

# TBAP Aspire AP Academy

## Peer to Peer Review

### February 2019

Area	The Review Team judged* TBAP Aspire	On the Self Review Scorecard Aspire self-assessed as follows
Overall	Requires Improvement (3)	Requires Improvement (3)
Leadership and Management	Requires Improvement (3)	Requires Improvement (3)
Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Requires Improvement (3)	Requires Improvement (3)
Teaching Learning and Assessment	Requires Improvement (3)	Good (2)
Outcomes	Requires Improvement (3)	Requires Improvement (3)

\*Please note that this review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection and judgements therefore are not necessarily equivalent to Ofsted judgements



## The Peer to Peer Challenge

The school judges itself as overall Requires Improvement with Teaching and Learning judged as Good. This is in line with the previous Ofsted report except for Teaching and Learning which was judged as Requires Improvement. The Review Team agreed with the overall judgement of **Requires Improvement** but judged Teaching and learning as Requires Improvement. Following the Peer to Peer Review, members of Aspire's SLT and Sarah Roscoe, Executive Headteacher accepted the judgements and the reasons why they were made.

The documents available on arrival to the review team included:

- The Dynamic Self Review and Scorecard
- TBAP summary of attendance and exclusion data
- Some Case Studies
- TBAP LAB Report on Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Having spent time as a team looking at these and after being given the chance to clarify some matters with Mr Valentine, recently appointed acting Head of School, the Review Team settled on the following key lines of enquiry:

- What progress has Aspire made since its last Ofsted report?
- What information currently exists to support the judgement that Aspire is overall Requires Improvement with Teaching, Learning & Assessment judged as Good?
- To what degree have the forced changes to the leadership of Aspire impacted upon its development?

## Leadership and Management strengths

The academy is resolutely proud of its support for learners' wellbeing and welfare and has particularly high expectations in this regard and the academy is effectively run on a daily basis. This starts with the way in which learners enter the building, readily handing over personal possessions such as mobile phones and accepting without challenge more routine body searches.

At breaks and lunches students mix together with staff in the main hall, demonstrating genuine levels of respect and courtesy. Staff and learners interact well, whether over a game of table tennis or by sharing a meal alongside each other. Newspapers are neatly laid out on the tables for students to read and there is a sense of togetherness which learners say they value immensely. The staff presence also ensures a calm atmosphere which is built more upon the staff's sense of compassion than a need for control.

School leaders promote a sense of inclusion with learners and staff, describing the school as a "family" where everyone is cared for. This is underpinned currently by the strong leadership of the acting headteacher and staff were quick to say is a legacy of the permanent headteacher who is currently absent from school due to sickness. The manner in which other colleagues have stepped up into leadership roles to cover not only her absence but that of the Director of Access and Inclusion is testament to the sense of commitment staff feel towards their jobs. This was similarly evident when an NQT who arguably should have gone home sick stayed in order to talk to the review team about his positive experience at Aspire.

The focus upon ensuring that the academy runs smoothly is epitomised by the management of the school timetable. Mr Valentine reviews this on a daily basis to ensure that there is the most efficient deployment of staff, taking into account both the needs of the curriculum and any emergent wellbeing needs for learners. It cannot be underestimated the level of care and detail that this exercise demands of him. Staff all anticipate as part of the daily update on learners' needs, this dynamic timetable that best utilises the experience of staff and their understanding of learners' needs.

It needs recognising, however, that the academy is experiencing challenging staffing pressures, not least with the absences of the Head of School and the Director of Access and Inclusion. However, TBAP has acted swiftly to address this ensuring that the Executive Headteacher, Sarah Roscoe, routinely supports Mr Valentine and other members of SLT in performing their roles. The positive working relationships she has forged alongside the appropriate challenge she provides, is ensuring that the academy continues to move forward and she has already identified further areas for improvement. Ms Roscoe is also perceptive about the very real risks associated with this temporary position and is working hard with Mr Valentine to maintain as much stability as possible. Other support from TBAP academies such as Octavia is gratefully received and the impact of Richard Rushton, Octavia Director of Learning in supporting the introduction of Pupil Asset is particularly valued by the Academy.

The primary section of the school enjoys its own suite of classrooms within the main building. The atmosphere in this area of the school was positive and benefits from a common sense of purpose. It is also clear that Mel Goodger works effectively with Mr Valentine across all areas of the academy, providing daily support as and where necessary.

