

**Peer Review**  
**Preston School**  
**9<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Team-**

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**Introduction**

1. The day started with a session on the school's data.
2. This suggested-
  - a. That last year (2015) the schools data was broadly in line with national data (KS4 performance attainment (Point score 5 A\*-C) and progress (% 5 A\*-C)) but significantly below for average point score best 8 (-10 points). English and science had underperformed. This was a year that wasn't significantly above the national figure in terms of ability on entry.
  - b. That this year's data looks far more robust in year 11 with English having taken strong and appropriate action. Concerns remained in regard to science. The present years 7 to 11 are all SIG+ in terms of ability in terms of ability on entry.
  - c. The internal data drops suggest that students are performing well across all five years. The school, under the leadership of the new Principal (April 2015) is ambitious in his desire to see the performance level of all students raised to an excellent level (Identified as 'Great' in the SEF).
3. The school, under the new principal, has created a new SEF that is robust and realistic. The SEF reflects a school that knows its strengths and weaknesses and knows what it must do to raise achievement.

## **Evidence Gathering**

### **Learning Walks**

1. During the day the two teams went on a series of learning walks that covered a variety of subjects. English, Maths and science were visited as well as Geography, Business Studies, MFL (French and Spanish), Art and Technology.
2. At several points during the day discussions were held about what evidence had been gathered. At the end of the day a plenary session drew the evidence together.

### **Behaviour for Learning**

1. The learning walks confirmed the SEF judgement. Students are-
  - a. Well behaved and civil with each other and adults.
  - b. Generally very well behaved in lessons.
  - c. Orderly around the building even in the congested main corridor.
2. However this good behaviour does not always extend to an enthusiasm for learning. Many students are quite passive in their response to lessons. They are not always ready for independent learning. The view of the team was that staff needed to have more confidence in challenging students- students, it was felt, would respond positively.

### **Quality of Teaching**

1. The school is right to see teaching as good overall. The quality of teaching varied on the learning walks but the following were generally to be seen-
  - a. Staff are respected by students. One of the best lessons seen was with an NQT. Preston is a place where teachers can teach.
  - b. Students respect teachers and generally value the good relations created.
  - c. Lessons were overwhelmingly orderly. Low Level Disruption (LLD) was very rare.
  - d. Quite a few of the lessons were teacher led. This, as already mentioned, allowed some students to be passive in their responses.
2. Teaching seen was not outstanding overall because the pace of lessons could have been greater in some lessons. The more able were not always been stretched and differentiation, for the more able and SEND students, was not always apparent. Teaching was often to the middle.
3. The Assistant Principal responsible for Teaching and Learning had an accurate picture of what we would see. This is a school that knows itself.

## **Book Scrutiny**

1. The school has a marking policy with an associated star stamp.
2. The school provides book covers for the students. This is an excellent policy and helps to present the books well.
3. It is to the credit of the school and staff that almost all staff are now following the school policy.
4. What wasn't seen was a pupil response to the advice and guidance offered by staff. This development of pupil response thus becomes the next step for the school. Students, from the marking, were not always clear what they needed to do to improve their work.
5. Some books had incomplete work that staff had not picked up on.
6. The books seen could be judged as good, they were not excellent because-
  - a. It was not always possible to see how students had responded to teacher marking.
  - b. It was not always possible to see that the students were making rapid and sustained progress.

## **Leadership and Management**

### **Principal**

1. Since his appointment it is clear that the principal has offered the school excellent leadership. The SEF reflects his ambitions for the school. He has taken a secure good school and begun to map the way forward towards overall excellence (the 'GREAT' School agenda).

### **Senior Staff**

2. The school has a small senior team. They offer real ability and skills. The two Vice-Principals offer skills in their areas of responsibility. The same can be said of the Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning). Each knows the strengths and weaknesses of their areas and what needs to be achieved.
3. The principal is clear that they are all developing into a strong team- he was pleased with their work the day before the visit on the future strategic development of the school. It is his belief they will be, if they continue to develop, a team able to demonstrate excellence over the next year.

