

Merrywood House School Review

Date of review: 3rd March 2021

Outcome:

The aspects observed during my visit are outstanding

• Context

This visit was a review meeting following my visit in November 2020 when next steps for the development of the school were identified. The priority was to review the progress towards the priorities previously discussed and look at the journey the school has made towards being outstanding.

I was very impressed with the progress made since my last visit and was made to feel very welcome by the children and staff that I met. This report demonstrates the excellent progress made in the aspects observed.

First impressions demonstrated the hard work that had taken place in the school environment. On entering the building there was a very calming welcome with lighting and music to enhance this. Year 6 had been involved in the development of their learning space and the child spoken to was pleased to share his pleasure in the progress.

• Quality of Education

Next steps identified in November 2020

- 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.

Continue to build a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the children who attend Merrywood House with clear structure and sequencing.

Progress made

Phenomenal development has taken place in creating a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the children who attend Merrywood House. The planning takes into account the future development of the school and the expansion to further settings.

- Identified curriculum leaders have effectively used the B Squared assessment tool to help shape the curriculum. The knowledge and skills at each step are clearly presented to support teachers with their planning and assessment.
- Each class has a half termly overview. Each step is backed up with more detailed medium term planning which takes into account the interests of the children and the requirements of the curriculum.
- The planning continues to appropriately take into account the Early Years Characteristics of Learning and includes a therapeutic aspect, this is important when considering the wide needs of the children who attend Merrywood House.
- White Rose is supported by Primary Stars in the planning of maths.
- The Literary Tree has been used to support the English curriculum, particularly writing, and training has been provided for staff.
- The school is using the AQA achievement scheme.
- PE has been developed with sessions at High Ashurst as well as all children attending and afternoon at Nork Park with all staff participating either as a leader or trusted adult.

Points to consider

- Make sure that planning is in place for each year group.
- How will teachers and trusted adults be supported in the implementation of the new planning?
- I did not look at weekly planning therefore leaders need to be clear about how the specific needs of the children are met.
- Regular monitoring of planning and the delivery of the new curriculum to be included in the monitoring regime in school.

Develop subject / curriculum leadership to strengthen expertise.

Progress made

- A head of teaching and learning has been appointed within the school and will have a role across all schools when they open. There is also a new assistant head with the responsibility for teaching and learning. Both have had an active role in the development of the new curriculum.
- The school recognises that they need to be innovative in computer science and a strong lead is in place to take this forward.
- A newly appointed teacher has taken responsibility for physical education.
- When planning together every Friday, teachers value the opportunity to share ideas.

Points to consider

- When working with local schools, consider how subject expertise can be shared.
- When the number of teachers increases across the community of schools, use their expertise as a team to support specific subjects.

Review/streamline the marking policy to ensure consistency.

Progress made

- The marking policy has been reviewed with staff to enable consistency.
- Teachers explained that they are aware of the expectations and feel more confident when marking work.

- Books reviewed showed the marking policy being implemented. New features include identifying when children work independently or with support; and when children are not present due SEMH needs.
- Work sampling with the teachers has recently been introduced. This clearly shows that the teacher has ownership of the evaluation and there is agreement on next steps.

Points to consider

- Through the school monitoring process, regularly undertake work scrutiny with the teachers to enable consistent application of the marking policy.
 - Use pupil voice to assess how useful the marking is to support their progress.
-

Behaviour and Attitudes

Next steps identified in November 2020

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

Regularly review the impact of the school approaches to support pupils.

Progress made

I am very impressed with how engaged the children were in their learning. They were keen to participate in lessons and all spoken to were happy to share their work with me. This demonstrated children feeling secure and increased confidence in school.

- Pupils are more settled in class since my visit in November.
- Approaches have been reviewed and the daily debriefing continues to be a valuable opportunity for all staff to share worries and success of the day. The meeting that I attended demonstrated that all staff participate and contributions are valued.
- Behaviour leads have been appointed from within the team and the time that they are able to spend with the children, when needed, is valued. Feedback is given to teachers at a suitable time when children are ready to return to class. Teachers say that this is effective and they can concentrate on the children who they are with, knowing that others are well supported.
- Therapists provide feedback and the OT works alongside trusted adults to provide professional development. This is then shared with the teacher in class.