Notwithstanding the daily challenges he faces, Mr Valentine is both insightful and precise regarding the next steps for Aspire. He recognises the not inconsiderable issues the academy faces but relentlessly challenged the notion of any excuse culture. Recruitment to core subjects has proved challenging over time and he has been nimble and intelligent in how he has deployed people to best effect, something he is also expert at doing on a daily basis. This level of strategic understanding he has, if translated across all aspects of the academy, would be of significant benefit.

## Leadership and Management risks and areas for development

The main challenge to Aspire concerns the balance between its operational management and its more strategic leadership. The daily demands of Aspire's learners cannot and should not be underestimated. However, arguably the school is overly committed to the day to day management of learners- notwithstanding the current staffing pressures, at the expense of more strategic leadership. This is something that Mr Valentine and his colleagues recognise and alongside Ms Roscoe they are making early inroads into this area of the academy. However, in the absence of a school development plan for example- or in the absence of one that was readily available to the Review Team, it is difficult to assess the academy's priorities and the progress it is making towards delivering them. It is worth repeating that the day to day demands of Aspire's learners are considerable but the academy needs to find ways to balance meeting these with addressing long term issues which ultimately, if successfully addressed, will enhance the learning experiences within the academy.

The absence of this more strategic approach means that there are few opportunities to reflect on what works and what can be improved. The Review Team felt they could not confidently say, therefore, that "leaders and school governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education at the school." (Ofsted School Inspection Handbook p.47). Equally, whilst there was an undeniable sense that there was a shared vision amongst staff regarding the day to day support of learners this was not captured in a strategic way that would allow the Review Team to comment confidently that leaders promote "improvement effectively". Leaders certainly on a daily basis "set high expectations of pupils and staff" however it was difficult for the Review Team to locate these within a wider school vision of what success looks like or benchmark it against a readily obtainable evidence base. The risk therefore, is that potentially strong progress and strategies are not being routinely captured and recognised for their significance.

For example, historic outcomes in the form of attainment appear on the surface to be very strong. However, in the absence of any robust assessment system the academy is unable to demonstrate whether these reflect strong progress. Further consequences of this is that the school is unable to demonstrate with clarity what progress is being made across the school. Equally, despite strong day to day management of attendance, there are still figures that are of real concern. In the absence of these being routinely evaluated or part of a wider strategic plan it is hard to see how sustained improvements can be made. Likewise the academy is unable to account readily for its pupil premium spend and there is no pupil premium report on its website which is a statutory requirement.

TBAP as a trust has a clear role to play in how an academy is integrated into the trust and there was a feeling from colleagues who were spoken to as part of the review that there have been missed opportunities to effect this as seamlessly and effectively as might be. There is, however, a shared commitment to improving this now and the working relationships which Ms Roscoe has forged suggest that this is improving. This should mean that Aspire can gain more systematically from the synergies of collaborative working within a multi academy trust such as TBAP. However, it should not be underestimated that there is considerable work still to be done if the academy is able, for example, to demonstrate progress against its previous Ofsted judgment and more importantly the areas for improvement identified.

## Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare strengths

The academy's daily management of behaviour was a noticeable strength. The climate was consistently strong, with behaviour being well managed. Instances of disruptive behaviour were effectively addressed and the sense of team spirit across the organisation was something that the Review Team felt was a defining characteristic of the academy.

LSPs or Co-educators were well deployed to ensure the academy runs smoothly and that learners receive extensive and appropriate pastoral care. The effective deployment of other professionals was a strength of the academy. Learners spoke highly, for example, of the independent careers advice they received and there was evidence of a Y11 learner feeling genuinely empowered by the opportunities that potentially lay ahead of him in terms of both "a plan A and a plan B" which he spoke about with confidence and relief.

The hugely impressive play therapist spoke with passion and commitment about her role and it was evident that she provides vital pastoral care for some of the academy's most vulnerable learners. Her impact is also secured because of the support SLT provide for her and the way in which her understanding of learners is cascaded appropriately to other members of staff. Anecdotally, she was able to speak positively about the reduction in violent behaviours as a consequence of her interventions and a more systematic review of this would only underline the effectiveness of her role.