### **Middle Leaders**

1. Middle leaders were positive about the school, the changes that are being made and the improvement agenda.
2. The picture, in terms of their skills, was more variable. Good practice exists, but so do areas for development. Not all middle leaders were seen but it would seem that middle leaders need to develop consistent practice that achieves the level of the best. This will see them-

- a. Having a clear picture re data and the performance of groups and individual students within their remit. Linked to this should be an understanding of how the data can be used to impact on student progress and achievement both as individual students and groups of students.
- b. Understanding the drive to raise the progress and achievement of students and how, within the context of the SEF and the ethos of the school, this can be achieved.
- c. Achieving consistent performance across subjects. Maths achieves well. English knows what it must achieve. Science needs to be clear about how it raise achievement and progress.

## **Conclusion**

The overall assessment in the SEF looks accurate. This quality of leadership and management within the school is good. To be excellent the leadership team should continue to develop and middle leaders need to be consistent so that all students receive their entitlement to excellent opportunities to progress and achieve.

## **Pupil Voice**

The pupil voice reflected all that had been seen on the learning walks and in the interviews-

1. They believe Preston to be a good school.
2. They believed Preston to a warm and friendly school.
3. They liked and respected the Principal and like the fact he was around the school and taught lessons.
4. They feel safe at Preston. However they wanted strong action against anybody who bullied.
5. They like the staff- they believe staff like them and are often willing to share a joke.
6. They believe they could work harder. They believe they could be stretched more. Able students said they were often waiting for other students to finish their work.
7. They wanted better social areas.
8. They thought the corridors were crowded and wanted a return to the “one-way” system.
9. They wanted to see the no mobile phone policy reversed.
10. They wanted better IAG (career advice).
11. They thought the school had a good range of extra-curricular activities.
12. They wanted to have a voice in the school. Wanted a student council. Wanted to put their voice forward.
13. They wanted a wider role for prefects.
14. They wanted more money spent on resources to allow more practical work.

## **Next Steps**

Preston is a secure happy, secure school. In the opinion of the team it has the capacity to become a excellent (great) school over time.

## **Excellence**

It has numerous areas of excellence-

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1. The skills of the new Principal and his capacity to lead the school forward.
2. The skills of the leadership and their capacity to grow into an excellent team.
3. The social behaviour of the students. They have the capacity to become excellent learners with the desire to work described in the Ofsted framework.
4. The strong ethos of the school as a learning community. This is shared by staff, students and the wider community.
5. Strong safeguarding procedures. A robust approach to attendance and persistent absence.
6. A positive culture amongst the staff with its blend of experienced staff and young staff bringing fresh ideas into the school.

## **Good Aspects**

Many aspects are securely good and have the capacity for excellence-

1. Behaviour for Learning. Here the way to excellence is through changing the sometimes passive nature of their responses.
2. The quality of teaching. (Here excellence will see staff raising their expectations of students).
3. A robust curriculum that will be further developed to address the requirements of EBacc.
4. SEND provision. The Vice-Principal has a clear idea of how she wants to raise their attainment. As it is the school serves their needs well, including autistic students.
5. The more able. Too often teaching is to the middle- the profile of the school means that the more able must be stretched if excellence is to be achieved.
6. Middle leaders need to establish consistent practice so that no area or subject is less than good and many areas and subjects demonstrate excellence.

## **Areas to be worked on include-**

1. Developing student voice so that students have the chance to contribute to the future development of the school. Students have the capacity to make a valid contribution to the school. Too little is being asked of them at present.

2. All core subjects must perform at a consistently high level. English are confident they can perform well this year. Science needs to move forward through a clear improvement strategy.
3. Overall student performance needs to improve. The able students coming through the school need to be challenged to achieve.
4. Marking, teacher feedback and student responses need to be developed as a driver for student progress and achievement.
5. There need to be a consistency of pace across all subjects.

*Anthony Wilde*

*9<sup>th</sup> March 2016*