

Visit Report

School: Wadebridge School

Date: 22nd and 23rd June 2015

Consultant: Andy Brumby

Please note that throughout the following report the term Pupil Premium is abbreviated to PP.

Work undertaken: A two-day in-depth review of the school's use of Pupil Premium (PP) funding in 2014-15 which included timetabled discussions with the following:

- deputy headteacher who acts as PP Lead
- two PP Advocates
- three Curriculum Area Leaders (English, mathematics, science)
- three HLTAs who support pupils in designated subject areas
- five disadvantaged pupils drawn from Years 7 to 9
- three disadvantaged pupils drawn from Year 10

The review also included:

- learning walks during which English, science, mathematics, geography and EPR lessons were visited
- informal discussions with numerous teachers, support staff and both PP and non-PP pupils
- oral feedback to PP Lead at the end of each day

Context:

This review comes one year after a similar process was undertaken in June 2014. The findings of the 2014 review are available on the school website.

<http://www.wadebridge.cornwall.sch.uk/our-school/pupil-premium>

Wadebridge School is a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students supported by PP funding is lower than the national average.

The 2014 KS4 examination results for PP pupils were significantly better than those achieved by PP pupils in 2013 in line with school forecasts. English results were especially pleasing with PP pupils performing in line with others nationally.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in December 2014 and received an overall effectiveness rating of 2 (with 2s for leadership and management, teaching and learning and achievement).

Inspectors noted that: The provision for disadvantaged pupils is monitored and evaluated closely. The two pupil premium advocates are particularly successful, working with students and their families both in and out of school hours.

The school was told that it can improve further by ensuring that the activities that are proving effective in securing good progress for disadvantaged students are being carried out in all subjects.

Below is a summary of the school's current strengths and areas for development in relation to its provision for disadvantaged learners.

Strengths:

The leadership of PP provision at Wadebridge School is highly effective at all levels, including key middle leaders and PP Advocates. Senior and middle leaders have worked very hard to secure 'buy-in' from all staff around this agenda. Subsequently many more members of staff now take individual responsibility for supporting disadvantaged pupils wherever they come into contact with them, having come to regard raising the achievement of this group as 'everybody's business'. The performance and well-being of PP pupils is universally accepted as a key priority for the school. The school has a designated PP governor who has attended relevant training events organised by Cornwall Learning.

Representatives from other secondary schools have visited the school to talk to senior leaders about the success of the PP provision at Wadebridge. Overall, the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils is very cohesive and flexible, enabling PP pupils to achieve good and rapidly improving outcomes.

The performance of PP pupils has improved significantly since 2013 when by the school's own admission it was a cause for concern. Expectations have been raised and ambitious targets set by relentlessly focussing on the gap between the school's PP pupils and non-PP pupils nationally. This practice is tightly aligned with advice contained within paragraphs 173 and 174 of the new Ofsted handbook.

Data analysis is increasingly sophisticated and this enables staff to quickly identify where gaps exist and to intervene effectively. Target-setting continues to develop and the use of FFT Aspire is beginning to have an impact now that it has been successfully adapted to a more user-friendly format that enables easy importing of information between documents. 4Matrix had just been introduced at the time of the 2014 review and staff are now using it confidently.

The impact of marking and feedback has improved significantly since the previous review. Many more examples of feedback that provides specific next steps were observed on this occasion. Pupils knew what DIRT means and reported that it is being used widely. They stated that feedback is now more helpful and that they are given more opportunities to act on it. Those pupils that have been at Wadebridge for more than a year were clear that the quantity *and* quality of feedback has improved. In books there were some very clear examples of pupils responding well to teachers' advice and guidance. Encouraged by their involvement in the School Improvement Group, some teachers are experimenting with purple pens and other adaptations to encourage learners to respond to their comments. Examples of very good feedback were observed in pupils' books in all subjects visited during the learning walk, namely English, mathematics, science, geography and EPR. The focus on improving feedback also appears to have had a positive knock-on effect in terms of improving assessment practice more generally with some very effective use of peer and self-assessment going on in a range of subjects.

