and engagement when using the software.

Next steps

- Continue to build a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the children who attend Merrywood House with clear structure and sequencing.
- Develop subject / curriculum leadership to strengthen expertise.
- Review/streamline the marking policy to ensure consistency.

• Behaviour and Attitudes

Strengths

- Meeting the SEMH needs of pupils is a key strength of the school and underpins all that takes place. The impact is significant for pupils who may not otherwise be in education.
- The core aim of the school to provide a 'nurturing space' is consistently and rigorously applied by all staff and valued by pupils.
- All staff are committed to creating a safe, calm, and positive environment for the pupils. The Positive Behaviour Policy is implemented consistently in, often, challenging circumstances.
- Personal Support Plans for pupils appropriately include the strengths and needs of their Social, Emotional and Mental Health.
- Teachers value the support they are given when writing the new Support Plans and can see the impact of the new strategies that have been implemented.
- The routines in school help pupils to feel safe. One child described her anxiety and how the staff support her when she is struggling.
- The therapeutic needs of the children are met through a wide range of interventions including Play therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.
- Staff communicate with parents through communication books and telephone calls where discussion is required.
- Daily briefing and debriefing enable specific needs of pupils to be highlighted. All staff are aware of any specific changes in the needs of a pupil and an agreed approach is implemented. The daily meetings are valued by the staff and have a significant positive impact in the support provided for pupils.
- Staff value the support provided by leaders, particularly at challenging times.
- Boxall assessments are completed for all children. Medium term plans for each class have been written to address needs.
- CPOMS is an effective tool for tracking trends in behaviour. All staff record incidents and leaders analyse this at least weekly.

Next steps

- Regularly review the impact of the school approaches to support pupils.
 - Identify trends using CPOMS.
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● Personal Development

Strengths

- This is a key feature of the school and the emphasis of the planned curriculum.
- Pupils spoken to value the animal care opportunities on offer to promote empathy and caring responsibilities.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons to engage children in their learning and create a sense of wonder.
- The Whole School Therapeutic Curriculum Provision is clearly mapped and identifies the significant range of opportunities available to all children.
- All staff are highly trained so that there is a consistent approach to deliver a trauma informed approach. This is evident when observing staff working with the children.
- The impact of the strong team work providing a 'family' approach is strong.
- Healthy life styles are promoted daily and nutritional meals are prepared for the children.
- Children are supporting 'Children in Need' and spoke about what they are doing to raise money and why.
- The views of the children are listened to and valued. The staff recognise the talents and strengths of the children and develop them further.

Next steps

- The school has appropriately identified working with other professionals to increase awareness of careers.

• Leadership and Management

Strengths

- There is a clear vision for the school that is articulated clearly by Michelle. This drives all that takes place in the school and is embraced by all staff.
- Michelle and Claire speak clearly and with passion, demonstrating their desire for all of the children to be successful.
- Senior leaders have attended relevant training to ensure trauma informed approaches are implemented.
- Staff have received extensive training to enable them to deliver a trauma informed approach consistently. Trauma Informed Schools is an organisation that provides this and continues to do so.
- The mental health of the staff is paramount. The well being of staff is supported with team building opportunities and, due to the specific needs of the children, supervision is provided by a counsellor.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and understood by all staff. Daily staff briefings raise any safeguarding concerns.
- Strong safeguarding procedures enable early identification and there is evidence of robust partnership working. The leadership team gave anonymised evidence of a specific case, demonstrating the robustness of procedures.
- All staff react swiftly to any safeguarding concerns. They know that this is paramount for the safety of the children and the leadership team are always available to discuss the concerns.
- Everyone will record any concern onto CPOMS. The leadership team tracks this closely, enabling a clear picture on every child.
- Records show that all safeguarding training is up to date.
- Appraisal targets are in place and procedures in place to monitor and support progress.
- Leaders are developing a curriculum bespoke to Merrywood House, meeting the specific needs of the children.

Next steps

- Review the leadership structure, clarifying roles of responsibilities in order to develop the curriculum, particularly foundation subjects.
- Develop the School Development Plan with the staff so that they have ownership of the priorities.
- Update the SEF so that the context of the school is clear.

Sally Leach
November 2020