

Autumn Term 2019

School: St Wenn School

Head Teacher: Sally Berry

Date of Visit: Thursday 14th November 2019

School Improvement Partner: Adrian Massey, Chief Executive of Bridge Schools, Ofsted Inspector and School Improvement Consultant

Aims of the day:

- To review school data and documentation shared in readiness for the next Ofsted Inspection expected Spring 2020 onwards
- To review teaching, learning and standards seen in lessons and books
- To meet with senior leaders, middle leaders and governors to review the impact of leadership across the school.

Documentation shared included:

- Summer term 2019 data for all year groups
- School Development Plan
- Self-Evaluation Form
- Governors' Safeguarding Report
- Curriculum Information

School Visit:

8.30am-5.00pm

Sally and I met to review the timetable for the day, share expectations and review what we wanted to achieve. Sally gave a short history of where the school had changed since its last inspection. A summary of standards, staffing, issues, growth, working relationships with other schools and sustainability were discussed.

We discussed school performance which was looking strong. Y6 last summer had been a particularly good year for the school with a strong cohort who had been well taught. Sally had a good handle on the available data.

We then looked at the School development plan. I suggested it was more detailed than it needed to be. Any actions needed ownership, tighter date timeframes and outcomes needed to be clearer – the 'so what?' question should be borne in mind when developing a list of actions as comprehensive as these. Sally then produced her 4am sheet of thoughts! This was a much tighter, sharper set of ambitions which I think staff and governors could subscribe to. Sally agreed she would look at either producing a summary sheet to accompany the school development plan or rewriting the document, whichever was most useful.

The self-evaluation form was similar. It is a long document which details the many actions taken to improve the school. The over arching impact of these was more difficult to see in a document of this length. More does not necessarily equal better without understanding the impact of these

actions. Sally said she would reflect on the suggestions to see if the information could be presented more succinctly.

I was introduced to all staff and then went on a learning walk on my own for an hour. We did not want to add to teacher workload or stress so visits to classrooms were no more than 15 mins.

Staff and children:

Positive relationships between children and their adults are a strong attribute of the school. This was exemplified in nursery where a new child has started and on his first day was settled, having had time with the other children and stroking the class guinea pig was now ready to learn. The atmosphere was calm with nurturing direction coming from the nursery leader. Children were very happy and confident to talk to me as a visitor. Activities were appropriately laid out for the children to access independently.

In Class 1:

Children are well behaved and contribute well to learning. Children formulate ideas and are able to record them in the phonics lessons seen. Children demonstrate age appropriate knowledge and skills in their learning. The environment is conducive to learning.

In Class 2:

Children were engaged in activities around the gingerbread man story. The children had made a story map and were recording their first sentences. Pace and expectation differed in the different groups. Talking to the children they could articulate their thoughts well and understood the task in hand but were slow to get started. One group waited for a TA to bring their paper. Organised differently the children would access their own materials and have no need to wait on an adult. Some children were able to produce quite a lot of recorded work in the time, others seemed less keen and produced a sentence. Try to maximise the learning time available – eg children finished the activity but were told its play time in 5 minutes so it's time to put coats on. Perhaps use the 5 minutes for an extension activity or discussion on characterisation in the story.

In Class 3:

Children all engaged in mathematics activities. These all seemed age appropriate for the children to work through. Work was mostly well presented with numbers lined correctly in columns to avoid mistakes. The atmosphere was calm and children were working well. Some of the interjections could have been more concise as children were working well. There was a good relationship of trust in the room with children challenging themselves and asking peers for help if needed.

In Class 4:

Children were engaged in writing activities. The work seen was of a high standard with description of atmosphere, character and place being particularly well used. Children were motivated and enthused. There was an atmosphere of high energy in the room. Space was tight but well planned for and used to best effect.

Music Specialist teaching session:

A session was observed with the regular music specialist with the Class 1 children. Nursery children eagerly joined in with the reception children in a high energy, practical, join in with me style of piano led music teaching. The children were clearly having a very enjoyable time but were being taught key musicality skills such as pitch with high/low, tempo with fast/slow, dynamics with crescendo/diminuendo. Children are fortunate to have someone with such good knowledge and ability; they responded very well to some very enthusiastic teaching.