The learning environment at Wadebridge School promotes positive learning habits and dispositions. The attractive Student Voice Group posters point out ways in which pupils can become successful learners. Some classrooms such as those in EPR have posters and displays that encourage self-reliance and self-help strategies. This is important because for some disadvantaged pupils a lack of determination and organisational skills can act as significant barriers to learning. In the lessons observed disadvantaged pupils were taking responsibility for their own learning and showing that they can stay focussed when work is difficult or challenging. A positive mindset amongst Year 11 students is being developed through their involvement in *Go for it!*

Strong work is being done by the six HLTAs who operate in designated subject areas. They are highly motivated and know the PP pupils very well indeed. They are aware of individual pupils' barriers to learning and work tirelessly to address them. There were some excellent examples of staff being prepared to 'go the extra mile' for individual pupils, including transporting pupils to school to ensure that they sit crucial examinations. The pupils appreciate the excellent work that these staff members do on their behalf and acknowledge that they make a huge difference to their progress and learning. They also reported that HLTAs are very good at judging when to intervene and when to step back. The HLTAs have developed sound knowledge of the standards and expectations in their respective subject areas. For example, an HLTA supporting disadvantaged pupils in geography was able to give extremely helpful subject-specific advice to Year 10 students working on an important GCSE assignment. The HLTAs are very clear about their role and are very well supported by the PP Advocates.

A second PP Advocate (fully funded by PPG) has been appointed since the last review. Together the two Advocates have successfully developed their role, serving as first point of contact for disadvantaged pupils and their parents and carers. Their efforts to improve attendance and parental engagement were recognised in the Ofsted report of December 2014. Their implementation of the PP bursary system has been exemplary and has led to the building of excellent relationships as well as providing students with a say in how they want a

part of the funding spent. The Advocates support and challenge the HLTAs effectively and have high expectations of them. Where HLTAs have been at risk of being deflected from their core business of supporting PP pupils, the Advocates have not been afraid to challenge and question on their behalf. The Advocates are meticulous in their logging of vital pieces of information about individual children and this enables them to spot patterns and trends that can be acted upon. They are increasingly proactive in working with primary schools to identify pupils who will need support on entry to secondary school.

Interventions are effective because they are well monitored and evaluated by those that deliver and co-ordinate them. There are very good lines of communication between staff who do intervention work and class teachers, with the teachers retaining a strong sense of overall responsibility for learners' progress. The new Power of Two intervention for mathematics is popular with staff and pupils but it is too early yet to comment on its impact on achievement.

Areas for development:

The school needs to learn from other schools which are similarly successful to itself or even more so. It has learnt well from other schools in the past (Dawlish Community College etc) and now needs to look outwards again in order to further develop and enhance its provision. This may involve travelling beyond the immediate area (and perhaps beyond the SW region). Opportunities for networking of this nature will be available on the 16th October when representatives from Wadebridge attend the PP Conference in Newquay. The school might forge learning links with the likes of Oasis Academy in Bristol, led by Headteacher Rebecca Clark. It is also important that the school learns more from the approaches adopted by primary schools which have been successful at raising achievement and closing gaps.

Progress has clearly been made with feedback over the course of the last year and there is plenty of evidence of PP pupils usefully correcting, amending and re-drafting work. However, whilst most were aware that DIT has recently been modified to DIRT, few were able to provide any convincing explanation of the significance of this change and stated that so far it has made no real difference. Has the school thought through the outcomes it is hoping to achieve as a result of this modification? Is DIRT intended to more accurately describe what is already happening than DIT, or is there an added dimension that the inclusion of the 'R' is intended to convey? If the latter is the case, what training and development will teachers need to develop these new elements? Is the 'R' about the implications of the feedback received? Is it about helping pupils to make links between their learning here and learning elsewhere? If so, how is that different to what goes on in plenary sessions?

The school has mechanisms in place that are enabling it to analyse data in ever more sophisticated ways. When it comes to disadvantaged pupils, it now needs to do further detailed analysis of sub-groups within the PP cohort. It could usefully look at the performance of 'crossover groups' such as PP and SA+ or PP

and more able. It could also look at the performance of pupils who are perhaps on the 'fringes' of the disadvantaged group such as those who are affected by mobility issues, particularly those that come from outside of county. It could also give further thought to what happens to pupils who no longer attract PP because more than six years have elapsed since they were eligible for Free School Meals – the so-called Invisible Group. This quite often affects Year 9, 10 and 11 pupils in secondary school. Research shows that their KS4 examination performance is much closer to that of PP pupils nationally than non-PP pupils. (See FFT Research paper no.5, June 2014)

<http://www.fft.org.uk/FFT/media/fft/FFT-Research-Pupil-Premium-and-the-Invisible-Group.pdf>

Some PP pupils are still struggling with learning as a result of poor personal organisation. They are not always sure where or how to record their homework, for example. The pupils for whom a lack of organisation skills most obviously appeared to be a barrier to learning were those that were PP and SA+. Please see comments above about the need for further analysis of the performance of sub-groups within the PP cohort.

Staff would benefit from opportunities to be involved in action research around 'what works' when it comes to raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Has school considered developing links with researchers at the Education Endowment Foundation, the National Education Trust or the Rowntree Foundation?

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