The process of induction for new learners was another strong feature of the academy. The "One plans" and "All about me" documents were extremely thorough and detailed. The academy ensures that these are then routinely shared amongst staff and reviewed in a timely fashion. As part of this induction process the school also prioritises interactions with parents. There were a number of examples of how the academy had been able to signpost or direct parents to wider family support and intervention. This process was mature and embedded within the academy's routines. The academy also provides monthly "drop ins" for parents to support them in accessing help and if necessary early interventions.

As part of the review, two parents of primary aged learners were met. Both were very positive saying the school was their 'saving grace' and that Aspire had changed their children's lives for the better. They also felt grateful for the constructive impact the school has had and that "it is a positive place for their children." They both felt that teaching was good and that their children made progress. They said "that staff go above and beyond to support parents as well as children" and stated they had "100% trust in the team to keep their child safe."

The overwhelmingly positive feedback was matched by the comments of two students (Y10 & Y11). Both said the school had "rescued them" from a mainstream setting where they were failing and felt they would continue to fail. They felt that the strength of the academy was its "family feel". They felt safe, trusted staff and believed that there was always someone they could go to if they needed help or support. The academy has well established relationships with other outside agencies which it judges as a strength. Half termly meetings with the Local Authority regarding learners with EHCPs are positive and notwithstanding the long term of absence of the Director of Access and Inclusion, continue to be well managed.

Attitudes to learning in lessons were positive. Learners were well aware of their boundaries and what was expected of them. There were sufficient numbers of pupils in both lessons and around the school to ensure there was a positive dynamic and a sense of urgency within the daily operations of the academy.

The day to day management of attendance is effective. There are regular follow up calls and the 'poor attender' case study demonstrates some of complex needs of some learners referred to Aspire. Equally The 'good attender' case study showed an improvement in attendance from 75% on entry to 89% , attributed to the nurturing environment, positive relationships and sense of feeling 'safe' at the Academy.

### Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare risks and areas for development

Despite the routine efforts of the attendance officer, the attendance overview from the RAB report suggests a dip in attendance in comparison to last year (Term 1 79% down to 70% Term 2 75-68 Term 3 74-67).

Concern was raised regarding the use of the “C” code and whilst Mr Valentine gave a robust response to this, the feeling of the review team member was that this would benefit from further scrutiny and thought.

Although interventions appear to be robust these appear to be reactive with no clear action plans in place or benchmarking at point of entry.

The use of part time timetables on return from exclusion also needs to be reviewed to ensure there is clarity around decision making and follow up.

Planning to address issues of poor attendance and persistent absenteeism (e.g. a robust action plan to address very high rate of unauthorised absence in Y10) is needed.

Whilst the climate of behaviour in the school on a daily basis was felt to be a strength, the academy was not able readily to provide any deep analysis or overview of behaviour. This meant that the review team were unable to evaluate what might be a real strength of the academy other than what was witnessed during the two days. Again, the importance of managing behaviour and attendance on a more strategic level cannot be underestimated and it would be advisable that the academy addresses this as a matter of urgency.

### Teaching, learning and Assessment-strengths

The school is committed to leading improvements to teaching and learning as evidenced through its programme of CPD. Furthermore learner-teacher relationships were invariably positive and respectful. The leaders of the core and non-core were committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and were able to evidence quality assurance cycles that focused upon on work scrutiny and learning walks. These have provided the evidence base for the most recent LAB report on Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

In lessons, students were focused and at times responded with real insight and intelligence. In a KS4 lesson on Macbeth, for example, a learner spoke well about the imagery of the “snake” and its links to the bible and deception.

In a numeracy lesson there was evidence of strong practice with learners engaged at all times largely due to skilled questioning by the teacher, excellent pace, fun and interesting activities and suitable level of challenge. The classroom learning environment was well organised and supported good behaviour because, for example, all resources were to hand and there was a ‘chill out’ tent where learners could retreat to if feeling stressed.

In a maths lesson, once settled, learners asked some good questions demonstrating their interest. All the learners were on task and engaged with work, with the teacher supporting individual learners effectively. The task was suitably pitched and challenging without being too hard. Learners showed their keenness to pass exams and revise as well as showing how much they care about their learning. The quantity of work in books was both good and very well presented.