Points to consider

- Evaluate the roles of the behaviour leads, based on the feedback provided by colleagues.

Identify trends using CPOMS.

Progress made

- Data was presented to show behaviour trends in school. We could see where there have been improvements once children are settled.
 - CPOMS is used effectively by all staff to record incidents although not all showed a category for those reported.
 - Due to the in depth knowledge of all staff of the 16 children who attend the school we agreed that no further interrogation is required.
-

Points to consider

- SLT to decide on the level of reporting to be included on CPOMS. Would a bigger picture be identified if all reported incidents had a clear category? Would you build a picture linked to other incidents beyond school?
-

• Personal Development

Next steps identified in 2021

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

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

Progress made

Progress in this field is limited due to a lockdown being in place.

- SLT has increased the range of professionals working with the school.
- Parents have been inspiring children about potential career paths using ZOOM.
- The curriculum takes into account high aspirations for the children.
- The school is offering professional development to local schools and this work will enhance the opportunities for those at Merrywood House.

Points to consider

- Continue the vision for personal development when opportunities are able to be developed.
-

• Leadership and Management

Next steps identified in November 2020

- 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.

Review the leadership structure, clarifying roles of responsibilities in order to develop the curriculum, particularly foundation subjects.

Progress made

Michelle has the vision and drive to lead the team with her high expectations of everyone who works at Merrywood House. She is ably supported by a very strong leadership team. The

changes in the leadership structure means that the school is in a strong position to expand to other settings, allowing the 'schools of opportunities' to support many more children in the future.

- A full restructure of the leadership team has taken place. Claire has been appointed head of school and Lauren, a new assistant head, has been appointed.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and, in addition, there is a new lead of teaching and learning who has been appointed from within the teaching team.
- The new structure has allowed the leadership team to be more strategic and this has clearly enabled the rapid developments in all aspects to happen. This was evident throughout my discussions with leaders.
- Foundation subjects are being addressed through the leadership team.

Points to consider

- Review the impact of the new leadership structure as the school expands to other settings.

Develop the School Development Plan with the staff so that they have ownership of the priorities.

Progress made

- All staff were involved in the priorities agreed in the School Development Plan.
- Those spoken to could share how they were involved, how their ideas were valued and they have ownership of the next steps. They know their role in making this a success.
- The School development Plan is clearly presented and has associated costs clearly identified.
- One aspect that has been highlighted is the engagement of parents and the school is actively working to enhance this. A questionnaire shows positive responses with the majority showing strong or strongly agree to all questions.

Points to consider

- Make sure that regular reviews take place and monitor progress.
- Do appraisal objectives match the School Development Plan?

Update the SEF so that the context of the school is clear.

Progress made

This has been addressed and the context of the school is clear. Comparisons with national data are useful.

Other aspects discussed since my last visit

Assessment

There has been significant amount of development since our discussions in November.

- The curriculum has been designed to follow the assessment opportunities when using B Squared.
- Teachers have chosen to update the database for core subjects regularly and use the findings to plan next steps for each pupil.
- Tracking reports for each child shows, in the majority of aspects monitored, good or better progress from their starting point.

- Termly pupil progress meetings have a good overview of each pupil, looking at academic progress and the all round progress made at school. This gives a thorough picture of every child at the school. Meetings take place at least termly with the teacher and the leadership team with action points agreed.
- The detailed reports provided give a strong picture of each child academically and holistically against their specific needs and targets.

Points to consider

- Clarify the Steps Scale when reporting pupil progress for ease of understanding.
- As more data is collected, progress in the long and short term to be reported to identify trends.
- Further develop the use of B Squared database following discussion with leadership team.
- How will you monitor progress in foundation subjects?

Next visit

Aspects to be reviewed will be agreed prior to my next visit on 10th June 2021. I will attend the morning briefing before school starts.

Sally Leach
March 2021