Meeting English Lead:

Changes from 2 classes to essentially 5, make a more coherent approach.

The school use 'talk for writing' to structure work and planning but supplement with other materials. Toolkits innovate stories and 'big writes' as well as writing for pleasure. The approach has been in place for 2 years and the lead feels it is now embedded. This year there is a vocabulary push to bring children's learning in line with new expectations.

There has been development of reading for pleasure. New resources have added 'incredible stories' which the children have taken to particularly well. A love of the subject came across from the subject lead. The library is in a state of flux, ready for a big change to redesign the experience. There is a 'Book Nook' in each room to invite children to read.

Whole class reading was tried last year, but the English Lead felt there was the need for a combination of whole class with group reading. I shared the success of 'Vipers' as a programme to help support this. There is a great deal of inventive activity being tried and tested with all teachers, led well by the English Lead.

Curriculum:

Staff have been engaged with re-writing the curriculum. History, PE, Music were shared. These all seemed to be moving in the right direction, matched against national curriculum criteria but added detail in year group expectation. I discussed the idea of revisiting knowledge in the term in the spiral of learning to develop memory, a new key focus in the Education Inspection Framework from Ofsted. Homework and quizzes were seen as a positive. If the children understand and remember the knowledge taught the model will work and can be replicated for the other subjects.

Meeting children:

I met with school council representatives who were well informed, fun and articulate about their learning. 'Teachers help us to learn.' 'Art is fun.' 'We have a lot of safety workshops to keep us safe on the internet.' 'We Show Racism a red card.' 'We will be dressing up for Pudsey Day for Children in Need.' 'Some children are bullied; one new girl was but we helped her and.' I asked them to stop to help her and now it's fine.'

Leadership and Management

Sally has a good understanding of the current areas the school needs to focus on to secure further improvements. Sally knows her children, staff, parents and governors well. There is a deep commitment and pride in her work to maintain a strong purpose. Plans are credible and well thought through. A culture of improvement is embedded within the staff. We held a feedback session for all teachers during their lunch hour to talk through what had been seen and where they thought further improvement could be secured. Leadership and management from a strong head teacher and senior teacher are setting a positive course for staff to follow. With outcomes looking strong and improvements in place the school was fortunate to have such robust leadership in place to take the school forwards.

Governance

I met with the Chair and Vice Chair to talk through findings. Both knew the school well and could articulate the changes made in recent years. I commented on how detailed the safeguarding report was where it showed evidence and impact. It was in a thorough and well thought out forming a useful monitoring document. If the standard of governance follows the same vein, then governors' role in challenging and supporting the school is effective.

Parents

I met a handful of parents on a particularly wet and blustery afternoon, but all were happy to stay and talk positively about the work of the school. Parents were effusive in their positive comments about how the school had helped their children to make educational gains.

Previous Ofsted Key Issues March 2016

Next steps for the school Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all pupils are challenged and stretched to reach their full potential, especially the most able, by:
 - developing the mathematical curriculum in Years 2 and 3 so that pupils are provided with a greater variety and depth of number problems and puzzles to solve
 - planning activities systematically and in depth in order to develop pupils' skills in written composition in Years 4 to 6.
- monitoring activities focus on precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding and align more closely with the priorities set out in the school development plan and training for staff.

Summary of suggested work to address Key Issues:

There is an issue with consistency in terms of the amount and quality of work seen in classes. Handwriting/presentation/expectation all need attention. These are 'quick wins' however and work has already begun to resolve this issue.

How regularly do the children have opportunity to write a sustained piece at length? This also varied for children within the same classes as well as between classes. Could the children achieve more? Invariably the answer is yes.

Stretch independent access to learning, particularly in Key Stage 1 to enable children to access their own resources and materials. KS2 may feel it is appropriate to also include some choice of learning, bringing self-directed learning activities to the fore to showcase the high ability of the majority of children. Have extension activities to hand which the children can access when tasks are completed. Maximise the learning time available.

All of the above will enable the school to demonstrate the actions taken since the last inspection to 'challenge and stretch.... Especially the most able' as well as 'focus on precise gains' written above as key issues 1 and 2.