In a Science lesson there was evidence of strong subject knowledge and planning relating to car safety and crumple zones. There was sufficient challenge and the teacher had carefully thought through ways to engage the interest of students.

During a learning walk in the primary section, a calm, well managed atmosphere was in evidence with learners enjoying the tasks. A phonics based lesson was expertly delivered and students were keen to engage in the activities.

The LSPs were very good at spotting learners who were moving off task and intervened without being overbearing. There was evidence of strong and effective working relationships with teachers.

In terms of work scrutiny at KS3-4, art emerged as an area of excellence. The quality of work over time was very impressive. Literacy issues were addressed and there were regular examples of students responding positively to feedback. One reviewer felt that that GCSE Art Sketchbook contained “stunning work of a very high quality.” The teacher did not just rely on images as there was clear evidence that teacher had developed the learner’s knowledge of artists and their techniques also.

In Science there was evidence of some learner reflection in green pen but not necessarily in response to feedback. However, there were examples of feedback supporting thinking and understanding demonstrated through ‘challenge questions’ set via marking.

The KS3-4 curriculum provides good challenge and a variety of opportunities for students. The wider enrichment curriculum is well liked and provides learners with opportunities to identify pathways of personal interest.

In primary exercise books, consistency was very apparent. There was a good quantity of work in general and feedback was helpful. Also there was strong baseline assessment.

#### Teaching, learning and Assessment- risks and areas for development

The most pressing area for improvement relates to assessment. The academy is in the process of transitioning between a previous assessment system and TBAP’s Pupil Asset but this needs to be concluded as a matter of urgency. This is because currently the academy is unable to present any in year data that is systematically benchmarked and arguably reliable. Moving forward with the help of TBAP Octavia, the academy is confident it will be able to baseline more effectively and therefore target set with more confidence and then assess progress more accurately thereby facilitating more timely interventions. Without such information the academy faces severe risks in terms of its own judgment for teaching and learning.

The academy needs a clearly articulated vision of teaching and learning and then needs to plan effectively to bring up its overall level of consistency. This vision needs to be rooted in the quality of personal relationships-something which is a strength of the school, but needs more rigour and definition. Best practice needs to be more routinely shared and less good practice needs challenging so that learners avoid coasting. Finally this then needs to be underpinned by a systematic and planned programme of CPD linked to academy priorities.

There was lack of consistency in some lessons not around relationships, but more around the level of challenge. Some tasks created learning opportunities that were then not capitalised upon by the classroom



teacher. In one lesson, Mr Valentine intervened to ask some students a series of probing questions that revealed high levels of insight and understanding amongst learners. The classroom teacher however, had missed the opportunities to probe and test understanding. Similarly in some lessons where there was evidence of good relationships there was a lack of pace and challenge leading to some loss of focus.

In terms of marking, there also needs to be higher levels of consistency; there was too much variability across the academy and it was not readily obvious how quality assurance systems were being used to monitor and improve this. In some exercise books graffiti and swear words went unchallenged. In English at KS3-4 there was little evidence on intervention in terms of literacy or support for extended writing. Assessment was hard to locate and therefore it was difficult to say with any real confidence what progress students were making.

Where best practice exists- such as Art, some Science books and within the primary section, it needs to be more routinely shared with colleagues so that there is a clear and unambiguous understanding of what is expected of all students by all staff.

**Outcomes strengths**

GCSE attainment is very strong compared to AP average which is potentially a real strength of the academy and one it could potentially be congratulated upon

There is evidence that students transition well into mainstream settings.

**Outcomes- risks and areas for development**

As part of the Review the academy was unable to produce data to demonstrate progress from starting points. The process of gathering robust baseline data is only just beginning (or will begin over the next few weeks as planned with TBAP SLE for assessment) and therefore requires urgent attention.

Leaders potentially do not have an accurate view of the academy’s performance because it has no readily available, reliable, up-to-date information about pupils’ learning or behaviour.

**Peer to Peer Summary**

Area	The School judged themselves:	The Peer to Peer Review Team judged them:
Overall	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
Leadership and Management	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
Teaching Learning and Assessment	Good	Requires Improvement
Outcomes	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement



Peer to Peer Review Team

The team was made up of:

Tim Long (Lead)

Jenny Appleton

Ruth Browne

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